

Institute for Christian Teaching
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**HEAVENLY HEURISTIC:
LESSONS FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
FROM THE HEBREW TABERNACLE**

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Introduction

In this paper I will explain the reasons why I see the Hebrew tabernacle to be a valuable object of study and application for Christian educators of the 21st century. In the introduction, I will define the term “heavenly heuristic,” review how I came to my own study of the topic, and briefly describe how I currently use a three dimensional tabernacle with associated discussion questions in my philosophy of education classes on the graduate and undergraduate level at Walla Walla College.

In the next subsection of my paper, I describe the advance organizer I give my students at the beginning of the course to assist them in analyzing the Hebrew tabernacle in a format that compares it with seven other philosophies that have impacted current Western educational practices. This organizer in a tentatively complete form can be found in Appendix A. The choice of six of those other philosophies was based on George Knight’s third edition of *Philosophy & Education*, one of our mandatory course texts. Here I thankfully acknowledge the debt I owe to his scholarly work. I have used his text as a resource since the time when I purchased an earlier edition of it myself to guide my way through a frustrating master’s level philosophy class taught by a declared existentialist at a secular university.

In the third subsection of the paper, seven paragraphs give the beginning and ending of an important discourse that I call “the philosophy of the ancient Hebrews expressed in narrative form.” The rest of the essay is included in this paper as Appendix B. This narrative serves a triple purpose. For one, those listeners and readers who learn best by inductive processes will profit from synthesizing details from this more wholistic view of the Hebrew philosophy, using with it the advance organizer previously introduced to process the text in their own manner. For another reason, it serves to give a macro-view of the ancient Hebrew tabernacle services, with which some readers will be less familiar than others. Those who prefer a more deductive approach may find that the portions of the paper from pages 6 through 10 will be more suitable for their style of processing information, along with, of course, the comparative framework itself (Appendix A). My third reason for utilizing this story-like view of the philosophy behind the tabernacle services is that such a way best describes how I present the visual to my students. I speak from my own experiences as a sinner in need of the blood of Jesus. I break my large classes up into small groups to do this, and to each group I give a personalized view that varies depending on the needs of the students before me. It is narrative rather than expository in nature at that point. I follow this up with a handout asking questions about important philosophical issues and their educational applications.

In the fourth, fifth, and sixth subsections of this paper, I analyze the Hebrew philosophy of education in terms of its metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. Intermingled with that are my applications to general Christian education. I conclude the paper with applications to Adventist teaching, including my own.

Before going further, I will define the lowest-frequency word in the title of this paper. “Heuristic” is a noun that conveys the notion of a device that gives a framework for assisting the learning process in some visual, language-based, or sensory manner; thus, a “heavenly heuristic” could be described as an eminently suitable learning device that has its origin in heaven.

As for my own interest in this topic, some twenty years ago I was particularly struck by the Bible verse in Psalm 77:13, “Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary” Although I had read these words many times before, they assumed a new importance as I began focusing

on the words “Your way.” At that time, I began a more specific study of the sanctuary to enlarge my understanding of God’s way, not for intellectual curiosity, but because of some difficult circumstances in my life where I had done things my own way and was appalled at the results. About this same time, Richard Post, a Bible scholar, philosopher, and teacher of my older son’s Sabbath School, presented from his own thorough study an excellent overview of some of the deeper meanings of the sanctuary/tabernacle service, using lovely visuals to enhance the understanding of the young people.

Realizing the value of the visual layout for my own understanding, I resolved to make a three-dimensional model, using wood, copper tubing, fabric, gold leaf, paint, foam, and other materials. With the enthusiastic help of several successive teams of young children, I did complete such a model over a period of years, including a “high priest” dressed in the appropriate clothing.

This visual, or, as I term it, education’s earliest and most detailed visual aid, holds the attention of all ages in the classroom, from small children to adults. The words I use to describe the services of the tabernacle change, of course, to match the linguistic level of the observer. For my philosophy of education classes that I teach at Walla Walla College, I bring the students to the room where the ten-foot model of the tabernacle is set up for them to investigate the Hebrew philosophy of education as the first of eight major philosophies that have impacted current Western education. As my students and I look at each piece of furniture in turn, moving the miniature high priest through the process, I tell the story of my redemption. Then the students are given a handout with such questions as these: “Based on the tabernacle services, what would be the Hebrew view of the moral status of humanity? What does this object lesson have to say about the subjectivity or objectivity of knowledge? What does it have to say about sources of knowledge and how their truth is validated? What are the standards of beauty and goodness?”

Unfortunately, at that point in the quarter, most of the students are new enough to these types of questions that they find it difficult to formulate their own answers. Even though they gradually learn to articulate their assumptions with regard to subsequent philosophies, I have not scheduled the time to revisit the God-inspired visual in such a way as to bring home important lessons to spiritually inexperienced students. Another serious lack is that I have not followed through with answers to questions about what an educational system based on the Hebrew philosophy would be like—how it would form the teacher’s thoughts and behaviors, the responses of the pupils, the disciplinary structure, and the social function of the school in the community. I know of no current philosophy textbook that treats the tabernacle insights as a philosophical imprint upon Western educational practices, although Dr. George Knight mentions it in one meaningful paragraph near the end of his excellent introductory textbook on the interrelationships of philosophy and education;¹ Willard, in his “foreword” to Poe’s book *Christianity in the Academy*, uses “Jerusalem” and “Athens” as symbols of diametrically opposed ways of dealing with reality;² and Reinhold Niebuhr, in his thoughtful essay “The Two Sources of Western Culture,” takes as his thesis statement that “Western culture is unique in human history in that it draws upon two different sources for its conceptions of meaning, the Hebraic and the Hellenic.”³

Comparative framework as advance organizer (see Appendix A)

I have developed an advance organizer that I call it a “comparative framework” to aid my students in comparing insights about the major philosophies that have impacted Western

education. Only the headings and the first two columns on the left are filled in when the students receive it at the beginning of the quarter. I am, of course, careful to let them know that the field of philosophy is by no means as tidy as this chart would lead one to suppose. They understand that the headings are question prompts for them to think through each philosophy and to pencil in brief notes to aid them in class discussions after reading the assigned texts and processing my Power Point lectures and individualized visual aids. They do not have to come up with the same responses that I have, but they do have to be able to defend their written answers in either whole-class or small-group discussions.

Beginning our comparative framework with the major Greek philosophers, as most philosophy texts do, has proven to be unsatisfactory in terms of properly informing our class debates early in the course. When we add information to the framework, if we start with Socrates and Plato and then go on to Aristotle and successive philosophies, students who are immature or inexperienced do not have a proper basis for comparison. They have no lofty standard by which to judge those philosophies that to the mature Christian mind appear hedonistic, rationalistic, inconsistent, and Godless. Such vulnerable students have a tendency to argue for or even adopt questionable aspects of some of the more seductive, esoteric, or well-known philosophical beliefs.

On the other extreme, to start our study with the Adventist philosophy, as I did earlier in my university teaching, besides being anachronistic when the rest of the philosophies are presented in chronological order, seems to cause a significant number of students (both non-Adventists and those from Adventist backgrounds who seem uncomfortable with any level of prescriptive lifestyles and beliefs when they come to our college) to close their minds against further instruction because they say that I am, by showing my own bias, not allowing them to examine the evidence and freely choose. Another argument against starting with the Adventist philosophy is that it is not considered by any standard to have had a significant impact on Western educational practices. For these reasons, but mostly because of the promptings of the Holy Spirit, I have for some time been impressed that I must present the questions and answers resulting from my comparative study of the Hebrew philosophy of education as expressed through the visual of the tabernacle, and that I must systematically and strategically revisit these concepts throughout the quarter so that students can see the historical sweep of the subject from beginning to the present time. They can then make comparisons and contrasts with that standard and judge for themselves regarding the efficacy of the Adventist philosophy of education as we develop that concept throughout the quarter.

Thus, the newest version of my advance organizer begins with the Hebrew philosophy of education. Together we work through the metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology of the Hebrew philosophy and link it to educational practices. By the end of the quarter, students can see what Seventh-day Adventist education should look like and act like in the 21st century. Since a heuristic is essentially a device for facilitating learning, the tabernacle, built from God's own blueprints, surely is pre-eminently qualified for the lofty purpose of facilitating an increase in knowledge about salvation.

The philosophy of the ancient Hebrews expressed in narrative form

In this section I will give just the setting and the conclusion for the narrative in order to conserve space for the theoretical discussions and practical applications. The setting is dealt with in four paragraphs, followed by the three paragraphs that conclude this original story

based upon my reading and rereading of the Bible and associated study aids over a period of years. The rest of the narrative can be found in Appendix B.

1) *The introduction.* I would like for you to come with me through space and time to a desert region in the south of the Sinai Peninsula. The time is one thousand four hundred years before the birth of Jesus. Here, in the midst of rugged mountains, there is a most amazing tent city set up in perfect order such as Pathfinders constantly strive to emulate on their camping trips. This is all the more surprising because there are two million people here, counting everyone from the babies on up. To contrast, on a division-wide Pathfinder camporee in the mountains of Colorado in 1985, there were some 20,000 campers, and we thought that was a lot of tents! This camp in the Sinai, one hundred times larger, boggles the mind! That Pathfinder camp got a bit smelly at times when the many portable toilets clogged or leaned over too far to be safely used, but this camp in the Sinai has a sweet fragrance, faintly like incense and something else tantalizingly elusive.

In the center of the camp is an object that immediately takes our attention, both from its sheer beauty and from the fact that there is a positively radiant light streaming from some source within the back third of the tent. Remember, we are now 1400 years before the time of Jesus and nearly 3300 years before Edison invented the light bulb. This is a light that no earthly bulb could ever emit. It is warm and vibrant—it draws not only the eye, but it also immediately creates in the mind many questions that tumble one over the other. We want to go closer and find out more.

There is one more striking aspect about this camp. Even though it is huge and there are many people, along with many animals in temporary pens farther back, it is intensely quiet here. There is a sense of peace such as we busy moderns at first cannot identify—we just know that the buzzing in our ears, our bodies, and our minds has stopped. Although people are going about the business of caring for animals, preparing food, cleaning, weaving, carving, and so forth, no one is rushing anywhere. Although there is laughter and singing and the occasional bleating of a lamb, there is no cacophony of sound such as a modern city nearly the size of Accra would produce.

Perhaps here we can have the time and the resources to answer questions that have been bothering us for some time, such as who we are, why we are here on this whirling ball of mud that is flying through space at such a dizzying speed, why so many bad things are happening in this world, and exactly where we are going.⁴

2) *The concluding three paragraphs.* As we 21st-century time travelers move away from this tent city, we look down at its heart, the tabernacle, and notice through tears that Jesus is represented by every detail. In the Most Holy Place, He is the Shekinah glory, He is the Mercy seat, and He is the embodiment of the Law. He is the Door that has been opened and no man can shut.⁵

Inside the Holy Place, He is the Bread of Life, He is the Light of the world, and He is not only the bearer of our prayers to God the Father, but He is, in His perfect righteousness and intercessory function, the Antitype of the fragrant incense itself.⁶ In the courtyard, He is both the Water of Life and the sacrificial Lamb on the altar. It is His blood that is borne into the tabernacle to await the Day of Atonement. It is abundantly clear that the study of the tabernacle is, indeed, a means of knowing His way, as the Bible promises.

Further out yet, we see with astonishment that the arrangement of the various furnishings is in the form of a cross. The altar of burnt offerings out in the courtyard is where the feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross; the laver, filled with bloody water, is in the position

where the blood and water flowed from His pierced side; in the Holy Place the Bread of Life is there to eat/read in his outstretched right hand; Light for all the world to see is there in His other hand; the altar of incense is where the mouth, the Word of God Himself, spoke loving, true, powerful, salvific words; in the Most Holy Place, both the unchangeable law and tempering mercy are in His holy mind, right where the golden crown on the turban of the high priest had inscribed upon it, “Holiness to the Lord.”⁷

Metaphysics in the Hebrew philosophy

Everyone, wrote Frost, is a philosopher, no matter his or her profession. He described philosophy as “the meaning which the world has for you. It is your answer to the question, ‘Why?’”⁸ The Bible tells us that fourteen hundred years before Christ came to earth the first time as a baby, the children of Israel were asking “Why?” about events and objects and words. Since the tabernacle answered those questions for the Israelites by exemplifying their core reality, their knowledge sources, and their standard of goodness and beauty (in other words, their philosophy), it will be instructive to see what this object lesson has to say about each of those aspects, beginning with metaphysics—those presuppositions and assumptions that lie behind an individual’s conscious decisions.⁹

Metaphysics has as one of its subsets questions about *cosmogony* and *cosmology*—how the universe came to be and what its current state might be. With regard to the first term, the Israelites had the seven-day week to remind them of the seven days their Creator had taken to fashion their particular part of the universe, with the Sabbath as the queen of the week when they rested and communed with the Creator. We moderns also have the same week and the same Sabbath to use for the same purposes, if we choose to do so. As well, we have Bible verses the ancient Hebrews didn’t have—Hebrews 1:2 and 11:3. With regard to cosmology, the Israelites had to know that a God who could devastate the Egyptian economy with ten precisely chosen plagues that blew each of their false gods away had the power to keep each planet, sun, asteroid, or anything else in space in place as well. He made this belief more explicit when He later held the sun still while the Israelites fought against the Amorites.¹⁰ We moderns, who have blanched with fear a few times recently when reports of space objects big enough to annihilate all life on earth were hurtling toward us, would do well to consider the same.

A subset of cosmology is *teleology*, or consideration of the purposefulness of the universe. Every year the Israelites had a living object lesson in front of their eyes about how the whole story of sin was going to end. We have even more than they did—we have 66 books of the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy as well to help us know that Jesus is coming again to take us to heaven for a thousand years while the great deceiver paces this ruined planet alone, waiting for the lake of fire that will annihilate him and cleanse the earth so the Holy City can settle onto a clean place forever. That should lead to some very purposeful living on the part of any thinking human.

What of ontological issues, defined by Henderson to be the “essence of things,”¹¹ or as Gruber sees it, “explicit specifications of conceptualizations”¹² on the nature of the domain under discussion, or, in this case, reality? Is there evidence that whatever it is, it is friendly and orderly? The Israelites had proof every day of the friendly and caring nature of God as He provided delicious and nutritious manna for them in that land of no refrigerators and no supermarkets. Women, especially, must have been thrilled to know that their food preparation chores had been cut to nearly nothing. The people may not have known why He asked them to

remove the fat from the body of the sacrificial animal and burn it separately, but we moderns certainly have a plethora of knowledge to support the fact that we should not eat animal fat. That was a friendly thing for God to do. The whole tabernacle service, in fact, was based on love for helpless humanity.

Orderliness prevailed in that huge camp. Even disposal of human waste was mentioned by God as meaningful for preserving order, beauty, and health. It certainly was orderly in every detail right down to where to put the ashes of the sacrifices. Even the instruction given to decide the guilt or innocence of a woman whose husband was jealous was a check on arbitrary and impulsive behavior. Those basic issues of systems, sanitation, and sanity have not changed over the 35 centuries since then—we know even more now about why these restrictions were essential. The work of cognitive psychologists, educational researchers, and medical practitioners validates God's principles that He put into practice nearly three thousand four hundred years ago.

In terms of anthropological questions about their humanity, the Israelites had no worries about questions that bother modern philosophers, such as whether they had separate souls inhabiting bodies, since they knew from their own history that they had come from a heap of clay sculpted by the hand of God Himself. They knew that the clay form had become a living soul when God breathed the breath of life into it. Later, Eve was fashioned similarly, but from bone taken from Adam. The Ten Commandments clearly reaffirmed Who their Creator was, and the oral history from Adam and Eve was already confirmed in written form in their midst as well. There was no doubt in the minds of the children of Israel that they were souls.

The Israelites knew from God's detailed instructions, from His mouth to the ear of Moses, that they had to do all He told them in order to keep their bodies and minds in the best possible health. They would then be happy, useful beings who would not prematurely turn back into little piles of clay. They could clearly see that they were created beings who were prone to sin. They were not able to live with a Holy God, yet they would surely die without Him, so they gratefully turned to His gracious provisions to cleanse their moral leprosy. It is of more than passing interest that the Israelites were not pursued here and there by the priest checking on their status. They had to come to where he was waiting for them so that he could then take the blood they shed or eat part of the animal they had killed and thus bear their sins for them.

What of the moral status of us moderns? God's provisions are still the only way to keep from certain and eternal death. The difference is that the real Lamb has now died once and for all, and all who ask forgiveness for their sins will receive pardon, just as those ancient Israelites received pardon through faith in the coming Savior. It is still true that the record of those sins must be examined during the Antitypical "Year of Atonement" that has been going on for nearly one hundred sixty-two years in heaven. The One who bears our sins for us when we ask in belief is doing that work.

It is also still true that God does not force our will in the matter of confessing our sins. He waits for us to come to Him to ask in faith for His blood to wash us clean, for His righteousness to cover us. At the same time His Spirit subtly draws us with beauty and power.

Theological questions, another subset of metaphysics, can be answered with reference to this visual on a broader and deeper level than most other means. How, for instance, did God present Himself to the Israelites and what is He like to us? For one, right in the heart of the Ten Commandments, He established His creatorship and authority over all of us created

beings. It is clear that He was from the beginning intensely personal and desirous of communication with His creatures. He was and is kind enough to set up a system whereby humans may approach Him for forgiveness and favors and not be consumed. That plan will allow us to live forever with Him if we only choose what He has ordained in love (which is that which will make us happy and healthy anyway). He is careful enough about His unalterable law that His own Son had to die to satisfy its demands. Our love for Him in response to His great-heartedness is what enables us to love others and to show it by helping and blessing them.¹³

Epistemology in the Hebrew philosophy

Epistemological concerns deal with the sources and validation of knowledge. In other words, how do we come to know about our reality? According to Knight, knowledge can come to humans in various ways: 1) from an authority such as a highly respected person or a book, 2) by means of revelation, 3) through the senses, 4) through intuition, 5) by reason, or by some combination of these.¹⁴ On this point, Holmes says that “revelation and reason are both God-given, both to be valued and used.”¹⁵ Sire argues that knowledge for the Christian is not the same as mere information. He sees the first step from information to knowledge as logical (informed by a belief/attitude that becomes justified as true), followed by the second step, acting on that which is known.¹⁶ Thus it seems to me that he is espousing reason, but he does not clarify where the beliefs come from in the first place and whether the subsequent action qualifies in itself as a type of knowledge-generator.

Are there other possible sources of knowledge besides those discussed in the preceding paragraph? Uremovich, in a provocative essay entitled “Epistemology of Faith and Learning: A Systems Approach,” analyzes the “Wesleyan quadrilateral” that adds the terms *experience*, *tradition*, and *Scripture* to that of reason.¹⁷ To me, it would seem that *Scripture* comfortably fits into the revelation and authority categories, while *tradition* is based on authority alone. *Experience* is a bit harder to squeeze into Knight’s paradigm, for the experiences of an existentialist would be considerably different in terms of classification than would those of a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. The former might be termed more intuitive, while the latter would be regarded as having come about because of one’s belief in God as manifested through the Bible and nature and reflected upon in a reasonable fashion. Uremovich apparently agrees with my assessment, but goes on to use three of those same four building blocks for his own epistemological model, including the problematic one of *experience*. He has *Scripture* as interpreted by the Holy Spirit (*revelation* and *authority* in Knight’s paradigm) as primary supports of one’s worldview. The Holy Spirit then informs one’s subjective beliefs and objective experiences that grow out of this worldview. From the opposite end of the visual, one’s faith and knowledge also inform one’s subjective beliefs and objective experiences. Apparently Uremovich’s use of the word “subjective” is a nod to the variability of intuition, while “objective experiences” would refer to those observable “facts” that are amenable to reason. If he is saying that all of these knowledge sources should be under the control of the Holy Spirit, I agree wholeheartedly with him. I do not, however, fully understand or agree with his dichotomy between subjective “belief” and objective “experiences.”

Garland Dulan, writing for the 24th Faith and Learning Seminar, listed *intuition*, *authority*, *tradition*, *common sense*, and *science* as conduits of truth. A case could be made for including *common sense* as a type of reasoning (although some would be likely to throw in a

pinch of intuition as well), but the inclusion of the term *science* is of interest here. Dr. Dulan goes on to warn, however, that these methods will not prove sufficient to illuminate “all truth.”¹⁸ That distinction is not made by Henry Margenau. Writing of the philosopher of science, he states that “he is surrounded by a flow of attitudes and facts; there is no source of knowledge for him outside of logic and science.”¹⁹

Fourteen hundred years before Christ was born, the children of Israel had an authority in Moses to interpret God’s commands for them. They trusted and respected him except when they were too tired, hungry, or thirsty to think clearly, or when they listened to the clamoring of the mixed multitude. They could use their reasoning powers, too, to put together all the evidence that God had given of His love for them. Their senses surely were involved as they heard His voice, ate the manna, saw the light and the cloud, and so on. One could say that revelation was a source of knowledge as God revealed His will directly to them. Did they use science? If *science* is defined as gathering information from natural objects and events in an inductive manner and then seeking to determine a larger pattern or meaning, then they did use science. That pattern, that meaning, was always to be based on God’s own metanarrative.²⁰

In modern times, we have the written record of the Scriptures and the evidence of the Spirit of Prophecy in the writings of Ellen G. White. The former is both an authority and a repository of revelations by the Holy Spirit to prophets, kings, disciples, and apostles. The latter is considered a lesser authority—the Bible always has supremacy over it—a register of revelations by the Holy Spirit to a prophetess. We certainly use reason to analyze and synthesize knowledge, as well as to judge its validity. In the view of Parsonage in his survey of various church-related institutions, our SDA institutions, especially those of higher education, do value direct experience (senses), as well as the experiences of others (authority) and logical reasoning.²¹

Once one has admitted new knowledge into his or her domain, how does one validate its truthfulness? According to Knight, there are three major validation processes—coherency, consistency, and pragmatism.²² Kneller calls the third process “favorable consequences,”²³ while Heylighen terms it “maximal simplification of problem-solving.”²⁴

According to this explanatory process, the Israelites had a coherent system of behaviors and thought processes initiated by God Himself. Not only that, but it was consistent with the facts of their experience. What God said He would do, He did, and they had the evidence of their own eyes, ears, mouths, etc., to vouch for that. In addition to that double validation, their system also worked. It was practical. It solved problems.

Did their knowledge exist before humans found it (*a priori*) or did it only come into existence because the humans created it (*a posteriori*)? The answer depends upon our metaphysics. If we believe, as did the Hebrews, in a reality that includes an omniscient omnipresent, omnipotent God, then we say that all knowledge is *a priori*, for God knows everything in advance. If we do not believe that, then our very definition gives our belief away, for we will say that *a priori* knowledge is that which exists as a pre-determined fact in the mind of the individual. Of course, we who believe in Truth with a capital T need to stay humble, no matter our level of learning, for our view of Truth is distorted. We need to wait until heaven to be able to see clearly.

Axiology in the Hebrew philosophy

Axiology has to do with the study of values. It is commonly divided into issues of aesthetics and ethics. In other words, what does this object lesson, the tabernacle, have to say

about what is good or bad, and what does it say about what is beautiful and what is ugly? Nichol and Cottrell, editors of the SDA Bible Commentary, have included a lovely definition of beauty in the Biblical term *beauty of holiness*. It is inclusive of “a spirit of quiet reverence, inward devotion and outward piety, devout earnestness and joyous gratitude.”²⁵ Again, just so we stay humble, Poe reminds us that “the only absolute values are the opinions of God.” People, of course, are also able to evaluate beauty and goodness, but their opinions are relative.²⁶

In terms of aesthetics, the artistic expression manifested in the tabernacle was varied, comprehensive, and exquisitely pleasing to the senses without overstimulating them. It was simple and yet grand in symmetry, scale, and detail. God clearly is a lover of beauty. His use of color, form, arrangement, and materials in the tabernacle thrilled the participant at every turn, but, more than that, it informed him or her. The Greeks used to say that form follows function. They learned this, without knowing it, from the Almighty God. Holmes put it well when he said that “all truth is God’s truth.”²⁷

God shows His aesthetic handiwork through nature, as well. Trees, flowers, birds, butterflies, little furry animals, even earthworms—all are worthy of serious time spent in study and contemplation of the lessons they contain.

Poe makes an interesting statement about art—“[it] has as much to do with how we should live as it has to do with aesthetic pleasure or entertainment.”²⁸ Of course, he is not talking merely about paintings or sculpture, but he has broadened the concept to include all the visual arts, literature, and music. Acting on one’s principles is a recurring theme for him, as it should be for all of us Christians.

In terms of ethics, the tabernacle clearly delineated what was good and what was bad. *Good* was everything God stood for—principled love, beauty, unselfishness, order, growth toward being like God, sharing, and communing with our Maker and with our fellow humans. *Bad* was everything opposite of those principles—hatred, ugliness, selfishness, disorder, growing away from God, hoarding, cutting off communication with our Maker and with our fellow humans. The boundaries were clear, and yet the Ten Commandments provide a huge area for positive action. There is room for eternal growth.

Twenty-first century humans, at least in Western cultures, are, by contrast, terribly confused about ethical issues. For one thing, the prevailing attitudes of neo-Darwinism have locked them into an untenable position. If we came from slime, how did the issue of morality ever arise in the first place? Of particular concern to evolutionists is the question of how altruism arose. The 2006 *Handbook of Moral Development* devotes more than 700 pages to these types of problems, adding much heat but no light. “Other-oriented” behavior rates 3 entries in the index, while “self-oriented” takes up twenty-six listings.²⁹

Application to today’s Adventist classroom

In A.D. 1844, the attention of saddened, frustrated Advent believers focused once again on those long-lost questions and answers that the Israelites had asked fourteen hundred years before Christ’s coming, only this time with regard to the heavenly tabernacle rather than the earthly one. “Why?” they cried as Hiram Edson and other believers walking through a cornfield one October morning in 1844 were given a vision of this place and of the movements of Jesus within it.

They had spent the preceding months and most particularly the day of October 22, 1844, participating in a great national and international heart-cleansing revival, preparing to

see Jesus in person. Now, however, they saw that He was, instead of coming to cleanse the earth, moving to cleanse the holiest place in the heavens. They took their questions to the Bible, systematically and prayerfully studying until they could do no more with the aid of human reason, at which time Ellen G. White, who was not able to help with the reasoning but who had been given the prophetic gift, would be taken off in vision to confirm the truth or give further light.³⁰

An early vision in which Mrs. White was shown the Ten Commandments, with a bright and glorious light around the fourth, served to confirm the earlier Bible study on the importance of the Sabbath day and mode of worship.³¹ Other details of the tabernacle service, also derived from Bible study and confirmed through vision, pointed to the meaning of Jesus Christ's entering the holiest place on October 22, 1844. It was clear that His movements and those of the high priest in the earthly tabernacle system corresponded in terms of the function of the Day of Atonement. The undeniable fact, to those who used spiritual eyesight, of the high priestly examination by Jesus of the records of all those who had ever professed His name became foundational for the church that would later be named "Seventh-day Adventist." This is something of which Seventh-day Adventists should be becoming increasingly aware.³²

As Jesus entered the holy of holies on October 22, 1844, He bore the names of His people on His shoulders and over His heart, just as the earthly high priest carried the engraved names of the tribes of Israel in one or the other of the onyx stones on his shoulders and on each of the 12 precious stones in the breastplate close to his heart. Jesus cares about names, about individuals, a fact that is reinforced whenever I read the book of Numbers and encounter many otherwise very forgettable names there. If Jesus cared enough about them for their names to be recorded in the most holy book on earth, then He cares enough about me, born in 1844, one hundred years after the events described above, to carry my very ordinary name on His mighty shoulders and over His great heart, as well. I trust that as He comes to the list of life's choices under my name, that as He holds this record up to the scintillating light emitted by the mirror of the Ten Commandments, He will see only the scrub marks where His merciful blood was applied as I pleaded for forgiveness for every wrong I've ever done. Just as did the ancient Israelites, so I have had to claim His blood. This is an important concept for teachers to remember. We are all learners in the heavenly school.

How should Seventh-day Adventist teachers apply concepts from the Hebrew tabernacle to a 21st-century class? After all, young people in Western cultures, including Adventists, have been affected by the individualism of existential thought, the narcissistic preoccupation of humanism, the institution-bashing of postmodernism, and the pervasive precepts of neo-Darwinism, all of which have eroded the power of "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not." It is noticeably more difficult for postmodern students to deal with deontic modality, a linguistic term that covers admonitions containing the modals *shouldn't*, *can't*, *must not*, *ought to*, *need to*, *have to*, and so on.

First, I would advise the teacher to prayerfully and systematically read the Bible daily, followed by periodically reading or re-reading the book *Education*, by Ellen G. White. The principles are timeless. Selmon Dio, academic dean at Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College, summarized that book and others of White's writings on the topic as follows: The teacher's philosophy—expressed in teaching faith and knowing that God is love, along with values of love and service to students—influences one's thinking and emotions. These, in turn, affect one's actions positively, leading to acceptance, cheerfulness, loving, helping, and understanding.³³ George Knight's 2005 article in the *Journal of Adventist Education* adds the

concepts of teachers introducing students to the Bible as a framework for the curriculum, drawing young people to Jesus, leading them to lifelong service, guiding them as they meet other likeminded young people, and serving as a role model.³⁴

Byrne has assembled a thoughtful list of qualifications of the Christian teacher, encompassing ten each of physical traits, mental factors, temperament and disposition, social behavior, moral life, and spiritual life. Some of the more unusual and valuable entries are good carriage and posture, constructive imagination, zeal, ambition, dignity, and a vivid sense of the reality and presence of God.³⁵

Knowing that the priest was, with the parents, the teacher in the tabernacle system, gives us teachers the dual responsibilities of knowing God's requirements and asking Him for wisdom and love to model those in almost a parental manner with no coercive attempts on our part. For myself, I want to keep my students over my heart as Jesus keeps us. To do this, I will write each name in my prayer journal and pray for them individually at least once each day of the quarter. I will be watchful for any reaching out on their part so that I can, in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, meet them for Jesus.

As for pupils, the great goal is for each one to be like God. This means that the child-centered teaching and learning of Progressivism must be balanced with a proper sense of the transcendence of God and the vitality of His requirements. With the teacher as the prime motivator, the student should be led along as fast and as far as he or she can go intellectually, but balance should be maintained. As with the children in the tabernacle story, access to nature and its riches should be planned for. Additionally, instruction should include object lessons and such activities that would get the students to ask questions.³⁶

On a personal level, I want to plan one class in the park or in my Lower Secret Garden, a wild area by a creek. Additionally, I would like to invite the students to my home or otherwise share a philosophers' meal or a "real-i-tea." I will continue offering the choice between writing an academic paper or writing the duty and destiny paper.³⁷ I will continue reading my own newest version of my duty and destiny paper to them at the start of the course, both as a way of modeling what they might consider in their paper and as a way of sharing my experiences and beliefs. I will also continue the assignment of having the graduate students plan together to present their version of the ideal school after we finish a comparative study of the eight philosophies that have impacted Western education.

With regard to the discipline structure, order and accountability, as we learn from the tabernacle, are both important in maintaining discipline in a pro-active sense; thus I will fine-tune my syllabus and make every effort to consult it in a timely fashion so that papers will come back to the students the next class period after they are turned in. I will gloss their essays with hand-written comments as a way of disciplining their thinking and powers of reflection. I will formulate a streamlined system for collecting and returning papers. It is appropriate and necessary for me to continue with my absence policies and procedures for handling late work. This helps the delinquent students keep focused.

Extending discipline to its larger sense of discipling, I want my students to learn that "this world is not a parade ground but a battlefield."³⁸ This has particular relevance on the micro-level (pun intended) for some of our female students, who have taken the low dress standards of the entertainment industry for their own. The beauty and appropriateness of the high priest's garments may be helpful in this regard. I find it instructive that the high priest put off his glittering gem-adorned breastplate and ephod to wear only the plain white linen garment when he went into the Most Holy Place.

When it comes to analyzing the social function of the school, the tabernacle clearly shows the social nature of Christ's economy. Whole families were impacted when one member sinned—after all, they all lost the use of that lamb or that bullock. The whole community prayed together on the Day of Atonement. The tabernacle services were intended to be a light to all the nations who would care to inquire about the meaning, just as Abraham shared his reasons for raising an altar everywhere he went. Service has always been the primary goal of Seventh-day Adventist Christian education.³⁹ Each quarter my students and I pick a service project, such as taking to the local Christian Aid Center a loaf of bread in which is baked a tiny roll of paper on which we have written our deepest philosophical belief summed up in a quotation or short paragraph.⁴⁰ Sometimes we do a “real-i-tea” at a local retirement home, where we take cookies and bring herbal tea, inviting the residents to sit and share with us what they have learned about the big issues of life. I give the students lists of potential questions to ask. We've given gifts to needy local children, such as school supplies, clothing, toys—even a bed. We've mailed off big boxes of school supplies to nations like Haiti. Although I have thought about planning into the course a service component that is both systematic and appropriate, there is the possibility that the immediate needs that present themselves as the quarter progresses might offer a fresher, more philosophically powerful “heuristic” of their own. The story of how we made a quilt for a survivor of Hurricane Katrina (complete with an answered prayer for us to find such a person who really did need this handmade quilt) is only one example of such a slice of real life that pertained so remarkably well to our philosophy class.

Knowing that our class associations are the foundation of any social outreach my students do (as well as building a base for our heavenly fellowship throughout eternity), I intend to continue with my practice of having a short devotional thought that has philosophical applications,⁴¹ followed by prayer requests. I will change, however, my intuitive manner of picking the devotional thought. Instead, I will write a syllabus plan for the devotional, much as I do for the required state certification components.

For this new section of the syllabus, I will revisit what I have already been using from each of the nine major sections of the book *Education*. In addition, I will take the valuable insight from Dr. Raquel Korniejczuk, academic dean at Montemorelos University, of treating the book as a series of descriptors of schools.⁴²

First there is the school in Eden. For this devotional segment I will ask the students to have prayer in small groups and then discuss the following questions: What do you think the first classroom on this planet looked like? Where was it? What did it look like? Who were the students? What did they study? Why did they study? One person from each group will report back to the whole class.

The second school studied in *Education* is the moveable one conducted in the wilderness on the journey from Egypt to Canaan and for many years thereafter. This devotional time will be the one when the ten-foot model (or the felt visual) of the tabernacle is introduced. The questions asked at this time are those that pertain to the metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology evident in the structure and its services. I intend to keep a smaller, portable version of the tabernacle model on hand in the classroom. This visual will be referred to throughout the quarter when comparing and contrasting this first philosophy with each subsequent one.

The schools of the prophets are the third type of educational system in the book *Education*. We are told that “the chief subjects of study in these schools were the law of God,

with the instruction given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry.”⁴³ Within these broad curricular guides, since we’ve already begun to discuss the sacred law of God and the instruction given to Moses, we will process my original essay measuring the morality of Moses against Kohlberg’s stages of moral development—“How to Teach Morality Using the Life of Moses.” It will provoke much heat and a fair amount of light as well.

Moving on in the book *Education*, the school of Jesus Himself becomes the center of our devotional thoughts, as we look at the ways He taught and the way He lived. Nature, object lessons, the use of questions, parables, reference to current events, and scriptural exposition were mainstays of His teaching. Building from this, we will do devotional segments about nature (we will meet in my Lower Secret Garden for this class period); about Bible science (for this I have dinosaur bones to bring in, along with a Power Point using geology for a base—“Jesus as My Rock”); poems and songs (we will bring in stringed instruments for this one and do the “Voice Choir for Socrates and Paul in Dialogue on Love”); and about how teachers need to keep in balance by getting enough rest, exercise, water, fresh air, worship time, and a praiseworthy spirit (we will choreograph a calisthenics/mime session here). We will go on to a devotional on the topic of character building (we will literally build a temporary, magnificent tower with colorful cubes for each student for them to write their name on one side and the name of their favorite Bible verse, a prayer for someone in need, and a statement of witness on the other three sides—this will be compared and contrasted to the “holey” book of Derrida & Eisenman that literally has holes punched halfway through the whole thing as a visual pun on deconstruction).⁴⁴ Finally, when we come to the school of heaven, we will do a mental exercise guaranteed to stretch the sacred imagination. I introduce a stunning visual of the Great Nebula of Orion, establish that it is 1600 light years away and that it is the “gateway to heaven” (in Randolph’s Reality Realm),⁴⁵ and ask the students how far away it is measured in paperfolds, if paper is assumed to be .003 thick. I begin the exercise by asking them to each fold a sheet of paper and stand on it, continuing to do that until it will not physically fold in half anymore, and then to continue doing that, including standing on it, in their imaginations as they work through the exercise. This should generate some serious thought about the reality of the Second Coming of Jesus.

Conclusion

It is my prayer that I will be able to implement these ideas, to keep the focus and determination that has been an outcome of this mountaintop experience at the 34th Faith and Learning Conference in Accra, Ghana, and to draw closer to Christ as a result of the use of this heavenly heuristic. In the great classroom of heaven, we teachers will see the results of our work.

Notes

1. George R. Knight, *Philosophy & Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 233.
2. Dallas Willard in *Christianity in the Academy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 9.
3. Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Two Sources of Western Culture,” in *The Christian Idea of Education*, ed. By Edmund Fuller (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 238.
4. Humberto Rasi, “Worldviews, Contemporary Culture, and Adventist Thought,” at the Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship in Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic, March 19-26, 2000, 3, 4.
5. John 10:7; Hebrews 10:20; Revelation 3:8.
6. E. G. White, *Christ in His Sanctuary* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), 34.

7. E. G. White, *Christian Service*, (Takoma Park, Washington D.C.: Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1947), p. 191. "The Saviour typified in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law is the very same that is revealed in the gospel."
8. S. E. Frost, Jr., *Ideas of the Great Philosophers* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1942), xiii.
9. John L. Childs, "The Morality of Inquiry," in *Modern Movements in Educational Philosophy*, ed. Van Cleve Morris (Boston, MS: Houghton Mifflin Company), 71.
10. *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Joshua 10:13, 14.
11. Stella Henderson, *Introduction to Philosophy of Education*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947).
12. Tom Gruber (2001), "What is an Ontology?" URL: <http://www.ksl.stanford.edu/kst/what-is-an-ontology.html>.
13. E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Silver Spring, MD: Better Living Publications, 1990), 168.
14. Knight, 233.
15. Arthur F. Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 18.
16. James Sire, *Discipleship of the Mind*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), pp. 98-106.
17. Gary R. Uremovich, "Epistemology of Faith and Learning: A Systems Approach" from the 26th International Faith and Learning Seminar, Loma Linda, CA, July 16-28, 2000.
18. Garland Dulan, "Teaching Sociology: A Biblical-Christian Approach" from the 24th Faith and Learning Seminar, Andrews University, June 20-July 2, 1999.
19. Henry Margenau, "The Philosophical Legacy of Contemporary Quantum Theory" in *Mind and Cosmos: Essays in Contemporary Science and Philosophy*, Robert Colodny, ed. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1966), 355.
20. Earl Aagard, "Can a Believer Be a Scientist?" from the 34th Faith and Learning Seminar, Valley View University, Accra, Ghana, June 18-28, 2006.
21. Robert Parsonage, ed., *Church Related Higher Education* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1978), 249.
22. Knight, 23,24.
23. George F. Kneller, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 35, 42, 48.
24. F. Heylighen (1993): "Epistemology, Introduction", in *Principia Cybernetica Web*, F. Heylighen, C. Joslyn and V. Turchin, eds., (Brussels: Principia Cybernetica), URL:<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/EPISTEMI.html>.
25. F. P. Nichol and R. Cottrell, eds., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 3* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 172.
26. Harry Poe, *Christianity in the Academy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 105.
27. Holmes, 7, 17.
28. Poe, 126.
29. Melanie Killen and Judith Smetana, eds., *Handbook of Moral Development* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).
30. White, *Christ in His Sanctuary*, 8.
31. Ibid., 10.
32. F. D. Nichol (ed), *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), 123, 715.
33. Selmon Dio, "Conveying Christ in the Classroom: Teachers' Attitudes and Behavior" from the International Faith and Learning Seminar in Pune, India, Nov. 3-15, 1996.
34. R. Knight, "Why Have Adventist Education," in *Journal of Adventist Education*, Summer, 2005, 7-9.
35. H. W. Byrne, *A Christian Approach to Education: A Bibliocentric View* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 125, 126.
36. E. G. White, *Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952), 41.
37. Ibid., 17, 18.
38. Ibid., 295.
39. Ibid., 309.
40. The students come to my house to form and bake these morsels.
41. Sample: Was Pilate's response to Jesus in John 19:38 that of an idealist, a realist, an existentialist, a pragmatist, or something else? Why?
42. Raquel Korniecjuk, interview at 34th Faith and Learning Seminar, Accra, Ghana, June 18-30, 2006.
43. White, *Education*, 47.
44. J. Kipnis and T. Leiser, eds., *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman* (New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1997).
45. White, *Early Writings* (Battle Creek: Review and Herald, 1882), 41.

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Appendix A: Heavenly Heuristic (Randolph, 2006, based on Knight, 1998, and Kneller, 1964, for rows 1, 3-8)

Time	Philosophy (major proponent)	Metaphysics (bedrock reality/pre-suppositions) *point of view of adherents ** point of view of Christian	Epistemology (sources of knowledge)	T or t <i>A priori</i> or <i>A posteriori</i>	Validation of knowledge (coherence, correspondence, pragmatic value)	Axiology/Values: Aesthetics and Ethics (beauty and goodness)	Application to education : Educational system Teacher Pupil Discipline Social function of the school
c. 1400 B.C.	Hebrew (God through Moses)	*God **Ideas and actions of God	Authority Revelation Reason Senses	T	Coherence Correspondence Pragmatic function	God's standard— Good is being helpful, useful, orderly, clean; Beautiful is loving, shining, symmetrical, meaningful, lasting	Curriculum was balanced theory and application for mind and body; Teachers were priest and parents who guided by loving (principled) example, exhortation, and consequences; Pupil was viewed as created by God and needing to be redeemed and restored; Social function of school was to transform society by living out a close connection with God
c. 400 B.C.	Idealism/ Humanism (Socrates, Plato)	*Ideas about forms of truth, beauty, and goodness **ideas of humans	Reason	T	Coherence	Beauty and goodness is that which approaches the universal ideal	Stimulate ideas through history, literature and mathematics—library with many books important; Teacher lectures about ideas; Students absorb ideas from readings and lectures; Absolute control by teacher; Transmit ideas from the past
c. 350 B.C.	Realism/ Humanism (Aristotle)	*Material world **ideas of humans	Senses Reason	T	Correspondence	Beauty is realistic representation of nature; goodness is moral law found in nature	Orderly emphasis on sciences, math, facts, languages; Teacher gives accurate and efficient information so students can grow to fit into environment; Pupils master facts and think inductively; Pupils seek to reduce errors in processing; Careful control; Transmit heritage of accumulated facts
c. A.D. 1200	Scholasticism/ Humanism (Aquinas)	*Synthesis of ideas about God and deductive analysis of material world **ideas of humans	a) Intuition and revelation (authority) b) Reason and senses	T	Coherence (took precedence if "facts" did not correspond to overall beliefs) Correspondence	Church dictated how reason controls morality; beauty is "creative intuition"	Curriculum trains mind through classic languages, math, logic, works of great intellectuals; Teacher preserves the status quo; Pupils perform demanding mental tasks; Rigid control by system; Transmit religious and natural heritage of the past
c. A.D. 1900	Pragmatism/ Humanism (Dewey)	*[constantly changing—not a valid construct] **ideas of humans	Reason Senses	t	Pragmatic function—whatever has favorable consequences for the group	Society dictates changing notions of what is beautiful and what is good	Curriculum arises from social needs of students; Teachers are guides and fellow learners; Students are active in creating learning with problem solving and, later, vicarious learning; Social, democratic, controls; School is part of larger community
20 th century	Existentialism/ Humanism (Nietzsche, Sartre, Buber)	*[not a concern—individual existence] **ideas of humans	Intuition or reasoning of the individual	t	Coherence for the individual	Free individual choice	Curriculum values study of humanities for intellect and emotions; Teachers are responsible for their own freedom and for that of each student; Feelings must be consulted; Social function of school is for promoting self-culture and inevitable conflict
20 th century	Postmodernism/ Humanism (Derrida)	*[no access due to the vagaries of language] **ideas of humans	Reason that is anti-authority--stories of the oppressed	t	Coherence for the individual	Stories/lives/output of the marginalized and oppressed	Constructivist curriculum—process rather than content; Teachers are scaffolders; Students are builders of their own knowledge and deconstructors of institutions; School must right community wrongs and produce agents of change
Last half 20 th century and into 21 st century	Neo-Darwinism/ Humanism (Dawkins)	*Scientific theory of origins **ideas of humans	Reason Senses Authority of science-so-called	T	Correspondence (claimed) Coherence (actual)	Beauty is the outcome of chance and necessity	Curriculum is centered around scientific view—history, literature, linguistics, etc., permeated with evolutionary concepts; Teacher must be a true believer in evolution; Pupil must become a believer; School must transmit heritage of received Truth about science and become ever more technologically advanced
1844 onward till Jesus comes	Seventh-day Adventism (God through Miller, Whites, Bates, us)	*God **Ideas and actions of God	Authority of Bible Revelation (Spirit of Prophecy) Senses (Nature) Reason (careful)	T	Coherence Correspondence Pragmatic function	God's standard	Curriculum balanced among intellectual, spiritual, physical, social; Teacher is responsible to lead student to Jesus and to prepare him or her for useful work; Pupil is a child of God who needs principled love and gentle correction; Social function of school is to transform the world

Appendix B: The philosophy of the ancient Hebrews expressed in narrative form

We notice two young boys—let's call them John and Samuel—walking between two rows of tents on the north side of this huge encampment. Eleven-year-old John and his brother Samuel, seven, are on the world's longest camping trip, but they don't know that now. It is only supposed to take them eleven more days of walking to get to the borders of Canaan once they leave this camp, so they don't have the slightest inkling now that they will be 51 and 47 years old respectively by the time they actually arrive at their final destination.¹ Their parents will have to die before they themselves will be allowed to enter the land that has been promised to them, but they don't know that either. No, they will need all the courage they can muster for the long years ahead, so God in His mercy hides the future from them.

Now they are walking a bit ahead of their parents, the whole family coming to the tabernacle with their biggest and best lamb for a sin offering. John, trying not to think about the lamb, looks around them at the hundreds of rows and columns of tents arranged in perfect order. One woman has picked up all the manna around her tent this early morning and is now sweeping the bare dirt in front of her tent. She is taking seriously, as do all the people, God's explicit commands about cleanliness of mind, body, spirit, and surroundings.

As the boys stop for a minute to look behind them to the north, they see many of the 53,400 tents of their tribe of Naphtali.² Moses has counted them all at the command of the Lord. Located there alongside their own tribe are the standards of the 41,500 tents of Asher and of the 82,700 tents of the tribe of Dan. In front of the boys are ranged the 6,200 tents of the sons of Merari, the Levites who are camped closest to the tabernacle on that side. Their count has been done separately, at the command of the Lord. They are the ones who are responsible for carrying the tabernacle boards, bars, pillars, sockets, vessels, pins, and cords when the camp is packed up and they begin marching again. This is their God-given responsibility.

John, holding Samuel's hand as he waits for his parents, guesses that his father and mother are singing the song of Moses as they come, his father's bass voice booming out as he carries the heavy lamb, which seems to be struggling a bit now. John turns his eyes away, blinking hard to keep the tears back as his own voice quavers the first words of the song: "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously . . ."³ This has been their family's favorite from among the many songs they sing when they are weary of marching or when they need to remind themselves of the mercy and power of their God. The songs lighten their loads as they remember all He has done—how He brought them out of Egypt from slavery to freedom with miracles unimaginable, He opened a path through the Red Sea for them, He shone a bright light on their path at night and cooled them with shade during the hot days, He made the bitter waters of Marah sweet for them, He sprinkled delicious manna on the ground six nights a week so they could eat and keep their health and strength and kept the manna fresh every Sabbath, He gushed water from a solid rock for them when they thought they would die of burning thirst—oh, there are so many wonders to remember! Right now the song will make this hard time for their family easier to bear.

John reverses direction again, pushing thoughts of the lamb out of his head, and begins mentally cataloguing the beauties of the tabernacle that is their destination just on the other side of the Levite camp. He has loved this beautiful tent ever since the very first pieces of it were being made by his people—for half a year,⁴ six days a week, first there was giving and sorting and then there was shearing, combing, twisting, weaving, cutting, stitching, hammering, melting, sculpting, sawing, casting, and forging. Now the glorious tent with its precious gold furnishings stands east to west, with the entrance on the east side, always on the east, so the entering priest's back will be to the rising sun. The rest of the curtains of the courtyard, of billowing, spotlessly clean white linen, stretch around the tabernacle on all sides in a very long rectangle. These curtains are supported by gleaming silver clips and bronze pillars. Behind and looming to twice the height of the fence is the most beautiful dwelling in the world, the portable tent where God has promised to meet with His people. Even from back by his own family's tent, John can always see the Shekinah radiantly streaming upward from the back third of the tent, rising high in rays of gold, much warmer and brighter than the sun. He smiles joyfully as he remembers the day the glorious light came down and filled the tent so that even their leader, Moses, whose own face already glowed from meeting with the God of glory on the mountaintop, could not enter the tent for awhile.

This tabernacle is indeed a holy place. All the children of the camp have been well taught that no one is allowed to carelessly approach it. Only those with urgent business there are allowed inside the courtyard—the cordon of Levites all around the tabernacle ensures that control. Only the priests have ever been inside the first apartment of the tent; only the high priest is ever allowed inside the second one, and that only once a year with very special preparations. Nonetheless, descriptions of the wondrous scenes inside have been circulated, so that young John has heard from his father about the incredible beauty of the place.

There are only three pieces of furniture inside the first apartment. Along the south wall, with highly reflective gold-covered wall boards magnifying the light from its seven lamps, is the solid gold lampstand, each of its golden flowers and leaves hammered with consummate artistry. Along the north wall is the gold-covered table with its golden crown. Every Sabbath two stacks of freshly baked bread, twelve flat loaves altogether, are placed there on a blue cloth. On the west side is the golden altar of fragrant incense in front of the gorgeously embroidered curtain that shields the Most Holy Place from all human eyes except for those of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

John's father, always close at hand and willing to answer his questions about anything, has helped him understand the meanings of each piece of furniture.⁵ The altar of incense, its fragrant smoke wafting up and over to the Most Holy Place, represents prayer to God. The table of showbread is a metaphor for the Word of God, which has been spoken directly to Moses. They know that Moses is also writing it all down on papyrus rolls and that he has already written down on vellum while he was herding sheep for forty years the words of God from the days of Adam.⁶ The continuously burning lampstand reminds them how they must ever be a light to the world.

Father has also described to him and little Samuel what will happen on the long-awaited tenth day of the seventh month. On that day, the high priest must search his heart and ask forgiveness for any sins of his own and those of his people. He must make special sacrifices for himself and for them. Those sacrifices will be offered to God on the bronze altar of burnt offerings just inside the gateway of the courtyard where sacrifices have been offered all year long. Then he will bring two goats to the tabernacle, cast lots for the Lord to determine which one shall die, and then sacrifice that one, catching its blood in a basin. The other goat, the living one, will wait until the high priest comes out of the tabernacle to place the sins of all the people on its head.

All the people will remain in deep heart searching and prayer as the high priest changes from his many-hued, gem-bedecked, magnificent robes into one of plain white linen. Next he washes his hands and feet at the laver, made from the brass mirrors of the women.⁷ He removes his sandals and takes the blood from the sacrificed goat; then, with a censor full of fragrant incense, he goes through the first apartment and on into the Most Holy Place to do as God has asked, which is to clean out the sins that have symbolically piled up there all year long. They haven't just disappeared when the sinner killed the lamb.⁸ Without that cloud of incense, representing prayers of deep sorrow and penitence, and without the blood, representing the cleansing power of the One who has been promised from the beginning of the world to die for every one of its people, he himself will die when he goes there into the presence of the Holy God. Inside the inner apartment is the ark of the covenant. The priest has, after all, been awash in blood on the outside and flesh inside his body from sacrificial animals all year long. He has become sin for his people, and he must be freed from the claims of the law or he will die.

Standing on the solid gold Mercy Seat over the ark, two solid gold cherubim frame the radiant Shekinah glory. Underneath the mercy seat and inside the ark is the law of God, written with His own finger in solid rock.⁹ This rocky text contains the law of the kingdom of God and it cannot change. To break even one of its ten rules means sin, and the wages of sin is death. It is only the mercy seat that keeps the blood of the guilty apart from the law. After the high priest finishes sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat, he symbolically gathers all those sins upon himself, and then comes out of the tent to symbolically put those sins on the head of the scapegoat. As the scapegoat is sent away forever into the trackless wilderness, the people will all rejoice that their high priest has done this work for them as a type of the One who will come and forever rid the earth of sin.

John's reverie is interrupted by Samuel tugging on his sleeve. His brown eyes are full of tears. "I don't want our lamb to die, John. Why does it have to die? Doesn't God love us enough to just forgive us when we pray and say we are sorry for our sins?"

John stops to think hard before he answers. He knows that when his parents bring the lamb to the tabernacle gate, it will be painful for tender-hearted little Samuel to see this soft, gentle, trusting creature, their very best and favorite lamb, being killed there for sins that are not its own—some of its blood poured out by the altar and some blood taken into the tabernacle. If the priest does not carry some of the blood inside, he will boil part of the lamb's flesh and eat it so that the next time he goes into the tabernacle he will carry those symbolic sins inside with him in his own body, having become, in symbol, sin for them. Through one of those two means, the record of their sins is transferred to the tabernacle.

John himself is not used to the sight of the spurting blood as the lamb dies without making a sound, and he knows his parents hate for such a thing to happen, too. He thinks about the time his father first explained to him about the lamb. It was early on a Friday morning several months ago when John and his father were looking up at the massive mountain on the southwest side of the camp that seemed to rise straight up from the plain. Above it hovered the cooling cloud that was evidence of the presence of their protecting, powerful, loving God. At night the cloud glowed like fire, pushing back the fearsome desert dark. From this very

mountaintop, John and Samuel, shivering with awe as they huddled close to their parents, had recently heard the voice of God proclaiming the moral laws of the Ten Commandments in thundering majesty.

They had just finished picking up the manna they would need for that preparation day and for the Sabbath. John put a piece of the soft white substance in his mouth, savoring its delicious taste and wondering again how something that tasted so good could also be so healthful. He listened to the words of his father.

"Sacrificing a lamb shows our faith in the coming One who has been promised since the garden of Eden.¹⁰ It is supposed to be a painful experience for us. If we do not follow the exact instructions of the One who has made us in the first place and redeemed us from slavery in the second place, we ourselves will die a terrible death that will forever separate us from the loving presence of our God and everyone else whom we love."

"But why a lamb, Daddy?" he had sobbed, thinking of his soft woolly pet that followed him around with joyous leaps of its thin little legs with the rubber-eraser-like hooves. "Why does it have to be a lamb? Why can't it be one of these awful poisonous desert snakes or maybe a biting ant or even a spider that has eight eyes and blue blood and is not loveable like my lamb? Why can't we trap a lion and use it for a sacrifice? Those creatures only hurt people anyway, and sacrificing them would make the world safer. He is a loving God—maybe He is not so particular as all that."

John knows he will never forget the earnest look on his father's face as he tenderly bent down to put his mouth closer to the ear of his small elder son. "My son, there is one thing even our omnipotent and omniscient God cannot do, and that is to break His own law that keeps the whole universe in harmony.¹¹ Sin is so terrible that we can't even imagine what it does to people's minds and bodies and relationships with others. It is worse than the worst leprosy we have ever seen. Even when the noses of lepers are rotted off their faces and their fingers and toes have fallen off, leprosy is not as horrible as sin. Sin twists people's minds; it causes them to hurt and hate and destroy. Sin is always fatal—it always causes death. Sin is highly contagious—it spreads rapidly from person to person. Without help, we will all die horrible deaths, never to live again. Yes, with the sacrifice there is death involved, and blood, but it is the only way to remove sin forever."

His father stopped and sighed deeply. "My son, I have told you that at the time of Adam and Eve, God told us to sacrifice an innocent lamb to help us remember His promise that He will send the Lamb of God some day to make atonement for us.¹² You know that Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, did not think that God was very particular about what he sacrificed for his sins, so he put his best fruit on the altar while their second son, Abel, sacrificed a lamb, as God had told them they must do. You remember the sad results that followed from that seemingly small deviation from God's commands—the first boy born on earth killed his little brother. Soon after that almost everyone on this earth was evil through and through."

John shudders in horror, remembering that conversation. He puts his arm protectively around Samuel. "Little brother," he says earnestly as his parents arrive with the lamb, "We are God's chosen people! He cares about us even more than our earthly father and mother do, and yet you know they love us as themselves. Let's promise each other that we will always love Him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might.¹³ He is just and merciful. Let us serve and honor Him. As our ancestor Enoch told his children and his children's children,¹⁴ if we walk with Him now, we shall someday live with Him forever."

Notes:

1. E.G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 387.
2. *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Numbers 1.
3. *Ibid.*, Exodus 15: 1.
4. E.G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), p. 349.
5. *Ibid.*, 66, 71.
6. *Ibid.*, 251.
7. E. G. White, *Christ in His Sanctuary* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), p. 28. Volume 1 of the *SDA Bible Commentary*, p. 643, makes the point that what the Bible refers to as "brass" was actually bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, as the copper and zinc alloy was not yet developed at that time. I choose to think of this notion of the women devoting their mirrors to this purpose as symbolic of their renewed dedication to God's service rather than spending their time primping and preening for public display. The devoting of their jewelry to the tabernacle needs is another important evidence of this change of heart and purpose. I have found Isaiah 3:16-24 particularly instructive in regard to women decking themselves out like Christmas trees.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 37. "Not until the goat had been thus sent away did the people regard themselves as freed from the burden of their sins. . . . By the offering of blood, the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed the guilt of his transgression, and expressed his faith in Him who was to take away the sin of the world; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law." As a teacher who once upon a time taught math, I see these records in the form of line graphs, with each point faithfully graphed and the lines drawn between each pair of points. On the Day of Atonement, the direction of the graph would be a relevant piece of information as well as the issue of unconfessed sins and even the nature of the sins. This statement is just an idea to be taken as a point of discussion.
9. We have only two records in the Bible of God writing something down. It is of great interest to me that the first time He wrote His eternal laws on a rock and the second time He wrote the secret sins of accusers of their sister in the dust.
10. Stephen N. Haskell, *The Cross and Its Shadow* (South Lancaster, MS: The Bible Training School, 1914), 124, 125.
11. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 52.
12. *Ibid.*, 66.
13. *Holy Bible*, King James Version, Deut. 6:5.
14. E.G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1913), 86.