

Institute of Christian Teaching
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The Seat of Authority: Reason
and Revelation in Seventh-
day Adventist Education

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1. Introduction

In the course of this seminar we have often touched upon the question of the relative roles of reason and revelation in the quest for truth. This is of course a fundamental question which must be addressed by all Christian educators. The very fact that we call ourselves 'Christian' implies that we accept, in one form or another, the notion that God has in some way revealed himself to human kind. As teachers, however, we accept also the idea that human reason has a part to play in the process of learning. Truth does not come in raw indigestible lumps: human beings are able to think, to exercise their rational minds and to understand. What, then, are the relative roles of reason and revelation in the overall quest for truth?

2. Survey of three Main Views

The question of the interaction between reason and revelation is by no means a new one. Indeed this question has been the subject of much debate throughout the history of philosophical theology. The question characterizes the works of such intellectual giants of as Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109) Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225/6-1274) and Karl Barth (1886-1968).

The answers given to the question of how reason and revelation are related have been several. Anselm's famous dictum credo ut intellegam (I believe in order that I may understand), is well known. For this theologian reason was subordinate, but not contradictory, to revelation. Faith comes first, learning second. Reason can be used to explain truths already known through revelation. Thomas Aquinas, whose theological-philosophical system is still that of the Roman Catholic Church, took a similar view to Anselm, but was much more positive regarding the powers of reason. Indeed in his work the Summa Contra Gentiles (1259-64) Aquinas is concerned to convince by reasoned argument a non believing reader of the central truths of the Christian faith. For St. Thomas,

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reason and revelation go hand in hand. Revelation is not a sine qua non of religious knowledge and reason can help very significantly in the quest for truth. The much more contemporary Karl Barth (1886-1968), on the other hand, elevated revelation to a position of high superiority over reason; for this thinker what God has revealed may well contradict what we know by reason, but this is because our powers of reason are fallible. Reason is subject to revelation; what counts is the Word of God, not the thoughts of man.

3. Reason and Revelation in Seventh-Day Adventist Education

With these preliminary remarks in mind let us now turn to look at the relative roles of reason and revelation in the Adventist educational philosophy. The question is by no means an idle one, for it involves the fundamental epistemological question of 'how do I know?' It involves also the question of the status of the Bible in our educational system and that of the role of Ellen White in the quest for the establishment of truth. We must look also at the difficult problem of what we are to do should reason and revelation ever be seen to be in conflict. How, then, might we as Adventist educators verbalize our conviction that God has spoken directly to man while at the same time maintaining and uplifting the value of human rationality?

A. The Bible as the Revelation of God

Fundamental to the Christian world view is the belief that the Bible is the revelation of God. Now to be sure what Christians mean when they make this claim is not always the same thing, but in general all are agreed that it is the Bible that provides humankind with knowledge about God and his dealings with the world. So for example we read in the Bible of the origins of humankind, their fall, redemption and destiny. God reveals things about himself: the commandments reveal something of his character, and the writings of Paul unpack the significance of the events in the

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history of salvation. Christians accept the Bible as God's self disclosure.

Adventists belong to the conservative wing of biblical interpretation, and despite the debate within Adventism as to which precise method of interpretation should be adopted, in general Adventists agree that the Bible is God's unchanging truth. Adventists may disagree on what the Bible means, but they are in agreement as to what the Bible is. The Bible does not simply record other people's encounters with God, though this is a part of it. The Bible is not simply a history book intertwined inextricably with the culture(s) in which it was written. As conservative Christians Adventists accept that the Bible is the direct, and not the second hand revelation of God. They accept that the Bible is able to reach across the gulf which separates our culture from the culture of ancient Israel or that of first century Palestine. In the Adventist view, then, the Bible is not simply another dusty ancient history book; it is the living word of God to man and the depository of revealed truth.¹

This very conservative understanding of the Bible has many important consequences. The most important in the context of the present discussion is that we as Adventists must recognize that our view of scripture leads us to place the Bible at the top of the list of epistemological authorities. The revelation of God, as recorded in the Bible, is true. In the Adventist view, what the Bible contains is not open to question, for to question the integrity of the Bible is to question the integrity of God himself.

¹The first fundamental belief states that 'The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history'.

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B. The Adventist view of Man and the Fall

If Adventists are positive in their view of scripture, they are scarcely less so in their view of man. Indeed, the very fact that we as a Church can seriously raise the possibility that it is possible for a believer to live without sin suggests that we are not as negative in our view of the nature of man as are many protestant denominations.

In the Adventist view man is in the image of God and this image was not lost at the fall. The image may have faded somewhat, but it was not lost.² Adventist theology emphasizes also the freedom of man. The great controversy is a real theme in Adventist theology, but in this controversy man is more than simply a pawn who is shoved and pushed around by the players. Man has real choices to make and can appreciate spiritual things; man can do good and is not totally enslaved by sin. Luther said that the human will, both before and after conversion, was like a donkey going wherever the rider directs. If the devil is the rider it is ridden to death and destruction; if God is the rider it is ridden to justification and eternal life. The donkey cannot choose its own rider or make a move towards either of them. The beast is pure passivity under the complete control of external forces.³ In Luther's view Man is a bad tree and can thus produce only bad fruit

²So for example in fundamental belief number 78 we read 'When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death'; 'to mar' does not mean 'to lose'. See further Seventh-day Adventists Believe... p. 98.

³'Thus the human will is placed between the two [God and Satan] like a beast of burden. if God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills . . . If Satan rides it, it wills and goes where Satan wills; nor can it choose to run to either of the two riders or to seek him out, but the riders themselves contend for possession and control of it'. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman, eds., Luther's Works, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 33:65-66.

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and this includes the fruit of intellectual inquiry;⁴ this is not the view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Rather in the Seventh-day Adventist view man is a free, rational, thinking, decision-making individual.

C. Rationality as a Human-Divine Attribute

This very positive view of the nature of man (at least in the context of protestant Christian circles) which is taken by the Adventist Church leads to an emphasis by Adventists upon man's intellectual capabilities. In the Adventist world view, man is capable of rational thought and that rational thought can lead him to truth. Adventists are not mystics declaring all to be a divine mystery; nor are they of the view that man's rational capabilities were so affected by the fall that they can lead now only to error. Adventists have not given up on human knowledge, and it is no coincidence that Adventists are at the cutting edge in many of the areas of human inquiry. It is fundamental to the Adventist theological framework, and consequently to its educational philosophy, that man is able to think rationally and accurately about the world in which he lives. This capability extends even to the realm of truth about God. Few denominations stress the extra-biblical revelation of God in nature as much as the Adventist Church. Indeed, we often give the idea that God can be proven by the cosmological (watch-maker) argument.⁵ It is we as Adventists who stress that there will be many in heaven that have never heard

⁴Ibid., 31:9.

⁵Mrs White's comment is typical of many other Adventist writers. She writes 'The things of nature that we now behold give us but a faint perception of Eden's glory. Sin has marred earth's beauty; on all things may be seen traces of the evil work. Nature testifies that One infinite in power, great in goodness, mercy and love, created the earth, and filled it with life and gladness. Even in their blighted state, all things reveal the handiwork of the great Master Artists. Wherever we turn, we may hear the voice of God, and see evidences of His goodness'. (Ministry of Healing p. 441).

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the name of Jesus, and we are very happy to use clichés like 'that person lived up the light that he had'. We feel comfortable with the idea that a person could know something about God even without the Bible.

The Bible, then, for the Adventist is not the only way to know God. Indeed the Bible is the most complete revelation, but it is not the only way in which God has disclosed himself to man. Man's own mind is capable of reaching out at catching at least a very faint glimpse of God.

Adventists are not without biblical foundations for their belief that the Bible is not the only channel through which God has revealed himself. Paul states clearly and unequivocally that all human beings know that God exists, that he is good and that he requires certain moral standards. This is the crux of his argument in Romans 1-3. All are guilty, Jews and Gentiles alike, for all knew God's character and all have sinned against him. There is in Paul, then, clear evidence for a natural revelation.⁶

D. Implications of Biblical Conservatism and Positive Anthropology

What we have said above leads us to one important conclusion: we are not able to say, as we so often do, that 'Man is finite, God is infinite and man cannot therefore hope to understand God'. Now of course sometimes this statement is necessary and we must learn how to deal with conflicts of faith and reason. We must know our limitations and be prepared to acknowledge that God is ultimately greater than we. However, as a basic educational philosophy the view that man cannot understand God simply will not do. If we really do believe the 'God is infinite, I am finite and never shall

⁶In Rom 1-3 Paul makes the argument that all are guilty before God. The counter argument 'but we had no scriptures', for Paul, does not wash since 'what can be known about God is plain to them [the scriptureless Gentiles], because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made' (Romans 1:19, 20).

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the twain meet' line, then the logical thing to do is close down our schools and colleges and retreat into a hermit-like existence and seek God through subjective means. However, as Adventists we accept that God has revealed himself and that man is able to understand that revelation. To say with Paul that we see now only dimly (1 Cor 13:12) is not to say that we do not see at all.

E. The Integration of Reason and Revelation

We come now to the main question addressed in this paper: how can reason and revelation be integrated by the Seventh-day Adventist teacher? From what we have said it will be obvious that we are not of the Thomist school of thought. Reason and revelation and not co-equal. By reason we may know some things about God, but what we can know is very limited. When a person considers the world he may come to the conclusion that someone created it, but it is doubtful that he could come up with a full-blown doctrine of creation or the Sabbath as a memorial to it. An individual may realize the fact that this world is not as it ought to be, but he will not know why or what is the solution to the problem.

Reason, then, is of limited use in establishing divine truths. It can take us so far, but no further. Reason may provide us with a few crumbs, but it is only in the Bible that we are offered the full menu. However, where reason surely comes into its own is in the explanation and application of revealed truths (as Anselm argued). In fact the Christian is rather like a schoolboy who has been given the answer book to all the math problems set for homework. He has the answers for they have come to him through revelation. The Christian knows the answers to life's fundamental questions 'who am I? What is reality? Where am I going?' Now he must try to explain those truths to give some intellectual content to his faith. After all, man is both spiritual and mental, and if his spiritual side is satisfied by faith accepted formulas, his mental faculties will need a different kind of food. The Adventist teacher must not be intellectual lazy or adopt a simplistic 'God

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said it, I believe it, that settles it' approach to Christianity. Rather he should advocate the 'God said it, I believe it, now I will try my best to make sense of it' approach. The same God who gave man the ability to believe gave him the ability to think, and to fail to think is no less harmful to the Christian life than a failure to believe.

Reason and revelation, then, do go hand in hand, but it is revelation rather than reason that assumes the lead. Revelation guides reason and revelation is the judge of reason. This is a very basic point which springs naturally from the Adventist understanding of scripture, revelation and inspiration. In the Bible God has provided a filter through which human knowledge can be strained. What comes out the bottom is revelation informed knowledge; what remains on the top is the debris of human error. All teachers need to know where their ultimate of epistemological authority lies. This needs to be communicated to the student so that the student knows on what basis the teacher judges truth.

F. The Role of Ellen G. White

Since we are dealing with Adventism we must go on to ask one more question, and this is perhaps the most difficult: what is the role of the writings of Ellen White in establishing religious truth? The Seventh-day Adventist Church has accepted the writings of Ellen White as being inspired and have traditionally looked to her for guidance and knowledge. It is however doubtless true to say that within Adventism there is a wide diversity of opinion concerning the nature of Ellen White's writings and their relationship to the scriptures. This diversity of opinion ranges from 'Spirit of Prophecy fundamentalism' to much more liberal understanding of Ellen White's writings. Indeed, though the persons themselves would probably stop short of saying it, the natural result of some Adventists' understanding of the Spirit of Prophecy would be to afford these writings complete equality with the Bible itself. There is no logical or qualitative difference

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between the inspiration which came to Ellen White and that which came to the apostle John. Others, however, prefer to see Ellen White's writings not as the Bible volume 2, but as being in some way qualitatively different. Such persons would no doubt quote the passage by Ellen White herself to the effect that she was a lesser light bringing men to the greater light.⁷ Still others emphasize the extent to which Ellen White was a product of her time and a messenger to it. How then are we as Seventh-day Adventist teachers to view the writings of Ellen White? And how are we to use her in the promotion of learning in our classroom?

These are very difficult questions and they cannot be answered unless we first conceptualize our own understanding of the relationship between Ellen White and the scriptures. In short, where are we going to place Ellen White in the hierarchy of epistemological authorities?

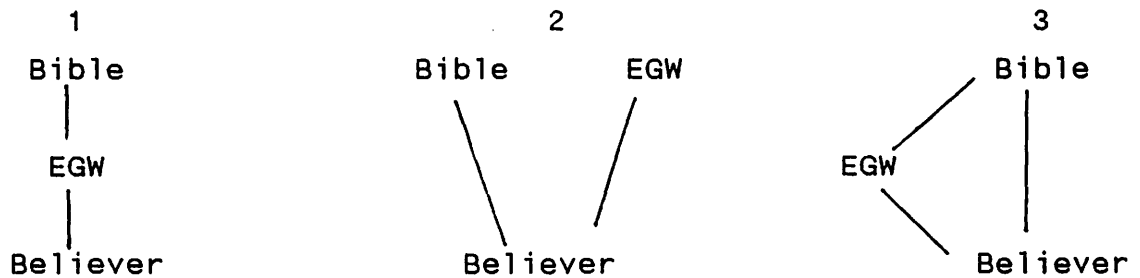
The situation faced by the Adventist in this area is in fact very similar to that faced by the Roman Catholic, and the Catholic model may help us to bring our own thoughts into focus. The Catholic believes that the Bible is the revelation of God, but into this understanding he must integrate his belief that God also reveals himself through the Church. For the Catholic the relationship between the Bible and the Church is simple: the Bible is the revelation of God and the Church is the inspired interpreter of the text. Indeed, part of the authority of the Church lies in its unique ability to interpret the sacred text. This not the only reason for the Church's authority, but it is one major contributing factor.

Is this our understanding of Ellen White? Is she the Seventh-day Adventist's pope? This question has been bluntly put and may stir up some emotions, but we as Seventh-day Adventist educators do need to think seriously about it. How do we view the relationship between the Bible and Ellen White?

⁷Colporteur Ministry p. 12.

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We do not have time here to discuss the various views that have been advanced. Rather let us simply suggest a model that may be of some value. Let us illustrate this with three diagrams.



In the first diagram the suggestion is that Ellen White is only way to a complete understanding of scripture. Indeed, according to this view the only way to approach scripture is through the writings of Ellen White, for unless we have not only inspired text but inspired commentary upon that text we will go astray in our thinking.

In the second diagram the suggestion is that Ellen White is not really a commentator on the text so much as a revealer of new light. Ellen White and the Bible together make up the sum of God's revelation to humankind. One can draw truth from the Bible or from Ellen White and although the two obviously interact and agree, there is no necessary connection between them. The relationship between Ellen White and the Bible, according to this view, is the same as the relationship between the gospel of Mark and the book of Romans. They share a great deal and agree on fundamental points, but each has its own distinctive part to play in the total process of God's self disclosure.

In the third diagram it is plain that Ellen White is seen as a (not 'only') way to scripture, but not on a level with it. Scripture is first and the authority of Ellen White rests upon her fidelity to scripture. Ellen White is a 'lesser light' and in fact the light which she has is only a reflection of the true light. Perhaps a parallel with Hebrews might reinforce the point, for what we get in Hebrews is not is much new knowledge as an explanation

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and midrashic amplification of truth already found, though not understood, in the Old Testament. So too Ellen White explains the Bible and what she says must be judged by it. Now of course Ellen White has a great deal to say especially in the areas of health and eschatology which is not spelt out specifically in the Bible, but still we must use the Bible to see if what she says makes sense. Ellen White's authority rests upon the authority of the Bible; it is only as she explains and interprets the principles laid out in scripture that she can be looked to for guidance.

In the recent publication by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the position that Ellen White is a guide to scripture and not to be put on a level with it is clearly emphasised.⁸ According to this publication the Bible is the supreme standard and all doctrines must be taken from the Bible and not from the writings of Ellen White. Ellen White is a guide to the Bible; she is a helper who assists the seeker in his quest for truth. Whatever Ellen White says must be subjected to the test of scripture. Very similar statements were made in 1981 in the Adventist Review.⁹ Here we read that 'Mrs White's writings are not an addition to the Bible, nor are they to take the place of the Bible'.¹⁰ And further that 'the canonical Scriptures constitute the norm by which all other prophetic messages are to be tested'.¹¹ Now these sort of statements have been made before and since in the Seventh-day Adventist church, but on practical level they have scarcely sunk in.

⁸Seventh-day Adventists Believe... pp. 227-228.

⁹The Adventist Review 158, 31(1981):18-19.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 19.

¹¹Ibid

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This is of course the very criticism made of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by Anthony Hoekema.¹² According to Hoekema the Seventh-day Adventist Church confesses one thing, but in fact believes another. Thus while the official Adventist position is that doctrines are not drawn from Ellen White and that Ellen White is in fact a little lower than scripture, in reality the Adventist places Ellen White on a level with scripture and does use her writings as a source of revelation. Especially, Hoekema argues, Seventh-day Adventists use Ellen White to establish interpretations of a biblical text which would otherwise be impossible to arrive at.

It must be said that Hoekema has touched Adventism on a raw nerve. Adventists do, on the whole, treat the writings of Ellen White in much the same way as scripture. What the church does and what it says are in a state of tension. However, whatever the weaknesses of its practice, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a right to be judged according to its theory. The official adventist position is that the writings of Ellen White are not on an equal level with scripture and that in fact the scriptures 'retain authority even over the gifts that come through the Holy Spirit, including guidance through the gift of prophecy'.¹³ What is more according to the statement of faith on the issue the Bible contains all the knowledge necessary for man's salvation.¹⁴ Thus it ought to be possible, in theory at least, to teach even biblical subjects without Ellen White. Some might argue that to leave out Ellen White is to miss an important dimension in Adventist spirituality; this may well be so, but the basic content of the Seventh-day Adventist faith ought to be demonstrable from the Bible

¹²Anthony A. Hoekema, The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism (Grand Rapids, Michigan; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 100-108.

¹³Seventh-day Adventists Believe... p. 13.

¹⁴Fundamental Belief number 1.

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and the Bible only. We will draw out some of the implications this has for the work of Adventist teachers below.

4. Implications for Teachers.

Let us now try to draw some practical lessons from what we have said and make it applicable to the classroom situation. There are four main points that need to be made.

A. The Role of Revelation

The first point to be noted is that the Christian teacher must be fully aware of where he places the seat of epistemological authority. Let us not fool ourselves; conflicts between faith and learning do arise, and unless we have gone through the process of deciding whether it is reason or revelation which is going to be allowed the deciding vote we will be at a loss as to what to do. This is a point we need to make clear to our students. The view that the scriptures are a divine and therefore true revelation of God is so fundamental to Christianity in general and Seventh-day Adventism in particular that it cannot be allowed to slip from view. We must bring this basic belief up to a high level of consciousness and let it be known that we accept the authority of someone else (God) in preference to what we can workout for ourselves. The Adventist educator must make his position absolutely clear to students and fellow educators alike. Of course, most often there will not be a conflict, the Bible says little about the specifics of computer technology or medicine, but where conflict does arise we must be clear as to why we listen to the voice of revelation rather than to that of reason.

B. The Role of Reason

This is not to say that reason is of no use in our schools. Indeed, if this were so the whole process of education would be a waste of time. As Seventh-day Adventists we accept the view that man does have reasoning powers and although those powers may have

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been corroded by the fall they have not disappeared altogether. As we have seen, Paul himself says that God has revealed himself to all, and even those who do not have written scripture can know something about God; Anselm too argued that one could prove that God exists by logical argument (the ontological argument being Anselm's own favorite), and yet both Paul and Anselm were unequivocal in their assertion that faith is the ground of all knowledge. In the classroom, then, we will want to make this clear to the students. We accept the Bible as the revelation of God, but we do not take this as an excuse for slovenliness. Rather we will pursue knowledge and understanding with as much vigour and determination as any non believer for it is our firm conviction that man has the ability to think rationally and indeed the duty to do so.

C. The Role of Ellen G. White

We come now to the difficult question of the role of Ellen White in the classroom. We have seen that this is one area where the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to conduct more study. The theory runs that Ellen White is not to be considered on a level with scripture, but the practice is that her writings are treated as such.

The theory should be placed before the students clearly. They should be allowed to judge Mrs White for themselves and feel free to question and criticise what she has said. At the end of the day the teacher, especially the Bible teacher, should be capable of leaving Mrs White's comments out altogether and still be able to teach the same doctrine. Mrs White should be treated as she saw herself, as an aid to scripture, and not as scripture itself.

When it comes to eschatology and health especially this approach will be difficult. Much of the detail that we have concerning last day events is drawn from the writings of Ellen White. However, in such circumstances a clear division should be made and the students should be told that this part of the class

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is based upon scripture alone, this part upon scripture and Mrs White. The former is not open to question, the latter is.

This is not to say that we should relegate the writings of Ellen White to the class of 'other authors'. The students should know that the teacher personally accepts that God was at work in the ministry of Ellen White in a very direct way. The teacher does accept that the writings of Mrs White were inspired. However, the students should also know that the writings of Ellen White are not scripture and that Seventh-day Adventism is based ultimately upon the Bible. Adventism is possible without Ellen White, although some might judge that Adventism without Ellen White would be of a somewhat impoverished kind.

D. Conflicts: The Integration of Faith and Ignorance

Points one, two and three lead us onto our fourth point. We have said that as Seventh-day Adventist teachers we accept the authority of the Bible and think of it as the final authority. We will of course still employ reason in the building of our total world view, but at the end of the day it is revelation which is the guiding principle of our epistemological system. However, an obvious question arises, and that is what if reason and revelation should conflict? What should we do in these situations?

Conflicts between reason and revelation come in two kinds. First there are conflicts that arise as a result of imperfect knowledge: a revealed truth seems to be irrational, but this is only because we do not as yet have the full picture before us. All the data is not yet in and one day the thing will become plain. As Paul says 'Now I understand in part, then I shall understand fully' (1 Cor 13:12). Perhaps one possible example of this is the story of creation. Now in all honesty we must confess that we still have difficulties fitting some of the things we think we know into the creationist framework. How, for example, is it possible for all those stalactites and stalagmites to have formed if the earth is only about 6,000 years old? Scientists tell us that on

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the basis of their observations they have calculated that these things take millions of years to form, how then can the world have existed for only 6,000? Or again, when fossils of living organisms are found and are dated to millions of years BC, how is this possible given the biblical view on the age of the earth? However, this sort of problem is one to which we can imagine having an answer one day. The question to be asked when faced with this sort of problem is 'how is it possible' and not 'is it possible'. We believe that it is possible, but we do not know how. In this situation the Christian teacher might advise his student to have faith in the word of God and await the answer to the apparent problem. In other words we deal with the apparent inconsistency by denying that any such inconsistency in fact exists. Reason and revelation are not in conflict, they only appear to be.

Much more serious are the kinds of anomalies and inconsistencies that involve a serious irrationality to which human reason has a natural aversion. For example the doctrine of the Trinity: the Bible says that God is one, but it also says that there are three individuals all fully God and all distinct from each other. Now this is a problem. Reason tells us that $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$; but scripture tells us that this is not a hard and fast rule, for on one occasion at least $1 + 1 + 1 = 1$. Despite the countless gallons of ink spent in discussing it, it appears to be impossible to see a way around this problem. What is more the problem seems destined never to be solved. In these situations the Christian teacher will need be clear regarding his position. He must acknowledge that his reason has let him down. His reason has been weighed in balances of scripture and found to be wanting. However, such a judgement is only possible if the teacher has already thought through the question of where he places the seat of epistemological authority and can bring this guiding principle to bear at this point.

This is not an excuse for intellectual suicide. What we are talking about here is very much a measure of last resort. However,

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when all other avenues have been explored and have been found to be blind we must be able to swallow our intellectual pride, abandon our rationality and submit to the revelation of God. God is a revealed God and he is a God of order; however in the last analysis God is greater than we and there are many things about him that we do not know and probably never will. Christianity is not wholly rational and it cannot be tied up in neat packages and delivered to non believers. Paul of course says as much in 1 Cor 1. This inability to solve all difficulties is a weakness of all world views whether religious or otherwise.

The fact that Christianity is in part non-rational is one of the most difficult things for a twentieth century Christian teacher to accept and it is even more difficult for him to communicate to students. At this level Christianity is very much a religion of faith and perhaps the most important thing we can do in the classroom when faced with this situation is show to our students that we know our religion is faith based and that we are not ashamed of it. As one person has said 'I will not allow those things I do not know about God detract from the things that I do know'.

In concluding let us offer a suggestion as to what an Adventist statement on the relationship between reason and revelation might look like. Perhaps it would run something like this

Seventh-day Adventists acknowledge the fact that God has chosen to reveal himself to man. It is God's revelation, in all its forms, that provides mankind with an infallible guide to truth. Seventh-day Adventists also affirm that man has the capability of rational thought and emphasize that it is man's duty to exercise this God-given ability in the quest for truth. Seventh-day Adventists are committed to achieving a faith-based but rationally supported understanding of truth in all areas of human inquiry.