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number 1



The case for a  
recent creation

Keepers of treasure

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## “HIS GLORIOUS RICHES”

“**A**nd this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, NLT).<sup>1</sup>

Paul’s reminder to the Philippian church remains one of my favorite Bible verses, although the reason for it being my favorite has changed over time. Growing up with a desire to have more than what my parents could afford, I felt comforted when I read this verse. I longed and hoped for more than I had, and this verse gave me that hope, but my focus was on the material things I desired. Those longings flashed across my mind every now and then and gave me a sense of excitement. I soon came to realize that I was not alone in my desires because human nature always craves for the material—and more of it.

Such a desire was present even among the disciples. At one time, Peter asked Jesus, “We left everything to follow you, what then will there be for us?” (Matthew 19:27, NIV).<sup>2</sup> Jesus’ answer portrays the wholistic nature of what to expect from God: “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters, or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29). Ultimately, what we can expect from God is not only happiness here in this life, but also the gift of even great value—eternal life. But in offering this eternal life, Jesus laid down a corollary: “for my sake.” Jesus made it clear that eternal life is ours only if the abandonment of self and all its possessions takes place for His sake. While heaven is our ultimate goal, experiencing eternal life begins here in this life, and that, too, is a gift from God. The gift begins with forgiveness of sin, an experience of justification, and an “assurance of eternal life in the kingdom of God.”<sup>3</sup> Such an experience is followed by a lifetime process of sanctification, a “habitual communion with God.”<sup>4</sup> Both of these are gifts received by faith and conscious choice.

The whole process of redemption—receiving forgiveness of sin, being justified with God, and walking the path of sanctification—involves God’s guidance in every step of the way. As sinners, when we come to Him, He accepts us as we are. By His grace He forgives our sin. We are justified through faith. As we continue to surrender our lives to Him, His grace leads us in the path of sanctification. We are empowered to live our physical, social, emotional, and spiritual lives. All these steps of Christian life are God’s glorious riches. Therefore, to limit the promise of God’s riches to the material and the financial, to the here and now, is, being too narrow-minded, and reveals an insufficient understanding of a redemption. God who “supplies seed to the sower and bread for food” (2 Corinthians 9:10) has promised to supply all our needs and much more.

But when the Bible refers to giving according to His glorious riches, it is speaking of what is best for us, the best time for us to receive it, and other attributes that are more fundamental. God is rich in knowing that some things may harm us, as well as knowing that others may hinder us from

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desiring to do His will or stop us from gaining eternal life. He has also given us the ability to make the right choices for our health, our future, our families, our education, our employment, and every other aspect of life. He wants us to trust Him and come in faith, believing He will supply the best according to His glorious riches.

The story of Ruth made me understand better that when God supplies according to His riches, this means more than material things. Remember Ruth? She and her family had experienced grief and tragedy beyond understanding. Elimelech and Naomi moved with their two sons to Moab to escape the famine in their homeland of Bethlehem in Judah. In the land of Moab, the sons married local girls, Orpah and Ruth. It so happened that Elimelech died, and after some time his sons also died in Moab, and suddenly, the three widows faced the plight of having to manage their lives with no roots and no sustenance. The three women faced the new frightening reality. Naomi chose to return to Bethlehem, and suggested that her daughters-in-law stay in their homeland of Moab. Orpah made the choice of returning to her father's home in Moab, but Ruth clung to Naomi, with the profound announcement, "Where you go I will go . . . Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 2:16). Consequently, the widows Naomi and Ruth headed for Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem, they faced life alone—yet not alone. Naomi instructed Ruth to trust God, and directed her to seek work in the fields of Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's husband. Ruth followed the counsel of her mother-in-law and trusted that the God she had chosen to follow would work things out. We all know the rest of the story, and how Ruth's life—and through her, Naomi's hope—were fulfilled. Note how God's glorious riches were bestowed upon Ruth, as she discovered a new life step by step (Ruth 2:8–18):

- Ruth received guidance: "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here."
- She received protection: "I have told the men not to lay a hand on you."
- She received provision: "And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars."
- She received encouragement: "May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

- She received fellowship: "At mealtime . . . 'Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.'"
- She received acceptance: "Boaz gave orders to his men, 'Let her gather among the sheaves and don't reprimand her.'"
- She received satisfaction: "Ruth also brought out and gave [Naomi] what she had left over after she had eaten enough."

Such are the blessings that satisfy the genuine needs of humanity. God according to His glorious riches knows that we need these, and when we come to Him as our Redeemer, our Savior, He provides us guidance, protection, provision, encouragement, fellowship, acceptance, total satisfaction—indeed, heaven itself. Humanity is, in various ways, forever seeking after these things, but it takes the faith and perseverance of Ruth to discover that all such blessings God makes available to us as free gifts if we choose to go to Him.

As a sign of total acceptance and fellowship, Boaz extended to Ruth, a Moabite and a foreigner, fellowship and acceptance that led to one of the greatest blessings one could imagine: Ruth became the ancestor of Jesus in the long lineage whereby the Son of God became the Son of Man in order to make the exceedingly precious promises of redemption and the blessings of His glorious riches available to all those who accept Him in faith. A life that is centered in Jesus, a life that follows His lead and guidance, will discover that in Him and through Him every disappointment becomes an appointment with God, every threat of failure or discouragement becomes an opportunity through which God's glorious riches will be manifest.

"Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him!" (Psalm 34:8).<sup>1</sup>

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ARIEL A. ROTH

# THE CASE FOR A RECENT CREATION

While the scientific community rejects the biblical account of beginnings, there is a significant body of scientific data that is hard to explain unless you believe in the recent creation depicted in the Bible.

Most scientists categorically reject the idea that God created our world a few thousand years ago. Famed Harvard biologist Richard Lewontin plainly describes science’s strong secular ethos when he states, “we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a Pew Research survey of members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science found that “just over half of scientists (51%) believe in some form of deity or higher power; specifically, 33% of scientists say they believe in God, while 18% believe in a universal spirit or higher power.”<sup>2</sup>

The paradox is that slightly more than half of scientists believe in a higher power, but they are not allowed to consider this as they interpret nature. While God was commonly included in scientific interpretations two centuries ago, leaders in science now insist on a strong secular interpretation. Most of the pioneers of modern science such as Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Boyle, Pascal, and Linnaeus, all honored God as they expressed their interpretations. God had established the laws of nature that made science possible. This demonstrates that one can do very good science while including God in the equation. Furthermore, most of these scientists believed in the biblical account of creation and the great Genesis flood. Now, those views are considered myth, not only by many scientists, but also by most leading Christian denominations. Scientists can speculate about a multitude of things such as zillions of unauthenticated universes, or how caterpillars happen to evolve into butterflies by random mutations, but they cannot speculate about God! An antireligious bias now dominates in science.

Do scientists have to exclude God as they interpret nature? What if God exists? Why should God be excluded if one is looking for the real truth (reality) about nature? When specific views are not allowed, academic freedom is compromised. However, at present, the prevailing views in the Western world follow science's restricted interpretations that life forms evolved gradually over billions of years and that the crust of the Earth is the result of slow, gradual, geologic changes. Part of the reason for insisting on long ages is that evolution needs all the time it can muster to try to accommodate a plethora of virtually impossible fortuitous events.

*Does a scientific have to exclude God as he interprets nature? What if God exists? Why should God be excluded if one is looking for the real truth (reality) about nature? When specific views are not allowed, academic freedom is compromised.*

On the other hand, the Bible indicates that a few thousand years ago, God prepared the Earth and created the various kinds of life in a six-day creation event. The universe and the matter of the Earth might be very old, but the creation of life is recent.<sup>3</sup> After that creation, humanity's wickedness became so great that God sent a worldwide flood to mitigate the rampant evil. That Flood plays a crucial part in the argumentation between science and the Bible. In a biblical context, the Flood is the event responsible for much of the sedimentary geological layers and the many fossils found therein. This is in contrast to the prevailing scientific interpretation that the sedimentary layers were laid down slowly, and the fossils represent the gradual evolution of life forms over billions of years.

Science's restricted view introduces a tremendous bias in its articles and textbooks when only mechanistic (materialistic, naturalistic) interpretations are allowed. Any appeal to the authority of science needs to keep this bias in perspective. The Bible is more open in its intellectual approach as it encourages the study of nature (Romans 1:20, Psalm 19:1); but science does not encourage the study of the world's most significant book, the Bible. While science is highly successful in certain areas, in others, like the deep questions of origins, its credentials remain challenged as long as it restricts its horizon to a mechanistic menu.

When studying the book of nature, one can find significant scientific *data*—in contrast to *interpreta-*

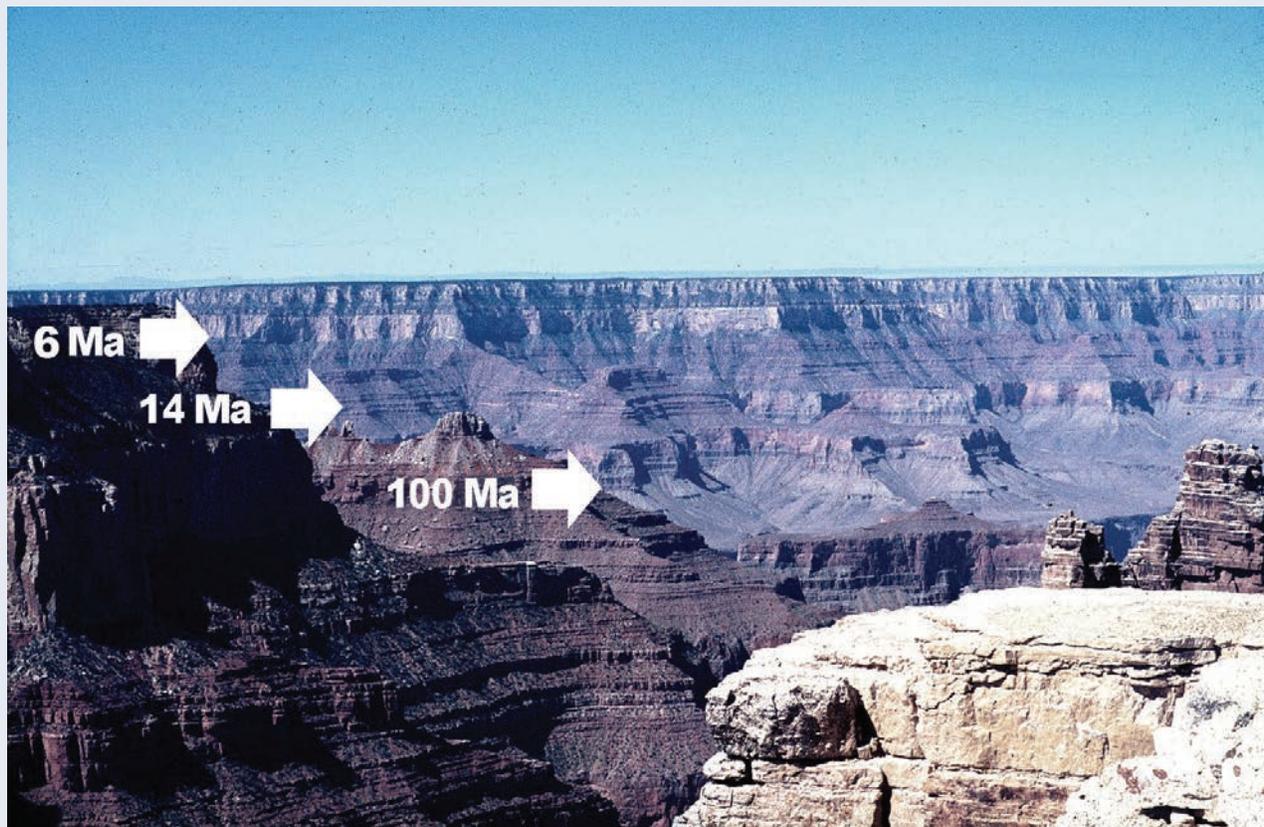
*tions*— for p.7 also (figure 1) that favor the biblical model of a recent creation and the great Genesis flood. Evolution faces severe challenges,<sup>4</sup> such as how millions of delicate organic molecules came together at the same time and place on an empty Earth to form the first living cell. Or why there are virtually no fossil intermediates between the major groups of organisms. Of special interest to the biblical account of beginnings are data that favor a recent creation. Time is a key issue, whether or not the fossiliferous sedimentary layers were laid down rapidly by the Flood. A few examples of this kind of data follow.<sup>5</sup>

1. Erosion of our continents occurs too rapidly to allow for the evolutionary timeline. Weathering, especially from rain and rivers, continually erodes our continents, which should have been washed into the oceans more than one hundred times during the billions of years of their postulated geologic age. But they are still here! Geologists try to explain this by proposing that the continents and mountain ranges are renewed from below. This is invalid, since a lot of the geologic column, from old to young, still remains on the continents, and the Earth has not gone through even one cycle of erosion of its continents!<sup>6</sup>

2. Protein molecules do not survive for lengthy periods of time. Scientists suggest thousands to one million years as a maximum for most proteins. Yet, recently, soft tissue that is composed of proteins and possibly red blood cells have been found in very old fossils, including dinosaur bones assumed to be around 80 million years old.<sup>7</sup> Considerable discussion has been generated in the scientific literature trying to explain this. The data fits better with the biblical account of a recent creation.

3. The slow decay rate of some radioactive elements is often used as evidence for geologic ages of millions to billions of years. However, carbon-14, which decays relatively rapidly, should not exist *at all* in samples older than a million years. Yet, tests of about a hundred samples of marine fossils, coal, graphite, and diamonds, all assumed to be hundreds of millions of years old, revealed that each one still contained some carbon-14. This indicates that the samples are less than 80,000 years old, the upper limit of carbon-14 testing sensitivity.<sup>8</sup> Some try to resolve the discrepancy by suggesting that these presumably ancient samples were later contaminated by some carbon-14, but experiments challenge that explanation.<sup>9</sup>

4. According to evolutionary interpretations, the genus *Homo* has existed for more than two million years, and humanity (*Homo sapiens*) for between 200,000 and 600,000 years. Yet the significant and undebatable evidence for human activity, such as writing and major architectural achievements like pyramids and aqueducts



**FIGURE 1: VIEW OF THE GRAND CANYON OF THE COLORADO RIVER**

Note the widespread flat layers, in contrast to the irregular effects from erosion of the canyon itself. The arrows point to three gaps (paraconformities) where major parts of the geologic column are missing. The numbers refer to the millions of years (Ma) postulated to be missing, yet the contacts are nearly flat. For instance, the Ordovician and Silurian periods of the geologic column, and more, are missing at the lowest arrow, and during that postulated 100 million years—based on average rates of erosion for the world continents—one would expect two miles (3.2 kilometers) of erosion. However, the Grand Canyon is only about one mile deep!

are all only a few thousand years old, as would be expected for the biblical model of origins. It seems incongruous that humanity would have been around for hundreds of thousands of years without leaving monuments of its activity until the last two percent of that time. Maybe humanity has not been around for that long.

5. The incredibly widespread geological formations (i.e., groups of similar layers) of the sediments on the crust of the Earth are as what would be expected from worldwide flood activity. Many of these unique formations, such as the ones in the Grand Canyon, are spread over several states. This is in contrast to the slow, irregular *localized* deposition by streams, rivers, or lakes that we see occurring now on the surface of Earth's continents, and

what would be expected during the assumed millions of years of slow deposition. These formations are relatively thin (considering their far-reaching extent), suggesting unusually widespread catastrophic activity, which would be expected from a worldwide flood. For instance, the Dakota Formation averages only 100 feet (30 meters) thick, but is spread over 315,000 square miles (900,000 square kilometers) in nine Western states of the United States. Proportionately, if the surface area of the Dakota Formation were represented by the surface of an ordinary sheet of paper (20-pound weight), its thickness would be less than one-tenth that of the paper.<sup>10</sup>

6. These relatively thin and nearly continuous geological formations need widespread flat areas on which

to be deposited. This is what one would expect from a worldwide flood, with one layer being rapidly laid down over another. While one can occasionally see evidence of minor erosion within or between layers, as expected for flood activity, that is nothing compared to the present irregular eroded surface topography of much of our continents. The past seems very different. Furthermore, where major parts of the geological column are missing between some of the layers because sediments were not laid down there, one does not see at the exposed surfaces the irregular erosion that would be expected during the many millions of years postulated for these gaps. (See Figure 1 for examples in the Grand Canyon.) These flat gaps, called paraconformities, severely challenge the millions of years postulated for the long geologic ages. The problem is that over time, on the surface of our restless Earth, either there is deposition, in which case there is no gap, or there is erosion, which carves an irregular topography. When the gaps are flat, that indicates little time, as would be expected from rapid worldwide flood activity.<sup>11</sup>

While the scientific community rejects the biblical account of beginnings, there is a significant body of scientific data that is hard to explain unless one accepts the recent creation depicted in the Bible. Ellen White provided an insightful perspective when she wrote: “Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.”<sup>12</sup>

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# KEEPERS OF TREASURE

JOHN WESLEY TAYLOR V

What we do in our « spare time » is of vital importance to our lives, and to the lives of others. It can make a fortune or wreck it. It can build character or destroy it. In essence, what you do with your time presents your philosophy of life.

Ashpenaz sighed.<sup>1</sup> The day had been unbearably hot, the scorching sun beating down unmercifully. It was always oppressively hot this time of the year, although by evening, a breeze would blow across the desert sands. With the gates to the city now bolted shut, however, there was little hope of that relief.

To make matters worse, after Ashpenaz had stood guard all day at the closed gate, the captain had ordered him to stand another watch. Tonight, of all nights, with the entire city celebrating the feast of Ishtar. Probably

the captain would be partying with some of his favorite men. And unfortunately, Ashpenaz was not one of them. Just that afternoon, in fact, the captain had called him lazy, insolent, a good-for-nothing.

His parents, of course, had held high hopes for him. They had named him Ashpenaz, after the chief officer in the court of the great Nebuchadnezzar. Perhaps they thought it would bring good luck. Well, they had tried—sending him to the best schools in Babylon. But school had always seemed too much work. He'd rather just relax and be cool.



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That's when he decided that the military might be a good option—excitement, adventure, fun, a chance to become someone. Well, at least that's what the recruiter had told him. But here he was, stuck at the bottom rung of the ladder, guarding a closed gate day after dreary day, and now, night after endless night.

Was it hot!

### DANIEL AND THE SCROLL

Not far away, about halfway between the river gates and the palace, Daniel arrived back at his room in the quarters of the magi. He had spent most of the day at the royal library, researching references to the Medes and Persians. With the Medo-Persian army encroaching on the realm, an energetic young monarch on the Persian throne, and the Babylonian empire in chaos, one could begin to see the writing on the wall.

On entering the room, Daniel walked straight to the window, the one facing west, toward Jerusalem. He raised his hands above his head and blessed Yahweh, the God of Abraham.

Unlike most of the magi's quarters, Daniel's dwelling wasn't lavishly furnished. In fact, besides the basic necessities, the only thing out of the ordinary was a row of clay jars along the inner wall. That's where Daniel kept his treasure—the ancient scrolls. More valuable even than the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, which Belshazzar was probably desecrating at this very moment. The last jar contained the most precious scroll of all—the scroll of Jeremiah the prophet.

Daniel carefully removed it from its jar and placed it on the table. Reverently he unrolled the scroll and read again: “This whole country [of Judea] will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever” (Jeremiah 25:11, 12, NIV).<sup>2</sup> “This is what the LORD says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place’” (Jeremiah 29:10). Seventy years. . . . Nearly over . . . .

Suddenly there was a clank of armor at the door, “O Daniel, chief counselor and wisest of the magi, his majesty, Belshazzar, son of Nabonidus, son of Nebuchadnezzar the Great, desires you to come at once to the palace. The matter is urgent!”

What a surprise! It had been some years since Daniel had been summoned. The last time, in fact, was when the Medes had first begun to present a threat to the realm, and Nabonidus had called together the magi for their advice. The recommendation had been to use the king's revenue to strengthen the border fortifications and to station seasoned troops to man those defenses.

But Nabonidus had never acted. In fact, a few weeks later, he had turned the administration of the realm over to his son, Belshazzar, and had retreated to a desert oasis to live a life of seclusion. And Belshazzar was not inclined to strengthen anything. In fact, since the beginning of his co-reign, he had used the royal revenue for one party after another. This last was the most lavish of all.

“Yes, I will go,” Daniel replied. He picked up the scroll and quickly followed the royal bodyguard through the deserted streets.

### A GUARD'S DECISION

Ashpenaz could stand it no longer. What he wouldn't give for a breath of cool, fresh air. To think that it was just on the other side of that gate, wafting through the river channel.

So what if he was to protect the treasures of the king's palace, the hanging gardens, the temple of Marduk. They had never done him any good! Besides, no enemy could ever enter the city through the river gates. Any soldier in armor would sink like a stone. It was time to indulge himself in a bit of comfort, and perhaps even pleasure.

Ashpenaz removed the iron and brass rods that locked the gate. The gate swung open on its own, pushed by the breeze that wound its way through the channel. Relief at last! What a difference a little water can make!

Looking at the river, Ashpenaz noticed that the river didn't seem as full as usual. In fact, he had never seen it this low. The drought must be taking its toll.

In the distance, Ashpenaz could hear the revelry of the men in the soldiers' quarters. He hadn't noticed it before, not with the sound of Belshazzar's band at the palace drowning out all else. But the band had stopped playing. Probably someone was giving a speech. Huh! He had never been one for speeches. Let the music play!

There would be plenty of food and wine at the soldiers' party. And by now, everyone was probably so drunk that no one would remember that he was supposed to be on guard, if they even noticed him at all. Why not! Ashpenaz turned and started toward the party.

He had only walked a short distance, however, when he heard behind him the tramp of feet. Strange . . . . Who would be making rounds on a night like this? He whirled around. There, pouring in through the river gate . . . . The enemy!

Ashpenaz turned to run, but it was too late!<sup>3</sup>

### WHAT ARE YOU GUARDING?

One evening, on a stroll through the Tsarskoe Selo palace garden near St. Petersburg, Nicholas and Alexandra came upon a sentry standing at attention in a secluded corner of the garden. Seeing no particular purpose for a guard in that place, the tsar asked, “Sentry, what are you guarding?”



Ceethymage

What is your treasure? What are you guarding?  
Guard your heart, for everything you do flows from  
it. Your heart is a treasure that you must keep  
secure. It is the key to your future, to your destiny.

“I do not know, sir,” the guard replied. “I was ordered to my post by the captain of the guard.”

Calling the captain, the tsar questioned him, but the captain could not give a reason, replying simply that regulations called for a sentry at that spot. The tsar ordered the archives searched to determine the origin of the regulation that kept such a spot under surveillance day and night, year after year.

Finally it was discovered that Catherine the Great, more than a century before, had planted a prize rosebush at that spot and ordered that a sentry be placed beside it to keep it from being damaged. The rosebush, however, had been dead for decades.<sup>4</sup>

What is your treasure? What are you guarding?

Solomon advised, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV). Your heart is a treasure that you must keep secure. It is the key to your future, to your destiny.

David wrote, “I rejoice at Your word, As one who finds great treasure” (Psalm 119:162, NKJV). The Waldensian Christians at times traveled as merchants of jewels, as a way of obtaining access to the families of nobility. When they had displayed their gems and were asked if they had anything more to sell, they answered, “Yes, we have jewels still more precious than any you have seen; we would be glad to show you these also. We will be glad to show them to you if you promise not to betray us to the clergy.’ . . . ‘We have a precious stone, so brilliant, that by its light a man may see God; another which radiates such a fire as to enkindle the love of God in the heart of its possessor.’” Then, unwrapping the bundle, they brought out portions of Scripture, the most precious of all their treasure.<sup>5</sup> God’s Word, then, is treasure that we must cherish.

There are other treasures that we must protect—treasures of resources and of influence, of talents and of time. The key question is: How will we guard these treasures? We will take the matter of time as a case in point.

#### THE TREASURE OF TIME

How do you use your time?

A few years ago, the BBC reported that a 28-year-old South Korean man had died after playing the game *Starcraft* for more than 50 hours with few breaks.<sup>6</sup> Local papers stated that the man, identified by his family name Lee, had recently been fired from his job for spending too much time playing computer games. That’s when Lee sat down at a local Internet café in the southern city of Taegu. He logged in on August 3, and spent the next two days playing the game. When Lee’s mother had not heard from him by Friday, she asked some of his friends to find him and bring him home. Reaching the café, they confronted Lee, who told them that he would leave as soon as his game was finished. A few minutes later he collapsed. He was taken to the hospital, but died shortly after arriving. A Taegu provincial police official told reporters, “We presume the cause of death was heart failure stemming from exhaustion.”

Some people worry about how long they are going to live. But more important than length of life is how we spend each day. Some years ago, there was an ad that shocked passersby by proclaiming in bold letters: “You have 24 hours to live.” Below, in smaller type, it added, “Today, that is.” Imagine that you suddenly received notice that you had only 24 hours to live. How would you spend that time? What would you do, and what would you not do?

What we do in our “spare time” is of vital importance to our lives, and to the lives of others. It can make a fortune or wreck it. It can build character or destroy it. In essence, what you do with your time reveals your philosophy of life.

When Thomas Edison was a train newsboy, he laid over in Detroit between runs. Many young men would perhaps have gone to the movies or just hung out with friends. But Edison went to the local library. The books that he read became the foundation for many of his inventions.

So how do you use your free time? Even 10 minutes can make a difference. Because 10 minutes per day, five days a week, amounts to more than 43 hours in a year. That is more than a full week’s vacation! But there is more.

### THE MATTER OF PRIORITIES

Try this experiment. Take a wide-mouthed jar, and place some rocks in it, stones as large as will fit through the mouth of the jar. When no more rocks will fit inside, you might assume that the jar is full; but actually, it is not yet full.

Now take some gravel and dump it in the jar, shaking the jar so that the pieces of gravel work themselves down into the spaces between the rocks. Keep adding gravel until no more will fit. Is the jar now full?

You’re right. Not yet. Bring some dry sand, and pour it in the jar. As you shake the jar gently, watch as it filters into the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Keep adding sand until no more fits. Is the jar finally full?

No. Grab a pitcher of water and pour water in until the jar is filled to the brim.

What is the point? Take another similar jar, and attempt to add the same amount of each ingredient, but in reverse order, starting with the water. What happens? Even though the ingredients are the same, many of the stones will no longer fit.

Here is the truth: If you don’t put the big rocks in first, you’ll never get them in at all.

Our life is made up of choices. It is crucial that we begin with those matters of greatest importance. That’s what Jesus meant when He said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33, NKJV). Jesus applied these priorities in His own life. After a long day—a day that had lasted far into the night, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35).

What do you do with your time? Are you helping another human being toward a better life? Are you doing something to overcome hate in this world? Are you making a difference?

Sometimes we get so caught up in the urgent, that we miss out on the truly important. Ask yourself, “What can I do in this day, in this hour, at this moment that will matter in eternity?” Time is short; it is uncertain; it is irrecoverable. Make each day, each hour, bring you closer to God, nearer to heaven.

### CONCLUSION

Paul wrote, “We have this treasure in jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7). There is treasure, God-given treasure, in our lives. How well do we guard it?

The secret to guarding treasure is to truly value it. Do you value the treasure that God has entrusted to you? The enemy wants to creep in and seize your treasure. Don’t let that happen!

Focus your life on the truly important. Keep your treasure—your time, your talents, your resources, your influence—safe, secure in the hands of God. ☮

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The opening story in this article is historical fiction.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture texts in this article are quoted from the *New International Version* of the Bible.
3. Based on Daniel 5; Isaiah 44:28–45:7; Jeremiah 51:57, 58; <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/isaiah/45-2.htm>; <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/5-1.htm>; <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/daniel/5-31.htm>.
4. Robert Atchison, “A Romanov Passion for Flowers,” 1997. <http://www.alexanderpalace.org/palace/blog.html?pid=1213306016379451>.
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6. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4137782.stm>; [http://starcraft.wikia.com/wiki/Lee\\_Seung\\_Seop](http://starcraft.wikia.com/wiki/Lee_Seung_Seop). *Starcraft* is an online battle simulation game.



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# SENDING JUSTICE TO VICTORY

WARREN A. SHIPTON AND WAYNE R. SHIPTON

Why a merciful, loving God does not stop injustice is an age-old question. It has some rational answers rooted in the nature of God.

Calling to account those who slaughtered the innocents in Bethlehem and surrounding areas (Matthew 2:16), to the genocidal activities of rulers of nations since, is something that must surely be an almost universal cry. Similar concerns bothered Epicurus and supposedly the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> They, and many since, have held God responsible for the lack of observable justice, dismissed Him as a person of consequence, or doubted His existence entirely.

We imagine that Epicurus probably possessed an inflated opinion of Greek philosophy, to which he was contributing. This was undoubtedly influenced by the rising importance of the nation following the stellar performance of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.). Epicurus' emphasis was on avoiding suffering, and an important element in his developing worldview was disparagement of the idea that any of the gods cared about human affairs or, indeed, had any role in human existence.<sup>2</sup> He represents one of the ancient links to modern evolutionary thought. His first misstep was to base his philosophy on egocentric concepts.

## WORLDVIEW AND JUSTICE

The worldview we adopt matters. It shapes how we view and relate to life and what we think about justice and ultimately suffering. If we believe that our present actions will determine what happens to our existence after death, without any faith involvement in a personal, knowable God, then we are embracing a worldview that resembles Buddhist and Hindu philosophy. But these views were not effectively challenged anciently nor are they at present.

Daniel, the prophet who lived about the same time as the Buddha, championed an alternative worldview

based on the concept that the Earth and the things in it were created by a personal God. His convictions were based on his real-life experience with God (Daniel 6:16–22). He understood that his God could be described as love (Deuteronomy 10:12–15) a concept that has two foundational components, mercy and justice (Psalm 85:10; Isaiah 16:5). Daniel had no problem reconciling the concept that the Savior’s crucifixion bridged the gap between human beings and God, following their disobedience (Daniel 9:24–27; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:21–25). Faith and reason were inseparable companions in his mind, as well as in the apostle Paul’s (Daniel 1:7–14; Acts 24:24, 25). The thought that Jesus came down from heaven to rescue humanity scandalized the ancient philosophers, for it represented an inversion of their values<sup>3</sup>—the wise rescuing the foolish was inconceivable to them.

Daniel’s closest companion prophet in terms of emphasis (in our modern Bible) is John. He clearly found faith and reason compatible and urged readers to exercise both (Revelation 13:18; 14:12). The intellectual framework on which he built his faith was the Great Controversy/sanctuary worldview (Revelation 3:12; 11:2, 19; 12:1–17). This represents a sequential account of the existence of created, free-willed intelligences, their rejection of elements of moral law, the consequences flowing from such disobedience, the intervention of a merciful Creator to restore humanity, and, finally, the just rewards (judgments) given to all consistent with their acts and responses to God’s mercy. John’s belief came from his personal encounters with Christ while He was on earth and the visions given to him while on Patmos. This coming down of God to communicate with humans was a polar opposite of the prevailing notion. The Greeks believed that individuals could rise up to the divine through effort exerted and/or join with the divine in imagination through mystical exercises.<sup>4</sup>

Our worldview circumscribes who we are, and this is inseparably connected with what we believe about our origins and destiny—and ultimately determines how we act. One writer has argued comprehensively that individuals, through embracing the mercy revealed in the Great Controversy worldview are transformed in thinking (cf. Romans 12:1, 2) and are the ones described by John as having the “testimony of Jesus.”<sup>5</sup>

### WITNESS CONCERNING JESUS

All genuine prophets have witnessed or testified to the character of God and His plan to save humanity. This is true from Moses to John (Hebrews 11:23–28; 2 Peter 1:16–21; 1 John 1:1–4), and extends to the more recent revolutionaries (e.g., Calvin, Luther). It includes God’s special envoys such as William Tyndale and Ellen White.

*Agape* love is the special quality possessed and displayed by God (1 John 4:16), to which mercy and justice are

inseparably linked. These latter characteristics are foundational pillars of His character (Psalm 85:10; cf. Isaiah 16:5). In a special sense, mercy and justice kissed at the Cross.<sup>6</sup> This reveals that God’s love was so all inclusive and deep that Christ paid the penalty (expressed His mercy) for human wrongdoing by His death on the cross (Romans 5:12–15; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6). The extravagant display of mercy indicated that an irrefutable case existed for all human beings to receive negative rewards for their disregard of or failure to keep God’s moral law (Romans 5:12–15, 18). This transaction, initiated by God, signalled to all human beings that they are at liberty to freely access the gift of life through faith, hence qualifying them for salvation apart from human works (Romans 5:1, 2; 6:12, 13). If human beings fail to accept this gift and do not give their wholehearted devotion to the Savior, this can only be answered by “an annihilating judgment on the selfish life” that refuses to respond to the offer of being remade in God’s image and receiving eternal life.<sup>7</sup>

An atheist has a realistic view of life without God in that human existence encompasses only the time from birth to death. There is no immortal element in the human soul that can experience eternal punishment or eternal enjoyment. A careful examination of Scripture substantiates this view, as well as the concept that death need not be final if God’s gift of *agape* is accepted. The gift of immortality through resurrection of the body is possible because the penalty for human disobedience (death) has been paid by a merciful Christ. This means that the penalty for failure to keep God’s moral law has been paid. It is only *agape*-type love that can bridge the gap between mercy and justice.

### THE TEMPLE OF WITNESS

The sanctuary that Moses constructed in the wilderness during the Exodus gave powerful witness to the Great Controversy worldview and highlighted love, mercy, justice, and judgment.

In this sanctuary, Passover ceremonies heralded the commencement of activities during the religious year; and in so doing, linked God’s covering of human nakedness (mercy) in Eden with its ultimate fulfilment at Calvary. At Calvary, Christ provided for human wrongdoing to be covered, hence expressing extravagant love in an act of mercy and justice. In the sanctuary model, the religious year ended with scenes of fellowship and rejoicing (Leviticus 23:33–44) symbolic of the righteous rejoicing on the sea of glass described by John following Christ’s second coming (Revelation 7:9–12).

Preparatory to this joyous event were the Day of Judgment (Atonement) ceremonies where the transactions of justification offered to repentant sinners throughout the year were honored and where the responsibility for inducing believers to sin was placed to Satan’s account (See Azazel goat story—Leviticus

*Our worldview circumscribes who we are and this is inseparably connected with what we believe about our origins and destiny and ultimately determines how we act.*

16:20–22). This established in the minds of all the solemn, joyful nature of Judgment Day.

The ceremonies on this day focused on the most holy place and its sole piece of furniture, the ark of the testimony (Leviticus 16), which witnessed to the love, mercy, and justice of God. We can assert this because the mercy seat was above the moral law (Ten Commandments). Its requirements could be satisfied only through faith in Christ's spilt blood (blood was ceremonially sprinkled on the mercy seat—Leviticus 16:14, 15; Romans 3:25).

The law itself is an expression of God's love as proclaimed anciently (Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12, 13, 18–20) and again so beautifully by Jesus (Matthew 22:36–40). In fact, the first four commandments have been likened by some David Asscherick<sup>8</sup> to a marriage contract where one promises to be faithful, devoted, respectful, and spend time with the one loved.

The beauty about the witness of the temple/sanctuary is that it continues today, for the prophet John saw it featuring prominently in last-day events (Revelation 15:5–8). This is meant to convey hope and encouragement, for God has promised a crown of life to those who love Him (James 1:12). Jesus will send justice to victory, or as one version has it “until he has brought justice through to victory” (Matthew 12:20, ISV).

### LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

Bertrand Russell once said “Fear is the basis of religious dogma.”<sup>9</sup> There is much truth to this claim. Many religions are based on fear, with believers seeking to gain favor with their gods or appease them by rituals of sacrifice, penance, deprivation, or torture. Devotees of a theology that includes fear are unsure of the future, and this element of uncertainty and suspense is used as a tool to induce conformity. Two ideas that commonly are taught in the Christian environment are purification in purgatory and punishment in hell. These concepts are pagan in origin.<sup>10</sup> They were created within the ancient church environment to promote trust in human doctrines, sacraments, and effort as essential to salvation. The benefits to the hierarchy of such a system were enormous.

For those who believe *sola scriptura*, these doctrines lack credibility. The idea of purgatory denies the cen-

tral teaching of the gospel: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, NKJV).<sup>11</sup> The idea of hell is built on the concept of a conscious existence after death, a notion specifically rejected by Scripture (Psalm 115:17; Ecclesiastes 9:5). Furthermore, the idea of an eternally burning hell, where all manner of torments are perpetrated, is contrary to the character of God, for the principles of heaven are based on love (Deuteronomy 10:12–15; Matthew 22:37–40; John 15:12).

“God has given us not a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Love casts out fear and provides us with the concepts of equality, fraternity, and liberty; something that some revolutionaries have considered special to themselves.<sup>12</sup> God offers us freedom/liberty from guilt irrespective of our status (2 Corinthians 6:12). The pain and guilt of sin's burden is removed. To accept Christ's love means liberation from fear. Having accepted God's forgiveness, we have no fear of the unknown. God's plan of salvation firmly establishes the idea that the reign of fear is finished in the believer's mind. Notice how the apostle Paul expresses this thought: “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out ‘Abba Father’” (Romans 8:15). Here the assurance is given that there is a loving Father in heaven “whose profession is to pardon.”<sup>13</sup> Believers who accept the concept of justification by faith feel reassured that when death comes, they enter “a sleep that is strong and sweet,” as Martin Luther put it.<sup>14</sup> Such individuals do not fear the judgment.

Undoubtedly, there is a negative side to God's judgments for those who have rejected His love. He is the awesome Creator-God and Judge who will ensure that justice is not only seen to be done but *is* done (Daniel 7:9, 10; Revelation 6:15–17). For those who allow His love to possess and transform them, judgment is desirable and a reason to rejoice (Deuteronomy 32:36, 43; Psalm 82:8; Daniel 7:22). To judge means to justify, save, deliver, and vindicate.<sup>15</sup> The reality is that in Revelation 14 the judgment is presented as part of the gospel, an idea not lost on the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 61:1–3). If we are to accept this meaning as a reality in our lives, then we will both fear God and give Him glory.<sup>16</sup>

Jesus assures us that “whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; for he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24, NIV). Those who are willing to cooperate with God have nothing to fear. They embrace the idea of a pre-advent judgment as they recognize its necessary legal function in establishing God's justice before the intelligences of the universe. He honors those who have placed their confidence and trust in Him. He also honors the decisions of those who have chosen not to believe while at the same time revealing the pervers-

sity of supposedly loyal religious and political powers arraigned against His kingdom (Daniel 7, 8).

The chief agent in disaffecting men and women is Satan. He will be revealed for what he is and be eliminated with his devotees. This is the ultimate expression of justice, for each of these individuals in turn has refused God's forgiveness and love, and has devoted energies to selfish ends and to misrepresenting God.<sup>17</sup>

### REJOICE, FOR GOD HAS PROACTIVELY PROVIDED

The Bible commences with an account of the golden age when all creation rejoiced (Genesis 2:1–3). It also ends on a note of joy (Revelation 22:20). God's decision to create free-willed individuals both in heaven and on earth raised the possibility of their making poor choices. He was not caught unawares when it happened.

The undertaking to provide a way of escape for disobedient humanity through Christ's sacrifice was made before sin arose (1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8). On the day when human distrust of God was expressed, He sought out the shame-filled pair and promised a just resolution of the sin problem (Genesis 3:15). He promised that a sense of enmity or active uncomfortableness would be placed in human minds. The depth of this is explained by the apostle Paul, who is emphatic about the witness of the conscience to the principles of moral law. Attention to this witness is part of God's just assessment of each person's genuine attitude toward Him (Romans 2:14–16). We believe that the conscience was planted at creation, since the principles of the law were operational well before Eden.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, this is one possible meaning for the concept that God "has put eternity in their [human] hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). There is an inbuilt longing for a spiritual connection with the Creator-God.

Another element of God's proactivity is shown in the design of the human body. He made it to function under much more rugged conditions than we could have anticipated in a very good, sin-free world. This can be illustrated by considering just three examples.

- First, *tears*. Tears not only function to bring oxygen to the cornea, but also contain chemicals that kill bacteria and move them and other debris out of the eye to the lachrymal duct, which serves as a drain. The enzyme lysozyme is the most significant antimicrobial component contained in tears. It is able to disintegrate the cell wall of bacteria, rendering them harmless, hence acting as a front-line defense against infection. It is higher in concentration in tears than in other body fluids. The immune system also functions to keep this organ free from infection.<sup>19</sup> The need for such an effective clearing system was minimal in Eden, but with the emergence of disease organisms and the occurrence of aerosols and dust particles, its need was expanded.

- Second, *the immune system*. The immune system is a complex biological apparatus necessary for the proper development of the body. It is also necessary for the body's recognition of self (i.e., to prevent autoimmune diseases) and the destruction of harmless microbes entering the blood through normal activities. The immense complexity and adaptability of the system is breathtaking and still imperfectly understood.<sup>20</sup> When we observe the biochemical machinery present in the human body and its ability to foil most acrobatic attempts by microorganisms to gain a foothold, we naturally feel impressed by a Designer who has incorporated such a complex and extensive capacity into His feeling creatures. The immune system has been designed to sense and destroy "alien" organisms or organisms not designed or made by God.

- Third, *blood clotting*. Without a blood-clotting mechanism, the body could not protect itself against even superficial injury. In the ideal world God designed, where nothing hurt or destroyed (Isaiah 65:25; cf. Revelation 21:4), it is conceivable that such a mechanism could have been needed to make adjustments to body tissues following the "normal" movement of blood through the body system. This could have involved clotting and repair on a micro-scale. However, in a less-than-perfect world, the human body's blood-clotting mechanism is capable of coping with quite severe injury. The blood cell replacement mechanisms ensure that we can cope with serious disasters, and also make the relief of pain and suffering possible. The blood platelets sense injury to blood vessels and are activated when they attach to the injured site, where they release chemicals and attract more platelets so that the cells pile up. If a break is minor, they plug the hole without clot formation. Often, other circulating cells and the protein fibrinogen assemble to form a clot, but this activity is restricted to the injured region.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it is clear that God created our bodies to function in a diversity of environments. The flexibility built into their design ensured that they could cope with situations well beyond anything anticipated in a very good world.

### GOD IS NOT INTIMIDATED

God's plans for the creation of a new world with its teaming life forms and its special class of intelligent beings (humans) was completed despite the demands made by Satan to be involved in the creation events. God then executed His plans as an affirmation of the justice of expelling Lucifer from heaven on account of his rebellion. This provided assurance that God was not intimidated by Lucifer's threat to wage warfare to win the ascendancy.<sup>22</sup> Thus we, too, may have absolute confidence in the principles of God's kingdom and His design of the universe and the biological systems it contains. Our robust body systems are integral to God's

overall rescue plan for humanity. So is the design of the human mind, which is able to grasp abstract ideas, to discriminate between right and wrong, make logical deductions, and design ingenious inventions.

God is not intimidated by the passage of time either, as it has a different meaning to Him compared to mortal creatures (2 Peter 3:8). Jesus will send justice to victory after the sealing of the saints (Revelation 7:1–3), for this event ensures they will stand during the last tumultuous events to take place on the earth. He has a plan to deal with evil, a plan that is working according to a well-organized schedule. The plea of Scripture is that all who listen to the voice of conscience respond by filling their minds with serious thoughts. A wholehearted response to God’s unexcelled offer of mercy is the only acceptable response.

## CONCLUSION

Epicurus was a powerful exponent of the idea that a good God cannot coexist with evil, but this idea was generally abandoned by his devotees. Unfortunately, he failed to realize that a God of love cannot be morally consistent if He uses evil to produce a desired outcome. The philosopher did not understand that mercy and justice are the foundation of God’s character and government (Psalm 85:10; 89:14). His pagan background allowed him to imagine evil being eliminated through the use of any or every means. He also drew incorrect conclusions about God by setting a tight time frame for the elimination of suffering.

Epicurus’ simplistic propositions failed to do justice to the complexity of the issue of evil, its instigator (Lucifer/Satan), and the problems of eliminating it through human conceptions. He did not see the possibility of a Creator-Redeemer intervention in resolving the problem of sin and preventing it from arising a second time. This redemptive possibility permeated Jewish religious thought, to which Epicurus conceivably could have gained access if he had desired to do so. The thought that God is a God of love, mercy, and judgment, and that He has provided a way of forgiveness and victory over sin and death is central to the Jewish sanctuary worship services, which in turn symbolized the life, death, and triumph of Jesus in overcoming evil and obtaining salvation for all who believe in Him, both Jew and Gentile.

Thank you, Lord, for sending justice to victory and the promise to take those who accept this truth to glory when You come. ॐ

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God's blessings are not only reserved for the future world to come, but also are a reality already here and now.

# THE LORD WILL PROVIDE: MEDITATION ON GENESIS 22

ARTUR STELE

**G**enesis 22 provides an essential background for the understanding of the sacrifice, atonement, and substitution in the sanctuary service. God told Abraham to send Ishmael away (Genesis 21:12, 13), and then directed him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to Him (Genesis 22:1–13). In both cases, Abraham rose early in the morning to fulfill the biddings. In accomplishing these tasks Abraham was actually saying goodbye to his future, to all of his hopes and dreams. But it goes even further.

Between chapters 21 and 22 are a number of obvious connections. In both narratives God calls upon Abraham, and Abraham hears two distinct and challenging, if not “strange” calls. These narratives contain linguistic, grammatical, and thematic connections.

First, in both places for “go” an unusual Hebrew expression is used: “*lek leka*.” The word is used only in Genesis 12:1 and 22:2. Because of this unique phrase, readers cannot but connect these two passages.

Second, the grammar in both places is similar: an imperative is used, followed by three direct objects.

Genesis 22 states: “*Take*” your son, your precious son whom you love, Isaac. Here for the first time in the Bible the word *love* is used. Genesis 12 tells Abraham: *Leave your country, your homeland, your father’s house*. In both cases, each direct object narrows it down more and more, and zeroes in on something or someone very dear to the heart of Abraham.

Third, in both places God gives the promise to Abraham that He will again communicate with him and provide him with additional information regarding the calls. He promises that He will either show him or tell him. Genesis 12:1: “Get out of your country. . . To a land that I will show you” (NKJV); Genesis 22:2: “. . . on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 22, the promise to engage in additional communication before the actual “goodbye” to his son was of enormous help to Abraham. The phrase: “on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” was the deal breaker.

These three connections between these two calls were also intended to provide additional assistance to Abraham to encourage him to follow God’s calling,

“God not only promises us a future in the kingdom to come, but also blesses us with an abundant life in the present age.”

because they referred to God’s leading in the past. The obvious connection to the first call reminded Abraham “that his obedience to that call had been rewarded with great blessing; now he had the opportunity to show an even greater act of obedience. God was helping him obey by recalling the formal call.”<sup>2</sup>

The way God addressed Abraham in Genesis 22:2 is of great interest. “The divine command ‘Take’ is followed by the particle *-nā*, which is normally translated something like ‘please’ or ‘I beg you.’ . . . *-nā*, which occurs more than sixty times in Genesis, is used only five times in the entire OT when God speaks to a person. Each time God asks the individual to do something staggering, something that defies rational explanation or understanding.”<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly enough, out of the five occurrences of this usage in the Old Testament, God addresses Abraham this way three times: Genesis 22:2; 13:14; and 15:5. Thus, this unusual way that God addresses Abraham serves as a reminder of His previous communication and leading in Abraham’s life. It refers the patriarch back to the promises God has already given to him.

Here’s a lesson for us. Whenever we go through a difficult phase in life, it is good to look back and remember God’s leading in the past. Ellen G. White so eloquently reminds us of this: “In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”<sup>4</sup>

In Genesis 12, the command to leave his country, his homeland, and his father’s house was actually a summons for Abraham to say “goodbye” to his past; and now in chapter 22, Abraham is invited to say “goodbye” to his future. Which is easier to give up: the past or the future?

Here the principle of substitution is beautifully underlined. *Are you willing to give Me your all in*

*exchange of My all to you? You give me your all, and I will give you My all.*

Sometimes we may think that God requires too much from us, but we need to consider what God expects from us in the light of His promises, in the light of what He is giving us in exchange. As we will see from the end of this story, God not only promises us a future in the kingdom to come, but also blesses us with an abundant life in the present age.

Abraham’s response is simple but very meaningful. “Here I am.” Genesis 22 records this phrase three times: twice as a response to God’s speaking to him, and once as a response to Isaac’s puzzling question (vss. 1, 7, 11). The phrase underlines Abraham’s humility on the one hand, and his readiness to serve, on the other.

Genesis 22:2 also names the actual place where Abraham should go, namely to the “land of Moriah.” The only other biblical reference to Moriah is in 2 Chronicles 3:1, where it refers to the temple hill in Jerusalem. This mention of Moriah is significant in that it connects this story with the place where the substitutionary atonement will take place years later through the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross. Isaac had the privilege to serve as a type of the actual sacrifice. It is this ultimate substitutionary atonement that made it possible for Abraham to return home, together with his son Isaac.

Abraham rose early in the morning, split wood for the burnt offering, took his beloved son and two of his servants, saddled his donkey, and began his journey to the mount. “Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you’” (Genesis 22:4, 5).

Here the party splits into two. One party stays with the donkey. The other party goes up the mountain. Abraham describes the purpose of the journey up the mount with the words: “the lad and I will go yonder and

worship.” This is the first time the word *worship* occurs in the Bible. Worship is important in the new relationship God reveals between Himself and His children.

Abraham shows us this and expresses his confidence in God’s guidance and promises by affirming that “we will come back to you.” He is using a plural form here. This also underlines that Abraham understood that God’s blessings are not only reserved for the future world to come, but are already a reality here and now. Abraham believed that he would return in a little while together with his son Isaac. It was this hope that gave him strength to continue the journey, and as verse 6 states, “and the two of them went together.”

As the two walked together, Isaac broke the silence by a question that for Abraham was like a knife piercing through his heart: “My father!” And Abraham responded: “Here I am, my son.” Both use the pronoun *my* (“my father,” “my son”), which underlines the close relationship they enjoyed. The actual question follows: “Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Genesis 22:7).

Abraham’s response was very profound and meaningful. It entailed much more than translations can transmit. Usually, Genesis 22:8 is translated: “God will provide for Himself the lamb.” However, the original Hebrew wording is trying to say more than translations could do justice. Doukhan points to the fact that “the word ‘God’ is put in the beginning of the sentence before the verbal form. This goes counter to the Hebrew regulation, which normally places the verb before its subject. The intention of this irregularity is to emphasize ‘God,’ to indicate that the solution is only in God. It is God who will see.”<sup>5</sup>

The actual rendering “God will provide for Himself the lamb,” is quite difficult. A more exact translation would be, “God will see in connection to Himself,” or, “God will see Himself as the Lamb.”<sup>6</sup> In this way, the substitutionary atonement becomes clearer in the text itself.

The narrative continues: “Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ So he said, ‘Here I am.’” (Genesis 22:9–11).

In Genesis 22:1, God used Abraham’s name only once. In 22:11, however, He calls out his name twice, as if to demonstrate not only the deep desire of the Lord to share the good news to Abraham but also to acknowledge the willingness of Abraham to really fulfill God’s order. God is now ready to intervene: to stop Abraham’s innermost suffering and to acknowledge his readiness to accept the prescribed avenue to salvation. The gospel

thus bursts forth: Salvation is not of the human but of God, and His alone.

Note God’s acknowledgment that Abraham’s faith in His saving purposes was authentic: “You have not withheld your son, your only *son*” (Genesis 22:12). It is indeed a pointer to God’s ultimate sacrifice to save humanity, including Abraham, Isaac, and us, as Paul would later point out: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

Now to the dramatic conclusion of the story. “Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided’” (Genesis 22:13, 14).

At this point it is perhaps of great importance to ask the question, “Why a ram and not a lamb?” After all, Isaac was asking, “Where is the lamb?” Abraham’s response also spoke of a lamb, but a ram is in the picture? Would the usage of a ram here instead of a lamb be to link this Genesis narrative with the services of the Day of Atonement, where also a ram is involved (Leviticus 16)?<sup>7</sup> One can also see the symbolic connection of Genesis 22 with the substitutionary atonement of the ultimate sacrifice for all of us.

Abraham then calls the name of the place: “YHWH Jireh,” meaning “The-Lord-Will-Provide.” The Hebrew verb “*ra’ah*” used here can be translated as “He will be seen.”<sup>8</sup> “In the mount of the Lord HE WILL BE SEEN.” He will show Himself, His character, His love! After such a revelation of God’s love, it is easy to trust Him, to follow Him, be guided by Him. Such a God will not let us down. He will provide! ☸

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# JOSHUA: MODEL IN LEADERSHIP



REYMAND M. HUTABARAT

**W**hat makes a person a godly leader? Before we answer the question, consider one of the finest descriptions of leadership we have. “The greatest want of the world,” wrote Ellen White, “is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”<sup>21</sup>

This inspired statement can apply to many heroes of the Bible, who lived their lives as models of God-centered leadership, such as Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Daniel, Esther, John the Baptist, Paul, etc. Of these, I want to reflect on the life and character of Joshua, the man God chose to succeed Moses to lead Israel into the promised land. Here is a man who was God-centered, faithful and fearless to his calling, full of confidence and trust in God, prayer-focused, full of thankfulness, and a loyal servant of God.

## A GOD-CENTERED MAN

Joshua’s life started with small things, but with great earnestness. His original name was *Hoshea*, which means “a savior.” Later Moses changed the name to *Joshua*, meaning “saved by God” (see Numbers 13:8, 16).

Joshua’s career started as a soldier. Through 40 years of leading Israel as a military commander on the march from the Egypt to the possession of the promised land, Joshua led a faithful and godly life. To be thrust into such prominence in leadership, to be chosen by God as the one who would lead Israel into Canaan, to succeed an eminent leader like Moses, and to fulfill the covenant promise God made to Abraham for a land for His people was no mean recognition of the leadership quality of Joshua, and of his faithfulness and obedience to God. God’s will was Joshua’s will. God’s way was his

By his trust and confidence in God, Joshua left for all posterity a never-to-be-forgotten lesson: Victory in life over every conceivable obstacle, situation, or enemy is not to be found in human strength but in placing oneself in God’s everlasting arms.

way. In between, for Joshua, there was nothing, except to remain faithful to the God who called him for a specific task.

Joshua lived 110 years. The first 45 years of his life were spent in Egypt. For the next 40 years, he was the military commandant of Moses, upholding his hands as he led Israel out of Egypt through the wanderings in the wilderness toward the promise land. The last 25 years of his life, Joshua devoted to lead Israel in the post-Moses era, in the task of occupation, division, and settlement of the promised land to the children of Israel.

## FAITHFUL AND FEARLESS TO HIS CALLING

What unique privileges God gave to Joshua! Here was a historic leader of immense faithfulness to the One who called him. Joshua was the commander who routed the Amalekites in the first battle Israel faced on their road to freedom's prized land (Exodus 17:9–13). God gave Joshua the privilege of accompanying Moses (Exodus 24:13) on that momentous trip up Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Joshua, along with Caleb, were the only ones in a team of 12 sent to spy out the promised land, to bring in a positive report that the land was theirs if Israel would trust in God and march under His banner. The other team members gave a majority report that the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey, but Israel was not strong enough to occupy that land, and so Israel had better return to Egypt (Numbers 13, 14). Between trust in God and fear-filled helplessness, Joshua and Caleb placed their reliance in God, and only those two of the original multitudes who left Egypt were able to enter Canaan. No wonder the mantle of leadership after Moses fell on Joshua, a leader who was faithful to and fearless in his calling.

When God instructed Joshua to lead Israel in the crossing of Jordan, in faith he set up a plan even though he did not have any one to guide him. Joshua “commanded the officers of the people, saying, ‘Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess’” (Joshua 1:10, 11, NKJV).<sup>2</sup> A faithful leader, a fearless spokesperson, in full confidence and trust in God takes over the command. His trust is not in his intelligence or in his military leadership, or in the army of Israel but in God who promised them the land. His the way, His the victory, and His the guarantee. The raging floods were no barrier to the trusting heart. And Joshua stood strong under the arms of His God. “Courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care for those committed to his charge, and, above all, inspired by a living faith in God—such was the character of the man divinely chosen to conduct the armies of Israel in their entrance upon the Promised Land.”<sup>3</sup>

## A MAN OF CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN GOD

Much of Joshua's success in life can be traced to his consistent confidence and trust in God. Note how he brought about Israel's victory over Jericho, a well-fortified city of great wealth and prosperity that was guarded by a trained army of valiant soldiers. To conquer this mighty city was perceived as the first step in the possession of Canaan. Before Joshua took the first step forward toward the conquest of the city, he sought divine guidance. When a person seeks God first for

*The sincere prayer of a righteous people has the power to bring nature and nature's God to fulfill their selfless wishes to accomplish the task assigned to them by God.*

directions as to where to go, what to do, that person is sure to get that guidance and the needed empowering. So when Joshua sought divine directions and enabling, he received the plans from the “Commander of the army of the Lord” (Joshua 5:14). Earnest and trusting prayer has the power to move the throne of God, and Joshua saw this power in the manifestation of the commander of the Lord, who Ellen White identifies was none other than the pre-incarnate “Christ, the Exalted One.”<sup>4</sup>

On the surface, God's plan for Israel's victory seemed simple but strange. A march around the city, once each day and seven times on the seventh day. The marching procession was in the order of selected guards, seven trumpet-blowing priests, the ark of the covenant, and the rear guards. At the end of the seventh march on the seventh day, just as God promised, the mighty walls fell, and Israel overwhelmed Jericho.

Centuries later, inspiration was to give credit where credit was due: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell” (Hebrews 11:30). By his trust and confidence in God, Joshua has left for all posterity a never-to-be-forgotten lesson: Victory in life over every conceivable obstacle, situation, or enemy is not to be found in human strength but in placing oneself in God's everlasting arms. “God will do great things for those who trust in Him. The reason why His professed people have no greater strength is that they trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf. He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and faithfully obey Him.”<sup>5</sup>

## A MAN OF PRAYER

Joshua was a man of prayer. With God as their leader, with Joshua at the head of Israel's march to possess the promised land, with the crossing of Jordan, with the wondrous conquest of Jericho, and with even the failure at Ai transformed into a great victory by God's grace toward a repentant Israel (Joshua 3-9), fear gripped the heathen nations on the pathway of Israel's ultimate possession of their promised land. The five Amorite kings formed a coalition to attack Gibeon, the buffer state between the advancing armies of Joshua and the Amorites. Gibeon had already made peace with Israel, and asked for immediate relief from Joshua.

The fearless leader confronted the Amorites, but the battle was strong, and the day seemed too short to complete the final victory. Joshua needed a little more of the day. The Spirit-filled leader knew only one way out: to draw from the inner springs of his faith life and pray: “Then Joshua spoke to the Lord . . . and he said in the sight of Israel: ‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.’ . . . So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day” (Joshua 10:12, 13). And Israel completed its task over the five kings who stood on its way to victory.

The sincere prayer of a righteous people has the power to bring nature and nature’s God to fulfill their selfless wishes to accomplish the task assigned to them by God. “The Spirit of God inspired Joshua’s prayer, that evidence might again be given of the power of Israel’s God. . . . Joshua had received the promise that God would surely overthrow these enemies of Israel, yet he put forth as earnest effort as though success depended upon the armies of Israel alone. He did all that human energy could do, and then he cried in faith for divine aid. The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort. Those who achieve the greatest results are those who rely most implicitly upon the Almighty Arm. . . . The men of prayer are the men of power.”<sup>6</sup>

### A MAN OF THANKFULNESS AND GRATITUDE

Joshua lived a life that was a perfect example in thankfulness and gratitude. Much had happened since he was a member of the investigative team that Moses sent to spy out the promised land. As he neared the end of his victorious life, he could have celebrated the goodness and faithfulness of God in a hundred ways and more. But one man from the vast throngs of God’s people settling down in the promised land appeared before Joshua, and made a simple request. The entreaty of this 85-year-old man jarred the memory of Joshua. Not that Joshua really forgot, but even saints need occasional reminders. Caleb stood before Joshua, and reminded him of that day at Kadesh Barnea some 45 years earlier when the two of them rendered a minority report of faith on the land of Canaan while the other 10 gave a negative report of fear and a plea to return to Egypt (Numbers 13: 25–14:4). This appeal to memory included a reminder of Moses’ promise to Caleb: “Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children’s forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God” (Joshua 14:9).

Joshua was a strong man—not just physically, but also mentally and spiritually. At the height of his power and glory, he could have easily given many excuses ordinary humans give: plead ignorance, push over ever so lightly a colleague into the land of forgetfulness, or just nudge the case into a social referral. But this is Joshua, a man who never forgot his God or His servants. And Caleb was a

noble servant, and he made his request, “Give me this mountain” (Joshua 14:12). Without hesitation, Joshua honored Caleb’s request. The Scripture adds a powerful endnote: “Then the land had rest from war” (Joshua 14:15). With Joshua and Caleb, together celebrating the award of Hebron to the later, Israel’s mission from the land of slavery to the land of the covenant was complete.

### A LOYAL SERVANT OF GOD

Joshua’s ministry closes with a powerful story of consecration and affirmation. He was 105 years old when he called in his village of Shechem a general conference session of all the elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel. Joshua’s farewell address to them was a review, a warning, and a plea (Joshua 23 and 24). He reviewed the history of all that God had done to Israel from the time of leaving Egypt to the occupation of the promised land—their ups and downs; their betrayals of, and their return to God; their roots from Abraham; their unique system of the law, the covenant, and the sanctuary; and their march to freedom and their inheritance of the promised land. Joshua also set before them a warning of God’s judgment in case of their wandering away from His law and His service. Finally, the faithful leader placed before Israel’s leaders his only plea: “Fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth” (Joshua 24:14). As part of this plea, he, before the representatives of all Israel and before God, took his final bow and pledged: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

No benedictory remark on the life and leadership of Joshua can better the inspired tribute Ellen White pays to the son of Nun: “Joshua’s work for Israel was done. He had ‘wholly followed the Lord’; and in the book of God he is written, ‘The servant of Jehovah.’ The noblest testimony to his character as a public leader is the history of the generation that had enjoyed his labors: ‘Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua.’”<sup>7</sup>

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# THE RESCUER

BENJAMIN J. BAKER

No room for the old artificial distinctions of superiority/inferiority exists in the arms of Jesus, the “place of safety,” or in the church, for those who have been rescued. Yes, the rescue is complete, the Rescuer extraordinary.



**T**hroughout her long and eventful life, Ellen G. White received numerous visions on race and issues relating to race. But one of her very last revelations on the subject is so simple, yet so profound, that it encompasses all the others. This vision from 1907 is one of those remarkable selections from the Spirit of Prophecy that is as relevant today as when it was first penned.

She wrote: “A scene was presented before me. I saw two souls struggling in the waters. The waves were beating high about them, and they were ready to perish. One of these persons was white, the other black. Then I saw One come to their rescue. With one hand He laid hold of the white man, and with the other hand He grasped the black and together drew them to a place of safety. Both knelt at the feet of their Rescuer, and both glorified His name.”<sup>1</sup>

## READY TO PERISH

The vision opens with Ellen White helplessly watching as two “souls” struggled in tempestuous waters. Initially, she does not see black or white, male or female, old or young, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, educated or uneducated—just two persons. These persons represent humanity, all the many billions who have lived on this planet from creation until now. At the core of each of them, each of us, is an essence created in the image of God. All externals are incidental.

So what about the persons about to perish? What does it matter? It matters because of their value. Ellen White said in one place that “One soul saved, to live throughout the ages of eternity, to praise God and the Lamb, is of

more value than millions in money.”<sup>2</sup> Later, she makes a stronger assertion: “One soul is worth more than all the gold and silver that could be heaped up on this earth.”<sup>3</sup> In another place, the ante is upped: “One soul for whom Christ has died is worth more than the whole world.”<sup>4</sup> Then this: “One soul saved in the kingdom of God is worth more than ten thousand worlds like this.”<sup>5</sup> But the absolute clincher is this: “One soul is of infinite value.”<sup>6</sup>

Around us, many infinitely valuable souls are drowning in the lethal waves beating high about them: They are on the cusp of perishing. Desperate but doomed struggle confronts them all. Even though each of us is a separate person and has distinct struggles, we are all in the same dilemma: “Having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12, NKJV).<sup>7</sup> The two persons Ellen White saw in her vision representing humanity are not struggling against each other, but against evil and the devil. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age” (Ephesians 6:12).

Why wasn’t Ellen White shown one person struggling in the waters instead of two? The two persons representing humanity foreshadow the division that comes to the forefront in the next sentences. You see, when God created Adam and Eve they were one, but sin wrought bifurcation and division, and ever since, humans have devised endless ways to divide themselves according to their deviant ways.

“One of these persons was white, the other black.” In this sentence, Ellen White indicates the sin-induced shift from the divine view of oneness to the human perspective of divisiveness: white and black. We humans

don't see souls, the internal; we see white/black, the external. The external keeps multiplying according to color, politics, nationality, race, possessions, etc. So we have: white/black, Democrat/Republican, Ukrainian/Russian, Jew/Arab, Hutu/Tutsi, Hindu/Muslim, American/foreigner, rich/poor. This truth is contained in God's insight to Samuel given so long ago: "[M]an looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

An additional aspect is addressed in Ellen White's identification of the race of these persons. In the year 1907, the belief that blacks were not human was still prevalent. With this was the complementary contention that whites were superior to blacks. Such notions are debunked by Ellen White's vision of the Savior pulling the two perishing souls to safety. The black is a person, one of the two souls. One soul cannot be superior to the other, for they are both on the brink of drowning. Of supreme importance, both are savable.

## THE RESCUE

Ellen White must have been relieved when a third figure emerged into this chaotic, awful tableau: "Then I saw One come to their rescue." Two souls are struggling; One comes to the rescue. There is white, there is black, divided in their perishing; then there is One. The white and black men cannot rescue themselves, cannot think their way out of the waves, prevent their own sinking, do-good their way out, politic their way out, invent their way out, legislate their way out. They are rescued despite themselves, having nothing to do with it.

The Rescuer is not struggling in the waters. The pounding surf, deadly to the perishing men, has no effect upon the One. There is no chance that He will drown, for the tidal waves are merely ripples to Him. The identification of the Rescuer is no mystery; this same thing happened on the Sea of Galilee two thousand years ago. Jesus Christ is on the scene (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-51).

"With one hand He laid hold of the white man, and with the other hand He grasped the black and together drew them to a place of safety." In a paragraph of a brief 85 words, every detail is vital. Therefore the order in which the men are mentioned must be significant. Notice that Ellen White does not say that Christ *first* lays hold of the white man and *then* the black. On the contrary, she states that Christ lays hold of the white man with one hand *and* grasps the black man in the other. This is crucial. Her choice of *and* informs us that both men are saved simultaneously. In His saving act, Jesus makes no distinction of superiority between the races.

But if this is the case, then why would Ellen White mention the white man first and the black man second in her recounting of the rescue? Was this simply a reflection of the racial hierarchy and social prejudices of the time in which she lived? To arrive at such a superficial conclusion is at odds with the fact that, after the

two men are rescued, Christ places them both on equal footing in the place of refuge. To ignore this is to miss the whole point of the vision.

In the description of the rescue the order in which race is mentioned, white then black, models the wrongness of the world in affording one race superiority over the other. By stating first that Christ takes hold of the white man, Ellen is showing us that Christ is familiar with our wretched human constructs of race and depraved notions of racial superiority. He mirrors our prejudices back to us in the order that we have imposed them, so that when He crumbles those walls of partition in the place of safety, we will see how complete the rescue is.

Jesus imparted the same crucial lesson in this vision of 1907 that He did to His disciples when He was on earth. When a desperate Syrophenician woman begged Him to cast a demon out of her beloved daughter, Jesus seemed to refer coldly to the foreign woman as a dog (Matthew 15:21-28). But what He was doing deftly was exposing the hideousness of the racism and prejudice prevalent in that day, a bigotry that resided in the hearts of His disciples. And so in Ellen White's relating of her vision, the order of the race of the drowning men is mentioned only to show how the Rescuer obliterates these artificial constructs of race. He saves both men at the same time and brings them to the same place of safety, without making any subsequent distinctions in power or status between them.<sup>8</sup>

Fittingly, the vision closes with worship: "Both [men] knelt at the feet of their Rescuer, and both glorified His name." The two men are so grateful for the rescue and so in awe of the Rescuer that they kneel at the feet of Jesus and glorify His name. After salvation and during worship, the two men, who were before divided by their struggle and race, are now unified, united by their rescue and Rescuer. The inadvertent proof, yet inexorable result of their salvation is this new oneness. No room for the old artificial distinctions of superiority/inferiority exists in the arms of Jesus, the "place of safety," and the church, for those who have been rescued. Yes, the rescue is complete, the Rescuer extraordinary. 

### Benjamin J. Baker

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GARY B. SWANSON


 A woman with blonde hair, wearing a light-colored top, is looking upwards and to the right, pointing her right index finger towards a glowing, wireframe brain graphic. The brain is composed of white lines and dots, set against a dark background with faint star-like lights. The overall scene is ethereal and futuristic.
 

# A.I. ANXIETY

As capabilities of artificial intelligence have increased to ever more sophisticated levels, troubling questions among humans proliferate. How should a Christian face such issues?

Economists say that artificial intelligence (A.I.) is bringing the world to the cusp of a fourth industrial revolution. And they are concerned. There are, of course, obvious and immediate benefits that have already resulted from the development of A.I. But the World Economic Forum estimated that its use in the workplace will eliminate as many as five million jobs in the economies of the developed world between 2015 and 2020. Interestingly, as smart machines assume the more routine roles in the workplace, two-thirds of these reductions will impact the so-called white-collar sector.<sup>1</sup>

And economists are not alone in their uneasiness. Philosophers, scientists, and even leaders in the field of technology have expressed concern over the idea that machines may ultimately pose a threat to the future of humanity. People like Stephen Hawking and Bill Gates.

With growing dependence on technology, the question of control has become more urgent. Today, machines pilot our airplanes and will very soon chauffeur our cars. Advertisements that appear on our Internet browsers and social media are the result of computer algorithms based on our own personal online behavior. Facial recognition programs can identify us in a crowd.

The theme of the potential danger of technology run amok isn't new in popular culture. One of the earlier classic examples of this in film is represented in the computer HAL 9000 in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Critics have pointed out that the conflict in this 1968 film between HAL and the human astronauts aboard a spacecraft centers on their desperate struggle to achieve a singularity in which either technology or humankind will emerge into the next phase in the evolution of earthly sentient beings.

Thirty years after *Space Odyssey*, another film—in fact, a trilogy of films—carried the theme of the competition of humankind and machine to an even more grim theory. In *The Matrix*, humanity and A.I. come to a literal face-to-face confrontation. “Every mammal on this planet,” says the artificial intelligence, “instinctively develops a natural equilibrium with the surrounding environment, but you humans do not. You move to an area, and you multiply and multiply until every natural resource is consumed. The only way you can survive is to spread to another area. There is another organism on this planet that follows the same pattern. Do you know what it is? A virus. Human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet. You are a plague. We are the cure.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1963, British mathematician and cryptologist Irving John Good warned, “An ultra-intelligent machine could design even better machines; there would then unquestionably be an ‘intelligence explosion,’ and the intelligence of man would be left far behind. Is humanity fully in control of its own inventions?”<sup>3</sup>

Technological advancement has moved thinking to some even more unsettling ideas regarding A.I. As its capabilities have increased to ever-more-sophisticated levels, trou-

bling questions among humans proliferate. And these questions aren't being posited merely by producers of popular culture.

Swedish philosopher Niklas Boström has given A.I. some serious thought and raised some disconcerting challenges. Though he insists that they are not predications, through some suggested thought experiments he urges more careful consideration in the development of technology:

- If a superintelligence were given the task of making paper clips, what would prevent it from eventually concluding that all humans should be made into paper clips?
- If A.I. were designed with the "prime directive" never to harm humans, what if it decided that the best way never to harm humans would be to prevent them from being born in the first place?
- If ultra-intelligent machines were programmed so that no matter what, they should always make people smile, what if they decided the best way to do this would be to install electrodes in all humans to make them smile?

Boström's imagination can get even more eerie. He offers the possibility that superintelligence could in theory have already superseded its human creators and placed them in an artificial human existence. "I'm not sure," he says, "that I'm not already in a machine!"<sup>4</sup>

OK, granted that these scenarios certainly sound like something that would occur only in the further reaches of science fiction, but judging from the questions that still persist from a 50-year-old science-fiction film, it appears that popular culture can sometimes foretell some issues. Today, an emerging "A.I. anxiety" has begun to affect even those who are creating these amazing technological advances.

And here is where the dilemma that humankind currently faces with its technology begins to sound similar to that which the original Creator of earthly intelligences must have faced. "Throw in elements of autonomy," says one writer in describing the creation of A.I., "and things can go wrong quickly and disastrously."<sup>5</sup> Throw in elements of free choice in the creation of humankind, and though it isn't clear whether it went wrong quickly, it certainly went wrong disastrously.

God didn't offhandedly "throw in" elements of free choice in the creation of humankind. Freedom of will wasn't merely included as a kind of accessory in the nature of humanity. It was central to its character because otherwise there could be no love between creature and Creator.

"God might have created man," wrote Ellen G. White, "without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been

no development of character. Such a course would have been contrary to God's plan in dealing with the inhabitants of other worlds. It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule."<sup>6</sup>

There were no philosophers at the creation of humankind to express A.I. anxiety about the potential danger of such beings. There were no scientists to voice concern that these new beings may someday attempt to outsmart or supersede their Creator.

Indeed this is what Lucifer—an ultra-smart creature—intended to do. And he succeeded in passing along to other creatures the desire that "your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5, NIV).<sup>7</sup>

The current human concern over the possibly fearful advances of A.I., of course, are not that it may become the equal of humanity but that it will succeed humanity. And this is frightfully similar in principle to what was in the back of Lucifer's mind: to succeed his Creator. Millennia after the origin of sin, "The devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me'" (Matthew 4:8, 9).

It is likely that Satan had more in mind than being merely *like* God. There was every intention to *surpass* God. How else could Satan have hope to be worshiped? In what is left of the future of humankind till the return of the Creator to rescue this sin-twisted planet from its own inventions—technological or spiritual—there is only the final answer from the Creator Himself: "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" (Matthew 4:10).<sup>8</sup>

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# ISABEL DE MORAES

A dialogue with an Adventist biochemist specializing in membrane protein research



INTERVIEW BY TIMOTHY G. STANDISH

**Dr.** Isabel de Moraes is a uniquely qualified researcher who runs the Membrane Protein Laboratory at the Diamond Light Source, a gigantic synchrotron occupying much of a decommissioned Royal Air Force base near Oxford, England. In her laboratory, the apparently impossible routinely occurs: crystallization of proteins found in the membranes that surround cells. These crystalized membrane proteins are then “photographed” using X-rays 10,000 times brighter than the sun. Electrons traveling close to the speed of light from the synchrotron generate these extraordinarily bright X-rays.

Mastering this incredible science would be remarkable for anyone, but Dr. Moraes has an astonishing backstory, one that starts with her late arrival. She was born in Portugal about three weeks past her due date. The result of Isabel’s almost 10-month gestation was epilepsy so severe that she was not expected to finish high school. But the epilepsy eventually went away, and Isabel did complete high school, after which she finished a rigorous chemical engineering degree in Lisbon and then moved to London, England, where she completed a Master’s degree in bioinformatics and molecular modeling. Next on her agenda was to earn a doctoral degree in biochemistry, while studying X-ray crystallography.

Today, Isabel is married to Ailson de Moraes, who teaches International Strategic Management as well as Business and Global Leadership in the Royal Holloway School of Management at the University of London. “I’m perfectly happy being married to a man,” jokes Isabel, “even though English-speakers commonly mistake my husband’s Brazilian name for the English female name ‘Allison.’” Isabel and Ailson have a daughter, Hannah, whom they have sought to raise with Seventh-day Adventist Christian values. Hannah, who studied at Newbold (Adventist) Primary School. She now leads out in the children’s Sabbath school and helps her mother with health-ministry events at the Newbold Adventist Church.

The de Moraes’ are a polylingual family—being fluent in English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French—which comes in handy during their many travels around the globe.

In addition to her family and her full-time job at Diamond Light Source, Isabel teaches part-time at Newbold College in England, where she also serves as a college governor. She is an elder in the Newbold church.

How did all these events happen? And how did she come to have an abiding faith in the Creator God of the Bible despite growing up in a secular home and going through a secular education?

■ *Thanks for taking time from what must be an extraordinarily busy schedule to let us know something about your work, faith, and life. Let's start by asking about membrane proteins: What are they, and why did you decide to spend your life studying them?*

Membrane proteins are crucial to the function of every cell that has ever existed. In our own bodies, it is estimated that nearly 30 percent of the human genome encodes membrane proteins. They act as gates between the outside world and the inner world of the cell, performing a variety of functions. These include transport of nutrients, ions, and water into and out of cells, as well as removal of waste products and toxins from cells. Today, 60 percent of medicines target membrane proteins. Therefore, the study of membrane protein structure provides a basic understanding of life at the molecular level while helping in the rational design of new drugs (medicines), in order to reduce unwanted side effects and make them more efficient.

■ *OK, so it is clear that membrane proteins are important and that understanding their structure has potential to be extraordinarily useful. How does your lab crystallize these proteins so that they can be studied? What challenges are there with these proteins as opposed to other protein classes?*

The process of producing and crystallizing membrane proteins is challenging! Often expensive and time-consuming, it is considered by many to be more of a “fine art” than empirical science! In order to crystallize membrane proteins, they should first be produced in large quantities (milligrams). This usually involves lots of molecular biology and protein engineering. It can take several years of lab work until *in vitro* [outside the cell] stable pure protein is obtained. Stability *in vitro* is the major challenge with this class of proteins, compared with soluble proteins.

In our bodies, membrane proteins exist embedded in the cell/organelle membranes. Hence, to purify and crystallize them, they need to be detached from their lipid environment in the membrane. This is usually done by screening a large variety of high-purity detergents until one is found that is suitable for the particular protein being studied. The detergent extracts the protein from the membrane, keeping it folded and soluble outside the cell.

Once the protein purification protocol is established, crystallization is the next step. Nowadays, crystallization trials are done using expensive and state-of-the-art robots that are able to screen thousands of potential crystallization solutions until the first crystals are obtained. This is sort of like trying to find a needle in a haystack! Again, it might take several months or even years before obtaining the most suitable diffracting crystals for X-ray data collection.

■ *The Diamond Light Source is a massive facility; tell us exactly what this gigantic synchrotron is and why it is uniquely useful to have the Membrane Protein Lab here.*

Synchrotrons are gigantic machines where electrons are accelerated, with the help of special magnets, to near-light speed in an almost-circular path. Once the electrons are at the desired speed, they can be used, with the help of special devices, to produce and release intense X-rays. This is done when electrons are released from the circular path in which they are stored, the storage ring, and channeled into experimental stations called beam lines. These beam lines are used by many scientists from different fields—from aircraft technology and geology to medicine.

In order to “see” biomolecules like membrane proteins at the atomic level, scientists need to expose protein crystals to intense X-rays (also called synchrotron light or radiation). Basically, these crystals act as magnifying lenses that, together with the synchrotron light, will enable scientists to “see” the molecules inside them. In a very practical way, we could say that a synchrotron facility is like a gigantic microscope.

Having the membrane protein laboratory inside the synchrotron building at the Diamond Light Source helps us to work more directly with the beam-line scientists on the development of better methods to accelerate the X-ray data collection when dealing with very small crystals. This is of particular importance with membrane protein crystals, as they tend to be very small, around 5 to 10 microns.

■ *What was it that attracted you to X-ray crystallography? How did you become this kind of scientist?*

From childhood, I always liked science. Science books or science documentaries were always my favorites . . . after chocolate, of course! At the age of 7, I set up a small lab at home with my collection of rocks and fossils. I had found these along the Portuguese coast during my school holidays. I also had a few simple reagents and some apparatus for doing experiments.

Most of the time, I had a good family support for my “excitement” with science, although my parents weren’t very happy when I tried experimenting with the fishes from our family aquarium!

So, you could probably argue that I was born both with epilepsy and a natural desire to know about the world. Perhaps some of my motivation came from one or two teachers who told me not to study chemistry because it was ahead of my grade level. They were trying to get me to concentrate on my history and language classes, but science was my first love—and trying to distract me from it proved to have the opposite effect.

After studying chemical engineering, I did a bioinformatics Master’s degree, and it was during that time that I

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realized how little I knew about biochemistry. Ultimately, X-ray crystallography proved to be the perfect marriage of my interest in chemistry with biology. Since I was born with a desire to know about the world, what could be better than knowing where every atom is inside a protein and thus how the protein functions to sustain life?

■ *What is it about the research you are involved in that leads you to believe in the Creator God of the Bible?*

Biochemistry is a complex but beautiful subject! It studies how living organisms function at the chemical level (and therefore at the atomic level). Biochemistry studies how all the molecules interact with one another in the enigmatic phenomena we call life. All organisms—ranging from humans to other animals, plants, and even bacteria—require a remarkable number of chemical reactions occurring in parallel to keep life going. There are hundreds and hundreds of chemical reactions, all happening at once, using and producing hundreds of small molecules and atoms, yet everything works in such harmony! It is like a musical composition where the musical notes combine with one another to produce a beautiful melody; in this case “the melody of life.” All the great musical melodies had great composers behind them: Bach, Beethoven, Lennon and McCartney, and so on. In the case of biochemistry, “the melody of life” also had a composer—God. Everything in nature is too perfect and too complex to just have appeared from nothing. When doing my research I “see” God’s creation and love, not just an intelligent design.

■ *How did your family and upbringing influence your beliefs?*

My parents weren’t Christians. Since they worked full time, our grandmother—who always lived with us—brought us (my brothers and me) up. She was a Seventh-day Adventist, and therefore she educated us in Christian values. I still remember very well my grandmother’s words: “In God we should always trust!” It was she who opened my mind to consider God in everything I did and, with this beautiful perspective, the evidence of His brilliance and love is clear.

■ *You were born with serious and debilitating epilepsy. What happened that it didn’t hold back your academic achievements?*

For many years, epilepsy seriously affected my studies, particularly because of the medication required to control it. However, I always liked to read and study, and that helped a lot. In addition, I had a huge support from my grandmother, who always encouraged me to study. She used to buy books on the subjects I liked most. The epilepsy disappeared around age 15 to 16 and, of course, I could then catch up with my studies. I have always had a positive attitude, and this helped when I was faced with this serious physical challenge.

■ *What challenges to your faith have you faced during the course of your education? What caused you to embrace the biblical record of history rather than materialistic Darwinism?*

I did my secondary school and first university degree in Portugal. At the time, classes and examinations were

commonly scheduled on Sabbaths. When this happened, it was a struggle to justify my absence from those classes or the need to have exams moved to a different day. Letters from the church pastor were often necessary, accompanied by a copy of the Portuguese law stating that if classes or exams fall on the student's worship day, they should be moved to another day.

Most of the time, this sort of situation wasn't welcomed by the schools or teachers. While at university, I had a case where a lecturer, even after all the official letters, continued saying he wouldn't move the exam from Saturday. Eventually, after the case was taken to the university senior management and the church pastor made a few calls, the exam was rescheduled.

During my initial studies (secondary school and university), I was blessed to have many people in my local church who were very interested on the subject of creation and they always provided me with huge support. Often, on Sabbath afternoons, we had debates about creationism and Darwinism. Our pastor was interested in these things, and that was helpful. I also read many books on the subject, written not only by Christians, but also by others. These helped me evaluate the strength of varied arguments.

■ *What advice would you give other Christians interested in pursuing careers at the highest levels in scientific research?*

Today, science research has become very complex and more and more competitive. In addition, if one moves to a higher level such as management or leadership, lots of politics is involved. My advice is, keep your Christian values and beliefs. Always trust in God! And if you succeed in becoming a good and great scientist, be humble and praise God for all your achievements. Remember your Creator, and He always will be with you . . . . Career, success, and popularity are meaningless without God! ☞

**Timothy G. Standish**

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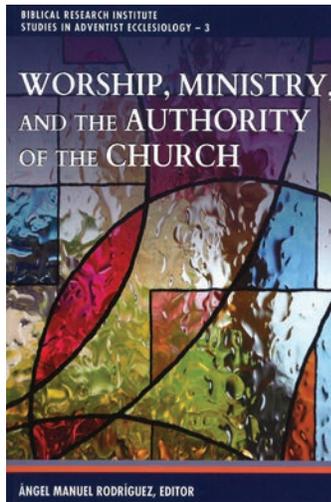


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## WORSHIP, MINISTRY, AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

*Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Editor (Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.: Biblical Research Institute, 2016); 429 pages, paperback.*

Reviewed by **Stephen Bauer**

**W***orship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church* is the last of the three-volume study on ecclesiology published by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. While the first two volumes focus more on the biblical foundations of ecclesiology, the current volume under review deals more with surveying historical backgrounds and providing theological analyses. The book is divided into two major sections: Chapters 1–7 focus on issues related to worship in the church; Chapters 8–17 deal with the nature of the church, its ministry, and its authority.

### WORSHIP

Part I, which deals with worship, opens with a historical survey of worship from the early church through the Reformation. The church started as an “underground network” whose corporate worship was likely based on synagogue service. Members gathered in small groups to avoid detection and thereby minimize persecution. The small-group intimacy would favor broad member involvement in the worship experience. After the conversion of Constantine (330 A.D.) and the legalization of Christianity, Christian worship changed, with large congregations conducting worship publicly in grand build-

ings. Worship became liturgical and clergy-centered, which separated the laity from the clergy, transforming the attendees into passive spectators. The Magisterial Reformers recovered the New Testament centrality of proclaiming the Word, and re-engaged the people in the worship life of the church (especially in singing and prayer). Some of the high liturgy was retained, however.

Next, the book examines how the Anabaptists went beyond the Reformers in worship forms by viewing all of a person’s life as a type of worship; and by involving all members in worship, singing, testimony, and teaching. This total-member involvement included instituting small groups whose members could encourage and support one another in applying Scripture to life throughout the week. A significant component of Anabaptist public worship was the frequent sharing of personal testimonies in worship services.

Early Adventist worship drew from the Anabaptists in giving personal testimonies a central role in public worship, though preaching was not neglected. As the Advent movement matured, Ellen White turned to the Old Testament sanctuary service as a primary source for principles of worship, supplemented with heaven’s worship scenes in Isaiah and Revelation. As a result, the essential ethos of worship began to emphasize God-centered, not creature-centered worship, including emphasis on the Sabbath as a celebration of God as Creator. This then led to the centrality of preaching the Word of God so the worshippers would understand the Creator’s claims on them. Personal testimonies lent support to the work of educating the worshippers about the will of God.

Chapter 7 addresses worship in the context of post-modernism—providing a solid overview, as opposed to fluidity and the nearly undefinable traits that characterize the postmodern mindset. One key element is that while postmodernists tend to reject authoritative meta-narratives and absolute truth claims, they are attracted to storytelling and personal relationships. This may suggest that personal testimonies of God’s activity in individual lives may be a better means of reaching post-modernist people than direct doctrinal preaching.

### THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH, ITS MINISTRY, AND ITS AUTHORITY

Part II (chapters 8–17) deals with the nature of the church, its ministry, and its authority. The section begins with a chapter on baptism and the ordinances. The chapter provides a rich background and exposition to the spiritual understanding and significance of these important practices in Christian life, introducing the reader to the larger overall slant of chapters 8–17, which is threefold.

First, there are excellent historical backgrounds and overviews on the ministry of the church, the role of clergy in the church, and the authority of the church, which help set a broad picture of where Adventism fits

within the larger Christian community. In addition, the section provides a rich understanding of how other Christian traditions approach such topics.

Second, the section deals with the middle-line between justifying the need for organizational authority and affirming human freedom of choice. On the one hand, we need order so that doctrinal and spiritual chaos do not ensue. On the other hand, we need to uphold the conviction that the Bible alone is our final authority, not the church. Church apostolicity is therefore defined by faithfulness to the biblical record of apostolic teaching, not through some kind of succession model. The church is thus cast as a cooperative consortium of believers that has come to certain common understandings of the Bible and holds members accountable to that common understanding.

Third, the section presents powerful arguments regarding a crucial concern of ecclesiology: that church authority and church ministry are not to be restricted to a sub-group (such as clergy, administrators, or a particular gender) but be open to all believers, since all humans are ontologically equal. The book makes a significant number of statements advocating gender equality, which in the present context might invite more vigorous discussion on the role of women in the church than the authors intended. Additionally, the argument is presented that the organizational structures are not sacrosanct and can be adapted to new needs and situations.

One final aspect of church authority is church discipline, and Chapter 14 provides an excellent exposition on this topic. While affirming that church discipline occurs at the congregational level, the author of this chapter creates a simple theology of church discipline, asserting that it is designed to be redemptive, not punitive. Thus, its goal is to help keep people in the church, not to expel them. While the thrust of the chapter is good, the focus is fairly narrow—on developing the redemptive goals of church discipline.\*

One minor observation: Chapter 15 introduces a possible point of confusion over the term *excommunication*. Adventists have traditionally eschewed this term due to the connotations of the church controlling a person's salvation, preferring the term *disfellowshipping* in referring to a member who does not respond to the redemptive efforts of the church body. Although the author qualifies the term *excommunicate* in harmony with the concept of disfellowshipping, stating that Adventists practice excommunication seems to muddy the water regarding the meaning of the intended church discipline.

One of the most useful functions of this volume is the historical backgrounds behind issues in worship, church rites and ordinances, and ecclesiastical authority. These especially help the reader to better understand the perspective of other Christian traditions while appreciating our unique place in Christianity.

The book is noteworthy and engaging. It makes many pointed contributions, while leaving some deep questions still to be addressed. ☮

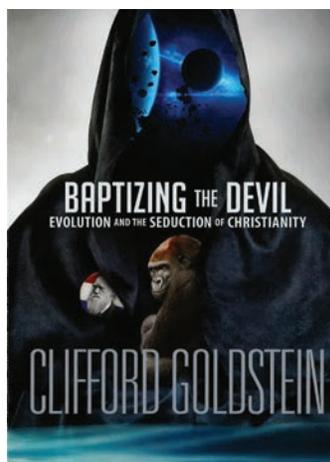
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\* In addition to the discussion of church discipline in this book, an excellent exposition of the theology of discipline can be found in Marlin Jeschke's *Discipling in the Church: Recovering a Ministry of the Gospel* (Scottsdale, Penna.: Herald Press, 1988). For Jeschke, the purpose of church discipline is to restore a person from a loss of discipleship. Thus, we must first disciple the convert into an accountable community of believers, or we have no basis for discipline. When the first signs of a loss of discipleship are detected, the community can then intervene before the drift gets out of hand. Therefore, church discipline is essentially another form of evangelism, namely making disciples.

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## BAPTIZING THE DEVIL: EVOLUTION AND THE SEDUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

Clifford Goldstein (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017); 256 pages; hardcover.

Reviewed by **Marco T. Terreros**

**C**liff Goldstein is a prolific writer. He is also the current editor of the Seventh-day Adventist *Adult Bible Study Guide*. The book under review here is his 24th publication, and as usual, his arguments are cogent and his discussions are frank and well informed on one of his favorite subjects: science and religion, particularly as it involves issues pertaining to creation.

Right at the outset, Goldstein throws down his gauntlet: Any attempt to harmonize evolution with the Genesis account of origins, even when undertaken by well-meaning Christians, is an attempt to compromise faith with the prevailing culture—a misguided capitulation. It is a move comparable to “baptizing the devil”: impossible at best and contradictory at worst. The two stand completely at odds with each other.

Goldstein approaches his study by exposing the fallacies of geocentrism as central to the understanding of the cosmos, and the deficiencies of the Ptolemaic scientific model founded on Aristotle, “the Darwin of that day” (p. 24), and how these got incorporated into the church’s theology by a wrong understanding of biblical cosmology and by tilting the balance in favor of science because “after all, it’s science!” (p. 29). Such an ambiguous claim to truth is persistently evoked even today—a claim underscored throughout the book.

The book exposes the bias among scientists that affects their conclusions not only regarding things that exist now, but also on their study of lifeforms and events dated eons earlier, long before we ever existed. Things are complicated by the limitations of methodological approaches to epistemology (how do we know what we know), and the tentative nature of scientific theories and conclusions (e.g., Newton’s theories being superseded by new theories, such as Einstein’s). Goldstein argues that scientific theories may be good but not necessarily true; make great predictions and produce fruitful technology, yet not be the most accurate depictions of reality—a point Goldstein considers crucial for Christians to understand, and rightly so, especially regarding such a basic doctrine as creation.

Goldstein addresses the problem of induction, a method foundational in modern science, but which cannot guarantee its conclusions. Induction assumes continuity between the past, present, and future, whereas the Genesis creation account reveals a radical discontinuity between them. This throws up the problem of science’s unwavering naturalism (not just methodological but ontological). “If the truth about our origins demands the supernatural, but every scientific theory about origins excludes the supernatural, then every scientific theory about origins must be wrong” (p. 97)—a point made throughout the book.

Goldstein refers to Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and takes up the inexorable intrusion of assumptions in doing science, observing that scientists view the world through the lens of whatever paradigm happens to be in vogue at a specific time in history; a truism exemplified by the origins of Darwin’s evolutionary assumptions. If logic and reason can’t be fully justified, Goldstein argues, what about the science that arises from them? This implies that the justification for scientific

theories bottoms out, having to assume certain regularities as facts (X does Y because X does Y), without any deeper and fully satisfying explanation. Thus the book tries to expose the “the myth of the [scientific] method” and the “God of the gaps” fallacy. Goldstein bravely confronts the scientific establishment by making use of the very words of several of its most respected proponents.

As it draws to a close, *Baptizing the Devil* provides a direct, forceful confrontation with the arguments of leading theistic evolutionists who have attempted to align the evolutionary paradigm with the biblical creation narratives. These theistic evolutionists whom Goldstein takes on include Michael Dowd, John Polkinghorne, Robin Collins, Arthur Peacocke, Allister McGrath, and even Desmond Ford. Having no formal conclusion, the book closes with the reminder that Christianity and science are both, at their bottom, systems of belief, with implications attached to the acceptance of either, and ends by quipping that even though science today has become culture, “the devil doesn’t get baptized, or even wet, no matter how hard the faithful try to immerse him” (p. 255).

Logically reasoned, Goldstein’s arguments are sprinkled with sarcasm softened by his good sense of humor. He quotes a vast array of authors and poses serious, penetrating questions to intellectual minds. The book is a must-read for every thinking Christian who believes in creation and is worth sharing with every thinking person who believes in evolution. ☩

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