often do we use this passage to measure our own hearts, our own inner private worlds of thought and feeling, choices and values?

We apply these measures against all others to show they are part of fallen Babylon, but how often do we measure ourselves by them? Scripture? The Commandments? The prophetic vision of things given to us by Daniel and Revelation and that have been affirmed, mirrored, made morally and spiritually practical and vivid in the writings of Ellen White? We are not to take the text and use it to measure others. We are to use the text to measure ourselves first and foremost.

The phrase “by the book” is an idiom. It means doing something strictly according to the rules or established guidelines—properly, correctly, without variance. It can be come across as legalistic. Rigid. Stifling. Saying an organization is run by the book often represents a criticism of how the organization is behavio. It would consider itself behavior. It would consider itself . . . . But it does send out chemical signals that say, ‘Hey, I’m here’ . . . and it listens back for other bacteria sending the same signal.

Dr. Bassler explains: “When enough bacteria are doing this, they know they have a quorum. All of a sudden, they light up and do all sorts of other things to act in concert, like a super-organism.”

This bizarre phenomenon would amount to little more than one of those little scientific curiosities that appear in Ripley’s except that this research has led to a potentially more significant discovery: Bacteria appear to have a kind of universal language. The little blue-glow guys are able to communicate with bacteria of other kinds whether the others have the capacity to glow or not. All have a common chemical that facilitates this ability to “talk” to one another.

And this, of course, suggests the intriguing possibility that scientists could actually prevent or alter the harmful consequences caused by some bacteria by interfering in some way with their ability to communicate.

So once again bioscience may have stumbled across a familiar biblical theme. Where have we heard before of a case in which the harmful effects of a group of organisms have been forestalled by interfering with its ability to communicate? Is it possible that God may have a bit of a knowing smile on His face?

Though there are obvious differences in the two scenarios, the possibility that scientists could actually interfere with the communication of
bacteria resonates with the story in the Book of Genesis in which God
confused the language of those who were building the Tower of Babel.

At that time, seemingly exasperated, He stepped in to prevent the
completion of the city and tower that were being erected in direct
defiance of His covenant with the survivors of the Flood to “fill the
earth” (Gen. 9:1, NKJV). You don’t go about filling the Earth by mobi-
lizing in one place and designing a strategy to protect yourself against
an event that God had promised He wouldn’t repeat anyway. Yet that was
the plan.

So God intervened in this effort by confusing their speech and thus
“scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and
eye ceased building the city” (Gen. 11:8, NKJV). Neat solution.

The parallels for our time are unmistakable. We’re still ignoring
God’s promises and grasping at hopeless ways to save ourselves. Ever-
false religion, every human philosophy, is nothing more than a
variation on the Babel theme: to save ourselves by our own efforts.

And we are, in a sense, even today living in a cosmic Petri dish. As the
beings on this Earth who have brought upon ourselves the disas-
trous path that human history has taken, we are being observed with
rapt attention. “In this speck of a world the whole heavenly universe
manifests the greatest interest, for Christ has paid an infinite price
for the souls of its inhabitants.” The rest of the universe is intently watching
our pathetic blue glow and wondering how it will all come to an end.

And God’s offering of this “infinite price” was nothing less than
astonishing. God, the ultimate scientist, literally injected Himself into
the Petri dish and became a bacterium.

C. S. Lewis has described this jarring image as the “irreverent doc-
trine.” That God should lower Himself to this level is beyond human
imagination. Even to think about it seems almost a sacrilege. Yet this is
what He did.

“What is beyond all space and time,” Lewis wrote, “what is un-
created, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into
His own universe, and rose again, bringing nature up with Him.”

Of all the unfathomable mysteries of the universe, the Incarnation
has to be one of the greatest. First, how could something like this—per-
manently “clothing” divinity in the form of humanity—be accomplish-
ished? Second, why would He do it?

We know more about the “why” than we’ll probably ever know about
the “how.”

Simply put, the most immediate answer to why God would do such a
thing is that He loves us, and this was the only way to save us. No
amount of tower building could ever accomplish that.

If it could ever be said that God was impulsive, this would have to be
it. In giving up His own Son to save us, He was operating under an
impulse of love. “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid
down his life for us” (1 John 3:16, NIV).

But beyond the mere salvation of our species, there is also the goal of
demonstrating God’s character to the watching universe. This issue is
what is known to theologians and philosophers as theodicy: “A vindica-
tion of God’s goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil.”

Ultimately, of course, God does not have to vindicate Himself to
anyone anywhere. If He truly did have to prove Himself, then whoever
it is He’d be proving Himself to would be superior to Him. There is
no such thing as a court of public opinion before which God must
defend Himself.

It’s far more a matter that when all is said and done, when Christ
returns and establishes His everlasting

ing kingdom, when sin has been blotted out finally and irrevocably,
then everything will make eminently good sense to anyone who wishes to
consider the meaning of it all. The only possible response will be, “Why,
yes, of course!”

So in the meantime, while we await the final chapters in God’s vast
metanarrative, our role as Christians is to communicate to the world His
love and His promise and His hope.

“The inhabitants of the heavenly universe expect the followers of
Christ to shine as lights in the world.” And as we shine, if we surrender our-
seves to the power that is available through God, it will amount to far
more than a mere blue glow.

REFERENCES

5 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 22.