

A Mistaken Idea Corrected

By A. V. Olson, Retired Vice-President
General Conference

IN THE beginning, when our world came from God's hands, it was perfect in every respect. There was not a blighted leaf or wilted flower to mar its beauty, not a discordant note to disturb its harmony. There was nothing anywhere to hurt or to destroy God's handiwork.

But since the entrance of sin, changes have come to our world. Its beauty has been marred. Its harmony has been disturbed. Under the curse of sin the earth has brought forth thorns and thistles, briars and weeds, to complicate the toil of the tiller of the soil. Worms, bugs, grubs, insects, and deadly fungi have attacked plant life in the fields and gardens, in the forests and fruit orchards. Against these enemies man must continually battle in his efforts to secure from the soil a living for himself. Many of the animals that were man's companions and friends before sin entered our world have become man's enemies, and they seek to destroy both him and his goods. Even the air seems to have been invaded by dangerous insects and contaminated by microscopic germs and viruses, against which man must wage incessant warfare.

In order to live out his natural span of life in spite of these elements, man has sought successful ways and means to combat his defiling and destructive enemies in nature. Thorns and thistles, briars and weeds, he constantly digs out or destroys by poison. Ferocious beasts he is gradually eliminating. Rodents and other creatures that destroy crops, he traps or poisons. Trees, bushes, and plants he sprays to kill the worms, bugs, insects, et cetera, that prey upon them. Even the air he breathes and many objects he touches he sprays to destroy deadly microbes that threaten his life. Constantly he is engaged in a battle for his very existence.

Some sincere Christians believe it is wrong to destroy life of any kind, that the sixth commandment forbids all destruction of animal life. This con-

viction is, we believe, a mistake. The commandment that says "Thou shalt not kill" is one of the Decalogue's six commandments that govern man's relationship to his fellow men; it forbids murder, but not the killing of an animal or insect. We know of no text in the Bible that proves or even intimates that it is wrong for man to destroy the life of animals (large or small), reptiles, worms, insects, and germs that threaten man's health and even his life.

Light is thrown on this subject by Ellen G. White:

"There are those who say that nothing, not even insects, should be killed. God has not entrusted any such message to His people. It is possible to stretch the command, 'Thou shalt not kill,' to any limit; but it is not according to sound reasoning to do this. Those who do it have not learned in the school of Christ.

"This earth has been cursed because of sin, and in these last days vermin of every kind will multiply. These pests must be killed, or they will annoy and torment and even kill us, and destroy the work of our hands and the fruit of our land. In places there are ants which entirely destroy the woodwork of houses. Should not these be destroyed? Fruit trees must be sprayed, that the insects which would spoil the fruit may be killed. God has given us a part to act, and this part we must act with faithfulness. Then we can leave the rest with the Lord.

"God has given no man the message, Kill not ant or flea or moth. Troublesome and harmful insects and reptiles we must guard against and destroy, to preserve ourselves and our possessions from harm. And even if we do our best to exterminate these pests, they will still multiply."—*Manuscript 70, 1901.*