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E.G. White Research Center
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Dr. Richard Nies
Masturbation/I

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GIVE GLORY TO GOD

Redlands, CALIF.

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OR: CAR C 002289, #1-3

I am going to deal with a topic today I would give an awful lot not to have to deal with. The topic is going to be on the ethics of masturbation. And you say, Why would you deal with this in the Sabbath School topic? Well, we have had a lesson on sexual ethics, but this topic is an embarrassment to Seventh-day Adventists for reasons which I will discuss in a little bit. It's a very difficult topic, and my view represents a minority view. And, furthermore, I think I'm still old-fashioned enough that I'd just soon not talk about this in a larger audience, but I consider you a mature, X-rated audience, so I think that we can discuss this.

But my reasons are three-fold. The first is because we have never adequately come to grips with a considerable amount of literature from the pen of E. G. White on this topic which, to us today, is an embarrassment. Let me just take a moment to elucidate this problem.

For those of you who want to do some reading, I will give you the references which represent most of the passages that she deals with this. In the book Child Guidance, section 16, pages 439-468; volume two of Testimonies for the Church, pp. 346-353, 390-411, 468-471, 481; and then a little tract which until recently has been out of print entitled "Appeal to Mothers." Now there is a larger book that you can now secure at Loma Linda University entitled ^A~~The~~ Solemn Appeal, and it has several other articles in it, but it does contain this; and, also, in the back of a manuscript prepared by the E. G. White Estates in fairly minute rebuttal to the Ron Numbers book, Appendix C, this tract, "Appeal to Mothers" is reprinted.

Now, this first problem that I'm going to deal with has to do with some statements that Mrs. White has made which I think to many Seventh-day Adventists are largely discredited now. I happen to take quite seriously what she says, although I must admit for a number of years these statements were very puzzling to me. But I'm not willing to throw things aside just because they're puzzling. And I think those of you who've been in my Sabbath School class for a number of years know that I have a very strong affinity toward the validity and inspiration of E. G. White messages. And I'm going to stand by that.

Now, specifically, within her writings there are three problems I think that are quite crucial. She speaks of this as secret vice, but the first problem I think—and I'm going to read a few quotations just to highlight this problem—is that masturbation in her treatment stands in contrast—in sharp contrast—to heterosexual intimacies as leading to mental, moral and physical deterioration. Now this is the zinger, the big one. And the question is asked—and I've never heard answered—that Why is the stimulation which results from this particular activity to be distinguished from regular heterosexual intimacies? And why doesn't that lead to mental, moral and physical deterioration?

Notice this statement from volume two, Testimonies for the Church, page 470. She gives some case histories—very brief—and she says "I've mentioned these cases to illustrate the power of this soul-and-body-destroying vice. The entire mind is given up to low passion. The moral and intellectual faculties are overborne by the baser powers. The body is enervated, the brain is weakened. The material deposited there to nourish the system is squandered. The drain upon the system is great. The fine nerves of the brain, being excited to unnatural action, become benumbed and in a measure paralyzed. The moral and intellectual powers are

weakening while the animal passions are strengthening and being more largely developed by exercise. The appetite for unhealthful food clamors for indulgence. When persons are addicted to the habit of self-abuse it is impossible to arouse their moral sensibilities to appreciate eternal things or delight in spiritual exercises. Impure thoughts seize and control the imagination and fascinate the mind and next follows an almost uncontrollable desire for the performance of impure actions." Now that's quite a striking statement. And, as I say, it's an embarrassment to many people who try to deal seriously with Ellen G. White's writings on this topic.

But not only does it stand in contrast in her writings to heterosexual intimacies as leading to mental, moral, and physical deterioration; she has quite a bit to say about it leading to disease. And that seems so out of context with what is generally known today. Let me read a few references in that regard, volume two of the Testimonies for the Church, p. 391. "Moral pollution"--(and she's referring specifically to masturbatory activity)--"Moral pollution has done more than every other evil to cause the race to degenerate. It is practiced to an alarming extent and brings on disease of almost every description." Now we don't have any scientific evidence today to back that up. But let me also say, (and I've not heard this said) we don't have any scientific evidence to disprove it. But it does become a bit of an embarrassment. From the tract, "Solemn Appeal," and in this book, Solemn Appeal, it's the shorter work, Appeal to Mothers, and in this book that I just referred to you'll find this on pages 63 and 64. "Children who practice self indulgence previous to puberty or the period of merging into manhood or womanhood must pay the penalty of nature's violated laws at that critical period. Many sink into an early grave, while others have sufficient force of constitution to pass this ordeal. If the practice is continued from the age of 15 and upward, nature

will protest against the abuse she has suffered and continues to suffer and will make them pay the penalty for the transgression of her laws, especially from the ages of 30 to 45 by numerous pains in the system and various diseases such as affection of the liver and lungs, neuralgia, rheumatism, affection of the spine, diseased kidneys and cancerous humors. Some of nature's fine machinery gives way leaving a heavier task for the remaining to perform, which disorders nature's fine arrangement, and there is often a sudden breaking down of the constitution and death is a result."

Now, that's not easy to explain. From the same book on page 73, speaking about the ladies who are sitting around and not getting much exercise, and she says, "Females possess less vital force than the other sex and are deprived very much of the brace and invigorating air by their indoor life. The result of self-abuse in them is seen in various diseases, such as catarrh, dropsy, headache, loss of memory and sight, great weakness in the back and loins, affections of the spine, and frequently inward decay of the head. Cancerous humor, which would lie dormant in the system in their lifetime, is inflamed and commences its eating, destructive work. The mind is often utterly ruined, and insanity supervenes." Now, I'm reading you some of the strongest statements, and I do that for a purpose.

Now a third problem that I feel in her writings is she speaks of this—it can be inherited as a predisposition. Volume two of Testimonies for the Church, pages 351 and 352, now she speaks of those who—she's speaking particularly of a man here who has apparently been involved in autoeroticism for a number of years, and carried this on into his married life. And then she says, "Children born to parents who are controlled by corrupt passions are worthless. What can be expected of such children but that they will sink lower in the scale than their parents. What

can be expected of the rising generation? Thousands are devoid of principle. These very ones are transmitting to their offspring their own miserable, corrupt passions. What a legacy. Thousands drag out their unprincipled lives, tainting their associates and perpetuating their debased passions by transmitting them to their children." And then on page 391 she speaks in a very real case, the parents are the real sinners. She speaks about them being enslaved by their own passions. Then she says, "Children are born with the animal propensities largely developed, the parents' own stamp of character having been given to them. Children born to these parents will almost invariably take naturally to the disgusting habits of secret vice. Those who feel at liberty because married to degenerate their bodies by beastly indulgence of the animal passions will have their degraded course perpetuated in their children. The sins of the parents will be visited upon their children because the parents have given them the stamp of their own lustful propensities."

Well, the answer that is given in the rebuttal to the Ron Numbers book prepared by the White Estate said that you'll just have to wait for further evidence. I'm a little impatient to wait for that evidence. I think we have some converging lines that might give us some answers. I'm going to suggest them. But this represents a problem to our people. Specifically, at Loma Linda University in the Medical School, by and large, the medical students are being taught that this is a perfectly normal and acceptable form of behavior. As far back as 1967 in the journal, The Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, and I quote from Dr. Harrison S. Evans, who is the chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and also dean of the School of Medicine, he states, "Masturbation is not believed to be a source of damage to the child either physically or mentally," which is, of course, in quite

contradistinction to what I've just read. "It does not have a weakening effect on the body or upon the mind. It does not draw out any of the child's vital energy as old wives' tales would tend to suggest. Masturbation as a phase of experience can actually have a beneficial effect on the child's emotional development because it helps us to establish the genitals securely within the body scheme so that at a later appropriate time they can become readily activated and used in a normal, heterosexual manner as part of a normal marriage. It is my opinion that for you as a parent the appropriate reaction is to accept this behavior as essentially normal."

I quote from this because it is in a journal that is disseminated to physicians and it does also reflect, I think, many medical opinions within our own ranks. Well, because of this problem with respect to the statements that Mrs. White has made, and because of the implications to our lives, this is the first reason I'm going to deal with this topic. It's quite a lengthy introduction, I haven't even finished yet.

The second reason I'm going to present this and, as I say, overcome some of my old-fashioned concerns about speaking about such a topic publicly, is because it is very much a part of our culture now. A number of years ago with the burgeoning, the proliferation of these sex clinics, one of the features of the older culture which these sex clinics intended to overcome was the hesitancy toward masturbation. In fact, for many years now, in our culture there has been quite a shift in a moral perspective as to the rightness or wrongness of this. And what began as simply a changing of the moral focus to masturbation being evil, being wrong, to now being acceptable and normal, there is even a more specific shift today in which now, in these sex clinics, it is being taught as part of one's normal sexual functioning and actually is promoted. And it is thought today by most of the

leading sexologists that masturbation should actually be vigorously taught as a normal and healthy expression of our sexuality.

One of the most recent bombs to hit the cultural scene (I should have brought the book—it's a very interesting, somewhat disquieting book) called the Hite Report, written by Sherry Hite. She sent out 100,000 questionnaires to women in which she asked them very intimate questions about their sexuality. Three thousand, a little over 3,000, I think 3,019 responded. Now I want to say, first of all, that as far as a piece of science, it's utter garbage. She does not, in my estimation, understand the principles of sampling; the questionnaires were sent out to readers of We Magazine and ^{Ms.} Miz Magazine and some of these other things. So it represents a very biased sub-population.

And, furthermore, keep in mind that the people who respond to this kind of thing have certain proclivities toward speaking about their own sexuality that I don't think necessarily represents everything that's going on. But if you think about it, you have to have a certain kind of response mechanism to want to indulge in this kind of discussion. I just read in the paper yesterday that some "clowns" under the name of scientific research were going to supermarkets and different places, and asking ladies right on the spot to show their navels. And a number of them did. And they were so taken back by this that they felt that during the time which they were exposing their navels to these individuals that they could ask them a number of questions and they would be so off guard that they'd tell them the truth.

So, supposedly, if you expose your navels spontaneously on the spur of the moment, then you'll tell the truth. Well, I would raise a question about what's going on with the women who would just expose their navels to a stranger anyway.

So, I do have some very serious questions about the Hite Report as a piece of scientific literature. However, I will have to say that the responses that are made—I have heard time and time again from not only people in my office which, by the way, is not something that is just peculiar to clinical psychological problems, but many of the physicians and of our ministers who've talked with me have been exposed to similar concerns. In fact, they have asked how I would deal with these problems, and particularly with reference to the statements that Mrs. White makes in view of this cultural thrust.

So the second reason I'm going to talk about this is not only because of the problems that Mrs. White's writings have created, but also because of what is taking place in our society that I think represents a sharp thrust against the integrity of the individual in the family composition.

The third reason is because I feel that in terms of the larger issues of the great controversy, something is highlighted in this masturbation issue that I think is quite relevant to other areas of our lives. And so it does become an occasion—an extreme occasion—although somewhat statistically normal, to highlight, I think, some larger issues in the great controversy that I think apply to us all.

Well, with that rather garrulous introduction I want to deal with masturbation. In fact, I want to build a case against it from four standpoints. I'm going to speak with respect to its psychological effects, its moral effects, its physical effects, and its spiritual effects. And my basic thesis is this: there is in all four of these areas a very vital difference between any kind of stimulation with respect to whether it is prompted by love or whether it is prompted by self-gratification. There is a vital difference, a distinct difference. And while we do not have any specific studies on masturbation that would deal with this directly, I

think that there are enough converging lines of evidence that I'm going to maintain this thesis, that there is a difference in all four of these areas; psychological, moral, physical, and spiritual. There is a difference between the same stimulation, whether it exists in the context of love, or whether it exists in the context of self-gratification.

First of all, let me say a few words about the psychological. I've said to you before in other contexts and on different occasions that for everything that we think and do, there are consequences. This can be quite well established with respect to even our perspective of reality. Every thought that you think, every activity that you express will have an effect upon the next thought, the next perception, the next feeling that you have. Individuals who can start out bragging innocently, but bragging in a way that is quite untrue, if they persist in this their whole psychological function will begin to align itself with their expressions, so that their ultimate conception of reality as mediated through their thoughts, through their perceptions, and through their feelings will line up with what is expressed.

Now that really has some tremendous implications, when you think about it; and, of course, those who would defend masturbation will speak right out of the other side of their mouth, ^{against} condemning violence because of its conditioning effect. And yet, then they will go back to the other side of their mouth again and justify pornography. But you cannot have a different set of psychological laws. By beholding we become changed, as Mrs. White has effectively pointed out. And there is ample evidence for that particular statement. What we see, what we hear, what we think, what we express, these are ultimately registered indelibly in our nervous system. And none of these consequences are trivial. It might take several

before the impact is experienced at the level of awareness, but again let me say, every thought that you think, every behavior you manifest will feed back upon your entire psychological experience and condition the next thought, the next perception, the next feeling. I've said that I think it is a law, although I've never heard it stated precisely as such; so you can call it a Nies law. But I didn't really invent it, I just put it in these words, that we're going to feel as we consistently think and behave.

Now you see, this makes the avenues to our soul very vital. What do you read? What do you listen to? What are we exposed to in our culture? Because all of this has to do ultimately with our perception of reality. And people who have given expression to self-gratification outside of a context of love have certain thoughts associated with that. People who masturbate are not thinking of the Dow-Jones Stock Averages. They are engaged, and we have a number of studies indicating the fantasies that go on in these kinds of activities, although we're now looking mainly at the psychological effects. But there is a great deal of thinking and of feeling that go on during this activity.

Now, what I'm saying is that when a person gets to the place where their central frame of reference is to be mediated in terms of how they feel about something, there's [a distortion of their] reality. So that you see in the more extreme forms of mental illness people are governed by delusions, by hallucinations, seeing, hearing, experiencing things that really are not there in the counterpart in the objective world. So that if you feel that someone is out to do you in, any objective evidence to the contrary, that feeling becomes the central basis of your reality, and to you it is so.

And ultimately, this is the way most people make their judgments, anyway. If it feels OK, then that's the way it is. And I say that individuals who are engaged in activity th look at objective reality. I have coined an expression a number of years ago based upon a Norman Rockwell painting in which a woman goes into a butcher shop and she bought a chicken, and the chicken is being weighed, and the butcher—they're both looking at the scale—but the butcher has his thumb pressing down on the scale, and the woman has her thumb pressing up on the scales. And that suggested to me a word picture that most people weigh reality with their emotional thumb on the scale. And they see things not as they objectively are, but they see them in terms of how they feel. And these feelings eventually captivate the thought processes so that even one's sense of ethics are based upon how one feels about things. But this stems from a basic psychological law that every thought that you think, every behavior you manifest is going to have a feedback relationship upon your nervous system, upon your next thought, upon your next perception, upon your next feeling, so that ultimately you color your world by self-gratification. And you begin to see things, not as they are, but as you are, and as you feel.

And then the worth of people are seen in terms of—the reality of a person is not based upon some kind of worth, but how they make us feel. And then other people are seen in terms of what kind of gratification they can give us. And I say this represents a psychological distortion of no small magnitude. And masturbation is a great way of distorting your own psychological feeling because the thoughts that go along with this kind of activity are related strictly to an autistic kind of experience—you're entirely self-referenced, and I say it's of an entirely different quality whether it's related to a love relationship. But whenever the focus is upon ourselves and our sensations and our feelings and our excitement, per se—and it's

not the feeling per se that is wrong, it is this short-circuited reference that I'm concerned about—then one is taking steps into deterioration of their psychological objectivity. OK?

The second concern is the moral implication of this. What you have when you begin to have a breakdown from reality in which self-gratification becomes the norm of reality, you wind up then with an ethic based upon feeling in which, if a thing feels good, it is right; if it feels bad, it is wrong.

I cannot tell you how many people I have heard make the statement in justification of what they are doing, "Well, I don't feel guilty about it." Well, what has that got to do with it? Reality is not to be measured simply in terms of our feelings. Just because you feel good about something doesn't make it right; just because you feel badly about something doesn't make it wrong. Feelings themselves, per se, or neither right nor wrong. We don't directly control our feelings. They tend to line up with the consistency of our thought and behavior. So feelings, basically, are amoral, except as they begin to reflect the way we think and behave.

But the thing is that when we give them ^a ~~an~~ amoral quality and build an ethic on our feeling, you see what's going to happen. That means that rather than a person having some objective realization of right and wrong based upon their perception of what it means to be made in the image of God, they then, in turn, become for all practical purposes, animals. And by the way, this is what Mrs. White is speaking about when she refers to animalism within the marriage relationship. She's not talking about simply having feelings, but she's talking about people who relate to each other, not on the basis of their love, but on the basis of seduction and the basis of simply using another person as a means to their own ends.

Here are men who will support their wives and come home to them as long as they will simply gratify their passions. And here are women who will seduce these men; in fact, use their sexuality to get what they want, and where the criteria of what you do is simply based upon these kinds of feelings. And it can correctly be called animalism because there's no really deep moral thought of caring for another person. It's whatever makes you feel good.

And so this is where we get the "now generation." This is why pharmaceuticals are so popular. And it seems like this ethic, this moral ethic in which how you feel is the criteria of whether a thing is right or wrong, I think is really distorting our culture today.

And in the Hite Report, Sherry Hite by a collection of these questionnaires is really showing in essence--to women she says in effect, Men are lousy lovers and women can have more jollies by themselves. Do what you want with men, is the implication; but if you really want to get your kicks, you don't need a man.

Well, if that's the case, of course then the whole enterprise of love breaks down. And I don't think God really ever designed that emotional pleasures would exist apart from its meaningful relationship to other persons. There must always be a reference of communication and loving another person. When it's simply turned within, and when the highest value in a person's life is what makes you feel good, then, you see, persons are never of value in themselves but they are means to other ends.

And this, I think, is one of the greatest bases for the ^{de}personalization of human beings, is that a person is regarded not for some kind of worth that they have as a person, but for some kind of stimulation value that they have to someone else.

Well, what happens when you get older?—you know, when your skin is not 18 years old anymore, and you look at yourself in the mirror and you say what time hath wrought! Then, have you lost your value as a person? Well, according to this ethic, certainly that is the case because quite obviously it is the young, the ones who have alive skin and not tired skin, and so forth, that carry the day according to this ethic. And I think to the extent that this becomes more and more a part of our culture people are not being trained to love. That isn't even of concern. And, of course, it is always more difficult to learn to express our sexuality in a love relationship. Doing your own thing is always easier. And, of course, psychosis is always easier than in a normal adjustment because you can have your own little ^{Cinemascope} ~~synomyscope or sinomyscope~~ between your ears and you can see and experience whatever you want to experience, and you completely break off from the rest of the world.

It's always more difficult to be a sociable person, to care about other people. Sometimes you might even be confronted with a dilemma that, at some particular point—some particular choice point—being loving doesn't make you feel good. Well, which has the priority? So I think that this Hite Report really highlights a focus in our culture of which people don't count; jollies do.

Now, let's move on to the physical effects of this kind of activity. We are told Biblically that as a man thinketh within himself, so is he. Several years ago this was impressed upon me in a series of studies of hypnosis. Now I have some concerns about the use of hypnosis, and I'm not justifying hypnosis per se, but it does illustrate a point that stood out in bold relief to me at the time, exemplifying this principle, that as you think within yourself, so are you, even in a physical sense.

I've referred to this study before in which a person under deep hypnotic trance was told that they were going to be touched on the leg with a hot piece of metal. Now, in fact, the metal was cold. The person under the hypnotic trance was watching what the experimenter did, and this person was sitting in a chair and was also told that they would not resist; otherwise, the experimenter might have gotten a shock to the chops. But then this man's leg was touched with a cold piece of metal, and he let out a yell. Immediately the area of the leg that was touched with the cold metal was bandaged, the person was placed under very strict observation for a half an hour to make sure that there was no tampering with that portion of the skin that was touched. And, of course, it was all wrapped up and sealed. A half an hour later the wraps were removed, and the person had a blister.

Now, if we take seriously a whole list of studies, not only in hypnosis, but in terms of even psychosomatic medicine, I think it's quite clear today that the kinds of thoughts that we have will influence our bodily reactions. I think you're all aware of that. A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; on the other hand, the negative thoughts—if you sit down to eat a meal and you're greatly distressed—you can have some very quick realizations of the effect of this kind of negative thinking. So it really has a certain amount of self-validity here that as a person thinketh within himself, so is he.

Well now, what's happening during masturbation? We know that every thought that we think, every feeling that we experience, anything which represents input or experiencing of the system is always mediated through the electrical properties of our nervous system. Now let me read a statement taken in the context of the problem of masturbation. This is volume two of Testimonies for the

Church, page 347. "Some who make a high profession do not understand the sin of self-abuse and its sure results. Long-established habit has molded their understanding. They do not realize the exceeding sinfulness of this degrading sin which is ~~in~~^enerivating the system and destroying their brain nerve power. Moral principle is exceedingly weak when it conflicts with established habits. Solemn messages from heaven cannot forcibly impress the heart that is not fortified against the indulgence of this degrading vice. The sensitive nerves of the brain have lost their healthy tone by morbid excitation to gratify an unnatural desire for sensual indulgence." Now notice this: "The brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which heaven can communicate to man and effect his inmost life. Whatever disturbs the circulation of the electric currents in the nervous system lessens the strength of the vital powers, and the result is a deadening of the sensibilities of the mind."

Now that's, I think, a very significant statement. Now I am asserting that there is a vast difference in our physical being, between thoughts which are prompted by love, which represent an outgoing, which establishes itself in terms of a love ethic, in terms of the worth of persons versus that which is self-referenced, that which is directed within, which really becomes the basis for all kinds of mental and emotional disturbances. **Self-centeredness** really stands at the citadel, the very center of our being, as the occasion of which all kinds of mental and emotional disruptions can take place. So that if I am worried about myself, of course, then I have to be concerned about what you do with respect to me. And as a result, I might get paranoid if things go badly enough for me. Having to worry about myself, I have to raise questions of, "Was this the best thing that I should have done," and worry about what's going to happen to me; I can get depressed, I

can get anxious if I'm not sure that I'm cutting the mustard. I can feel guilty. I mean, all of the basic emotional disruptions I am prepared to defend, rotate around a center core of self-centeredness.

All right. If this is the case, then I'm saying that the electrical properties of our nervous system mediate this effect into our body, and that which is done in love is going to be helpful and beneficial. And Mrs. White speaks of the sacred relationship of marital intimacies. Those who take, I think as Ron Numbers did, some of her statements about sex out of context make her appear to be against sex; she was not. There are a number of instances in which she dealt with this problem, in which in my judgment she had a very healthy concept of our sexuality. And she speaks about the beneficent effects of the sacred ties and the sacred expressions. And she was very clear that our highest expression of sexuality was not simply for the purpose of having children, either. This can be documented.

So, she had some very positive aspects, but always the emphasis is it must be done in love. In masturbation, of course, this is a short-circuiting of this whole process. Now if, then, this represents a very intense form of self-centeredness—and I think it does—and it tends to capture the thought processes that—in fact, it tends to siphon ^{them in,} ~~the men~~, suck them in like a vacuum cleaner, so that people become very self-referenced in terms of their sensations, their feelings, their thoughts. Well, what's happening to their physical well-being? They then become gripped, I think, by their own sensations. And I think that when you set up a system that is electrically mediated in the system, in which a person is very, very self-referenced, not only do you have psychological ^{bizarreness} ~~bizarreness~~ beginning to take place, but I think you actually have a breakdown of the physical well-being. And a person, I think, becomes prone to disease. And I don't think Mrs. White is saying that this

is the disease; I think it simply sets up a situation in which our resistances are broken down. Just as they are psychologically, I think they are physically. And, by the way, Mrs. White is talking about the extremes. Always prophetic utterances take in the study of the messages of prophets. You see that they take examples that illustrate some larger principle.

But I have seen in mental hospitals individuals who engage in this kind of activity that actually typify all of the distortions that she describes. This represents the end result. And she recognizes that there are degrees of this situation, but she does describe the extreme cases, the kinds of things that can happen. And I think that, while we do not have any direct studies of masturbation, I do think that the evidence that we do have converge^s upon such a conclusion, that very self-referenced thoughts—preoccupied thoughts in which individuals simply live for their own sensations, to the degree that they do, you will have a breakdown; not only of their psychological being, their moral being, but their physical being. And I think they are less capable of resisting disease.

And so I think what she says is quite valid. That isn't the end of the story. And, of course, you can see the implications for health. In fact, she associates masturbation with a number of other things—diet, what we read, the kind of entertainment that we have. Mrs. White does not isolate masturbation and make it some kind of an entity by itself. It's always part of the web of a larger context of sensualism. And I think you can see the evident implications for health.

Now, the last point I want to make in this argument against masturbation is the spiritual. And this, of course, is left out of all of the discussion, at least among physicians and physiologists, and so forth, psychologists, psychiatrists. And that is, what's going on behind the scene? Now if we take seriously that we wrestle not

simply with flesh and blood—now those are the human kinds of things—habit patterns, physical things that go on. This is kind of a horizontal plane where we live. But there's also a vertical dimension. We wrestle not just against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities, and spiritual wickedness in high places.

And if we realize that there is a battle for the mind in the great controversy, then we begin to realize that the way we live has a great deal to do with the effect of our system by spiritual forces; whether we are going to be influenced by the satanic or the divine. The very essence of demon possession, looked at psychologically, is this. When we get to the place where we can only respond to emotional stimuli, Satan has us. For all practical purposes, we are demon possessed.

Mrs. White speaks about those who are temporarily under the influence of alcohol as also temporarily under the influence of a demon. Why is this? It's because people become very suggestible. The same thing happens under a hypnotic trance. Individuals give up their capacity for freedom and simply become reactors instead of actors. We are acted upon rather than acting upon. And I think the issue of freedom is very important here. When a person can only do what they feel like, when they have to get up each morning and what they do depends upon their particular mood, those persons have lost their freedom.

And, of course, this is where Satan can take advantage of those individuals who have dissipated their energies, who are living for the sensuous moment. Not only are their systems more readily accessible to him, just like they are to anyone else, by the way—I do not believe that what is referred to as demon possession follows any different laws than parent possession, what I would call generally a passion possession.

Individuals can lose their freedom with respect to other people. They cannot think for themselves. They are afraid of what other people think, and they feel guilty if they don't find out some else's opinion or they become very frightened lest someone not like them. And all of these kinds of fears and the guilt that's associated with it, the anxiety that might be associated with feeling socially "out of it" lead many people to give up their freedom. They become very suggestible.

We know individuals that have dissipated for a period of time are much more suggestible to emotional stimuli than are other individuals. Individuals who have dissipated greatly are much more suggestible to being hypnotized against their volition. This business that you cannot be hypnotized against your volition is a lot of nonsense. There are individuals who just by watching a hypnotic induction can go under. And this is one of the reasons the Federal Trade Commission will not allow the induction of hypnosis to be seen on television. You can see a person after they've been hypnotized. And I've seen this happen. I've seen this in demonstrations out at U.C.L.A. where as part of our class work some hypnotist was brought in and attempted to hypnotize the whole shebootel and shebang. And it's kind of an eerie influence when everyone's just kind of dropping off, and I'm sitting there pinching my toes and saying, "Nuts to you, Buster; you're not going to get me under." And he didn't. But a lot of people—you could just see them—begin to get sucked right into the emotional mood and the suggestions that are made, some more readily than others.

Well, I think there are tremendous implications here in terms of the spiritual world. And, furthermore, in terms of the great controversy, when an individual is actually living according to the principles of the Satanic government, it is by selfishness—by their own self-gratification. Satan has more access to them. There

are many times God must step aside and say—, you know, He's got to let them alone. And Satan has access to them. Mrs. White describes that if the curtain could be drawn back, we would see the struggle, the great controversy that goes on over every soul. We would be so impressed with the reality of this battle for the mind that we would be frightened to remain one moment outside of divine protection. And I don't think enough emphasis has been given to this quality of living—living by the senses, living for self-gratification to the influence of the demonic and to the influence of the divine. God cannot work through a person's system as effectively when they're self-centered. What's God going to do? say You can be selfish and I'll bless you? You can be self-centered and live happily ever after? No! Our sins separate us from God.

But it isn't just separation from God, we become exposed to the Satanic. Now you begin to see, I think, even more of the implications for disease. And I don't think that what Mrs. White says is that bizarre, after all, when we really see it in terms of the larger context. Now you see, the very nature of the controversy is going to mean that it's going to be very difficult to submit this to some kind of a scientific analysis. But I think we have converging lines of evidence to realize that if we take in this broader context of truth, then we can begin to see the lines of battle as they take place—the battle for the mind.

We are told that the last deception that Satan will force upon the world is the deception of our senses. Why? Because this is where people lose their freedom. When they can only respond to the sensate stimuli, they can only respond to how they feel when their thinking and their perceptions are completely governed by their guts. They have lost their sense of reality, they have lost their freedom. They are reactors. They can no longer create in the divine sense of the term. And

whatever gets to their nervous system that creates the strongest impotence, the strongest impulse has them. They don't have problems, problems have them.

And then I think we have here the condition that is described in Romans 1:18-32. And you ought to read that. It's a very sobering experience where individuals simply are without natural affection. And everything is turned within. And I'm ready to defend the position that Mrs. White spoke very wisely. And I think she spoke under inspiration.

Now I realize that this is very difficult to defend outside of this larger spiritual context. And many of those who are contending for the legitimacy of masturbation, of course, have an ethic and a world perception that is quite discrepant from mine. And I recognize it. But I am willing to stand by my own particular recognition that there is a larger world involved, and I want to see as best I can the issues as they take place in the great controversy.

And so then, what shall we say about the three problems that I've mentioned in terms of Ellen White's treatment of masturbation. Number one, I said it stands in contrast to heterosexual intimacies as leading to mental, moral and physical deterioration. I believe that's quite true. It is not the stimulation, per se, that is wrong. It's what's going on in the person when they're becoming self-referenced and self-centered. Now where our sexuality is in the context of loving other persons, it never gets out of hand. These individuals that will become bilious and really irritable if a person does not submit to their own particular form of sexuality—they are not loving a person, they are simply making that person accessory to their own gratification.

And I think whenever you have a system set up like this, where individuals are more concerned with their own feelings than they are with really loving another

person in terms of the things that I said, I think you have a whole network in operation that's going to lead to the deterioration of the worse in the person physically, mentally and morally.

And, secondly, to the extent that this breaks down the finer sensitivities of our nervous system, of our organic function—and when you add to this the realization that Satan is to a great extent the author of disease—and when you take such statements as, "Nine-tenths of the diseases which exist have their origin in the mind," then it is not difficult to see in terms of the electrical mediation of our nervous system, how disease becomes a natural result of individuals who have placed their own gratification at the center of their being. And I think disease is the natural result of this.

And, of course, from the studies that we have today in terms of heredity, we know that certain traits can be developed in animals as a result of specific types of inbreeding, and we can even develop bright rats versus dumb rats just by hereditary manipulation. Those who are involved in horse racing know that certain traits can be developed and bred into the horses through selective breeding. Well, the same heredity laws operate through the chemical compositions and the genes, the RNA and the DNA. And I think these predispositions can be passed on. And I think the evidence is becoming quite clear in that regard.

So I would defend that while it certainly seems out of sort to those who are certainly reacting to this kind of thing and who want to defend masturbation as a normal part of our cultural sexuality, I would say if you are open to the larger evidence, I think that we have a good basis for seeing the predisposition as being inherited and passed on and transmitted from one generation to another, even leading to degeneration of the race.

So I think that we have here, or at least I've suggested, the lines of argument that might be taken psychologically, morally, physically, and spiritually.

Now let me make a few parenthetical remarks, maybe not so parenthetical, about my concern here. I think that children growing up (I suppose most children growing up sometime or another are going to explore their own body and find out that certain sensations are more pleasurable than others) and certainly no one is contending, and I can show you that Mrs. White was not contending, either, that someone get hysterical about this. And she speaks about not being emotional on this. She does speak about the concern. And I think the whole emphasis should be on not so much that this is naughty and nasty, but on the fact that people are cheating themselves from the ongoing training that they should be getting in learning to love, learning to be God's persons. [i.e., by learning self-control].

Now it would take another study to discuss dealing with this, and that's not the point of the study this hour. I simply wanted to discuss this in terms of the ethical implications. Individuals who want to deal with these kinds of patterns, can be helped. However, I have found that in dealing with these kinds of problems there are many, many times where unless a person is willing to be open to the spiritual influences, they're not going to have much strength to deal with these kinds of problems, let alone even having the motivation to deal with them.

But I think that in Christ we can overcome every hereditary and cultivated tendency to evil. And I think what happens during a habitual pattern of masturbation is that a person is having a training, a very intense training in self-centeredness. And I think if we look at the larger world, that we're really being trained for eternity, and that this really means something.

Now if you conceive of being a Christian as being inhibited, of having no fun, of going around frozen stiff and spending most of your life taking cold showers, then of course this whole thing is going to be ludicrous. But I'm ready to contend for the greater joys of the Christian life, and I think to those who have had a chance to know a little bit about what God's life is all about, will contend that you're not going to have to go through life being terribly inhibited. There are tremendous numbers of outlets in God's universe, and I have contended before, the loves and sympathies which God has implanted in our souls shall ultimately find truest and sweetest exercise. So no one's going to ultimately lose out on anything by going God's way.

Now, I'm not suggesting a rigidity; nor do I define masturbation simply in terms of the sensation that's produced. I think that if you think this through, you'll realize that for instance in any situation where, say, a man is going to give a semen sample after he's had a vasectomy, the physician's going to ask him for this sample, and what's he supposed to do? pray? I mean, how does he secure this sample?

Now, although there are some that will contend that you cannot legitimately do this, no. I think that this is not in the context of self-reference, and many will argue, But look, so many of the things go on in terms of sexual intimacies that really represent the same kind of physiological reflex. This is true. But I'm saying that the difference is not so much in the practice, per se, but in the context in which this exists. And I think you take any sensation out of the context of love, and you have a basis set up for the deterioration of all of those things that God designed for the dignity of the human being.

And so my basic thesis is this: I'm not trying to draw circles around giving specific acts. I am saying, though, that every act must be evaluated in terms of

this larger ethic. Is it really prompted by, and an expression of love, or is it simply a matter of catering to our own self-gratification? Self-gratification is synonymous with destruction.

And so I don't think we have to be reticent about maintaining the particular posture that really, in my estimation, leads to the dignity and the worth of persons. I think those who contend for masturbation as being the modus operandi of our sexuality are really trivializing persons, depersonalizing.

Now, I've stated that my view is a minority view. But I've tried to suggest some lines of thinking that would help us to come to grips with some of these statements that have been so bothersome. I think that those who are waiting for some specific evidence might have a long wait. But I think that if we take the ancillary evidence, and do some intelligent synthesizing, I think we can come up with some fairly rational points to make in dealing with this problem.

Now just for a couple of minutes, I'll give you a chance to ask questions. I purposely have not left too much time for two reasons. One is I didn't know how many questions you'd have to ask on this. And secondly, as I say, I'm just still a little bit old-fashioned, and it's not the easiest topic to deal with. But I feel that since it has become a fairly big problem with many individuals, I am constantly being asked by ministers how to deal with this, so I don't think it's simply something that's characteristic of my practice. I think it's a little more universal than that. So if you have any questions, we'll take just a few minutes to deal with them.

Questioner:

The responsibilities of weeks of prayer at colleges and academies where, inevitably, this question is raised in personal counseling, especially with boys, and there are many difficult situations to try to help these young people, particularly with the relationship of guilt to even occasional experiences along this line, et cetera. That's just one of the areas.

I think you started—you came close to answering that more recently, but not exactly, that is in the last of your talk.

Dr. Nies:

Yea, I'm not going to.

Questioner:

Huh?

Dr. Nies:

Now, let me state this . . .

Questioner:

Now, I have a couple of other questions to ask you.

Dr. Nies:

Well, but what I would be willing for a group who would be interested, and not just simply curious, but really talk—we could spend some time—I don't want to do this in this kind of a meeting. I don't think this is the place to do it. I had intended to give special attention to this in terms of the program of sex education. I would

be very happy to discuss with those who are willing to look at this responsibly and talk about dealing with these problems, and there are many very sticky situations here which seem to lie outside of the periphery of the things that I've talked about that really don't, but they sound like it. And I would be willing to deal with those. However, I'm just trying to give you some of the general lines. I'm not trying to simply satisfy your curiosity of all of the abnormalities that can occur. So I'd like to deal with that under a different situation. But if there are those of you who would like to deal with this, I'll be willing to do that.

Questioner:

I'm sure there would be some. Here's a general one. In your opinion, does the Bible speak to this at all? Some of us who think we've studied the Bible find it speaking to so many specific sexual sins, going into details that are almost unmentionable in the Old Testament, particularly, defining sexual sin, incest, and even with animals, et cetera, et cetera—condemning all those, and yet apparently masturbation never mentioned from start to finish.

Dr. Nies:

That's correct. It's not dealt with directly. And those of you who are looking for proof texts to establish something are going to be disappointed.

Questioner:

Is there any allusion to it in your opinion?

Dr. Nies:

O well, I mean I think that the whole trend of what Scripture is about, you can within that context—see this whole matter of ethics—you're not going to really solve things by bombing people with key texts.

Questioner:

I'm not wishing for that.

Dr. Nies:

Ok. I do not think you can say, Now, here's a text that says Thou shalt not masturbate. I know of no such. I'm simply—in the matter of really coming to grips with ethical problems, those individuals who are very rigid and have to have some crisp statement that they use as authority, are—they're just really not equipped to handle ethical problems. We just don't have that in Scripture.

Questioner:

I just wondered why you thought the Bible didn't deal with it in the broader context that it does with other sexual sins.

Dr. Nies:

Well, I can make a list of all kinds of things that the Bible does not directly deal with. The Bible was not given to cover every situation that could arise in the matter of sin. You see, there's only one basic sin. And that, the Bible deals with, and gives numerous examples of people in different generations who sinned. But, you know, how many—there's no end of the different kinds of sins that you can

have. Self-centeredness can be manifested in fifty billion ways. Well, I mean, what are you going to have? We could fill up this whole room with specifics. And I don't think God wants us to have a norm of which we have to have a specific statement—You can't do this. I think God wants us to understand the basic principles, and be able to apply these.

Questioner:

Uh, man does—

Dr. Nies:

Well, now I think—you have some good points. Let me just give one moment for someone else if they have another question in just a moment. Any other questions?

Ok. We're already about three minutes over, so you get a group together, and we'll discuss this. Shall we stand for prayer?

END OF TAPE