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Introduction

Backlash¹

Pierre Laplace was one of the great thinkers of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. He wrote a book about how the planets move. Pierre called it *Celestial Mechanics*. And he gave a copy of the book, in person, to Emperor Napoleon. Someone warned Napoleon that the book never mentioned God. The emperor said, “Mr. Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on how the planets move. But you have never even mentioned their Creator.” Boldly, Laplace answered, “Why should I? God is not necessary to the point I am proving.”

This story helps us understand what is known as “the modern period” in history. In this period, scientific thinking was considered to be the beginning of all truth. In this period, people believed that everything could be explained. If something could not be explained, then it could not be real.

But today, not all people agree with this thinking. They do not believe that everything can be explained through the scientific method alone. There is something about us that no reason, no test tube, no scientific law, ever could explain.

These opinions have influenced² all areas of life including religion. But some of these opinions have gone too far. They even push aside or ignore doctrinal truths.³ They tell us that experience is more important than teachings and doctrine, but this is not true.

Truth is not just knowledge of doctrines and verses. It is something that influences the believer on a personal level. It was Jesus who said that His truth would have good results in our lives (John 8:32). Truth develops the spiritual life and influences how a person will deal with the challenges of daily living. There is a useful, life-changing part of our religion that never should be downgraded. At the same time, experience never should take away from the importance of correct Bible teachings.

This quarter we want to study both parts of our faith: doctrine and experience. In our study during this quarter, we will pay close attention to 13 important teachings of the Christian faith. Each week’s lesson will try to keep a

1. backlash—a strong reaction against something, such as a person or an idea.

2. influenced—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

3. doctrinal truths—a set of beliefs accepted by the church as truth.

careful balance between a correct Bible understanding of these different parts of our faith. And each lesson will show how the teachings influence our daily experience. It is our hope that at the end of the quarter you will both understand these themes (topics; subjects) better and that your Christian experience will be blessed by them. Each lesson is about “the truth as it is in Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 42.

After all, Jesus is the One who is the Alpha (Beginning) and Omega (Goal) of our faith. There may be 13 different themes, but they will have one goal: the One (Jesus) in whom “ ‘we live and move and exist [live for a purpose]’ ” (Acts 17:28, NIV).

Reinder Bruinsma was born in the Netherlands. He has served in different offices in his long career in the church. Bruinsma is the author of almost twenty books. Some of these books have been translated into a number of languages. He was president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Netherlands when he wrote this Bible study guide.