

## **Editor's Page**

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This issue of *JATS* is the first to feature a book review article in many years. Generally, we have avoided doing reviews because it can be a lot of extra work to select books worthy to review and find appropriate reviewers. Also, we have noticed a trend in some journals where actual articles seem to give way to scores of short book reviews, and we have wanted to avoid that trend with *JATS*. However, the ATS executive committee recently agreed that sometimes a key book may come along that deserves special attention. That is the case with *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science*, edited by L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi and published by Pacific Press. Since the issue of creation has been the focus of much attention within the Adventist church, and will continue to be as the church re-examines Fundamental Belief 6 concerning creation, the editors felt it would be good to bring this volume to the attention of our readers. We are grateful to Dr. Joe Galusha, a biology professor from Walla Walla University, for providing his impressions of this recent publication. We hope to continue to offer thoughtful reviews of key works in future editions of *JATS*.

As for the main scholarly articles, we again are pleased to present some thoughtful studies that move across the various theological disciplines. We have three from the field of theology—Fernando Canale continues his series on the Emerging Church with the third installment; Michael Younker looks at the issue of divine action in the natural world in a dialogue with contemporary theologians, philosophers, and scientists alongside Ellen White. Warren Shipton takes us back to reflect on the “thorny” issue of thorns and thistles in relation to the creation narrative. In the area of

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Church History we have Joseph Olstad discussing universal legal justification as a failed alternative between Calvin and Arminius; and Terry Robertson discusses the implications of Arminius' understanding of the intellect on Knowledge Exchange Strategies in the mission of the Adventist church. Finally, Gerhard Pfandl returns us to the Old Testament with a defense of the year-day principle—which is so important to Adventist understandings of key prophecies. We hope you enjoy and are blessed by these studies as you read and meditate upon them.

## **In Defense of the Year-day Principle**

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Until the 19th century, most students of the apocalyptic books Daniel and Revelation used the historicist method to interpret the prophecies in these books. One of the main pillars of the historicist method is the year-day principle which says that a day in apocalyptic time prophecies represents a year. During the 19th century, the historicist method was slowly replaced by the preterist and futurist systems of interpretation; both of which deny the year-day principle. Preterists place most of the prophecies into the past up to the time of the Roman Empire; futurists place most of them into the future, specifically into the last seven years between the secret rapture and the Second Advent.

### **Kai Arasola**

In 1990, Kai Arasola, a Finish Seventh-day Adventist scholar, published his dissertation *The End of Historicism* which he had written at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. Contrary to the claims of Desmond Ford, Arasola did not say that “the scholarly world of biblical interpreters gave up the year-day principle at the time of the Millerite debacle—the disappointment of 1844.”<sup>1</sup> What Arasola does say is that when the Millerite movement came to an end “historicism gradually ceased to be the only popular method of interpretation. It was largely replaced by futurism and preterism. Yet one must acknowledge that in fact historicism did not die

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Ford, *Daniel & The Coming King* (Newcastle, CA: Desmond Ford Publications, 1996), 298.

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with Miller. It still lives in a modified form and partly renewed form within the groups that have some roots in Millerism.”<sup>2</sup>

Arasola refers to Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses; others are the Advent Christian Church which also came out of the Millerite movement and the various Church of God congregations. However, apart from the Seventh-day Adventist Church very few Daniel or Revelation commentaries have been written by these smaller churches.

Historicism did not die with the demise of the Millerite Movement. In fact, many historicist commentaries appeared after 1844,<sup>3</sup> among them the well-known commentaries on the books of Daniel and Revelation by Albert Barnes.<sup>4</sup> Even in the first half of the 20th century we find a number of scholarly volumes written by historicists,<sup>5</sup> but by the end of the 20th

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<sup>2</sup> Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism* (Sigtuna, Sweden: Datem Publishing, 1990), 171.

<sup>3</sup> James H. Frere, *A Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Esdras, and St. John, Shewing That All the Prophetic Writings Are Formed upon One Plan* (London: John Hatchard and Son, 1850); J. Cumming, *Prophetic Studies: Or Lectures on the Book of Daniel* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue and Co., 1850); Edward Bickersteth, *Practical Guide to the Prophecies, with Reference to Their Interpretation and Fulfillment, and to Personal Edification* (London: Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, 1852); William Ramsey, *An Exposition of the Book of Daniel: with Practical Observations* (Edinburgh: Th. Grant, 1853); Samuel Sparkes, *A Historical Commentary on the Eleventh Chapter of Daniel: Extending From the Days of Cyrus to the Crimean War* (Binghamton: Adam and Lawyer Printers, 1858); W. R. A. Boyle, *The Inspiration of the Book of Daniel* (London: Rivingtons, 1863); Samuel Tarver, *Course and Culmination of Empire According to Prophecy* (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton, 1866); William C. Thurman, *The Sealed Book of Daniel Opened; Or a Book of Reference for Those Who Wish to Examine the Sure Word of Prophecy* (Boston, MA: Office of the “World’s Crisis,” 1867); James W. Bosanquet, *Messiah the Prince or the Inspiration of the Prophecies of Daniel* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869); William H. Rule, *An Historical Exposition of the Book of Daniel the Prophet* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1869); W. Birchmore, *Prophecy Interpreted by History* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1871); Robert Nevin, *Studies in Prophecy* (Londonderry: James Montgomery, 1890); Joseph Tanner, *Daniel and the Revelation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898).

<sup>4</sup> Albert Barnes, *Daniel*, 2 vols. (1853, reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950).

<sup>5</sup> Charles H. H. Wright, *Daniel and His Prophecies* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1906); Justus G. Lamson, *The Eleventh of Daniel* (Minneapolis, MN: J. G. Lamson, 1909); J. A. Battenfield and P. Y. Pendleton, *The Great Demonstration* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 1914); Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (1923, reprint Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963); H. N. Sargent, *The Marvels of Bible*

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century, with few exceptions<sup>6</sup> historicism was no longer used in the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation outside of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**Seventh-day Adventists**

Seventh-day Adventists continue to use the historicist method of interpretation because they believe that the year-day principle is not a paradigm imposed on the text, but that it is found in Scripture itself. In Daniel chapters seven, and eight, for example, the interpreting angel uses the historicist method to explain the various symbols as empires in history, one following the other.

It is ironic that one of the best summaries of the year-day principle, based on the works of T. R. Birks<sup>7</sup> and H. G. Guinness,<sup>8</sup> is found in Desmond Ford's first commentary on Daniel.<sup>9</sup> In his second commentary on Daniel, eighteen years later, he no longer uses it because he now believes that the year-day principle cannot be justified biblically.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to this position, most Seventh-day Adventist interpreters believe that the year-day principle is based on Scripture.

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*Prophecy* (London: Covenant Publishing, 1939); F. G. Smith, *Prophetic Lectures on Daniel and Revelation* (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet, 1941); Clarence H. Hewitt, *The Seer of Babylon* (Boston: Advent Christian Herald, 1948); Edmund Filmer, *Daniel's Predictions* (London: Regency Press, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> For example, Fred P. Miller, *Revelation: Panorama of the Gospel Age* (Clermont, FL: Moellerhaus, 1991) and Robert Carolinga, *The Present Reign of Jesus Christ: A Historical Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Springfield, MO: Abundant Life Ministries Reformed Press, 1995) are contemporary historicists outside of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas R. Birks, *First Elements of Sacred Prophecy* (London: William E. Painter, 1843).

<sup>8</sup> H. G. Guinness, *The Approaching End of the Age, Viewed in the Light of History, Prophecy, and Science*. 8th ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882).

<sup>9</sup> Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1978), 300-305.

<sup>10</sup> In his latest Daniel commentary he denies that the 70 weeks are cut off from the 2300 years of Daniel 8 and adds, "Neither do I consider that the year-day principle should be applied in the study of the prophecies of Daniel, though I recognize it as a providential aid over long centuries of Christ's delay." (Ford, *Daniel & The Coming King*, 1996, 298).

**Biblical Evidence for the Year-day Principle<sup>11</sup>**

An inquiry into the biblical foundation of the year-day principle produces a number of arguments for the application of the year-day principle to the prophecies of the apocalyptic books Daniel and Revelation.

1. *Symbolism*

Since the visions in Daniel 7 and 8 are largely symbolic, with a number of different beasts representing important historical empires (7:37; 8:35, 2021), the time periods (7:25; 8:14) should also be seen as symbolic.

Daniel 7:3-7	Lion	Babylon (626-539 BC)
	Bear	Medo-Persia (539-331 BC)
	Leopard	Greece (331-168 BC)
	Beast	Rome (168 BC-AD 476)

The vision concludes with the Second Coming when the saints shall receive the kingdom: “Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Dan 7:27). The time element of 3 ½ times or years in verse 25, during which the saints are given into the hands of the little horn, must, therefore, cover more than 3 ½ literal years. “He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time” (Dan 7:25).

In Daniel 8, we have again empires that lasted for hundreds of years:

Daniel 8:3-5, 20-21	Ram	Medo-Persia (539-331)
	Goat	Greece (331-168)

The vision goes to the “time of the end” (v. 17). The time element of “two thousand three hundred days” (Dan 8:14), therefore, should also be a longer time period than 6 years and 3 months.

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<sup>11</sup> I am indebted to D. Ford, *Daniel*, 300-305 for some of the points in this section.

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*2. Long Time Periods*

The fact that the visions deal with the rise and fall of known empires in history which existed for hundreds of years indicates that the prophetic time periods also cover long time periods.

Babylon (626-539 BC)  
Medo-Persia (539-331 BC)  
Greece (331-168 BC)  
Rome (168 BC-AD 476)

In Revelation 12-14 we have the history of the Christian church from the time of Jesus (12:5) to the Second Advent (14:14). The time elements of 1260 days, 3 ½ times, and 42 months (12:6, 14; 13:5), all referring to the same time period, only make sense if they represent 1260 years. There is no 3 ½ year time period in church history that would fit the description given in these chapters.

*3. Peculiar Expression*

The peculiar way in which the time periods are expressed indicates that they should not be taken literally. If the “time, times, and half a time” in Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:14 stands for three and a half literal years, we would expect God to say “three years and six months” as He does in Luke 4:25 and James 5:17. In these texts, where three and a half literal years are referred to, each time the phrase is “three years and six months.” Similarly, Paul remained in Corinth “a year and six months” (Acts 18:11), and David reigned in Hebron “seven years and six months” (2 Sam 2:11).

*4. Salvation History*

In Daniel 7 the four beasts which together account for a reign of at least one thousand years are followed by the little horn power. It is the focus of the vision since it is most directly in opposition to God.<sup>12</sup> Three and a half literal years for the struggle between the little horn and the Most High are out of proportion to the comprehensive scope of salvation history portrayed in this vision. The same applies to Revelation 12:6 and 14 where the one

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<sup>12</sup> Seven out of 28 verses in Daniel 7 refer to the little horn.

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thousand and two hundred and sixty days or three and a half times cover a large part of the history between the first and second advent.

*5. Time Terminology*

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a **time and times and half a time**. (Dan 7:25)

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for **forty-two months**. (Rev 13:5)

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**. (Rev 12:6)

According to the context, the expressions “time, times, and half a time” (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14), “forty-two months” (Rev 11:2; 13:5), and “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Rev 11:3; 12:6) all apply to the same time period, but the natural expression “three years and six months” is not used once.

The Holy Spirit seems, in a manner, to exhaust all the phrases by which the interval could be expressed, excluding always that one form which would be used of course in ordinary writing, and is used invariably in Scripture on other occasions, to denote the literal period. This variation is most significant if we accept the year-day system, but quite inexplicable on the other view.<sup>13</sup>

The only commonly used measure of time not used in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is the year. Days, weeks, and months, are referred to, but not the time unit “year.” The most obvious explanation is that the “year” is the unit symbolized throughout these prophecies.

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<sup>13</sup> Birks, 352.



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6. *Time of the End*

At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm *them*, and pass through. (Dan 11:40)

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. (Dan 12:2)

The prophecies in Daniel 7-8, and 10-12 lead up to the “time of the end” (8:17; 11:35, 40; 12:4, 9) which is followed by the resurrection (12:2) and the setting up of God’s everlasting kingdom (7:27).

In the sweep of history described in these prophecies that extend from the prophet in the sixth century B.C. to our time and beyond, literal time periods of only 3 ½ to 6 ½ years are not capable of reaching anywhere near this final end time. Therefore, these prophetic time periods should be seen as symbolic and standing for considerable longer periods of actual time extending to the end of time.<sup>14</sup>

7. *Old Testament Examples*

In Numbers 14:34 God deliberately used the day for a year principle as a teaching device:

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know my rejection (Numbers 14:34).

And in an acted out parable the prophet Ezekiel was told to lie 390 days on his left side and 40 days on his right side, “I have laid on you a day for each year” (Ezekiel 4:6).

However, Numbers 14 and Ezekiel 4 are not apocalyptic texts. God, therefore, spells it out—one day stands for one year. In apocalyptic texts this is never stated, it is an underlying principle.

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<sup>14</sup> William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Revised edition, DARCOM (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 73.

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Characteristics of apocalyptic texts are:

- a. Visions and revelations
- b. Symbolism and imagery
- c. Cosmic dualism – Apocalyptic writings present two opposing personified forces in the universe, God and Satan.
- d. Contrast – There are two distinct and separate ages; the present evil age under the control of Satan, and the perfect future age which God will establish after his victory over Satan.
- e. Resurrection and judgment is presented as the goal of history
- f. Appearance of a Messiah
- g. Angelic interpreters

Daniel 7 is a classic apocalyptic chapter where we find all these characteristics present. Daniel 4, on the other hand, is not an apocalyptic but a historical chapter. The “seven times” in verse 16, therefore, are not to be interpreted with the year-day principle. The seven times are seven literal years in the life of Nebuchadnezzar, not 2520 prophetic years.

8. *Daniel 9: 24-27*

In Dan 9:24-27 the 70-week time prophecy met its fulfillment at the exact time, if we use the year-day principle to interpret it. Many interpreters, who in other apocalyptic texts do not use the year-day principle, recognize that the 70 weeks are in fact “weeks of years” reaching from the Persian period to the time of Christ. Thus the pragmatic test in Daniel 9 confirms the validity of the year-day principle.

Desmond Ford and others, including the revised *SDA Bible Commentary*,<sup>15</sup> have argued that the year-day principle is not involved in Daniel 9. Ford says concerning the term “seventy weeks” in Daniel 9:24:

The word translated “weeks” in the King James Version and some other versions is literally “sevens” and, like the words “dozen” or “score,” can apply to a variety of things. The Hebrew word there used is never used for a seven-day period, although the singular term can be so used. In ninety out of ninety-four cases in which the OT uses the word *shabua* in the sense of seven days, there are added the explanatory and additional words “of

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<sup>15</sup> F. D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), 4:851.

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days,” for *shabua* on its own merely means a heptad (a group of series of seven). Here in Daniel 9:24, the Hebrew is masculine, whereas the plural form elsewhere is always feminine.<sup>16</sup>

This sounds pretty convincing but it really isn't. The Hebrew word שָׁבֻעִים (*šābū'îm*) for “weeks” is the masculine plural form of שָׁבֹעַ (*šabua'*) “week.” It is derived from the word שֶׁבַע (*šéba'*) “seven” “as a specialized term to be applied only to the unit of time consisting of seven days, that is, the ‘week.’”<sup>17</sup>

*Šabua'* occurs twenty (not ninety-four) times in the OT.<sup>18</sup> An investigation of the twenty texts yields the following results:

a. Three times it occurs as a singular noun meaning “one week” (Gen 29:27, 28; Daniel 9:27). “Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years” (Gen 29:27).

b. Once it appears as a dual for “two weeks.” “But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks” (Lev 12:5).

c. Eight times it is found as a feminine plural (*šābū'ōt*). In five of these texts *šābū'ōt* appears with the word “feast” (*ḥag*) and refers to the Feast of Weeks (Exod 34:22; Deut 16:10, 16; 2 Chron 8:13; Ezek 45:21). “And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end” (Exod 34:22).

d. In Numbers 28:26 most versions translate the feminine plural *šābū'ōt* “Feast of Weeks” although the word “feast” does not appear in the text. Nevertheless, the context seems to indicate it. “Also on the day of the first fruits, when you present a new grain offering to the LORD in your *Feast of Weeks*, you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work” (Num 28:26 NAS).

e. In Deuteronomy 16:9 where the feminine plural is used it refers to the seven weeks between Passover and the Feast of Weeks. “You shall

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<sup>16</sup> Desmond and Gillian Ford, *For the Sake of the Gospel* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2008), 57.

<sup>17</sup> Shea, 90.

<sup>18</sup> R. Laird Harris, et al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:899.

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count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from *the time* you begin to put the sickle to the grain” (Deut 16:9).

f. In Jeremiah 5:24, the last text where the feminine plural is used, it refers to “the appointed weeks of the harvest” (Jer 5:24 NKJ).

g. Four times it appears as a masculine plural (Daniel (9:24, 25 (2x), 26; 10:2, 3). The fact that in Daniel it is masculine and not feminine as in other places is irrelevant because it is one of many Hebrew nouns with dual gender.<sup>19</sup> As we have seen, Daniel consistently uses the masculine plural, and most versions translate the word as “weeks.”

Please note: In every text outside of the book of Daniel the meaning of *šabua*<sup>c</sup> is always “week” or “weeks.” To claim that the word literally means “sevens” and “can apply to a variety of things”<sup>20</sup> is simply not true. As we have seen, it always applies to a week or in plural to weeks.

Neither is it true that “The Hebrew word there used is never used for a seven-day period.”<sup>21</sup> In Daniel 10:2, 3 the same masculine plural *šābū‘im* is used for three weeks twice. “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks [שָׁבָעִים יָמִים] I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks [שָׁבָעִים יָמִים] were fulfilled.” The NIV translates *šābū‘im* in Daniel 9:24 as “Seventy sevens” but in Daniel 10:2, 3 as “three weeks.”

Desmond Ford’s argument that only when *šabua* is followed by *yamim* “days,” as in Daniel 10:2, 3, does it indicate a week is not valid. He is misinterpreting a Hebrew idiom. As Bill Shea has explained, “When a time unit such as a week, month, or year is followed by the word for ‘days’ in the plural, the idiom is to be understood to signify ‘full’ or ‘complete’ units.”<sup>22</sup> For example:

Then Laban said to him, “You are my own flesh and blood.” After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month [חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים], (Gen 29:14 NIV).

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<sup>19</sup> L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 4:1384; Mordechai Ben-Asher, “The Gender of Nouns in Biblical Hebrew,” *Semitics* 6 (Pretoria, 1978): 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ford, *For the Sake of the Gospel*, 57.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Shea, 91. See also E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius Hebrew Grammar*, 131d (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 424.

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You shall eat [quails], not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but *for* a whole month [ḥōdeš yāmîm], until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, (Num 11:19-20 NKJ).

Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years [šənāṭáyim yāmîm], that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river (Gen 41:1 NKJ).

Now Absalom lived two full years [šənāṭáyim yāmîm] in Jerusalem, and did not see the king's face (2Sa 14:28 NAU).

Therefore, when it says in Daniel 10:2, 3 “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three šābū‘îm yāmîm” (Dan 10:2), it does not mean “three weeks of days” but “three full weeks” (NKJV) or “three entire weeks” (NAS, NAU).<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, because most Daniel interpreters no longer use the year-day principle of prophetic interpretation they argue, like Ford, that the šābū‘îm yāmîm in Daniel 10:2, 3 are “weeks of days” and the šābū‘îm šib‘îm in Daniel 9:24 are “seventy weeks of years.”<sup>24</sup> Stephen Miller, for example, writes:

Gabriel declared that the time involved was “seventy sevens” (šābū‘îm šib‘îm ). “Sevens” (traditionally “weeks”) is a literal translation of the Hebrew and refers to periods of seven without specifying what the units are. These may be sevens of years, days, months, or indefinite periods of time.<sup>25</sup>

He then opts for seventy weeks of years otherwise the prophecy would not fit the appearance of the Messiah 490 year later. However, as we have shown the word šābū‘îm in the Old Testament always refers to the week.

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<sup>23</sup> See J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1927); 407. The Jewish interpreter Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm cites Rashi who translated the *sh<sup>e</sup> loshah sabu‘im yamim* as “three weeks of days” and interpreted them as twenty-one years. (Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm, *Daniel* [New York: Mesorah Publications, LTD., 1979], 269).

<sup>24</sup> This is the translation found in the RSV.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 257.

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Therefore, the claim that šāḇū‘îm “refers to periods of seven without specifying what the units are” is not supported by Scripture.

The Year-day Principle in History

The earliest evidence for the year-day principle, though not by that name, can be found in The Book of Jubilees, a Jewish work from the intertestamental period.<sup>26</sup> The Book of Jubilees, dated to the second century BC,<sup>27</sup> uses the word “week” to refer to seven years. As O. S. Wintermute explains, “Each period of seven years is referred to as a ‘week of years’ or simply as a ‘week.’ Each period of seven weeks of years, i.e., forty-nine years, is designated a jubilee.”<sup>28</sup> Thus Noah’s age in Jubilee 10:16 is given in these words, “Nine hundred and fifty years he completed in his life, nineteen jubilees and two weeks and five years.”<sup>29</sup>

19 jubilees	= 19 x 49 years	=	931 years
2 weeks	= 2 x 7 years	=	14 years
5 years	= 1 x 5	=	<u>5 years</u>
			950 years

According to Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm, the Jewish work Seder Olam<sup>30</sup> “and all the commentators, especially Ibn Ezra,<sup>31</sup> interpret the expression (“seventy weeks” in Daniel 9:24) to mean 490 years: seventy weeks of years.”<sup>32</sup> They count 70 years from the destruction of the first temple to the restoration of the temple under Darius (Haggai 1:1-8) and another 420

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<sup>26</sup> See Shea, 106-110 for other examples.  
<sup>27</sup> O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction,” *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed., James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1985), 2: 43.  
<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 2: 39.  
<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 76.  
<sup>30</sup> *Seder Olam Rabbah* (“The Long Order of the World”) is a 2nd century AD Hebrew language chronology detailing the dates of biblical events from the Creation to Alexander’s conquest of Persia.  
<sup>31</sup> Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) was born at Tudela, Spain. He was one of the most distinguished Jewish men of letters and writers of the Middle Ages.  
<sup>32</sup> Goldwurm, 259.

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years to the destruction of the Second Temple.<sup>33</sup> This adds up to 490 years, although these figures do not harmonize with the actual dates in history (586 BC to AD 70).

In the New Testament, the book of Daniel does not play a major role. In view of the statement in Daniel 12:4 “seal the book until the time of the end,” this is no surprise. Those Church Fathers who wrote a commentary on the book interpreted Daniel along historicist lines with Rome as the fourth power in Daniel 2 and 7. The seventy weeks in Daniel 9:24 were seen as 490 years, but the time prophecies in Daniel 7, 8, and 12 were placed as literal days either in the past in the time of the Roman emperors,<sup>34</sup> or in the future in the time of the final antichrist.<sup>35</sup>

L. E. Froom notes, “We shall find in this period the seventy weeks of Daniel interpreted as 490 years, but there was no application of the year-day principle to the longer time periods by any Christian writer of this early era.”<sup>36</sup> And this is quite understandable. As Irenaeus (d. c. 195) already noted, “For every prophecy, before its fulfillment, is to men [full of] enigmas and ambiguities. But when the time has arrived, and the prediction has come to pass, then the prophecies have a clear and certain exposition.”<sup>37</sup> The year-day principle, therefore, did not play an important role in the early centuries, though it was not unknown. Julius Africanus in speaking about the 2300 evenings and mornings in Daniel 8:14 says, “For if we take the day as a month, just as elsewhere in prophecy days are taken as years . . . we shall find the period fully made out to the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes, from the capture of Jerusalem.”<sup>38</sup>

The first Christian interpreter to apply the year-day principle outside of the seventy weeks, it seems, was Tichonius (late fourth century), an

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<sup>33</sup> I. Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Socino Press, 1938), Yoma 9a and <sup>c</sup>Arakin 12b.

<sup>34</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata* 1. 21 (ANF 2:334).

<sup>35</sup> Hippolytus, *On Daniel* 12.7 (ANF 5:190); Gleason L. Archer, Jr. *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Co., 1958), 150, 151.

<sup>36</sup> Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950-1954), 1:241, 242.

<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.24.1 (ANF 1:496).

<sup>38</sup> *The Extant Writings of Julius Africanus* 3.18.4 (ANF 6:137).

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African Donatist.<sup>39</sup> “He interpreted the three and a half days of the slaying of the witnesses (Revelation 11:11) to be three and a half years.”<sup>40</sup>

Following Tichonius we find throughout church history a number of Jewish and Christian interpreters who used the year-day principle, e.g., Benjamin Ben Moses Nahawendi (8th, 9th century);<sup>41</sup> Joachim of Floris (1130-1202);<sup>42</sup> and the Reformer Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560).<sup>43</sup> But particularly towards the end of the 1260, 1290, 1335, and 2300 day prophecies, and following their fulfillment, the number of interpreters who used the year-day principle increased enormously.<sup>44</sup>

**Conclusion**

Our study has shown that the historicist method of interpretation is not a Johnny-come-lately on the theological scene; rather it rests on a solid biblical and historical foundation. It was used by the angel interpreter in the book of Daniel, during the intertestamental period, and by Jewish and Christian writers throughout church history. Until the nineteenth century it was used by most interpreters of the Bible. And in spite of what some may claim, it is not an outdated method belonging to the past, but a valid principle of interpreting apocalyptic prophecies today.

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<sup>39</sup> The Donatists were rigorists, holding that the church must be a church of saints, not sinners, and that sacraments, such as baptism, administered by *traditors* (Christians who surrendered the Scriptures to the authorities who outlawed possession of them) were invalid.

<sup>40</sup> Froom, 1:471.

<sup>41</sup> Rabbi Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculations in Israel from the first through the Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1927), 55, 208.

<sup>42</sup> Joachim, *Concordia*, fol. 118r; cited in Froom., 1:712, 713.

<sup>43</sup> Philipp Melanchthon, *In Danielem Prophetam Commentarius, in Opera*, vol. 13, col. 978, cited in Froom, 2:290.

<sup>44</sup> See Froom 4:394-397, 404, 405.



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## **Thorns Also and Thistles**

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### **1. Introduction**

The principles of God's government were expressed in the beauties of His creation and the harmonious relationships which existed among His creatures (Gen 1:31; Isa 65:17-19, 24, 25; cf. Rev 21:3, 4, 8). There was one individual, however, who was determined to change all this. His dissatisfaction with God's government commenced in heaven and progressed so that finally Lucifer found himself barred from its inner courts but with access to other parts of God's created universe. Now we find that on earth he has despoiled that which was once perfect and good and thereby has added to the cup of human misery.

In this article I examine the biblical record, selected evidences of science, and the resources of the Spirit of Prophecy in an attempt to answer some of the basic questions regarding the nature of selected curses proclaimed by God on the earth after the Fall. I attempt to reconstruct scenarios which help us to understand the intent of and methods used by Satan to deface and change nature and lead humanity to deface the image of God. This will help us to relate to events happening in the world around us in a more intelligent manner and will aid in understanding statements on amalgamation made by Ellen White. I will show that these statements are coherent and have deep meaning and relevance today. I will commence the discussion with a review of Satan's wisdom.

## 2. Detailed knowledge

Lucifer was the leading angel in heaven “the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Isa 14:13, RSV). There was nothing lacking in his abilities. His intellectual powers are mentioned particularly and we note that it was not just knowledge that he possessed, but wisdom or higher order reasoning ability. We might reasonably believe that today’s brightest and best could not match the brilliance of unfallen, early man let alone that of Lucifer. Writing of Lucifer we notice Ellen White’s words: “He possessed the wonderful intellectual power of an angel, of which few form any just idea.”<sup>1</sup>

We can only imagine the extent of Satan’s knowledge. Some minimal understandings might be as follows. Satan no doubt heard the scientific knowledge conveyed to Adam by God (Gen 2:19, 20) including the answers to the “many questions” that Adam and Eve put to their angel counselors about the things that they partially understood.<sup>2</sup> This undoubtedly included the information shared with Adam about the mysteries of the natural world.<sup>3</sup> He knew the extent of God’s creation that included the world invisible to the naked eye—the microbial world. This knowledge is integral to a proper understanding of the meaning of the idea of being “full of wisdom” (Ezek 28:12, NKJV). He possessed “unrivaled” knowledge in common with those who lived before the Flood.<sup>4</sup> His knowledge went beyond the bounds possessed by humans, since angels operate on a higher level of existence than mankind (Ps 8:4, 5). We might well ask: What knowledge was Satan offering Eve in the Garden and what was his schedule for transferring this information? And has he now transferred part of that knowledge to the human race?

The evil imaginings and wickedness of mankind were inspired by Satan and led God to destroy most of them (Gen 6:5). Their unrestricted thoughts were generated from minds not receptive to God’s Spirit (v. 3). They

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<sup>1</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 2:71.

<sup>2</sup> E. G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 29.

<sup>3</sup> E. G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 83.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

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worshiped their own intellects just as modern mankind is prone to do.<sup>5</sup> Their unsanctified thoughts arose from suggestions made by the arch-deceiver.<sup>6</sup> Soon after the Flood, rebellion arose again and they defied the memory of this destruction and God's promises. In effect, they had rejected God and set up the tower of Babel or the "gate of the gods."<sup>7</sup> In time false religions of the basest types were invented. Baal worship provides us a suitable example. Here human sacrifices and gross sexual indulgences are thought to have occurred.<sup>8</sup> Some of the sexual liaisons perhaps would have included animals by extrapolation from our knowledge of mythology. For example, in Baal worship the god is figured as having sex with a heifer to sire a bull god. Other gods are figured performing similar acts. In the first part of the last millennium there was a preoccupation with the possibility of animal-human hybrids.<sup>9</sup> All this suggests that erotic fantasies, if not practices, were common. Such fantasies have been carried out through human history and were acted out at the Roman games and circuses where hundreds of thousands may have died in acts of torture and rape from a wide variety of trained animals. Today, acts involving sex with animals are not uncommon.<sup>10</sup> The reason I mention these unseemly acts is to highlight the unsanctified thoughts of humanity and fascination shown by mankind in improving upon God's provisions by experimenting with crosses between living organisms including humans. All this served to destroy God's image in mankind at the moral level.

As time passed, Satan would have entered into the experimental sciences. Ingenious methods of manipulating genetic information other than human-assisted crossings of animals and plants became available by the time of Job (date unfortunately not fixed by the historical record). It was clear by this time that Satan had the ability to manipulate microbes so as to

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<sup>5</sup> C. Goldstein, *By His Stripes* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999), 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> White, 1958, op. cit., 378.

<sup>7</sup> S. H. Horn, "Babel," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1960), 103-105.

<sup>8</sup> S. H. Horn, "Baal," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1960), 99-100.

<sup>9</sup> J. Ham, and M. Senior, *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1997), 10.

<sup>10</sup> H. Miletski, "A History of Bestiality," in *Bestiality and Zoophilia: Sexual Relations with Animals*, ed. A. Beetz (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 1-22.

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cause boils (responsible bacteria are in the genus *Staphylococcus*). Conceivably, this involved altering an existing microorganism (in today's world, most of these perform a beneficial function in both the environment and in animals). In the production of disease-causing organisms a means was provided to sweep unregenerate man to an early death and it also provided opportunity to bring accusations against God as the creator of such destructive agents.

We might read two things into the account recorded in Job chapters 1 and 2. First, on the basis of the belief that God, angels and devils present in the unseen realm have unusual and superior powers to mankind, we can assert with reasonable confidence that Satan's knowledge was far in advance of contemporary mankind. Secondly, the emergence of pathogenic microbes (as noted in Job's history) may have been due to the instability in copying genetic information in the parental types (chance production of pathogens) or Satan may have experimentally produced pathogenic staphylococci. The instability proposition is based on knowledge that mutations are known to give rise to pathogenic races in some categories of microbes.<sup>11</sup> (Mutations have consistently been observed in some genes). On the other hand, the possibility of experimental modification is not unreasonable if we consider the following historical facts. The discipline of microbiology emerged in the late nineteenth century, the genetic code was discovered by Watson and Crick in 1953, and genetic manipulations were common by the turn of the millennium. This sequence of events over a relatively short time frame informs us how quickly Satan could have acquired knowledge with his superior wisdom. Within less than 50 years of the discovery of the genetic code, modern scientists have acquired the ability to manipulate genetic information across species barriers. It might not be too rash to imagine that Satan and his minions already had achieved similar understandings well before the modern era. However, before we let our imaginations loose, it is also relevant to observe that Satan's abilities

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<sup>11</sup> P. R. Day, "Mutation to Virulence in *Cladosporium fulvum*," *Nature* 179 (1957): 1141-1142; P. R. Day, S. L. Anagnostakis and J. E. Puhalla, "Pathogenicity Resulting from Mutation at the B Locus of *Ustilago maydis*," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, USA* 63 (3) (1971): 533-535; O. C. Yoder, "Toxins in Pathogenesis," *Annual Reviews of Phytopathology* 18 (1980): 103-129.

were limited by God's restraining hand (Job 2:5, 6).<sup>12</sup>

**Conclusion 1:** *Satan has concentrated his destructive activities on earth on obliterating the image of God in mankind and altering the face of nature to bring discredit on God as its creator.*

Before I return to discuss these possibilities of genetic manipulation further, I need to consider briefly the emergence of disease-causing organisms.

### 3. Emergence of disease-causing organisms

The earth as it came from the Creator's hand did not have within it anything that hurt or destroyed, for it was perfect (Gen 1:31, cf. Isa 65:25 concerning God's ideal). The first indication that something unusual would happen was the pronouncement made by God that thorns and thistles would appear (Gen 3:18). In terms of consistency of argument, God is not the originator of evil but rather Satan (James 1:13; Rev 12:9). Our text in Genesis thus is telling us that Satan would be permitted to alter the face of nature within certain limits. A complete list of possibilities was not provided.

The biblical record does not permit us to suggest when the first disease-causing organism appeared. For our purposes, it is most informative to focus on the account given in the book of Job (possibly written by Moses). By the time of Job, bacteria capable of infecting humans existed (virulent *Staphylococcus*) and Satan was able to induce experimental infection at will (Job 2:7). In understanding the latter phenomenon it is fruitful to refer to relatively recent community outbreaks where special environmental and contact conditions were shown to permit mass infection to occur.<sup>13</sup> I am suggesting that Satan had discovered the elements of genetic engineering and understood something about the ecology of

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<sup>12</sup> E. G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), 150.

<sup>13</sup> M. G. Landen, B. J. McCumber, E. D. Asay and G. M. Egeland, "Outbreak of Boils in an Alaskan Village," *Western Journal of Medicine* 172 (2000): 235-239; J. Wang, S. Barth, M. Richardson, K. Corson and J. Mader, "An Outbreak of Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* Cutaneous Infection in a Saturation Diving Facility," *Undersea Hyperbaric Medicine* 30 (2003): 277-284.

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bacteria<sup>14</sup> in order to have achieved the outcome described. His skills possibly were very advanced at this time.

How genetic engineering may be used to produce disease inducing microbes is illustrated by the relatively recent production of a virulent recombinant mouse pox virus. The virus was made through genetic manipulation. The virus particles had mouse derived molecules incorporated into them. When the virus was altered by receiving alien pieces of genetic information, it was able to undergo uncontrolled replication causing death in the experimental mice. This experimental result caused a stir in the scientific community.<sup>15</sup> Further experiments were abandoned because the recombinant virus suppressed the immune response of the animals leading to their death. This example naturally forces us to ask the question where viruses have come from, for these entities are able to replicate only in living cells. They do not carry all the features of living organisms. A number of solutions have been postulated.<sup>16</sup> One theory suggests that viruses may have arisen from the genome of living organisms,<sup>17</sup> which makes sense in the context of our discussion. However, this is not the only suggestion postulated in scientific circles.<sup>18</sup>

It is simpler to account for the origin of pathogenic bacteria than for viruses as the majority of the former group of microbes has free-living relatives or closely similar counterparts in the environment. The switch from non-pathogenic to pathogenic bacteria can be illustrated through the following examples: the bacterium causing diphtheria in humans

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<sup>14</sup> Compare with. V. R. Racaniello, "Emerging Infectious Diseases," *Journal of Clinical Investigation* 113 (2004): 796-798.

<sup>15</sup> R. J. Jackson, A. J. Ramsay, C. D. Christensen, S. Beaton, D. F. Hall and I. A. Ramshaw, "Expression of Mouse Interleukin-4 by a Recombinant Ectromelia Virus Suppresses Cytolytic Lymphocyte Responses and Overcomes Genetic Resistance to Mousepox," *Journal of Virology* 75 (2001):1205-1210; A. Müllbacher and M. Lobigs, "Creation of Killer Poxvirus Could Have Been Predicted," *Journal of Virology* 75 (2001): 8353-8355.

<sup>16</sup> E. V. Koonin, T. G. Senkevich and V. V. Dolja, "The Ancient Virus World and Evolution of Cells," *Biology Direct* 1 (2006): 1-27.

<sup>17</sup> D. Gillespie and R. C. Gallo, "RNA Processing and Tumor Virus Origin and Evolution," *Science* 188 (1975): 802-811; N. J. Dimmock and S. B. Primrose, *Introduction to Modern Virology*, 4th edition (Oxford: Blackwell Science, 1994), 276.

<sup>18</sup> E. K. Wagner and M. J. Hewlett, *Basic Virology*, edition 2 (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 8-9.

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(*Corynebacterium diphtheriae*) is relatively harmless until it acquires a bacterial virus that gives it a suite of genes which makes it virulent. Many other similar examples are known and include *Staphylococcus aureus* which may cause boils and other disease states.<sup>19</sup> Blocks of genetic information found in harmless intestinal or soil bacteria are also commonly found in pathogenic ones, which have led to the suggestion that transfer of the information from one group of bacteria to another has given rise to disease-causing bacterial pathogens. How such horizontal transfer occurs in nature is not completely understood although in the laboratory the processes are both utilized experimentally.<sup>20</sup>

I have indicated how viruses and pathogenic bacteria may have arisen but what about common eukaryotic parasites such as flatworms and nematodes? The emergence of parasites from among groups of organisms that commonly exist independently in the environment is perhaps not too difficult to imagine (e.g., nematodes occur in saprophytic and parasitic modes of existence). Parasites such as tapeworms and flukes also are considered to have originated from free-living counterparts.<sup>21</sup> It is suggested here that these aberrant organisms or entities were brought into existence by clever reworking of the genetic code by the mind of one who said: “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face” (Job 2:4, 5).

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<sup>19</sup> J. W. Bass, “The Spectrum of Staphylococcal Disease: from Job’s Boils to Toxic Shock,” *Postgraduate Medicine* 72 (5) (1982): 58-74; H. Brussow, C. Canchaya and W. D. Hardt, “Phages and the Evolution of Bacterial Pathogens: from Genomic Rearrangements to Lysogenic Conversion,” *Microbiology Molecular Biology Reviews* 68 (3) (2004): 560-602.

<sup>20</sup> J. Hacker and E. Carmiel, “Ecological Fitness, Genomic Islands and Bacterial Pathogenicity,” *EMBO Reports* 2 (2001): 379; H. Ochman and N. A. Moran, “Genes Lost and Genes Found: Evolution of Bacterial Pathogenesis and Symbiosis,” *Science* 292 (2001): 1096; S. O. Jensen, S. M. Kwong, B. R. Lyon and N. Firth, “Evolution of Multiple Drug Resistance in Staphylococci,” *Microbiology Australia* 29 (3) (2008): 121-123; M. Q. Carter, J. Chen and S. Lory, “The *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Pathogenicity Island PAPI-1 is Transferred Via a Novel Type IV Pilus.” *Journal of Bacteriology* 192 (13) (2010): 3249-3258.

<sup>21</sup> N. Chowdhury, M. L. Sood and T. O. O’Grady, “1. Evolution, Parasitism and Host Specificity in Helminthes,” in *Helminthology*, eds N. Chowdhury and I. Tada (New Delhi: Narosa Publishing House, 1994), 1-33.



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**Conclusion 2:** *The origin of pathogenic microbes from free-living organisms can be accounted for in some instances by the operation of 'natural phenomena.'* However, it seems likely that this process may have been assisted by clever genetic manipulation by Satan who has the motive, ability and opportunity to do so.

In the next section, I wish to explore the concept of genetic manipulation and speculate about the use of such a process in Satan's laboratories a little more pointedly.

#### 4. Producing the spectacular—amalgamation

In the previous section I suggested that manipulation of genetic information in the simpler forms of life (microbial world) was responsible for the emergence of some disease-causing organisms. However, Satan's abilities went beyond the microbial world to include "Every noxious herb." We are informed that these are of "his [Satan's] sowing, and by his ingenious methods of amalgamation [mixing of genetic elements from the context<sup>22</sup>] he has corrupted the earth with tares."<sup>23</sup> Now, ingenious methods by definition go well beyond classical cross fertilization technology. Today we can eliminate thorns and prickles from plants through genetic and artificial culture manipulation,<sup>24</sup> but not enough is known about the genetic structure of organisms to suggest precisely how these features may have been acquired in the first place. (Thorns are modified branches while prickles are modified outgrowths from epidermal cells; Satan must have found a way to affect plant development.) Some prickles are expressed as

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<sup>22</sup> Compare J. A. H. Murray, H. Bradley, W. A. Craigie and C. T. Onions, eds, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961) 1:263 on the meaning of amalgamation—"The homogenous union of what were previously distinct elements, societies, etc." or "The action of combining distinct elements, races, associations, into one uniform whole."

<sup>23</sup> E. G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 2:288.

<sup>24</sup> Example: F. A. Canli and R. M. Skirvin, "Separation of thorn less rose chimeras into their (*Rosa* sp.) consistent genotypes *in vitro*," *Pakistan Journal of Biological Sciences* 6 (2003):1644-1648.

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recessive traits<sup>25</sup> and it is conceivable that they can arise through mutations or through complementation (a form of interaction between genes).<sup>26</sup> Others may arise when somatic hybrids are created involving different plants (e.g. potato and tomato and related species), even though neither parent possesses the trait.<sup>27</sup>

The interpretation that I have placed on the words “ingenious methods of amalgamation” used by Ellen White encompasses but are not restricted to induction and selection of mutants, tissue cloning, cell fusion, embryo culture and gene exchange using genetic engineering methodology as possibilities.<sup>28</sup> Using such techniques, the possibilities for changing the face

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<sup>25</sup> T. Jinno, “Cytogenetic and cytoecological studies on some Japanese species of *Rubus* II. Cytogenetic studies on some F1-hybrids,” *The Japanese Journal of Genetics* 33 (7) (1958): 203.

<sup>26</sup> Y. F. Bogdanov, Y. S. Fedotova, S. P. Sosnikhina, V. G. Smirnov, S. Y. Dadashev, E. I. Mikhailova and J. H. de Jong. “Bar- and Thorn-like Abnormalities in Synaptonemal Complexes of a Mutant Rye, *Secale cereale*,” *Genome* 41 (2) (1998): 284-288—thorn-like abnormalities arise through mutation; R. N. Lester and Daunay, M.-C. “Diversity of African Vegetable *Solanum* Species and its Implications for a Better Understanding of Plant Domestication,” Proceedings of a Symposium Dedicated to the 100th Birthday of Rudolf Mansfield, Gatersleben, Germany, 8-9 October, 2001, *Schriften zu Genetischen Ressourcen*, band 22 (2001): 136-152—prickles appear when certain crosses are made; R. N. Lester and G. N. W. Thitaiz, “Inheritance in *Solanum aethiopicum*, the Scarlet Eggplant,” *Euphytica* 40 (1989):67-74—reverse mutation noted causing prickles to be lost; M. Marcotrigiano, “Herbivory Could Unlock Mutations Sequestered in Stratified Shoot Apices of Genetic Mosaics,” *American Journal of Botany* 87 (2000): 355-361—prickle expression does not occur because of a mutation in a developmental pathway.

<sup>27</sup> F. Bletson, D. Roupakias, M. Tsaksira and A. Scaltsayjannes, “Production and Characterization of Interspecific Hybrids between Three Eggplant (*Solanum melongena* L.) cultivars and *Solanum macrocarpon* L.,” *Scientia Horticulturae* 101 (1-2) (2004):11-21; M. Okamura, “Pomato: Potato Protoplast System and Somatic Hybridization between Potato and Wild Tomato,” in *Somatic Hybridization in Crop Improvement*, ed. Y. P. S. Bajaj (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 1994), 1:209-223.

<sup>28</sup> Example: A. Kumar and S. K. Sopory, eds, *Recent Advances in Plant Biotechnology and Its Applications: Prof. Dr Karl-Hermann Newmann Commemorative Volume* (New Delhi: I. K. International Pub, 2008); D. S. T. Nicholl, *An Introduction to Genetic Engineering*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); S. Wakayama, H. Ohta, T. Hikichi, E. Mizutani, T. Iwaki, O. Kanagawa and T. Wakayama, “Production of Healthy Cloned Mice from Bodies Frozen at -20° C for 16 Years,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA* 105 (45) (2008): 17318-17322.

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of nature are enormous.<sup>29</sup> If we think about it carefully, Satan is the author of evil (Rev 12:9) and he must possess the tools with which to produce disease and the abnormal. It stands to reason, then, that his knowledge must be superior to that possessed by modern scientists. Whether the limits of Satan's activity are the same as that prescribed by God for man is unknown but mankind has not yet reached the limits of Satan's abilities if we follow the account given in Job. We can induce boils, but cannot cause tornadoes or arrange for destroying fire (as described) to descend from heaven.

***Conclusion 3:*** *Genetic manipulation can account for the appearance of thorns, prickles, weeds and pathogenic organisms in God's creation.*

#### **5. Amalgamation of man and beast**

In this section I wish to address the debated statements of Ellen White relating to amalgamation and draw on some of the arguments established to this point. The disputed statements made by Ellen White<sup>30</sup> were about attempts to mix the genetic elements of animals and of humans. They are as follows:

But if there was one sin above another which called for the destruction of the race by the flood, it was the base crime of amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere.

Every species of animal which God had created were preserved in the ark. The confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed. Since the flood there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of man.

These statements have caused some debate,<sup>31</sup> but I am proposing an interpretation based on the information given above that may help resolve

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<sup>29</sup> D. Concar, "Brave New Rose. It's 2000. You're Lying on a Lemon Scented Lawn," *New Scientist* 160 (no.2158) (1998): 30-33.

<sup>30</sup> The book by E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 3: 64, 75 was written in 1864.

<sup>31</sup> G. Shigley, "Amalgamation of Man and Beast: What Did Ellen White Mean?" *Spectrum* 12 (June 4) (1982): 10-19.

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some of the remaining problems. For our purpose it is important to remember that the comments were written by Ellen White in 1864.

The word amalgamation commonly has been applied, in the time period under consideration, to social as well as sexual relationships among races.<sup>32</sup> However, other meanings can be found so that the limitations placed on the meaning of the word amalgamation argued by some may be too narrow. For example, one recent account allowed the word to describe fusion of metals and different elements and the mixing of diverse races but not the production of “any kind of hybrid animal-human relationship.”<sup>33</sup> Certainly, as presented by this author and as elsewhere affirmed, the word “amalgamation” has been used to describe the combining (or mixing) of human cultures and intermarriage between racial groups,<sup>34</sup> but this represents a partial picture.

The deep seated resentments to inter racial marriages present in society and the other connotations that it held came to the fore in the United States in 1863/4. In fact, leading up to the election of 1864, the term “miscegenation” was introduced.<sup>35</sup> This term was used to describe mixing races and was based on the understanding that all races were derived from the one original type and that interbreeding was not a particularly dangerous idea. This move quickly led to the creation of a reactionary term called “subgenation.” It referred to the mixing of an inferior race with a superior race. This opposing understanding was based on the proposition that not all races (species) of man are equal and that mixing would bring inferior peoples into existence. Since the Negroes and some other groups

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<sup>32</sup> R. Bernasconi and S. Cook, *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 32-33; M. E. Hodes, *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in Northern American History* (New York: NYU Press, 1999), 207.

<sup>33</sup> H. E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1998), chapter 43. Online: [www.whiteestate.org/books/books.asp](http://www.whiteestate.org/books/books.asp) (February 25, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> R. W. Burchfield, *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 71; R. L. Numbers, ed., *Creationism in Twentieth-century America* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 452-453; H. Spencer, *On Social Evolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 163-164.

<sup>35</sup> S. Kaplan, *American Studies in Black and White: Selected Essays, 1949-1989*, ed. A. D. Austin (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 47-73; E. V. Lemire, *“Miscegenation”: Making Race in America* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 51-52.

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were regarded as inferior to the whites, intercrossing with them was considered an act of debauchery or even “bestiality” and in this context reference was made to the crimes punished by death in the Jewish dispensation.<sup>36</sup> The debate became quite heated, it was well publicized, and it became political in nature and was protracted.<sup>37</sup> There is no questioning the connection of the idea of amalgamation (miscegenation) with bestiality. This was made abundantly clear in *The Herald* (Article title: “The Beastly Doctrine of Miscegenation and Its High Priests”) and *New-York Freeman’s Journal & Catholic Register* which called miscegenation (amalgamation) a “beastly doctrine of the intermarriage of black men and white women.”<sup>38</sup>

It is recognized by some historians, over the broad sweep of the last 200 years, that the categorization of “‘Inter-race-ial’ sex was presented as an act of bestiality, miscegenation as a curse against civilization, and both perceived as the product of folly and physical immorality.”<sup>39</sup> Further, it has been observed that in the United States in the 1800s the “equation of miscegenation with bestiality” had been made by society.<sup>40</sup> However, it may be objected that the word bestiality carried the lesser meaning of being like or acting like an animal rather than engaging in sex with an animal. This argument might be persuasive except for the following points: There was a long established tradition in England which held that intermarriage between Jews and Christians was legally equivalent to sodomy and bestiality (sex with animals) and these all were regarded as sins that cry out to the heavens (*damantia peccata*) and were punished severely.<sup>41</sup> Similar

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<sup>36</sup> J. H. van Evrie, *Subgenation: the Theory of the Normal Relation of the Races an Answer to “Miscegenation”* (2006), 8-26 [Original produced by John Bradburn of New York in 1864.] Online: <http://books.google.co.th/books?id=BpwwfKWzlekC&ho=en> (10/12/2008); cf. Lev 20:10–16; M. Dekkers, *Dearest Pet: on Bestiality*, translated by P. Vincent (New York: Verso Books, 2000), 39.

<sup>37</sup> Debate ran from just before Christmas 1863 until the elections in late 1864.

<sup>38</sup> S. Kaplan, *American Studies in Black and White: Selected Essays, 1949-1989*, ed. A. D. Austin (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 47-73.

<sup>39</sup> J. Solomons and L. Schuster, “Hate Speech, Violence and Contemporary Racisms,” in *Europe’s New Racism: Causes, Manifestations, and Solutions*, ed. The Evens Foundation (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 43-56.

<sup>40</sup> A. Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy*, (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 113.

<sup>41</sup> B. J. Sokol, “Prejudice and the Law in *The Merchant of Venice*,” in *Shakespeare Survey: Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. S. Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159-174.

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understandings were held in parts of the United States over the time period in question and individuals were sometimes punished severely for their sexual exploits with other humans and animals. Elaborate rituals were invented in some communions to minimize the risks of such experiments.<sup>42</sup> Finally, van Evrie, the author of the pamphlet on subgenation specifically indicated that mixing of races “belongs to that class of ‘bestial crimes’ which, under the Jewish law, were punishable with death.”<sup>43</sup> The Jewish laws alluded to included both sex between individuals of the same gender and with animals (Lev 18:22, 23). Critically, van Evrie identified his understanding of bestiality by referring to the observations of Herodotus (an historian) involving the Egyptians.<sup>44</sup> These activities are clearly recorded by Herodotus as the act of sex with animals, namely the sacred goat.<sup>45</sup> This allows the suggestion to be made that the term amalgamation carried both explicit and implicit meanings.

**Conclusion 4:** *The term amalgamation was used in the mid-1860s to refer to intercrossing between races (but was not limited to this meaning). It was likened by some to “bestiality” (sex with animals) in a highly publicized debate.*

Stepping back a little, the idea of amalgamation actually represents none other than the mixing of genetic elements. By logical extension, attempted union (combining or mixing of genetic elements) might also be allowed as a possible meaning for the word. The fact that some in the United States applied the concept behind the term to refer to acts of bestiality<sup>46</sup> indicates clearly that it was more broadly understood in the time when Ellen White wrote than some have been willing to allow. The mating (crossing or blending or amalgamation) of people from diverse races does not always end in reproductive success even though the intent to produce

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<sup>42</sup> J. D’Emilio and E. B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, edition 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 117, 118, 122-128.

<sup>43</sup> van Evrie, *op. cit.*, 25-26.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>45</sup> E. Robinson, *The Biblical Repository* (Andover: Fagg & Gould, Publishers and Printers, 1832), 2: 459; H. Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (eBooks Library, 2004), V: 33.

<sup>46</sup> Example: Kaplan, *op. cit.*, 65, 71; van Evrie, *op. cit.*, 22, 26.

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offspring may often be present. God considers intent and completed deeds in the same category (Matt 5:28). We are making this application and also are suggesting that Ellen White may have had this in mind as this was the clear implication of some secular accounts in the very year she penned her words on amalgamation.

***Conclusion 5: Imagined and attempted matings are equivalent morally to successful matings.***

As background to expanding on the conclusions drawn already, the reader's attention is drawn to the fact that God has involved Himself in individual, regional and global judgments on those who, against the call of nature and conscience, persistently engaged in experiments involving sexual activity against nature in an attempt to increase the level and frequency of human sexual pleasure (or perhaps in some instances to experiment with the idea of improving on the biological resources available—particularly in the pre-scientific era). These activities include homosexual behaviour and bestiality or zoophilia (e.g., 1 Kings 14:23, 24; 15:12; 2 Kings 23:7; Lev 18:22-24). From earliest times, historical records show that men and women have shown a morbid fascination with sexual acts involving animals. This is still the case.<sup>47</sup> The fascination is primarily to experience unrestricted and unusual sexual pleasure, but also at times has carried with it the visionary hope that human-animal hybrids may be generated.

The fantasies relating to human-animal hybrids have been displayed in carvings and drawings. To illustrate, the common therianthropes (combined animal and human forms) have been worshiped throughout history.<sup>48</sup> Examples of the better known ancient animal-human forms include the deities Horus and Pan. Some of these therianthropes may have come from fairly uncomplicated underpinnings, but in selected pagan belief systems they represented visions of zoophilia. For example, the Romans had advanced in their depravity along these lines so that they had well

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<sup>47</sup> A. Beetz, "New Insights into Bestiality and Zoophilia," in *Bestiality and Zoophilia. Sexual Relations with Animals*, ed. A. Beetz (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005), 98-119; Miletski, *op. cit.*, 1-22.

<sup>48</sup> L. Dayton, "Half Man, Half Wolf," *New Scientist* 172 (2001):19.

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rehearsed and cruel practices of submitting people to acts of sexual torture inflicted by trained animals in games and circus acts. These events were for the entertainment of the citizens and to illustrate sexual acts from the lives of the gods.<sup>49</sup> There is no lack of interest in the subject of sex with animals today as anciently and some philosophers even advocate zoophilic activity as a healthy experience.<sup>50</sup> These few comments are more than adequate to illustrate that genetic exchange (amalgamation or mixing of genetic elements) between beast and man was attempted. This type of activity undoubtedly extended to mating attempts among diverse animals groups. Mating attempts outside the usual were evident in biblical times in the production of the mule (male ass X female horse) and in modern times have been seen in the creation of the leopon, tigon, wholphin, huarizo and others.<sup>51</sup>

This brief outline gives us the ability to suggest that the people before the Flood were destroyed for “the base crime of [attempted] amalgamation of man and beast which defaced the image of God, and caused confusion everywhere.”<sup>52</sup> This appears similar to the general category of crimes committed by the Romans (and others) who were obsessed by sexual activities, which undoubtedly helped fill their cup of iniquity and led God to terminate their great empire (Dan 2:40–45).<sup>53</sup> In another statement, White suggests that some “confused species” were destroyed at the Flood,<sup>54</sup> which indicates that perhaps some mixing experiments involving animals X animals were at least partially successful. (We do not know what the original ancestors of present day animals were, although we understand that modern dogs possibly arose from wolves, for example.) I have indicated already that receiving progeny from somewhat unusual animal crosses is

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<sup>49</sup> C. A. Barton, *The Sorrows of the Ancient Romans* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 68; Ellis, *op. cit.*, 31-39; Miletski, *op. cit.*, 1-22.

<sup>50</sup> G. R. Preece, *Rethinking Peter Singer: A Christian Critique* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>51</sup> D. Batten, “Ligers and Wholphins? What Next?” *Creation Archive* 22 (3) (2000): 28-33; leopon (male leopard, female lion cross), tigon (male tiger, female lion cross), wholphin (false killer whale, bottlenose dolphin cross), huarizo (male llama, female alpaca cross).

<sup>52</sup> E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945), 3:64.

<sup>53</sup> F. A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976), 24-29.

<sup>54</sup> White, 1945, *op. cit.*, 3:75.



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not an impossible outcome for fertile progeny of crosses across the species barrier have been achieved in recent years and furthermore the introduction of foreign genes into an animal may not interfere with their fertility.<sup>55</sup>

**Conclusion 6:** *Human mating (mixing of genetic elements or amalgamation) involving same sex couplings and animals couplings has been a common feature of human behavior throughout history.*

Several issues are identified in White's statement cited in the above paragraph. In my opinion the issue of primary significance is that the image of God was defaced. Man alone was created in God's image (Gen 1:26, 27). Satan's foremost desire was to bring mankind under his total control to corrupt their minds and to make their bodies the "habitation of demons. The senses, the nerves, the passions, the organs of men, were worked by supernatural agencies in the indulgences of the vilest lust." At the time of Christ "Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity."<sup>56</sup>

The marriage institution was God's great gift of love to humanity at creation. And one great purpose of this gift was to assist in maintaining the image of God. This institution would help the race to hold their passions under the control of reason reflect the character of God and live in harmony with His will.<sup>57</sup> It was Satan's studied effort to deface God's image and one early, potent device used to this end was the practice of polygamy.<sup>58</sup> Another was intermarriage with idolaters and association with them (Gen. 6:2).<sup>59</sup> Attacking God through mankind has continued to be Satan's most

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<sup>55</sup> Example: male llama crossed with a female alpaca or huarizo—S. J. Davis, *The Archeology of Animals* (London: Routledge, 1987), 132; T. L. Rankin, Z-B. Tong, P. E. Castle, E. L., R. Gore-Langton, L. M. Nelson and J. Dean, "Human ZP3 Restores Fertility in Zp3 Null Mice without Affecting Order-specific Sperm Binding," *Development* 125 (1998): 2415-2424.

<sup>56</sup> E. G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 36-37.

<sup>57</sup> White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, idem, 45.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>59</sup> E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), 499.

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significant work.<sup>60</sup> I am suggesting that sexual relationships outside those originally designed by God (one partner of the opposite sex, same faith) functioned to destroy His image because the purpose and plan for the moral superiority of mankind were thus obscured.

**Conclusion 7:** *Preserving the marriage institution as made by God in the beginning has served to maintain the image of God in mankind.*

The second issue identified in White's statement is that "confusion" resulted from the cross breeding episodes entered into and that this was widespread. The significance of this statement differs for humans and animals. Among the human population confusion occurred relating to the purpose and appropriateness of sexual relationships as outlined in Romans 1 (vs. 25–28). The Bible contains graphic explanations portraying the depths to which mankind will descend in the pursuit of sexual pleasure. The account of Lot's experience in Sodom on the night of the angels' visit is one such instance involving male-male human couplings (Gen 19:4, 5, 13). Another example of activities performed in ancient societies is implied by the counsel given by Moses. God placed a prohibition on animal-human mating on the basis that they caused "confusion" (Lev 18:22–24; 20:12, KJV). The translation of the Hebrew word used in the basal texts is reasonably rendered "confusion."<sup>61</sup> At the close of the eighteenth century, the understanding of the meaning of the term "confusion" as given in the Scriptures was still entirely consistent with that in society.<sup>62</sup> Hence, it is not surprising to read that around this time "the sin (of bestiality) was the sin of confusion."<sup>63</sup> It might also be observed that the stated superior attraction of human beings to beasts on account of the proposal that they contained

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<sup>60</sup> F. D. Nichol, R. F. Cottrell, D. F. Neufeld and J. Neufeld, eds, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 1: 1105-1106.

<sup>61</sup> J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H. J. Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of Old Testament*, translated by D. E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), XV: 563-564.

<sup>62</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1771. Entry: "Buggery." Online: <http://1771.encyclopedia.org/vol1/buggery.html> (11/03/2009).

<sup>63</sup> B. J. Sokol, "Prejudice and the Law in *The Merchant of Venice*," in *Shakespeare Survey: Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. S. Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159-174.

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qualities which humans did not possess certainly left other significant humans in a state of confusion.<sup>64</sup> Confusion in this area probably now has reached one of its lowest points in the statement made by Peter Singer that human-animal couplings “cease to be an offence to our status and dignity as human beings” because “we are animals, indeed more specifically, we are great apes.” This means that bestiality is morally acceptable in his view, as long as animal suffering is not involved and the animal finds the act pleasurable.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the modern humanist has attempted to bring the apes into “the same moral community as ourselves.”<sup>66</sup>

An area of confusion among the animal population might be illustrated by the experiences of the Roman circuses. Here a variety of animals were trained to perform sexual acts with human beings. This was against the natural order arranged by the Designer who made various “kinds” of living animals, male and female “to keep the species alive” (Gen 1:24, 25; 7:2, 3). Today we recognize that similar confusing activities are still promoted in select circles.<sup>67</sup> An additional area of confusion might be the abnormal relationships promoted by humans among animals from groups not commonly given to intimate associations. Some of these unusual matings have given rise to fertile progeny such as between false killer whales and dolphins.<sup>68</sup>

***Conclusion 8:*** *Matings performed against nature cause confusion among both humans and animals thereby influencing their sexual and social behavior.*

A third area of possible confusion may be understood by reference to modern science. Until this point we have restricted our attention to the

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<sup>64</sup> G. Brulotte and J. Phillips, eds, *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2006), 1A-K: 140-141.

<sup>65</sup> S. F. Krantz, *Refuting Peter Singer's Ethical Theory: the Importance of Human Dignity* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 23; M. Somerville, “Crossing the species boundary,” (2007). Online: [http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/crossing\\_the\\_species\\_boundary/](http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/crossing_the_species_boundary/) (16/03/2009).

<sup>66</sup> A. C. Grayling, *Meditations for the Humanist: Ethics for a Secular Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 84.

<sup>67</sup> Beetz, *op. cit.*, 98-119; Miletski, *op. cit.*, 1-22.

<sup>68</sup> Batten, *op. cit.*, 28-33.

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products emerging from the application of classical breeding techniques. Those arising from genetic manipulation using more modern techniques introduce a whole new meaning. Today we have transgenic animals that hold genes from other sources incorporated in the genome (including from humans). Then there are chimeric animals which hold two or more populations of genetically dissimilar cells to make up the organism (e.g., sheep and goat and chicken and quail). This has reached such a level that one commentator has said “the biological co-mingling of animal and human is now evolving into even more exotic and unsettling mixes of species, evoking the Greek myth of the monstrous chimera, which was part lion, part goat and part serpent.”<sup>69</sup> Despite the unsettled attitude among many, the United Kingdom government recently allowed (2008) the mixing of human cells with animal eggs.<sup>70</sup> The ethical debate that such experimentation has created is considerable, especially where human neural cells are introduced into animals and where such animals are capable of reproducing. Issues of human dignity, moral confusion and going counter to God’s intent are at the forefront of such debates.<sup>71</sup> I suggest that bizarre chimeras being created in our time represent a modern confusion of species. Is it possible that God’s displeasure will be expressed on those who rearrange His works?

White’s statements neither rule in or out the handiwork of Satan in producing “confused” species by using genetic engineering, as the techniques were unknown in her day. I am ‘ruling in’ the possibility, as she identifies that Satan has utilized “ingenious methods of amalgamation” in

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<sup>69</sup> Associated Press. “Scientists Create Animals that Are Part-human,” (2005). Online: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7681252> (22/01/2007). Animal chimeras represent animals with some cells from one species and other cells from a different species. For example, the geep had the head of a goat and the torso of a wooly sheep, with admixtures seen elsewhere on the animal, too.

<sup>70</sup> D. Stringer, “Animal-human Hybrids Research Approved in U.K.,” *Natural Geographic News*, Thursday, October 28, 2010. Online: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/05/080519-AP-hybrids.html>.(15/03/2011). Canada has banned the formation of such hybrids, but only some states in the United States have done so—Bland, E, “Animal-human Hybrids Banned in Some States,” *Discovery News*, Friday, June 4, 2010. Online: <http://news.discovery.com/tech/human-animal-hybrids-splice.html> (27/10/2011).

<sup>71</sup> L. P. Knowles, “Ethics of Research Using Hybrids, Chimeras and Cytoplasmic Hybrids,” *Stem Cell Network*. Online: <http://www.stemcellschool.org/pdf/Ethics-of%20Research-Using-Hybrids.pdf> (27/10/2011).

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the plant kingdom.<sup>72</sup> I suggest that Satan worked behind the scenes with depraved mankind to cause confusion of God's creation. I already have argued that such engineering techniques seemingly were available to Satan around the time of Job to produce pathogenic microbes. (Such destructive micro-organisms may have been present before this time, being manufactured from useful microbes in the environment.) We understand from the Scriptures that limits have been placed on Satan's activities. This means there are boundaries beyond which his experiments cannot proceed.

***Conclusion 9:*** *Experimental mixing of genetic elements (amalgamation or co-mingling) from widely different sources has led to deep ethical dilemmas.*

This brings us to the statement made by Ellen White about "certain races of men" arising from amalgamation or mixing of genetic elements,<sup>73</sup> which has caused a number of emotional responses (perhaps due primarily to the emphasis placed on the restricted dictionary meaning of the word "amalgamation" rather than on the outcomes of the process described which gives us a better understanding of the scope of meanings which might be attributed). We might link this idea with the companion statement that speaks of "almost endless varieties of species of animals" arising from the same process.

Some initial questions are: What has selective or directed breeding or interbreeding within small gene pools accomplished? And what was the fundamental purpose of such activity? These are the questions we need to ask. Until recent times, animal variants were produced to fulfill economic and other specific practical needs. Directed breeding, mutant selection and culling were the chosen methods to produce new animal lines. The variation within the canine, bovine and ovine group of animals produced over a relatively short period of time is sufficient to illustrate how easy it has been to produce different animal breeds. From these artificial or naturally occurring lines of animals, species may eventually arise. This occurs when populations are isolated so as to prevent interbreeding.

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<sup>72</sup> E. G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 2:288.

<sup>73</sup> White, 1945, *op. cit.*, 75.

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Isolation may occur on account of habitat separation, the erection of sexual reproduction barriers and genetic barriers. The animals emerging over time in these groups will no longer interbreed successfully even if placed in the same location. Mutations are the genetic mechanism by which speciation occurs. Mutations may occur in isolated populations that alter mating success and this in turn may hasten speciation.<sup>74</sup> This means that if cross breeding does not now occur among groups of animals it is not a sure indicator that it never occurred.<sup>75</sup>

Fundamentally similar changes have been observed within the human population as a result of restricted interbreeding. Breeding within restricted gene pools (e.g., Ashkenazi Jews, Amish, and Newfoundlanders) has led to the emergence of unusual population characteristics and defects among humans.<sup>76</sup> Breeding within larger gene pools has led to other interesting genetic variations arising when disease often has prevented individuals reaching reproductive maturity. For example, susceptibility to malaria is related to haemoglobin characteristics. In areas of the world where malaria is or has been endemic, individuals with altered haemoglobin characteristics predominate. Certain African populations commonly have genes practically unknown among other populations which give them resistance to fatal malaria.<sup>77</sup> Changes may also be found in the major histocompatibility protein complex. These proteins are associated with white blood cells and other cells and a subset of them is connected with the ability of higher organisms to resist the onslaught of pathogenic

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<sup>74</sup> Example: K. Y. Kaneshiro, "Sexual Isolation, Speciation and the Direction of Evolution," *Evolution* 34 (1980):437-444.

<sup>75</sup> Batten, *op. cit.*, 28-33; S. J. Davis, *op. cit.*, 126-132.

<sup>76</sup> McKusick et al., *op. cit.*, 99-114; T-L. Young, M. O. Woods, P. S. Parfrey, J. S. Green, D. Hefferton and W. S. Davidson, "A Founder Effect in the Newfoundland Population Reduces the Bardet-Biedl Syndrome 1(BBS1) interval to 1 cM," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 65 (1999):1680-1687; J. Charrow, "Ashkenazi Jewish Genetic Disorders," *Familial Cancer* 3(3-4) (2004): 201-206; L. B. Weinstein, "Selected Genetic Disorders Affecting Ashkenazi Jewish families," *Family and Community Health* 30 (1) (2007): 50-62.

<sup>77</sup> V. St. Georgiev, *National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, NIH, vol. 2: Impact on Global Health* (New York: Humana Press, 2009), 168.

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organisms.<sup>78</sup> More recently it has been suggested that black plague epidemics (*Yersinia pestis*) shaped the distribution of people with iron overload (haemochromatosis) mutation in certain parts of Europe.<sup>79</sup> These examples provide abundant evidence that variants in human population groups have arisen through interbreeding, mutation and selective pressures. Whether we wish to call these groups races<sup>80</sup> or whether White had such a concept in mind is a matter of personal opinion and further research. Suffice it to say that the term “race” was used variously during this period and some even used the designation ‘race’ and ‘species’ interchangeably.<sup>81</sup>

***Conclusion 10:*** *Interbreeding, mutations and selective pressure leads to the emergence of species. The latter do not readily interbreed. This process has been inferred from observations made among animals.*

Among the human population, a common view held in the general period when Ellen White wrote was that racial interbreeding would result in the production of biological monstrosities and inferior individuals.<sup>82</sup> It was held by leading scientists that certain races were superior to others and that the less intellectual were being exterminated by natural evolutionary

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<sup>78</sup> Madigan et al., *op. cit.*, 925-926; S. Segal and A. V. Hill, “Genetic Susceptibility to Infections Disease,” *Trends in Microbiology* 11 (9) (2003): 445-448; G. C. Cook and A. I. Zamla, eds, *Manson’s Tropical Diseases*, edition 22 (Canada: Saunders Elsevier Limited, 2009), 1208-1209.

<sup>79</sup> S. Moalem, “Survival of the Sickest,” *New Scientist* 193 (no. 2591) (2007): 42-45.

<sup>80</sup> Compare V. Sarich and F. Miele, *Race: The Reality of Human Differences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> B. Douglas and C. Ballard, eds, *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750-1940*, (2008). Online: <http://epress.anu.edu.au/foreignbodies/mobiledevices/ch01s08.html>.

<sup>82</sup> L. C. Dunn and T. Dobzansky, T. *Heredity, Race and Society* (New York: Mentor Books, 1952), 130-131; R. L. Numbers, ed., *Creationism in Twentieth-century America* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995) 452-453; S. Thernstrom, “The Demography of Racial and Ethnic Groups,” in *Beyond the Color Line: New Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America*, eds S. Thernstrom and A. Thernstrom (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 2002), 1-25.

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processes.<sup>83</sup> However, the view that racial interbreeding led to the production of monstrosities (unusual variants) and inferior individuals was not the only one held and there is no known reason why we should attribute the most unsatisfactory explanation to White's account.<sup>84</sup> In fact, Herbert Spencer expressed the then almost "universal belief" that crosses between different varieties and strains of animals and plants gave the immediate offspring vigor and fertility.<sup>85</sup> He added that this harmonized with the experience found with humans (and we might add that this corresponds with the evidence today).<sup>86</sup> Charles Darwin was arguably one of the most influential scientific writers around this time. In his account of *The Descent of Man*, when speaking of the crossing of races, he stated that the characteristics of each race would be diluted if the progeny intercrossed for many generations. He regarded monstrosities as chance phenomena that were either not transmitted to progeny or not fully developed in the next generation. In this work, the word monstrosity is noted to mean, in the simplest case, a marked change in color in the progeny.<sup>87</sup> He made no adverse comments about the progeny of crosses between the white race and Australian aborigines, for example, except to note that half-castes were not readily accepted by the tribes.<sup>88</sup> He further reported that in Brazil the Paulistas (cross between Indians and Portuguese) were energetic and successful in contrast to the inferior vitality of some inter-racial crosses or mulattoes.<sup>89</sup> I contend that he was citing best and worst case scenarios. In 1908 Herbert Spencer came out strongly against intermarriage between dissimilar races but this concern was largely owing to the perceived social disfunctionality of the progeny.<sup>90</sup> The idea that monstrosities and inferior

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<sup>83</sup> E. Haeckel, *The History of Creation or the Development of the Earth and its Inhabitants by the Action of Natural Causes* (London: Paul, Trench & Co., 1883), 323; F. Darwin, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (London: John Murray, 1887), 211.

<sup>84</sup> Compare Shigley, *op. cit.*, 10-19.

<sup>85</sup> Compare van Evrie, *op. cit.*, 19.

<sup>86</sup> B. V. Milborrow, "A Biochemical Mechanism for Hybrid Vigour," *Journal of Experimental Botany* 49 (1998): 1063-1071.

<sup>87</sup> C. Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and the Selection of Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871), 1: 224, 241.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 221, 225.

<sup>90</sup> H. Spencer, *On Social Evolution—Selected Writings*, Edited and an Introduction by J. D. Y. Peel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 256-257.



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individuals could arise following crosses between races<sup>91</sup> can thus be seen to be a mixture of fact, fantasy and prejudice.

**Conclusion 11:** *Racial interbreeding was commonly held to give rise to biological monstrosities and inferior individuals in the mid-1860s. However, this was not the only view held by scientists in White's day. White should not be held to the worst scenario as an automatic reaction.*

Our view of the intent behind the interbreeding attempts involving both humans and animals has something to do with our attitude to the statements made by White, for it was intent as well as practice that led to the destruction of mankind at the Flood (Gen 6:2, 4). Directed or manipulated breeding was advocated anciently by Plato to produce a suitable soldiery and a relatively recent practical example comes from Nazi Germany.<sup>92</sup> In the latter example the so called lesser races were eliminated along with those with genetic defects to preserve a perceived master race.<sup>93</sup> Then we observe that selective abortion is practiced in some countries<sup>94</sup> and gene testing and manipulated of conceptions occurs in others.<sup>95</sup> These could be regarded by some as modern examples of evil intent. Mankind through modern scientific advances has prevented the deaths of many who previously would have died before reproductive activity. This is seen by some observers as changing the outcome of natural processes; consequently, they bewail that evolution has ended for mankind.<sup>96</sup> Others

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<sup>91</sup> Summarized in B. Douglas and C. Ballard, eds, *Foreign Bodies: Oceania and the Science of Race 1750–1940*, (2008). Online: <http://epress.anu.edu.au/foreignbodies/mobiledevices/ch01s08.html> (10/11/2009).

<sup>92</sup> J. L. Scholer, "Four Millennia of Literary Utopias: from Plato to Orwell; J. Lawrence Scholer reviews *The Faber Book of Utopias!*" *The Portsmouth Review*, November 12, (2001).

<sup>93</sup> M. R. Rose, *Darwin's Spectre* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 142-145.

<sup>94</sup> D. Galton, *In Our Own Image* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 120.

<sup>95</sup> L. S. Penrose, "Phenylketonuria—a Problem of Eugenics," *Annals of Human Genetics* 62 (1998): 193-202; M. W. Strickberger, *Evolution*, edition 3 (Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2005), 620-628.

<sup>96</sup> J. Rothschild, *The Dream of a Perfect Child* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 56-57; D. Derbyshire, "Evolution Stops Here: Future Man Will Look the Same Says Scientist," Mail Online, October 7, 2008. Online: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk> (10/03/2009).

may wish to prevent the further decline in the human genetic endowment and look optimistically to managing and directing evolution.<sup>97</sup>

In research involving chimeras, the ethical and legal questions have become center stage. Successful interspecies manipulations have been made with some unusual outcomes achieved, but these are of no riveting interest as they do not breed true to the altered form.<sup>98</sup> However, the future of human-animal cytoplasmic hybrids (cybrids) is just opening before us and is an area of intense ethical debate. Interest is primarily focused on the generation of embryonic stem cells using animal eggs as the incubator (a human nucleus is introduced into an animal cell that has had its nucleus removed). The interest in the human-animal cybrids is to enable research into crippling diseases and related issues. The technique also is used in order to rescue endangered species.<sup>99</sup> It is undoubtedly true to say that for every well intentioned use, there are those who are prepared to push at any boundaries erected. After the successful insertion of human brain cells into a mouse, the debate has entered new territory. The question now has become: What proportion of human brain tissue can a recipient animal receive before it becomes part of the human family?<sup>100</sup> These advances

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<sup>97</sup> Compare B. Keim, "Research Breakthrough: Human Clones May Be Genetically Viable," *Wired Science*, February 2, (2009). Online: <http://blog.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/02/human-clones-ap.html> (09/03/2009); Y. Chung, C. E. Bishop, N. R. Treff, S. J. Walker, V. M. Sandler, S. Becker, I. Klimanskaya, W-S. Wun, R. Dunn, R. M. Hall, J. Su, S-J. Lu, M. Maserati, Y-H. Choi, R. Scott, A. Atala, R. Dittman and R. Lanza, "Reprogramming Human Somatic Cells Using Human and Animal Oocytes," *Cloning and Stem Cells* 11(2) (2009): DOI: 10.1089/clo.2009.0004. Online: <http://www.liebertonline.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1089/clo.2009.0004?cookieSet=1> (10/03/2009).

<sup>98</sup> Y. Xi, S. Fang, Y. Nada and N. Fujihara, "Peafowl-chicken Interspecific Chimera," *Journal of Poultry Science* 39 (2002): 149,155; S. Meinecke-Tillman and B. Meinecke, "Experimental Chimeras-removal of Reproductive Barrier between Sheep and Goat," *Nature* 307 (1984): 637, 638.

<sup>99</sup> Z. Beyhan, A. E. Iager and J. B. Cibelli "Interspecies Nuclear Transfer: Implications for Embryonic Stem Cell Biology," *Cell Stem Cell* 1 (2007): 502-12; S. Camporesi and G. Boniolo, G. "Fearing a Non-existing Minotaur? The Ethical Challenges of Research on Cytoplasmic Hybrid Embryos," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 34 (2008): 821-825; doi:10.1136/jme.2008.024877.

<sup>100</sup> A. R. Muotri, K. Nakashuma, N. Toni, V. M. Sandler and F. H. Gage, 2005. "Development of Functional Human Embryonic Stem Cell-derived Neurons in Mouse Brain," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, USA 102 (2005): 18644-18648; doi: 10.1073/pnas.0509315102; L. M. Silver, "Human-animal Chimeras: from Mythology

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perhaps help in understanding the statement by White that at the Flood “the confused species which God did not create, which were the result of amalgamation, were destroyed.”<sup>101</sup> (This idea becomes particularly relevant if we argue, as I have done, that Satan possessed some of these advanced manipulation abilities early in earth’s history.) Where all the current experimentation becomes unethical is a much debated issue. God may or may not figure in the emerging discussion, but one thing we do well to remember is that He has promised to reward negatively those who destroy His creation (Rev 11:18).

**6. Acts against nature and God’s response**

In the previous section I assumed a certain level of knowledge regarding activities which have caused God to express intense displeasure. In this section I will more fully develop our understandings. God has involved Himself in individual, regional and global judgments on those who, against the call of conscience, persistently engaged in experiments involving sexual activity against nature in an attempt to improve on the biological resources provided or to increase the level and frequency of human sexual pleasure. I have written already about aspects of this question.

At creation God established the natural order of reproductive activity. Human sexuality arose through a deliberate act of God (Gen 2:20-23) and was intended for the increase of the race (v. 24; Gen 4:1) and we understand it had a purpose in addition to procreation. Sexual activity involving husband (male) and one wife (female) was the continuing norm expected for those who understood God’s purpose—the Edenic model is presented as universal law in Leviticus 18.<sup>102</sup> The importance of emotional bonding through the act of consensual sex is implied by the apostle Paul (1 Cor 7:2-5). The marriage union was meant to be permanent and those entering it were urged to maintain its fidelity and purity (Matt 19:3-9).

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to Biotechnology,” (2007). Online: <http://www.scientificblogging.com/> (16/03/2009).

<sup>101</sup> White, 1945, *op. cit.*, 3: 75; some unusual crosses are capable of producing fertile progeny—Wholphin and genae (snakes from different genera)—Batten, *op. cit.*; I have indicated already at reference number 55 some additional information.

<sup>102</sup> R. M. Davidson, “Polygamy in the Old Testament,” in *Pathology of Polygamy: Cross-Cultural Mission on a Biblical Basis*, ed. Ron du Preez, 9-54 (Berrien Springs, MI: Omega Media, 2007).

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Fascination arose soon after creation with other arrangements outside the marriage model designed by God. By the time of the Flood, we are told that “they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose” (Gen 6:2). Reasonably, this may be interpreted to mean that polygamy and divorce were common.<sup>103</sup> The phrase “every intent of his heart was only evil continually” (v. 5) needs a little more explanation.

First, we might note that the evil intent of people’s minds led God to lament His creation (v. 6). They were “corrupt” and “violent” (Gen. 6:11, 12), taking by force that which they desired—property and wives.<sup>104</sup> As a consequence of the activities of the pre-Flood population, God proclaimed a universal death penalty on all except a remnant (Gen. 7:17, 21-23). The meaning of the word “corrupt” can be ascertained by reference to Israel’s history during the days when they were under God’s visible leading. Many of those receiving the death penalty came from among individuals who participated in sexual relationships outside the natural order. This included those given to homosexual and bestial behavior (Lev 18:6-17, 22, 23; 20:10, 11). A considerable proportion of the sins recorded as bringing utter condemnation from God dealt with sexual immorality (Lev 18, 20). Immoral behavior and abandonment of the God’s principles are chief among the sins that brought the destruction at the Flood.<sup>105</sup>

Those who did not follow God’s instructions caused the land to “vomit” the inhabitants out (Lev 20:22; cf. 18:25). The apostle Paul is more explicit and indicates that persistent rebellion against God’s ideals ultimately would mean the departure of His Spirit (Rom 1:25-28) resulting in practitioners being given over to “their vile passions” (v. 26). Entrance to the path of sexual immorality brings with it a harvest of other unrighteous acts leading ultimately to the judgments of God and the reward of eternal death (Rom 1:28-32; Rev 22:15). This is similar to the outcomes delivered to the depraved inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. They were destroyed by fire for their gross acts of immorality, for which they refused to repent (Gen 19:4-11, 24).

From this background of information, we can assert reasonably that one category of corrupt practices of the pre-Flood race was sexual immorality

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<sup>103</sup> Compare Matt 24:38; White, 1943, *op cit.*, 338.

<sup>104</sup> White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, *idem*, 92.

<sup>105</sup> E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 5: 601.

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in the broadest sense and contributed to their destruction. Their motivation was evil continually and this was driven by the originator of evil, Satan.

***Conclusion 12:*** *It may be reasonable to understand that White's statements on the "base crime of amalgamation" to represent attempted crossings involving animals and humans and other perversions of the order established at creation.*

**7. Concluding comments**

The foregoing comments are not meant to address all the issues exposed through a discussion of how sin affected this world and the methods Satan used to cause deterioration of nature. However, some puzzling aspects of both the scriptural and Spirit of Prophecy record are becoming clearer as we progress into the twenty-first century. Others can add to the debate as time passes.

I have attempted to show that statements written by E. G. White that have appeared to be absurd at a certain time in history can become plainer years later. It is truly said by the apostle Paul: "we see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor 13:12). But in all the darkness perhaps we can confidently echo Jehoshaphat's thoughts when he said: "Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper" (2 Chron 20:20).

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## **The Emerging Church–Part 3: Evangelical Evaluations**

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Due to the sheer epochal nature of the changes western culture and Christianity are experiencing at the beginning of the twenty first century, Evangelicals cannot avoid asking not only the meaning of what Phyllis Tickle calls “The Great Emergence,” but also “where is it going and where is it taking them as it goes.”<sup>1</sup> In order to assess how this overall phenomenon relates to the evolution of Evangelicalism, in this series of articles I am attempting to assess, in broad lines, the nature and extent of the changes American Evangelicalism is experiencing at the beginning of the twenty first century. In order to envision the direction in which Evangelicalism may be evolving, it is important to factor the initial reaction of Evangelicals to the Emerging Church movement.

Because the changes facing Evangelicalism affect the actual religious experience of all believers, reaction to postmodernity and engagement with the emerging church movement was unavoidable. Reactions to challenges can widely vary in persons and movements. Allan Stucky reminds us that “[d]ifferent people react to such radical changes in different ways. Some quickly adapt while others fight to keep their world the same at all costs. Some find themselves in the middle, cautiously seeking to understand their new world but weighing it against where they’ve been before. And just like people, different churches and denominations have different reactions to a

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<sup>1</sup> Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 13.

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world that seems to be changing around them incessantly.”<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Ken Howard’s call for cool heads and open minds to prevail in this experience is wise and timely.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, most reactions to the emerging church that I have found are, kind, Christian and even sympathetic.<sup>4</sup>

After briefly summarizing the theological history of the Evangelical movement in America (first article) and drawing a working outline of the emerging church movement (second article), in this article we turn our attention to some initial critical evaluations by Evangelicals to the Emerging Church movement. Necessarily, the sketch that follows will be an incomplete sample of a much broader and complex reality. We will focus on the very same issues raised by the Emerging Church Movement described above: Worship, postmodernity, epistemology, Nonfoundationalist-Foundationalism, culture, Scripture, theology and ecumenism.

Since my approach in this series is historico-theological rather than historico-sociological<sup>5</sup> I have chosen to evaluate reactions from the center of Evangelicalism.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Stucky, “Anabaptism and Emergence: Collision or Convergence,” *Dialogue* 39, no. 1 (2010): 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> Ken Howard, “A New Middle Way? Surviving and Thriving in the Coming Religious Realignment,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (2010): 105-06.

<sup>4</sup> Consider, for instance, John Bolt’s assessment of D. A. Carson’s sympathetic evaluation. “As I noted above, Carson is not unsympathetic to many of ECM’s concerns. He praises its concern to know its social and intellectual context and to aggressively evangelize in a contemporary mode. He also notes its concern to reconnect with historic, particularly early, church tradition. Then, in a telling anecdote (55-56), he draws a portrait of a church that looks for all the world like a typical emergent church, only to disclose that he is in fact speaking of Tim Keller’s Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, a church significantly different from ECM in its unapologetic Reformed confessional identity—a quite un-postmodern characteristic. What is Carson’s point? Redeemer *displays all the strengths of the emergent church movement while avoiding most of its weaknesses* (Carson’s emphasis). ECM is definitely ‘on to something’ (56) but, according to Carson, it does have weaknesses.” John Bolt, “An Emerging Critique of the Postmodern, Evangelical Church: A Review Essay,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (2006): 207.

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent evaluation of the Emerging Church from the historico-sociological perspective see, for instance, Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*.

<sup>6</sup> I am focusing on essays presented in the following works, Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjos Helseth, and Justin Taylor, ed. *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004); Gary L. W.

### Worship

Although the Emerging Church Movement arguably revolves around worship, I was surprised to find almost no critical theological evaluation to the Emerging Church's worship and spirituality views in the few publications I consulted.<sup>7</sup> Instead, I found some passing positive comments in the area of ecclesiology.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most obvious reason for this absence is that I did not do a thorough enough literary review of existing sources. Other scholars may have evaluated the worship patterns in the Emerging Church. However, this situation might also indicate that a leading group of Evangelical scholars led by renowned theologian Millard Erickson<sup>9</sup> basically agree with the Emerging Church Movement in this most important issue. This suspicion seems validated by the group of Evangelical scholars led by William Henard and Adam Greenway.<sup>10</sup> The latter group provides a critical but sympathetic evaluation of the Emerging Church movement, but generally distinguishing between two streams within the Emerging Church movement, a stream hostile to Evangelical doctrines (Emergent) and another stream friendly to Evangelical doctrines (Emerging) is challenging.<sup>11</sup> They find laudable the Emerging Church's openness to

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Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason, ed. *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008). William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway, *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009).

<sup>7</sup>Erickson, *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*. Andreas Köstenberger, ed. *Whatever Happened to Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005). Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications*. Johnson, *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*.

<sup>8</sup>For instance, "In the area of worship, the emphases on art and beauty and the desire to experience God's transcendence are commendable." John Hammett, "The Church According to the Emergent/Emerging Church," in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 258.

<sup>9</sup>This group reports its findings in, Erickson, *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*.

<sup>10</sup>This group reports its findings in, Henard, *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*.

<sup>11</sup>Devine, "The Emerging Church: One Movement—Two Streams," 7-9. Ed Stetzer enlarges this taxonomy by suggesting three branches, Relevants, Reconstructionists, and, Revisionists. The Relevants are a continuation of the "contemporary worship" of the 80's and 90's. The Relevants are the same but challenge church structures. The Revisionists challenges the doctrines and theology of the Evangelicals. Stetzer, "The Emergent/Emerging Church: A Missiological Perspective," 72. Interestingly, Stetzer who writes and evaluates



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Church tradition and its spiritual and liturgical forms that the Emerging Church in general exhibits.<sup>12</sup> The evaluators I have surveyed seem to have no qualms with Emerging Church spirituality and worship styles.

However, Jim Shaddix, from a homiletical perspective, takes issue with what he perceives to be a central weakness in the Emerging Church liturgical paradigm. He challenges its “blatant redefinition of preaching” with sound biblical evidence and arguments. Emerging Church preaching demonstrates there is a vanishing and mutation from simply proclaiming and explaining the Word of God into a “progressive conversation” in which Scripture is merely one of the participants.<sup>13</sup> In other words, “as opposed to being the sole authority for faith and practice, the Bible is merely one contributor sitting around the table—alongside experience and collective wisdom—‘as an authoritative member of the community’.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, from solid biblical evidence he shows that “when it comes to the issue of discovering and communicating spiritual truth, preachers in the Bible saw their responsibility simply to teach propositionally what God had revealed and persuade their listeners to act on it.”<sup>15</sup>

Then Shaddix moves on to challenge the central tenet on which this theory in the Emerging Church stands, the notion that the essence of Christian spirituality does not involve knowledge and education.<sup>16</sup> He

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an article on the Emerging Church in Henard’s volume is himself an Emerging Church leader friendly to Evangelical doctrine, Devine, “The Emerging Church: One Movement—Two Streams,” 8. This strengthens my suspicion that Evangelical leadership do not challenge but acquiesce or embrace the spirituality and worship advanced by the Emerging Church Movement.

<sup>12</sup> Devine concludes his evaluation of the Emerging Church, “One very hopeful and potentially self-correcting feature observable among many of the leaders across the entire spectrum of the movement is the declared openness to the whole Christian tradition, the desire to learn from the witness of the body of Christ extended in both time and space. They wish to avoid a lapse into one theological ghetto or another that would threaten to shut them off from fellowship with other Christians and destroy the unity of Christ that must concern all Bible-loving believers.” ———, “The Emerging Church: One Movement—Two Streams,” 40.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: The Emerging Church a New Reformation or an End-Time Deception* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Jim Shaddix, “To Preach or Not to Preach: An Evangelical Response to the Emergent Homiletic,” in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 283.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

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challenges this position by showing “Scripture’s emphasis on the essential nature of knowledge and understanding for spiritual development.”<sup>17</sup> On this basis he concludes that when preaching the primary task of ministers “is not to give opinions, indirect implications, extra-biblical principles, or even inspiration for mutual dialogue but instead reveal the Holy Spirit’s intended meaning in Scripture so that people’s minds are exposed to supernatural truth.”<sup>18</sup>

Finally, Shaddix challenges Emerging Church and Evangelical pastors against the tendency of relying on methods of communication rather than the supernatural message itself. Paul himself exemplified the principle according to which method should not rise above or overshadow the message. This usually takes place in Emerging Church and Evangelical worship because preachers are convinced they will reach postmodern audiences by using methods “like progressional dialogue, conversational speech, relational presentations, visual imagery, contemplative atmospheres, and other components that appeal to the postmodern mind.”<sup>19</sup> Instead he claims, “some methods of presentation can actually overshadow the message because of their emotional nature or other qualities that bypass understanding and appeal to other aspects of people’s flesh.”<sup>20</sup> Instead the sermon should make the message clear to the mind and heart of the believer.

Shaddix’s emphasis in preaching from Scripture and through understanding reaching the mind of the believer as an essential component of Christian spirituality directly contradicts the dynamics of mystic spirituality the Emerging Church retrieves from church tradition. This point is clear to many lay Evangelicals. Although not representing a scholarly opinion, I found a lay ministry strongly opposed to the new spirituality and worship advanced by the Emerging Church.<sup>21</sup> The presence of these views may signal the existence of spirited opposition at the grass roots level of the Evangelical movement to both the spirituality of Christian tradition and the Emerging Church where the rubber meets the road. Time will tell how extended and influential such sentiments might be. If this is the case, Evangelicals could be divided on this pivotal issue.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 289-90.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 293.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 304.

<sup>21</sup>This group reports its findings in, Henard, *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*.

### Postmodernity

There is no clear single conservative view of what postmodernity is and represents for Evangelicalism. Evangelical scholars are aware of the postmodern spirit of the times and favor engagement rather than isolation. However, Douglas Groothuis describes the spirit of American postmodernism by correctly comparing it with the Sophists of old. Protagoras' spirit, he affirms, "is reincarnated (with a few twists) in a host of postmodernist thinkers."<sup>22</sup> Not surprisingly, then, conservative Evangelicals have a more critical and nuanced approach to postmodernity and reject the way of philosophical and theological accommodation favored by the Emerging Church Movement. A few scholars challenge the Emerging Church's accommodation to postmodern relativism by engaging it at a general philosophical level thereby opening possible alternate ways to relate to postmodernity. Some options are revelational, metaphysical, and transmodern.

The revelational alternative stands on the conviction that postmodern criticism of scientific metanarrative does not apply to religious narratives. Expanding on James K. A. Smith's analysis, Kwabena Donkor observes correctly that Scripture makes universal claims to truth "not on the basis of some kind of *universal reason*, but on the basis of faith."<sup>23</sup> Consequently, Evangelicals do not need to shy away from claiming the divine revelation and inspiration of Scripture as the foundation of their beliefs and worldview. If this view is correct, then, postmodernism may require an adjustment of Christian Apologetics and ministerial methods but not a reinterpretation of Christian belief by adopting the Emerging Church's communitarian nonfoundationalist/foundationalist turn.

The metaphysical alternative stands on the conviction that the way to overcome postmodern relativism and affirm universal truth<sup>24</sup> is not by way

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<sup>22</sup>Shaddix, "To Preach or not to Preach: An Evangelical Response to the Emergent Homiletic," 304.

<sup>23</sup>Douglas Groothuis, "Truth Defined and Defended" in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjos Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 70. C.f. Donkor, "Postconservatism: A Third World Perspective," 214.

<sup>24</sup>"My own view is the direct opposite of Rasche's. I shall not engage his argument in any detail but only suggest that in fact evangelical theology has been insufficiently metaphysical instead of too much so. The accusations laid against so-called evangelical rationalism—too much philosophy; not enough relationality based on mystery and faith—are precisely the Achilles' heel of the postmodern enthusiasts." James K. A. Smith, "A Little Story about Metanarratives: Lyotard, Religion, and Postmodernism Revisited," *Faith and*

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of divine revelation but by way of a “revitalized classical theological metaphysics.”<sup>25</sup> John Bolt makes this claim directly contradicting Carl Raschke’s call to *dehellenize* the evangelical faith.<sup>26</sup> Apparently feeling comfortable with the general patterns of Greek thought, Bolt claims that Metaphysics rather than Scripture<sup>27</sup> will continue to provide the foundation for Evangelical universal claims to truth. In calling for a metaphysical foundation to overcome postmodernity, Bolt follows the Roman Catholic way to “overcome” postmodern thinking,<sup>28</sup> and agrees with the turn to tradition of the Emerging Church Movement.

The transmodern alternative stands on the possibility that postmodernism is on its way out and being replaced by a “transmodern” synthesis<sup>29</sup> of classical, modern, and postmodern ideas that include the objectivity and universality of truth.<sup>30</sup> James Parker III concludes, “While

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*Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (2001): 355.

<sup>25</sup>John Bolt, “*Sola Scriptura* as an Evangelical Theological Method?,” in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 92.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 89. C.f., *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>27</sup>Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity*: 131-40.

<sup>28</sup>As Bolt, John Paul II calls “... for a philosophy of *genuinely metaphysical* range, capable, that is, of transcending empirical data in order to attain something absolute, ultimate and foundational in its search for truth... Here I do not mean to speak of metaphysics in the sense of a specific school or a particular historical current of thought. I want only to state that reality and truth do transcend the factual and the empirical, and to vindicate the human being's capacity to know this transcendent and metaphysical dimension in a way that is true and certain, albeit imperfect and analogical. . . We face a great challenge at the end of this millennium to move from *phenomenon* to *foundation*, a step as necessary as it is urgent. We cannot stop short at experience alone; even if experience does reveal the human being's interiority and spirituality, speculative thinking must penetrate to the spiritual core and the ground from which it rises. Therefore, a philosophy which shuns metaphysics would be radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation.” *Ibid.*, 62-63.

<sup>29</sup>For an introduction to Transmodernity see, John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship between Faith and Reason*, Holy See Web Site (Vatican: Holy See Web Site, 1998), 7: 83.

<sup>30</sup>In concluding his presentation of the Transmodernism, James Parker III outlines its general profile. “A new transmodern vision seems to be emerging from diverse disciplines. This vision is neither uniform nor monolithic—nor is necessarily theistic. But what it has in common is the rejection of the philosophical naturalists’ or materialists’ claims of modernism (viz., autonomous reason and unjustified progressive optimism) and the rejection of the fundamental assertions of postmodernism (viz., that truth is a community fiction, modals are social constructs, and tradition and classical influence are undesirable and

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one might hesitate to predict the future of this movement (if indeed it can be called a movement), developments on the horizon appear to indicate that a significant (or even monumental) cultural shift is on the offing. Time will tell.<sup>31</sup> If transmodernity replaces postmodernity, the Emerging Church Movement in its constructive version will prove to be a fad. However, for the same reason, transmodernity would invigorate Grenz's and the vintage Church restorationist theological models (see the Theology section above). Transmodernity and the Emerging Church movement fit well within Pope John Paul II's vision to overcome the shortcomings of postmodernity.<sup>32</sup>

### Epistemology

A few Evangelical scholars challenge the Emerging Church's accommodation to postmodern relativism and rejection of universal and propositional truth by engaging it at the epistemological level. They show that the Emerging Church epistemological criticisms and commitments have been hasty, superficial, and stand on misunderstandings of Neo-evangelical epistemology, postmodern epistemology, Nonfoundationalism, and Foundationalism. A proper understanding of these areas seriously weakens the epistemological arguments used by Emerging Church leaders.

Paul Kjos Helseth shows that Neo-Evangelical theology is not modernist but classical by assessing the standard post-conservative interpretation of Old Princeton theologians' view of Scripture. According to the standard interpretation Old Princeton theologians' embrace of modernity led them to distort the classical Evangelical doctrine of Scripture into an indefensible precisionism and inerrancy.<sup>33</sup> This issue is important in evaluating the Emerging Church Movement because postconservative theologians argue that while battling the Enlightenment Old Princeton theologians embraced the high standard of certainty modernity demanded.

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illegitimate). Transmodernists affirm objective and normative truth without capitulating to a naturalistic scientism, and they affirm true moral values and virtues. They hold out beauty, harmony, and wisdom as real possible entities. Cynicism based in modernist naturalism and postmodern fictions are replaced by hope—a hope that is based on the very nature of things.”

<sup>31</sup>James Parker III, “A Requiem for Postmodernism—Whither Now?,” in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjos Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 307-21.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>33</sup>John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio: Encyclical Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Relationship between Faith and Reason*: 7: 86.

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As a result, the argument continues, Old Princetonians transformed Evangelicalism by formulating the inerrantist doctrine of Scripture and the propositional understanding of the theological enterprise. This argument presumes the critical historiographic opinion<sup>34</sup> that Old Princeton theologians were modernists.<sup>35</sup>

Helseth challenges this opinion by arguing that Old Princeton Theologians weren't rationalists. By studying their views in some detail, he concludes, "Despite what the consensus of critical opinion would have us believe, the Princetonians simply weren't rationalists."<sup>36</sup> Rather, they "were committed Augustinians who conceived of reason in a moral rather than a merely rational sense."<sup>37</sup> Old Princeton theologians did not use scientific but classical reason which Helseth labels "right reason."<sup>38</sup> Helseth shows that the critical historiographic view postconservative Evangelicals assume in their dismissal of inerrancy and propositionalism stands on a caricature rather than fact. If Helseth is correct in his assessment of the Princetonians, Neo-Evangelical epistemology, including inerrancy and propositionalism, did not spring from modernity but from the classical tradition the Emerging Church embraces.

D. A. Carson, correctly points out the regional nature of the epistemological relativism used by the Emerging Church. Briefly put,

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<sup>34</sup>The accepted historiographic opinion views Old Princetonian theologians as "thoroughgoing rationalists that compromised 'the original spirit of the Reformation' by accommodating philosophical assumptions that fostered indifference to the subjective and experiential components of religious epistemology, thus encouraging an exceedingly 'wooden' approach to the task of theology both at Old Princeton and in conservative evangelicalism more generally. This assessment is now an essential component of post-conservative evangelicalism's religious historiography." Carson, "Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz's *Renewing the Center*," 44.

<sup>35</sup>Paul Kyoss Helseth, "'Right Reason' and Theological Aesthetics at Old Princeton Seminary: The 'Mythical Evangelical Ministerium' Reconsidered," in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 143.

<sup>36</sup>———, "Are Postconservative Evangelical Fundamentalists? Postconservative Evangelicalism, Old Princeton, and the Rise of Neo-Fundamentalism," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjos Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 223-24.

<sup>37</sup>———, "'Right Reason' and Theological Aesthetics at Old Princeton Seminary: The 'Mythical Evangelical Ministerium' Reconsidered," 143.

<sup>38</sup>———, "Are Postconservative Evangelical Fundamentalists? Postconservative Evangelicalism, Old Princeton, and the Rise of Neo-Fundamentalism," 238.

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relativistic epistemology is the American version of postmodernity. Grenz embraces this branch of epistemology according to which knowledge is a social construction.<sup>39</sup> Also correctly, Carson points out the important fact that postmodern epistemology does not cancel the objectivity of knowledge or argues for the complete socialization of knowledge.<sup>40</sup> He recognizes that postmodernism properly affirms that all human knowledge “is necessarily within the bounds of some culture or other, and can thus truly be said to be a social construct. But to run from this fair observation to the insistence that it is improper to talk about objective truth, or about human knowledge of truth, is merely a reflection of being hoodwinked by that one unattainable antithesis [either we know absolutely and omnisciently or we know socially].”<sup>41</sup>

It seems that failure to recognize this simple philosophical distinction brings Grenz, Raschke, and the Emerging Church to build their cases on a faddish conception of postmodernity that ignores two main facts. First, postmodernity does not replace modernity but brings it to its fruition. Second, postmodernity does not embrace social construction denying objectivity. Instead, it argues for the need to reinterpret the nature of objectivity and subjectivity altogether on the basis of an epochal shift from Plato’s timeless to Heidegger’s temporal conception of being.

#### **The End of Foundationalism?**

So far Evangelical theologians and philosophers have chosen neither to pursue the epistemological consequences of postmodern epistemology Carson describes, nor the ontological shift from which they arise. Instead, they level their epistemological criticism of the Emerging Church movement by vindicating a soft version of foundationalism. The purpose in so doing is to affirm Scripture as providing a reliable foundation for Christian beliefs. In short the epistemological debate between the Emerging Church and conservative Evangelicals is about authority. Should Christians settle questions of belief on the basis of their reading of Scripture or on the basis of their experience as a community?

From inconsistencies he finds in Franke’s presentation Paul Helm’s argues forcefully and persuasively that even in the postmodern

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<sup>39</sup>———, “‘Right Reason’ and Theological Aesthetics at Old Princeton Seminary: The ‘Mythical Evangelical Ministerium’ Reconsidered,” 145-52.

<sup>40</sup>Carson, “Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz’s *Renewing the Center*,” 45.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 46, 47.

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communitarian turn there are foundational beliefs and objective truths.<sup>42</sup>J. P. Moreland and Garrett DeWeese correctly uncover the foundationalism implicit in the postconservative version of nonfoundationalism by comparing it with Cartesian idealism. Instead of innate ideas in the mind being the foundation of knowledge as Descartes thought, definitions of society are the foundations of knowledge for postconservative theologians. The knower knows only what comes to the mind from society. Society is the foundation of knowledge.<sup>43</sup>

Moreland and DeWeese express their disappointment at postconservative writers that reject foundationalism “with very little argument.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, “the three theoretical commitments that can be discerned in their writings, which may undercut foundationalism, are either themselves highly suspect, or only do so in the case of extreme versions, as straw men that represent no contemporary foundationalists.”<sup>45</sup> They proceed to present a strong argumentation in favor of a soft version of Foundationalism. In a technical but accessible way they show that through sensory perception, we can access direct knowledge of reality that provides “basic evidence.”<sup>46</sup> The “modest foundationalism” they propose accepts defeasible perceptual beliefs as properly basic in the foundation of knowledge.<sup>47</sup> Appropriately, they make clear that epistemology assumes ontology. Ontology is required to explain why perception is a foundation for knowledge or reliable evidence and outline; briefly, how epistemology assumes “the nature of the knowing subject and the ontology of the acts of perception.”<sup>48</sup>

The importance of this philosophical affirmation is to vindicate Scripture as a basic source of evidence. “So, beliefs formed on the basis of reading the Bible are properly basic in a way that is isomorphic or parallel to the way beliefs formed on the basis of seeing a red apple are basic.”<sup>49</sup> This argument validates the conservative Evangelical view that Christians

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<sup>42</sup>See, *ibid.*, 47.

<sup>43</sup>Paul Helm, “No Easy Task: John R. Franke and the Character of Theology,” in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 93-111.

<sup>44</sup>Moreland, “The Premature Report of Foundationalism’s Demise,” 96.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 90-91.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*



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should use Scripture as the basis of their beliefs, which is precisely what the Emerging Church wants to avoid when the so called “Hodge’s extension” is factored in.

### **Culture**

Evangelical theologians recognize the challenges presented by contemporary cultural trends and the need to face them in the tasks of theology and ministry. However, they think the Emerging Church leaders are going too far when they adapt not only the forms and styles of gospel ministry but also doctrinal contents and the theological methods to the whims of the times.

In a sympathetic evaluation, Evangelical missiologist Ed Stetzer identifies some contributions the Emerging Church makes to Evangelicalism and also expresses some concerns about it. He correctly believes that the Emerging Church’s call to authentic Christian life, emphasis in the Kingdom of God, embrace of the missional turn, promotion of a holistic style of ministry and rejection of theological reductionism are contributions Evangelicals should welcome.<sup>50</sup> Some concerns are the Emerging Church’s underdeveloped ecclesiology, over contextualization leading to cultural syncretism, and the apparent fear of penal substitutionary atonement.<sup>51</sup>

The Emerging Church movement embraces cultural diversity. This deep-seated attitude stems from doctrinal indifference and the strong influence of American culture.<sup>52</sup> According to Phil Johnson this situation springs from the failure of Fundamentalism and the accrued apathy of Neo-evangelicalism “to maintain focus on the truly essential doctrines of the Christian faith.”<sup>53</sup> In this context, heresies are no longer experienced as something negative but as the unavoidable content of Christian diversity.<sup>54</sup> Literally, doctrinally speaking anything goes. Johnson concludes, that the Emerging Church’s “thoughtless celebration of unbounded diversity is a deadly trait”<sup>55</sup> that makes the movement impervious to self-correction and

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>51</sup>Stetzer, “The Emergent/Emerging Church: A Missiological Perspective,” 86-87.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 87-88.

<sup>53</sup>Johnson, “Joyriding on the Downgrade at Breakneck Speed: The Dark Side of Diversity,” 213.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 214.

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criticism and “per se augurs disaster.”<sup>56</sup> This is an example of the “cultural captivity” of the gospel.

Martin Downes argues that the cultural captivity of the gospel takes place when “the thought forms of the age exert control”<sup>57</sup> over its understanding and proclamation. “When this happens, the gospel becomes a lost message. It no longer sounds distinctive but resonates with the sound of the culture. This does not necessarily mean that people are kept from hearing about Jesus, the good news, the Bible, or the cross. The words themselves may remain, but their content is altered by, and adapted to, the dominant cultural worldview.”<sup>58</sup> This takes place in the Emerging Church because “the relationship between divine revelation, culture, and theology has been wrongly configured so that doctrine is no longer believed, taught, and confessed as it once was or now ought to be.”<sup>59</sup> In the process, then, culture changes the gospel instead of the other way around. This change is not of form and style but of content and even of method with an implicit capitulation to liberal theology.<sup>60</sup> This brings us to the central issue of the role and authority of Scripture in the church.

### The Eclipse of Scripture

Agreeing with Martin Downes, Gary Johnson sees the Emerging Church movement as the modernization of Evangelicalism. Put simply, in the Emerging Church movement the modernity that the Old Princetonean theologians, Fundamentalists, and Neo-Evangelicals fought against has found finally a home in evangelical quarters. The Emerging Church signals the capitulation of conservative evangelicals to modernity.<sup>61</sup> In a well-

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 223.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>58</sup>Martin Downes, “Entrapment: The Emerging Church Conversation and the Cultural Captivity of the Gospel,” in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 224.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 225.

<sup>61</sup> “Because of the diversity within the emerging church, one must be careful not to overgeneralize. It is obvious, however, that a vocal segment of the emerging church, though claiming to be evangelical, has great affinity with theological liberalism. Non-conservatives are honored.” Ibid., 227. “For all its criticism of ‘modernity’ it appears now that postfoundationalism is really only late or liquid foundationalism, and for all its shapelessness, liquidity continues to assume Enlightenment ‘givens,’ such as human autonomy relative to all other authorities and the centrality of the human knower relative to all knowledge.” Larry D. Pettigrew, “Evangelicalism, Paradigms, and the Emerging

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argued article Johnson concludes, “Under the guise of our postmodern context, post-conservatives are moving in the same direction as Schleiermacher and Briggs. Despite their protest to the contrary, they have already begun to go down this same path.”<sup>62</sup> This implies the Emerging Church embraces the historical critical method of biblical interpretation and the philosophical and theological assumptions from which it works. Obviously, embracing modernity has momentous implications for Scripture and theology. In this section we will survey the ways in which conservative evangelicals evaluate the impact of modernity in Scripture. In the next section we will survey its impact on theology.

A. B. Caneday notices, correctly, that the Emerging Church’s view of Scripture displaces the authority of the Bible from the text to the inaccessible work of the Spirit.<sup>63</sup> In other words, the words of Scripture are

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Church,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 17, no. 2 (2006): 174.

<sup>62</sup>R. Scott Clark, “Whosoever Will be Saved: Emerging Church, Meet Christian Dogma,” in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 119. “Despite the rasping protests of some post-conservatives, the parallels between what Schleiermacher was attempting to do in the early decades of the nineteenth century and the proposals of this group of evangelicals that fondly refers to themselves as ‘emergents’ or ‘post-conservatives,’ are striking. In a provocative essay that attempts to sanitize Schleiermacher for contemporary evangelicals Nicola Hoggard Creegan rightly observes that Schleiermacher is the one voice from the past that speaks directly to our postmodern situation.” Johnson, “Introduction,” 26.

<sup>63</sup> “Their appropriation of speech-act theory entails misappropriation, for Grenz and Franke focus upon the Spirit’s appropriation of Scripture, which is hardly accessible as speech-acts, instead of focusing upon the Scriptures which are the Spirit’s *accessible* speech-acts. Though they regard these *inaccessible* speech-acts of the Spirit to be ‘closely bound to the text.’ The Spirit’s world construction does not reside in the text. This is so because the biblical text is not the Spirit’s creative speech itself; Scripture is just the instrumentality of the Spirit’s creative speech. So it is outside Scripture that ‘the Spirit performs the perlocutionary act of creating *world*.’ Thus, however closely linked the Spirit’s present inaccessible speaking may be with Scripture, Grenz and Franke locate the Spirit’s present speaking outside the canon. They do so because the new world the Spirit creates in his perlocutionary act ‘is not simply the world surrounding the ancient text itself. It is the eschatological world God intends for creation as disclosed in the text.’ In fact, they say that the Spirit’s perlocutionary act of world construction ‘does not lie in the text itself.’ They dislodge the perlocutionary act from the locutionary and illocutionary acts. By the Spirit’s appropriation of the biblical text the ‘Spirit performs the perlocutionary act of creating a world through he illocutionary act of speaking, that is, of appropriating the biblical text as the instrumentality of divine speaking.’” ———, “Introduction,” 15-16. Caneday, “Is Theological Truth Functional or Propositional? Post Conservatism’s Use of Language Games and Speech Act Theory,” 155.

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not the words of God but the words of human beings and therefore of tradition. The word of God is the elusive work or action of the Holy Spirit that takes place beyond the realm of human words.<sup>64</sup>

The dislodging of Spirit and the actual meanings of the words and texts of Scripture is characteristic of modern theology. By so doing, Postconservatism is mobilizing against the “commitment to the reliability of Scripture, to Scripture as the source of theological construction, and to the nature of theological task being one of reflecting first on Scripture as the grounds for both theology and life.”<sup>65</sup> This view of Scripture is unacceptable for conservative Evangelicals.<sup>66</sup> After all, we need to bear in mind that “[t]he Reformers’ so called ‘Scripture principle’ identified the Bible as God’s words in human speech.”<sup>67</sup> Moreover, William G. Travis correctly reminds evangelicals that the inerrancy of Scripture did not begin in the XIX century. Instead, “[s]uch belief is fundamental for J. A. Bengel the most noteworthy Pietist Bible scholar of the eighteenth century; was present in the beginnings of the Wesleyan movement; was integral to the

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<sup>64</sup>“The postconservative project, guided by Grenz and Franke, turns the Bible into something other than what it actually is just as much as some evangelicals have unwisely done when they attempt to locate God’s revelation—the real locus of God’s revelation and authority—somewhere other than in the text of Scripture.” See also, Stephen Wellum, Jr., “Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis,” in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Paul Kjos Helseth, Millard J. Erickson, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 191.

<sup>65</sup>Caneday, “Is Theological Truth Functional or Propositional? Post Conservatism’s use of Language Games and Speech Act Theory,” 156.

<sup>66</sup> “Does not Scripture’s use of Scripture teach us how we are to read and to use Scripture to shape and to ground the beliefs and behavior of God’s people? Should not Christians always be striving to embrace the first-order language of God’s revelation as their own in such a manner that their own second-order formulations of things believed asymptotically move toward the fullness of Scripture’s first-order form and content? This is the hermeneutical spiral in which Christians, theologians or not, find themselves as they immerse themselves in God’s Word.” Chad Owen Brand, “Defining Evangelicalism,” in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjos Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2004), 304. Caneday, “Is Theological Truth Functional or Propositional? Post Conservatism’s use of Language Games and Speech Act Theory,” 158.

<sup>67</sup>See also, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Scripture and Tradition,” in *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 149.

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holiness movement and its denominational spin-offs; and was a given among the majority of the Pentecostals.”<sup>68</sup>

Correctly recognizing that “Scripture is the most fundamental of all fundamental doctrines, since it is the fundamental on which all the other fundamentals rest,”<sup>69</sup> Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe give a disapproving evaluation of the Emerging Church’s view of Scripture using strong and clear language. According to them, “Grenz and McLaren are not only postmodern but they are also post-Christian. Their rejection of the classical orthodox view of Scripture is sweeping. It includes a rejection of the correspondence view of truth, a rejection of objective truth, propositional truth, and inerrant truth in Scripture.”<sup>70</sup> Stephen Wellum agrees. He finds the Emerging Church’s surrendering of Biblical authority to the community of faith unacceptable for Evangelicals. For Evangelicals authority resides in the Bible not in the church.<sup>71</sup>

To the issues of Biblical inspiration and authority Douglas Bount adds the all-important issue of interpretation. Correctly explaining that interpretation always involves presuppositions and assumptions, which, according to him, we choose based on our personal or communal “taste.” On this basis, he faults Emerging Church theologians for defining their presuppositions based on the “taste” of postmodern culture instead of on the taste of the “apostolic faith.”<sup>72</sup> This choice determines biblical interpretation

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<sup>68</sup>Downes, “Entrapment: The Emerging Church Conversation and the Cultural Captivity of the Gospel,” 233.

<sup>69</sup>William G. Travis, “Pietism and the History of American Evangelicalism,” in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Paul Kjos Helseth, Millard J. Erickson, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 278-79.

<sup>70</sup>Norman and Thomas Howe Geisler, “A Postmodern View of Scripture,” in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 107.

<sup>71</sup> “What I find surrendered is biblical authority—i.e., a text that is first-order and God-given through human authors which is our basis for how we interpret the world, ground our beliefs, and live our lives. Without that solid grounding, not in human reason and autonomy, nor in the community of God’s people, but in Scripture itself, we have, in terms of theological method, surrendered the very transcendental condition for the possibility of doing theology in any kind of normative fashion.” *Ibid.*, 107-08.

<sup>72</sup> “What distinguishes orthodoxy from heresy, then, is not *whether* each reads the sacred text; rather what distinguishes them is *how* each reads it. Orthodoxy reads the Bible with tastes thoroughly formed by the apostolic faith; heresy reads it with tastes formed by something other than that faith.” Wellum, “Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent

in the Emerging Church and further weakens the message and role of Scripture.

Carson summarizes well the Emerging Church view of Scripture by pointing out that “Grenz’s reformulation of the doctrine of Scripture is so domesticated by postmodern relativism that it stands well and truly outside of the evangelical camp (whether ‘evangelical’ is here understood theologically or socially/historically).”<sup>73</sup> In so doing, the Emerging Church emasculates from evangelicalism the ground (Scripture) from which the Reformation emerged away from tradition,<sup>74</sup> and replaces it with the tradition from which it emerged. In short, by emerging away from Scripture and building on tradition the Emerging Church seems to be the undoing of the Reformation.

### Theology

Let us now consider briefly some Evangelical reactions to the theological consequences of the Emerging Church’s surrender to modernity, abandonment of the Scripture principle, and corresponding turning back to tradition. Let us first consider briefly some comments on the general theological approach of the Emerging Church to then consider some comments on selected theological contents.

The postmodern turn to the community Grenz embraces means that the doctrines of the church are not true in an objective sense. Instead, community doctrines are “true”<sup>75</sup> for the community of faith that formulates them and agrees to use them as “rule of life.” Thus, doctrines have only

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Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis,” 193.

<sup>73</sup>Douglas Blount, “A New Kind of Interpretation: Brian McLaren and the Hermeneutics of Taste,” in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 126.

<sup>74</sup> Carson explains this point very correctly and clearly. “What drove the Reformation was the conviction among all its leaders, that the Roman Catholic Church had departed from Scripture and had introduced theology and practices that were inimical to genuine Christian faith. In other words, they wanted things to change, not because they perceived that new developments had taken place in the culture so that the church was called to adapt its approach to the new cultural profile, but because they perceived that new theology and practices had developed in the church that contravened Scripture and therefore that things needed to be reformed by the Word of God.” Carson, “Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz’s *Renewing the Center*,” 50.

<sup>75</sup>———, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications*: 42.

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“intrasystematic” “church community” status.<sup>76</sup> Representative conservative evangelical A. B. Caneday criticizes Grenz’s view of doctrines as describing the beliefs of the community for the community but not referring to truths in the real world. The theological approach of the Emerging Church, in good modernistic fashion, assumes that truth ultimately belongs to the domains of science and philosophy not of religion or theology.

Regarding the general approach to theology Ronald Gleason suggests in the Emerging Church there is a theological paradigm shift “away from soteriology toward ecclesiology.”<sup>77</sup> Gleason suggests this shift takes place on one side because Emerging Church leaders are “misinformed about Reformed theology” and on the other because they follow “Barth, Frei, Grenz, Olson, Pannenberg, Moltmann, Yoder, and others in the theological realm and Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Rorty in the philosophical.”<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the theological shift from a system centered on soteriology to one centered in ecclesiology seems to find inspiration and encouragement in the so-called New Perspective on Paul advanced by renowned authors such as E. P. Sanders, James Dunn, and N. T. Wright.<sup>79</sup> This view moves closer to mysticism and union with Christ, and therefore closer to the church and away from forensic justification as central to soteriology. Simultaneously, however, and mainly, Gleason argues that this shift fits the basic subjectivism of the modern approach to theology that places the individual and communities as sources of beliefs and understanding.<sup>80</sup>

Arguing from the writings of Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck on theological method Gleason suggests that even though theologians properly draw materials from “Holy Scripture, Church’s Confessions, and Christian Consciousness [the believer]”<sup>81</sup> they should maintain a proper equilibrium between them. Theologians achieve this balance when they give precedence and preeminence in their method to the Holy Scripture. Precedence and

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<sup>76</sup>Caneday, “Is Theological Truth Functional or Propositional? Post Conservatism’s Use of Language Games and Speech Act Theory,” 150.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 150-51.

<sup>78</sup>Ronald Gleason, “Church and Community: or Community and Church?,” in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 174.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 187.

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preeminence mean that “[t]he whole of Scripture must prove the whole (theological) system.”<sup>82</sup>

Not surprisingly, conservative Evangelicals have strong disagreements with Emerging Church’s theological and doctrinal views. For instance, Guy Prentiss describes, compares, and evaluates from Scripture N. T. Wright’s views of Christ’s Kingdom of God strongly embraced by emerging theology and ministry and finds them failing to respond to important biblical teachings.<sup>83</sup> Focusing on Brian McLaren’s rejection of the doctrine of Hell, Greg D. Gilbert concludes that McLaren “has misunderstood the gospel as a whole.”<sup>84</sup> His reason for such a serious indictment is that McLaren has lost sight of “the meaning and centrality of the cross, he has all but ignored the eschatological and spiritual character of the kingdom of God, and he has done everything in his hermeneutical power to read the traditional doctrine of hell out of the Bible. All in all, there does not really seem to be much of the gospel there left to deny.”<sup>85</sup>

Adam W. Greenway summarizes “the most consistent criticism” leveled against the Emerging Church by the various authors of the volume *Evangelical Engaging Emergent* and elsewhere, as “the overarching lack of concern for doctrinal content and precision.”<sup>86</sup> He correctly concludes that Emerging Church theology “resonates with twentieth-century neo-orthodoxy: dynamic views on Scripture’s inspiration and avoidance of descriptors like ‘inerrant’ and ‘infallible,’ emphasis on Jesus’ human nature and moral example rather than divine essence and redeeming sacrifice, strong commitment to social justice and ministry, discomfort with Reformational theology, ecumenism, center-left political values—the list goes on.”<sup>87</sup> The crucial disagreement between the Emerging Church and Evangelicalism revolves around the interpretation of the Gospel. Emerging Church leaders think that the problem with Evangelicalism is not only methodological but theological as well. The message itself must “evolve”

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 178.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>84</sup>Waters, “It’s ‘Wright,’ But is it Right? An Assessment and Engagement of an ‘Emerging’ Rereading of the Ministry of Jesus,” 193-96.

<sup>85</sup>Greg D. Gilbert, “Saved from the Wrath of God: An Examination of Brian McLaren’s Approach to the Doctrine of Hell,” in *Reforming or Conforming: Post-Conservative Evangelicals and the Emerging Church*, ed. Gary L. W. Johnson, and Ronald L. Gleason (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 268.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Greenway, “Conclusion,” 334.



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and “change.” According to Greenway this is not acceptable to Evangelicals because Emerging Church leaders advance a message that “hardly resembles the evangelical gospel of grace.”<sup>88</sup>

However, Darrell Bock and Robert Sagers give sympathetic verdicts on Emerging Church Christologies and Salvation. On Christology Bock concludes by appealing to all sides of the conversation “for balance, in which I believe there is more need for some both/and thinking versus the either/or. I also question arguments that appeal for more of some components at the seeming expense of other key components. What we all need to seek is more consideration of genuine integration, rather than taking sides with guns loaded.”<sup>89</sup> On Salvation, Robert Sagers arrive at a similar conclusion. While recognizing that when facing false teachers “Evangelicals must put priority on the gospel over other considerations” he acknowledges that, “there are also some voices within the emerging church movement who are pointing out real deficiencies with the way Evangelicals have understood the doctrine of salvation. Where these voices are consonant with that of the Spirit of Christ as revealed in the Scripture, we should listen humbly.”<sup>90</sup>

### Ecumenism

Evangelical reactions to the Emerging Church’s ecumenical embrace of Roman Catholicism exhibit the fragmented and even contradictory ecclesiologies held by Evangelical denominations.<sup>91</sup> Not surprisingly, sympathetic and critical evaluations of the ecclesiology of the Emerging Church can be found.

Travis Barbour and Nicholas Toews agree with the Emerging Church’s attempt to mediate between liberal and conservatives in the Church but challenge the methodology of “revolution” embraced by emergents and favor “evolution.” In other words, they disagree with the method but not with the goal. In so doing they implicitly accept the Emerging Church as

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 335.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 336.

<sup>90</sup>Darrell Bock, “Emergent/Emerging Christologies,” in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 186.

<sup>91</sup>Robert Sagers, “The Emerging Church and Salvation,” in *Evangelicals Engaging Emergent: A Discussion of the Emergent Church Movement*, ed. William D. Henard and Adam W. Greenway (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 217-18.

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part of the broad Evangelical ecclesiological experience.<sup>92</sup> Following a similar approach, Leron Shults sees no danger in the fact that “[a]t its core, the emerging movement is an attempt to fashion a new ecclesiology (doctrine of the church).”<sup>93</sup> On the contrary, he believes the Emerging Church’s ecclesiological experience sheds light in the ongoing reflection about how to make the Christian church better.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, he studies the Emerging Church phenomenon to enhance the Evangelical ecclesiological understanding.<sup>95</sup> Ecumenism does not come into the picture of Shults’ evaluation.

From an Anabaptist Mennonite perspective, Alan Stuky sees close similarities between the ecclesiological experience of Anabaptists and the Emerging Church movement. Consequently, he does not perceive the Emerging Church’s implicit ecclesiology as a threat to Evangelicalism but rather as a kindred community from which to learn. According to Stuky, “the Emerging Church resembles sixteenth-century Anabaptism in striking ways.”<sup>96</sup> Core similarities between Anabaptism and the Emergent Church are discipleship (following the way of Jesus) and living in community. But the most significant parallels revolve around the ecclesiological notions of decentralization of power, intentional involvement of the members of the church, “and the Kingdom of God for understanding the mission of the church.”<sup>97</sup> While recognizing the significant differences between the two movements, Stuky concludes “they seem to be two cars driving in the same direction on the highway of faith. They have enough affinity for each other that interaction between the two is important and will, hopefully, bear much fruit in the future.”<sup>98</sup> Stuky seems to assume and embrace an ecumenical

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<sup>92</sup>Carson, “Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz’s *Renewing the Center*,” 52.

<sup>93</sup>Travis Barbour, and Nicholas Toews, “The Emergent Church: A Methodological Critique,” *Direction* 39, no. 1 (2010): 35.

<sup>94</sup>“The rapid growth of ‘emerging’ churches worldwide provides a new opportunity for reflection on the nature and task of the church. This article briefly outlines some of the tensions this movement raises in relation to the traditional ‘marks’ of the church (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic). It identifies some ways toward a reconstructive and reformatory ecclesiology that also recognizes that followers of the way of Christ are multiple, embedded, particular, and hospitable.” McKnight, “Five Streams of the Emerging Church: Key Elements of the Most Controversial and Misunderstood Movement in the Church Today,” 37.

<sup>95</sup>F. LeRon Shults, “Reforming Ecclesiology in Emerging Churches,” *Theology Today* 65, no. 4 (2009): 425.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup>Stucky, “Anabaptism and Emergence: Collision or Convergence,” 23-24.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

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approach to ecclesiology and therefore comes close to the Emerging Church's emphasis on ecumenism.

Mark Devine provides a positive evaluation of the Emerging Church movement by arguing that it includes two streams, one friendly to classical Evangelical doctrines and the other adverse to or wary of them.<sup>99</sup> By disconnecting doctrines from ministry and mission he welcomes the many positive points he believes the Emerging Church is advancing in attempting to be the Christian Church. The assumption is that Emerging Church ecclesiological emphases such as the need for: genuine community characterized by authentic relationships,<sup>100</sup> becoming aware of the meaning of the gospel and sharing it by way of cultural contextualization,<sup>101</sup> experiencing the Gospel from within a missional mind-set,<sup>102</sup> and, recovering narrative, history, and mystery<sup>103</sup> can be experienced with different sets of theological and doctrinal understandings. Devine argues that Evangelicals should be open to engage Emerging Church pastors and theologians that affirm the doctrinal beliefs of conservative American Evangelicals with an irenic spirit.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, Devine's approach seems to advocate a much less open attitude toward emerging evangelicals that challenge the traditional doctrines of Evangelicalism.

Paul Doerksen is less sympathetic to Emerging Church ecclesiology because he sees it adapting too readily to the surrounding culture. In his view the appropriate Evangelical relation to culture is contextualization.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>100</sup>Devine, "The Emerging Church: One Movement—Two Streams," 7-8.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 11-23.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>104</sup> "How should Evangelicals respond to emerging church pastors and planters who combine exemplary zeal for the conversion of souls with crystal clear confession of core theological commitments ranging from the doctrine of the Trinity to the Christological consensus spanning Nicea and Chalcedon to the justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone? Should not unashamed confession of core doctrines combined with evident zeal for church-planting and conversion-seeking evangelism justify an assume-the-best posture and a measure of patience where emerging church speech and practice raise concerns among Evangelicals?" Ibid., 31-38.

<sup>105</sup> "To my mind, this drive to embrace all forms of church expression, combined with a less than robust notion of church as contrast-society, is closely related to the Emerging Church failure to distinguish adequately between contextualization and correlation as these relate to the church's relationship to the world. McLaren and other Emerging Church writers are good interpreters of culture and consistently grapple in important ways for the church to be relevant to the world, to resist insularity and isolationism. However, a fairly consistent

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According to him, this approach blurs the discontinuity that should exist between the church and the world.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, although Doerksen is critical of the Emerging Church's ecclesiology, he seems comfortable with the ecumenical view of the church.<sup>107</sup>

Departing from previous sympathetic evaluations, Larry D. Pettegrew warns against the obvious rapprochement of the Emerging Church with Roman Catholicism at the foundational levels of worship and spirituality. He correctly and clearly explains, "The medieval church is not admirable. As a whole, the medieval church did not proclaim the gospel, or justification by faith, or believers' baptism, or the imminent return of Christ, or separation of church and state, or freedom of conscience, or the autonomy of the local church, or proper view of the Lord's Supper . . . The list could be lengthy. Some of the best literature from this period—the writings of the mystics, for example—shows people desperate to find a relationship with God, but hardly succeeding. And the worship style of the medieval church, regardless of how beautiful or reverent it might seem, was a poor substitute for genuine Christianity."<sup>108</sup> Additionally, he reminds evangelicals that because the center of Protestant 'sacred spaces' has historically been the pulpit, where God's Word can be taught and preached the medieval church is a poor model to impose on the youth of the twenty-first century.<sup>109</sup> Implicitly, this evaluation warns against the ecumenical bend to Rome espoused by the Emerging Church leaders.

Following the same line of thought and with similar clarity Gary Gilley points out "that the vintage church to which Kimball refers is not a return to the New Testament church. The vintage church has been waylaid by medieval Catholicism, which we must remember may have experienced the spiritual through the senses, but nevertheless was an apostate religion. Simply providing unbelievers with a religious experience, which they might

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note struck by McLaren is that the church must take many of its cues for change from the surrounding culture, especially as he understands surrounding postmodern culture, a concern evident both in his content and writing style. But to privilege culture while attempting to shape change is to engage too heartily in correlation." *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>106</sup> "My complaint about the propensity for correlation rather than contextualization is closely related to the observation that there needs to be *more* discontinuity between church and world in the work of the Emerging Church, rather than focusing on the discontinuity between the modern and postmodern noted above." Paul G. Doerksen, "The Air Is Not Quite Fresh: Emerging Church Ecclesiology," *Direction* 39, no. 1 (2010): 7.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> See, for instance, *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Pettegrew, "Evangelicalism, Paradigms, and the Emerging Church," 168.

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interpret as an encounter with God, may do them more harm than good. Just as the seeker-sensitive church saw felt-needs as the means of connecting with unbelievers, so the emerging church sees spiritual experience. The philosophy is basically the same, just the methods have changed.”<sup>110</sup>

### Back to the Future

In the last section of this article I want to consider briefly the programmatic vision for Evangelical theology renowned Evangelical theologian Millard Erickson articulates by way of conclusion to “Reclaiming the Center,” a volume he coedited with Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor.<sup>111</sup> My purpose is to ascertain how a seasoned Evangelical theologian views the way in which Evangelicals should engage in the task of doing theology to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that postmodernity and the Emerging Church places before them.

Erickson believes that postmodernity and its effects in the Emerging Church have brought a lack of clarity (obscuration, fogging) that have brought further fragmentation into the already divided Evangelical coalition.<sup>112</sup> This causes “visibility” in theological discussions to be low. However, he believes Evangelicals are beginning to emerge from this situation and proposes several characteristics that will enable them “to find the landmarks.”<sup>113</sup> Erickson works on the conviction that postmodernity is beginning to be transcended and that the way ahead involves a going back “to values and ideas of an earlier period, although they will not simply be a repetition of an earlier form.”<sup>114</sup>

According to Erickson to emerge from the fog of postmodernity Evangelical theology should be global, objective, practical, accessible, postcommunal, metanarrative, dialogical, and, futuristic.

To be *global* Evangelical theology should listen to theologians from around the world and will be open to their insights.<sup>115</sup> To be *objective* Evangelical theology should include a correspondence theory of truth and metaphysical realism.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, it should embrace a “neo,” “soft,” or

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 169.

<sup>111</sup>Gilley, “The Emergent Church,” 276.

<sup>112</sup>Erickson, “On Flying in Theological Fog,” 323-49.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 324-25.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 325.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 325-28.

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“modest” foundationalism, as advanced by philosophers William Alston and Robert Audi, found in Reformed epistemologists like Plantinga and Wolterstorff, and embraced by Evangelicals like J. P. Moreland and Garrett DeWeese.<sup>117</sup> Finally, to be *objective* Evangelical theology should build on a “post new” historicism that leaves behind the “old” and “new” historicisms. The old historicism attempted to determine historical facts and drew conclusions from them. The new historicism arrived at a conclusion and then justified it by creating historical data to fit it.<sup>118</sup> Instead, the “post-new” historicism will seek what really happened in the past while accepting its own historical conditionedness, yet seeking to minimize it.<sup>119</sup>

To be *practical* and *accessible* Evangelical theology should work in close connection with the practice of ministry.<sup>120</sup> It should be a ministerial theology addressing and embracing the whole church by relating to life and human predicaments.<sup>121</sup> To be *postcommunal* Evangelical theology should not be based on the community but in Scripture. Yet, it should also “be thoroughly familiar with the culture into which one wishes to speak the Christian message, and to contextualize the message in such a way as to be better understood.”<sup>122</sup> To be *metanarrative* Evangelical theology should affirm the universality and exclusiveness of Christianity vis-à-vis all other religions and philosophies.<sup>123</sup> To be *dialogical* Evangelical theology should interact “with different theologies, considering thoughtfully their claims, and advancing its own with cogent argumentation.”<sup>124</sup> Finally, to be *futuristic* evangelical theology should anticipate what is to come and prepare for it “so that its answers will not be merely to the questions that are then past.”<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> “Future evangelical theology will be based on a foundationalism of this latter type, a foundationalism that regards some conceptions and propositions as basic, from which other propositions derive their validity, but without claiming indubitability as did classical foundationalism.” *Ibid.*, 329-30.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-45.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

**Summary**

Before drawing some conclusions on the brief and incomplete sample of evidence regarding the way in which Evangelical scholars are evaluating the Emerging Church movement I will summarize the findings briefly.

On worship Evangelical evaluations are almost non-existent in the data I considered. However, I found one scholarly argument criticizing the Emerging Church abandonment of the classical Evangelical sermon in favor of a conversation. This move has implicit negative implications for Emerging Church spirituality and worship styles but does not necessarily conflict with them. Additionally, I found a lay ministry strongly opposed to the Emerging Church spirituality. Finally, the positive evaluation of the Emerging Church's embrace of early Church tradition by one group of scholars seems to suggest that Evangelicals share the same approach to spirituality and worship advanced by the Emerging Church leaders, and approach that conflicts with some lay ministries.

On postmodernity Evangelical evaluations are negative. They reject cultural and epistemological relativism as incompatible with Evangelicalism. Some, experiencing modernity only as a social phenomenon, argue that it will soon fade away and be replaced by something different. Those viewing postmodernity as an epistemological position challenge it face on. I found three proposals to overcome postmodern epistemological relativism. A revelational option advances the notion that Evangelical theology should stand on faith in Scripture. A metaphysical option advances the notion that Evangelical theology should stand on classical metaphysics. The third option advances the notion that a new "transmodern" epistemology still in the making might replace current postmodern views. Of course, since nobody knows what the future holds it is too early to tell whether future epistemologies may help or hurt Evangelical theology.

On epistemology Evangelical evaluations are also negative. The reactions surveyed were apologetical rather than epistemological. The main point is to show that the Emerging Church's use and embrace of postmodernity is not necessary. Answering the argument that since Evangelical inerrantism is modernist, postmodernity leaves it baseless. Heltseth shows that Evangelical inerrantism originates not in modern but classical times, a period of the Church embraced by Emerging Church leaders. Answering the argument that postmodern epistemology dictates the end of absolute reason and truth Carson shows that the Emerging Church

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uses the American version of postmodernity according to which knowledge is social construction. Yet, he correctly points out the existence of other forms of postmodern epistemology that do not eliminate objectivity but rather calls for its reinterpretation, which is still in the making.

On the end of Foundationalism Evangelical evaluations have a negative verdict. They argue that the Emerging Church uses nonfoundationalism in an extreme, unfeasible way. They fail to realize that nonfoundationalism actually has foundations, and therefore is not actually possible to maintain in the absence of all foundations whatsoever. They argue epistemological nonfoundationalism rejects extreme forms of foundationalism, but not its soft versions. Moreover, they present a strong and well-articulated defense of a soft version of epistemological foundationalism that allows believers to claim Scripture provides basic evidence to form Christian beliefs as much as sensory perception allows scientists to form scientific beliefs.

On the Eclipse of Scripture, Evangelical evaluations are decidedly negative. They correctly view the Emerging Church view of Scripture as being a full-fledged capitulation to modernity and Neo-Orthodoxy. They reject the sacramental view of Scripture according to which the work of the Spirit is dislodged from the contents of the words of Scripture. God actually speaks in the words of Scripture. They are authoritative for all Christians. Although not explicitly stated, this view implies the eclipse of tradition, the reversal of the Emerging Church's eclipse of Scripture. There is no affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* or *tota Scriptura* principles.

Not surprisingly, Evangelicals have a rather superficial and even divided evaluation of Emerging Church's theology. Obviously, they disagree with the notion that doctrines are just the expression of human traditions. Most criticism takes place at the doctrinal level. For instance, the fact that the Emerging Church fails to uphold traditional evangelical doctrines like the doctrine of Hell, and, embrace the emphasis on soteriology. Perhaps the most important doctrinal criticism is the Emerging Church's movement away from understanding the gospel and the Kingdom of God from the sole perspective of forensic justification. To Evangelicals, this amounts to a distortion or even rejection of the gospel, the doctrine on which the Church stands or falls. So far, however, Evangelical's state their obvious doctrinal differences with Emerging Church leaders but stop short from engaging Emergent theology with their arguments. Pondering the fact that at times Emerging leaders advance heretical views that sound biblical



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some Evangelicals are calling for openness and theological engagement even in the central issue of the atonement.

Evangelical reactions on ecclesiology and ecumenism are divided. While some welcome and resonate with the ecumenical nature or the Emerging Church, others warn about it implicitly at least on the basis that it involves the acceptance of Roman Catholic theology and their view of the Church. In short, some favor a return to Rome while others oppose it.

Finally, representing a group of Evangelicals evaluating the Emerging Church in theological depth, Erickson concludes that postmodernity is passing and Evangelicals should move ahead by going back to their Evangelical convictions. Some of them are, the correspondence theory of truth, metaphysical realism, soft foundationalism, new historicism—faithful to historical acts but sensitive to historical interpretation—, incarnational ministry where Scriptural doctrine is contextualized to cultural situations, claim to universal truth, and solid argumentation that answers current questions and issues.

### **Conclusions**

From the brief description of some sample Evangelical evaluations of the Emerging Church movement I will attempt to draw some very general and tentative conclusions in hopes that they might help us to frame the larger question about the nature and extension of the changes currently experienced by American Evangelicalism and Christianity at large. The Emerging Church emerged from tradition and culture as a reform of neo-Evangelical American Protestantism. Unlike the Protestant Reformation that evolved outside of the walls of the Roman Catholic Church, the Emerging Church has originated and is evolving inside the walls of Evangelical denominations. As a sector within Evangelicalism, the Emerging Church is in the early stages of development. Its full theological and ministerial shape is still in the future. Having inherited five centuries of Protestant ecclesiological fragmentariness the Emerging Church is strongly motivated and focused to overcome it by engaging in ecumenical theology, ministry, and ecclesiology.

Not only Luther and Calvin but also Emerging Church theologians and ministers develop their theological systems using Roman Catholic ontological and metaphysical foundations. Although rarely recognized, studied, challenged or interpreted, implicitly these principles provide the hermeneutical foundations for both Evangelical and Emerging Church

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theologies and ministries. They provide the real operative basis for theological and spiritual unity not only among them but also within the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches from which they inherited them by way of tradition.

After the two initial centuries when Protestantism gradually emerged from Scripture, challenges from science and culture confronted its unstable and underdeveloped theology for the next three centuries. During that time, Evangelicals responded to the challenges of modernity by way of apologetics, the inerrancy of Scripture, and intra-ecumenical Evangelical alliances, but failed to produce a grand theological and philosophical synthesis. Arguably due to this absence, during the twentieth century the ground of the Protestant Reformation began to switch progressively from Scripture to philosophy, culture, and tradition in the spiritual, theological, and ministerial experiences of evangelicals. This might help to explain why early in the twenty first century, the Emerging Church movement has turned for theological and spiritual guidance to theological, philosophical, and spiritual synthesis produced by liberal Protestantism and Christian tradition.

Thus, radically departing from the American Evangelical tradition the Emerging Church does not experience the teachings of Modern philosophy and science as serious challenges to their understanding of Scripture and the doctrines of Christianity in general and Protestantism in particular. This may help us to comprehend why when facing the absence of simple answers to modern scientific and philosophical challenges to Scripture and Christian doctrines, Emerging Church leaders feel free to follow the example of Christian tradition and their Liberal Evangelical predecessors who have progressively accommodated Bible interpretations and teachings to the dictates of philosophy, science, and popular culture in the areas of theology, doctrines, ministry, and worship. In short, failure to develop a grand philosophical and theological synthesis of Evangelical Christianity in the face of modern philosophy and science has brought an influential sector of young Evangelical leaders to adopt the well developed classical and neo-Orthodox syntheses and its correspondent secularizing effects on Scripture, theology, doctrines, worship, music, and liturgy.

By implicitly adopting the Classical and Neo-Orthodox syntheses of philosophy and theology as articulated by Augustine, Aquinas, Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Jürgen Moltmann, the Emerging Church has explicitly challenged the theological center and leadership of the American Evangelical coalition. In so doing, it has further fractured the already

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fragmented theological and ecclesiological existence of Protestantism. The leadership of the Evangelical coalition and the future of the Protestant Reformation are at stake.

In the first article of this series we asked the overall question about the extent and nature of the changes taking place in the Emerging Church movement. We asked whether the Emerging Church movement represents a minor evolutionary mutation in the history of Evangelicalism or the emergence of a new macro evolutionary form.

Due to its strong philosophical commitments, grass roots engagement, and simultaneous origination, the Emerging Church movement does not seem to be a passing fad as some Evangelicals leaders think. Instead, it appears to be a new stage in the historical and theological development of American Evangelicalism.

Some questions remain. Why should we consider a very short-lived and fragmented movement to have epoch-making characteristics? And, more importantly, does the Emerging Church's turn to philosophy and culture indicate that the Protestant Reformation emergence from Scripture is over?

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## **The Implications of Arminius’ Understanding of the Intellect on Knowledge Exchange Strategies in the Mission of the SDA Church**

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### **Abstract**

I discuss the implications of the intellectualism/voluntarism debate for knowledge exchange systems, particularly as they apply within Seventh-day Adventist theological education. In the worldview of Arminius, the soul consisted of the Intellect, the Will, and Desire. Calvin argued that God first redeemed the Will, and then the Intellect was informed. Arminius believed that God appealed first to the Intellect, which in turn empowered the Will. Based on this description, I infer that this priority of the intellect speaks to the role of information and knowledge as prerequisite and causal in the salvation process, and thus knowledge exchange systems become instrumental in promulgating the experience of faith.

As a case study of this inference, I compare recent Calvinist statements and Adventist statements on the philosophy of education. Adventists focus on bringing the student as an individual to a saving and transforming knowledge of Jesus, a bottom-up approach; Reformed educators highlight preparing the student for responsibility within the community transforming society, a top-down approach.

I conclude that this distinction warrants the articulation of an intentional Adventist knowledge exchange policy for theological education that situates formal scholarship as another form of ‘evangelism.’

### Introduction

I am interested in knowledge exchange systems<sup>1</sup> and scholarly communication, particularly as they apply within Seventh-day Adventist theological education. This research agenda includes reflecting on how experts collaborate to increase the collective store of knowledge, what systems they use to share that knowledge, and how this collective wisdom in turn contributes to fulfilling the mission of the church. While throughout our denominational history, much of this communication dynamic has been happening in the larger community of faith, I suggest that the Seventh-day Adventist Church would benefit from a more intentional and organized knowledge exchange strategy specifically for her theological education program.

Improving knowledge exchange systems that benefit graduate theological education students sounds appropriate, particularly since new Adventist Seminaries are currently being established outside North America/Europe/Australia. But in the give and take of everyday life, church administrators must make difficult choices based on economic limitations. These knowledge exchange systems are costly. Are they a necessity or a luxury? When it comes to these systems, what can we afford, and how do we balance the needs of theology students with the many other needs of the church?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church from its inception has focused largely on knowledge exchange systems that target a general public, a non-academic readership, and has continuously been engaged in publishing books and magazines that inform, evangelize, and disciple the congregation and reach out to the community at large. For the most part, this knowledge exchange has involved presenting established teachings within an accepted consensus, but it also assumes the teachings are new for the reader. This work is valid, and must continue to be fully endorsed by the community of faith. However, documented knowledge exchange

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<sup>1</sup> This terminology has gained currency in the business and health management fields and refers to the strategies and technologies by which employees are prepared for leadership in global business contexts. This entails more than simply sharing instructional information, but empowers employees to knowledgeably solve problems and further the mission of the corporation. One pertinent application is discussed by Louise Kjaer, "Reflections from the Frontline: The Journal of a Knowledge Manager," in *Becoming Virtual: Knowledge Management and Transformation of the Distributed Organization*, ed. Jane E. Klobas and Paul D. Jackson (New York: Physica -Verlag, 2008), 180-196.

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between Adventist thought leaders, particularly those that mentor and train the next generation of church leaders, seems unwarrantedly inadequate. Thus much of Adventist theological education depends primarily on sources published outside the Adventist perspective. It is fully appreciated that in the past both economics and technology have raised insurmountable barriers to substantial and comprehensive academic level publishing, but looking forward, those barriers appear to be rapidly shrinking.

Theological education in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is responsible for training qualified and effective leaders who will carry forward the mission of the church in a diverse global community. How should our knowledge exchange values and strategies be shaped in the light of these new opportunities represented by global outreach and emerging technologies? While I have raised a number of issues in this introduction, it is not the purpose of this paper to fully address this multifaceted and complex problem. But I am proposing that Arminius, a theology professor at the University of Leiden, and one who fully engaged the knowledge exchange technologies of his 16<sup>th</sup> century context, might have some timeless wisdom to offer that provides a soteriological/missiological context for this agenda.

**The “What”: Arminius on the Priority of the Intellect**

This is a conference reflecting on the life, times, theology and impact of Arminius, recognized as a key voice in the theological ancestry of Seventh-day Adventists. He lived and ministered in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, a little over a hundred years after the invention of the printing press, a pivotal and revolutionary knowledge exchange technology. He is remembered because of his stand on predestination, which was different from that of his Reformed faith community in the Netherlands. Admittedly, I doubt Arminius thought much about knowledge exchange systems, seminary library budgets and scholarly publishing, though he was an active and thoughtful academic who fully engaged the information technology infrastructure of his day. He certainly did not write treatises on information and communication theory. But I am

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proposing that in his view of the epistemological in his soteriology,<sup>2</sup> particularly as it contrasted with that of his Calvinist interlocutors, he provides a nuanced perspective on the role that knowledge exchange systems play in the mission of the church. By extension, we can then infer that he speaks to our motivation and values as the economic resources are allocated for knowledge exchange by the church administration for the mentoring and training of new leadership.

Arminius, in his *Private Dispositions*, outlines a system of theology, moving topic by topic through an understanding of the nature and character of God and Jesus Christ, to the human predicament and the question of predestination. This in turn leads into a discussion of vocation, the election or calling of the saints. Throughout this description, there is a blending of the ontological and the epistemological in that, while the “reality” of salvation is fully established solely by the grace of God, the vocation entails the person who is called to come to know and assent to that “reality.” The following discussion will focus on this theme exclusively. The *Private Dispositions* then wrap up with a discussion of ecclesiology and sanctification.

First, for the essential definition of vocation:

The vocation or calling to the communion of Christ and its benefits, is the gracious act of God, by which, through the word and his Spirit, he calls forth sinful men [*reos*] subject to condemnation [*animalis*] of natural life, and out of the defilements and corruptions of this world, to obtain a supernatural life in Christ through repentance and faith, that they may be united in him, as their head, destined and ordained by God, and may enjoy [*communione*] the participation of his benefits, to the glory of God and to their own salvation (XLII:I).<sup>3</sup>

While the “efficient cause of this vocation is God” (XLII:II), and the “antecedent or only moving cause is the grace, mercy and philanthropy of God” (XLII:III), the “instrumental cause of vocation is the word of

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<sup>2</sup> Keith D. Stanglin, *Arminius on the Assurance of Salvation: The Context, Roots, and Shape of the Leiden Debate, 1603-1609*, Brill’s Series in Church History (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 236-244.

<sup>3</sup> Jacobus Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius, D.D., Formerly Professor of Divinity in the University of Leyden*, trans., James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall, 3 vols. (Auburn, NY: Derby and Miller, 1853), 2:104.

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God, administered by the aid of man, either by preaching or by writing” (XLII:IV).<sup>4</sup> A further distinction is then developed by Arminius between external and internal vocation. “The external vocation is by the ministry of men propounding the word. The internal vocation is through the operation of the Holy Spirit illuminating and affecting the heart, that attention may be paid to those things which are spoken, and that [*fides*] credence may be given to the word. From the concurrence of both these, arises the efficacy of vocation” (XLII:X).<sup>5</sup> Thus is described one facet of knowledge exchange, the “ordinary instrument” by which a knowledge of God’s calling is mediated to a sinner is through the act of preaching, one person communicating knowledge of God’s word to another person. This is an epistemological transaction.

In the next disputation, Arminius turns to the steps by which salvation is actualized.<sup>6</sup> “Faith is the foundation on which rests the obedience that is yielded to God” (LXIII:II).<sup>7</sup> Obedience is defined according to three parts, repentance, faith, and holiness of life. This disputation (LXIII) parses repentance. As a response to preaching of the law and gospel, a causal relation to the word of God and the Spirit of Christ, “it first urges a man by the word of the law, and then shews him the grace of the gospel, which is thus skillfully made, removes all self-security, and forbids despair, which are the two pests of religion and the soul” (LXIII:VIII).<sup>8</sup> The “antecedent to this response is the knowledge or acknowledgment of sin” (LXIII:V).<sup>9</sup> The concept of a response to the external vocation resulting in knowledge is an epistemological categorization incumbent on the called.

In the progression of Arminius’ development of obedience, he next addresses faith in Christ. After defining faith, “generally,” he narrows the focus.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2:105.

<sup>6</sup> J. V. Fesko, “Arminius on Union with Christ and Justification,” *Trinity Journal* 31, no. 2 (2010): 210-211. Fesko provides a helpful comparison with other contemporary theologians on this theme.

<sup>7</sup> Arminius, 2:107.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 2:108.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2:107.



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Evangelical faith is an assent of the mind, produced by the Holy Spirit, through the gospel, in sinners, who, through the law, know and acknowledge their sins, and are penitent on account of them, by which they are not only fully persuaded within themselves that Jesus Christ has been constituted by God the author of salvation to those who obey him, and that he is their own Savior if they have believed him as such” (XLIV:III).<sup>10</sup>

This section expresses the necessary conditional epistemological response of faith to the ontological reality of God’s action. The action verbs representing the epistemological response of the human person to the gospel (this tacitly incorporates the concept of access to the gospel through the means of preaching, spoken or written), include: “assent,” “know and acknowledge,” “are persuaded,” and “believe.” These responses are ontologically “produced” by the Holy Spirit, and “constituted by God the author.”

In the further parsing of “faith,” particularly in understanding what it means to “assent,” Arminius draws the following distinction:

Knowledge is antecedent to faith; for the Son of God is beheld before a sinner believes on him. But [*fiducia*] trust or confidence is consequent to it; for, through faith, confidence is placed in Christ, and through him in God. The author of faith is the Holy Spirit, whom the Son sends from the Father, as his advocate and [*vicarium*] substitute, who may manage his cause in the world and against it. The instrument is the gospel, or the word of faith, containing [*sensum*] the meaning concerning God and Christ which the Spirit proposes to the understanding, and of which [*persuadet*] he there works a persuasion.<sup>11</sup>

Note the repetition of the concept that the gospel is the instrument containing the meaning by which the Holy Spirit proposes and persuades the understanding.

Along these lines, Richard A. Muller in two separate articles brings into the discussion the relation between the intellect and the will. The first examined Calvin’s position, and a second explored Arminius’

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2:109-110.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2:110.

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position in contrast with the Reformed position of his time.<sup>12</sup> In the first, he documented Calvin's voluntarism, and the second, Arminius' intellectualism. He explains that Arminius and Calvin shared the same worldview, emerging out of medieval scholasticism. In their perspective, the soul consisted of the intellect, the will, and the desires.<sup>13</sup> Calvin argued that in faith and salvation the will took precedence (hence voluntarism), while Arminius held that the intellect took precedence (hence intellectualism). Based on this description, it is suggested that this priority of the intellect speaks to the role of information and knowledge as prerequisite and causal in the salvation process, and thus knowledge exchange systems become instrumental in promulgating the experience of faith.

Muller explains the difference between the two positions in this way:

does the person approve and appropriate the knowledge to which the intellect has assented *because* the will follows the dictate of the intellect as it proposes the good, or does the will have the capability of denying the known good, or perhaps even of willing that it not be brought forward to full intellectual assent? In other words, intellectualism assumes that the causal faculty in the grasping of the good is the intellect, whereas voluntarism assumes that it is the will.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Richard A. Muller, "Fides and Cognition in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin," *Calvin Theological Journal* 25, no. 2 (1990); Richard A. Muller, "The Priority of the Intellect in the Soteriology of Jacob Arminius," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55, no. 1 (1993). In a later work, Muller defends the Calvinist position, see Richard A. Muller, "Grace, Election and Contingent Choice: Arminius's Gambit and the Reformed Response," in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will: Historical and Theological Perspectives on Calvinism*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 2:251-278. For a much more detailed analysis of Calvin's thought on the will see Dewey J. Hoitenga, *John Calvin and the Will: A Critique and Corrective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> See Norman S. Fiering, "Will and Intellect in the New England Mind," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1972): 516-517. Fiering acknowledges that this distinction between the intellect and the will is archaic. However, he traces the intellectualism/voluntarism debate in New England in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and it can be inferred that the issues it raised continued to be influential on into the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, influencing early Adventist theology.

<sup>14</sup> Muller, "The Priority of the Intellect," 58-59.

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According to Muller, the implications of this distinction are far reaching in the understanding of the relationship between faith and salvation. Both Calvin and Arminius agree that it is only by the grace of God that salvation can be experienced. But they differ on how the grace is mediated. For Arminius, grace appeals to the intellect which then guides the will. The emphasis is on the causal sequence. As Muller further describes:

The gospel must simply be heard, understood, and approved, all within the normal realm of intellectual function. Accordingly, the causal “antecedent” of repentance can be described as a knowledge of sin in the mind, while the causal “antecedent” of faith is the knowledge instrumentally communicated by the gospel to the mind. Arminius, therefore, also seems to allow a role for the intellect in the salvation of the individual, the intellect directing the will toward the known good in cooperation with the divine grace of illumination, with the result that both grace and the normal arbitrating function of the intellect at the root of willing bring about the renovation of the will.<sup>15</sup>

It appears that this distinction may be one of the key underlying presuppositions that inform the contrasting conclusions concerning predestination and faith.<sup>16</sup> What does the preaching of the Gospel accomplish? Under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, does the message appeal foremost to the intellect of the hearer, or does it first transform the will of the hearer? Appealing to the intellect grants the hearer a choice, though having the choice at all is solely through God’s grace. By contrast, the belief of the prior transformation of the will, albeit solely by God’s grace does not appear to allow for comparable choice; the choice has already been made for the soul.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>16</sup> Stanglin reviews the debate, but suggests that the real distinction between Arminius and his colleagues is his intentional differentiation between *fides* (faith, epistemological assent) and *fiducia* (trust/confidence, an act of the will), and that *fides* is prior to *fiducia*. “Given that neither intellectualism nor voluntarism determines one’s soteriology, perhaps the more relevant difference between Arminius and his colleagues in the discussion of the intellect and the will is not the question of causal priority, but the degree to which the intellect and will were affected by the fall and restored after regeneration,” Stanglin, 102.

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This distinction is further illustrated by understandings on how the reign of God is to be realized. Heirs of both Calvin and Arminius reflect on the teachings of Jesus as the standard by which the kingdom of God is understood and agree in substance on what living in the kingdom is like, such as in the values of social justice. To highlight the distinction between the two, the Calvinist approach might be described as a top-down process, while the Arminian approach is a bottom-up approach.<sup>17</sup> The one perceives a community of chosen who bring about the kingdom values by transforming the larger community through its political and social institutions. The other gives priority to transforming individuals to live as citizens of the kingdom.

This top-down Calvinist perspective is illustrated in the Calvin College “Expanded Statement of Mission”:

God chooses a people to receive Christ’s forgiveness by faith, live in renewed covenant relationship, and enter into eternal life. God’s people are to live as the visible embodiment of the covenant promises. They manifest the universal scope of divine love; drawn from every tribe and language and people and nation, they become one body, one priesthood, one church.

Through this people God declares the restoration and completion of the creation. The church calls men and women to faith in Jesus Christ, and as agents of covenant renewal the people of God work to see God’s reign over the whole creation. The redeemed are called to correct the

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<sup>17</sup> The distinction between “top-down” and “bottom-up” is widespread in many disciplines, most notably political science, economics, software engineering, and cognitive psychology. I was introduced to the distinction in Steven Johnson, *Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software* (New York: Scribner, 2001). He explains the concept as it applies to both urban and online community development. In its application within a theological concept see Methodist theology professor, Joerg Rieger, “The Word of God and the People of God: Revitalizing Theological Discourse from the Bottom Up,” *Quarterly Review* 21, no. 1 (2001): 33-44. Rieger refers several times to John Wesley as an example of bottom-up practical theology. The Emergent Church movement also has applied this concept to church leadership, see Kester Brewin, *Signs of Emergence: A Vision for Church That Is Organic/Networked/Decentralized/Bottom-up/Communal/Flexible/Always Evolving* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007). This also underlies the choice of “knowledge exchange” rather than the more common term in knowledge management circles, “knowledge transfer.” The idea of exchange is more “bottom up” than the “top down” transfer language.

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exploitation and oppression of people, to alleviate pain in the world, and expunge evil from themselves. The confessing community forms the principal witness to the awakening reign of God, and provides a vision of spiritual liberation that also requires liberation from injustice and bondage.<sup>18</sup>

This can be contrasted with what Richard Rice, an Adventist theologian who shares Arminius's understanding of the place of God's love, emphasizes when he introduces the reign of God theme:

Because God's relations to his creatures are motivated by love, he does not establish his reign by the imposition of sheer power. His reign depends on the willing acceptance of his subjects. The situation which God seeks—in fact, the only situation which will satisfy him—is the glad acceptance of his lordship that arises from an appreciation of his loving character. Consequently, God gives his creatures the choice of serving him or not. He allows them time to examine the alternatives and make an intelligent decision. . . .

On another level, the reign of God reminds us that God's lordship is universal. Every aspect of life is subject to his sovereignty. This justifies the attention Seventh-day Adventists have given over the years to such matters as physical health and religious education, and it calls us to extend the sovereignty of God into others areas as well.<sup>19</sup>

Underlying this expectation of an “intelligent decision” is a knowledge exchange system by which the Gospel is made accessible to the intellect through normal communication channels. Thus, in its testimony, the community of faith, as it reaches out to a lost ‘individuals’ throughout the world, must be as clear, accurate, and thorough as possible.

A further consideration, perhaps anachronistic but at least tacitly warranted, is the problem of misinformation. Keith Stanglin traced much of Arminius's controversy with his Calvinist colleagues to the problem

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<sup>18</sup> Calvin College, “Calvin College—Expanded Statement of Mission,” Calvin College <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/mission/part1b.htm>, (accessed 5 November 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), 14-15.

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of the assurance of salvation. As noted above in the *Private Dispositions*, Arminius identified the “two pests of religion and of souls”<sup>20</sup> as self-security at one extreme, and despair at the other, both of which were the fruit of misinterpreting the relation between the law and the gospel. Stanglin observes that Arminius viewed this dialectic as derived from Reformed soteriology.

Arminius considered the dialectic of *desperatio* and *securitas* to be the direct result of certain distinctive aspects of soteriology increasingly taught and commonly accepted in the Reformed churches. Arminius’s contention is that Reformed soteriology in general and predestination in particular provided fertile ground for these two pests of religion and of souls to be fruitful and multiply.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, it is possible to conclude that for Arminius, the obtaining of true and adequate information was a necessary antecedent to experiencing the assurance of salvation, while the obtaining of incomplete or false information could result in the loss of salvation. Believing misinformation, what Arminius calls the “accidental”<sup>22</sup> has eternal consequences. By extension, preaching the truth versus preaching error may affect the salvation of the hearer.

### **So What: Philosophy of Education as a Case Study**

As a case study of how this priority of the intellect in the salvation process plays out in a contemporary application, I will reflect on how this assumption nuances an understanding of the purpose of the academic in the mission of the church. To illustrate the difference, recent published statements by both Adventist and Reformed thinkers will be discussed. Primary texts for this comparison are “A Statement of Seventh-Day Adventist Educational Philosophy,”<sup>23</sup> and the “Calvin College–

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<sup>20</sup> Arminius, 2:108.

<sup>21</sup> Stanglin, 181.

<sup>22</sup> Arminius, 2:104.

<sup>23</sup> “A Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy,” (paper presented at the First International Conference on the Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education, Andrews University, April 7-9, 2001), available from [education.gc.adventist.org/publications.html](http://education.gc.adventist.org/publications.html), (accessed 1 November 2012).

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Expanded Statement of Mission.”<sup>24</sup> Further discussion on the topic will be cited from George R. Knight, noted Adventist educator, and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., current president of Calvin Theological Seminary.

The value of education is equally appreciated by both the heirs of Arminius and Calvin. Prior to the Civil War in the United States, two thirds of the institutions of higher learning had been founded by those with Calvinist roots.<sup>25</sup> Since its beginnings in Battle Creek in 1874, Adventist higher education has over-achieved, and colleges and universities have been established throughout the world.

**The Adventist Philosophy of Education**

First, note the pertinent themes from a broad consensus statement prepared at a meeting of Adventist educators focusing on the Adventist philosophy of education.

Adventists believe that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God’s character and purposes can be understood as revealed in nature, the Bible, and Jesus Christ. The distinctive characteristics of Adventist education—derived from the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White—point to the redemptive aim of true education: *to restore human beings into the image of their Maker. . . .* Education in its broadest sense is a means of restoring human beings to their original relationship with God. Working together, homes, schools, and churches, cooperate with divine agencies in preparing learners for responsible citizenship in this world and in the world to come. Adventist education imparts more than academic knowledge. It fosters a balanced development of the whole person—spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially. Its time dimensions span eternity. It seeks to develop a life of faith in God and respect for the dignity of all human beings; to build character akin to that of the Creator; to nurture thinkers rather than mere reflectors of others’ thoughts; to promote loving service rather than selfish ambition; to ensure maximum development of each individual’s potential; to embrace all that is true, good, and beautiful.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Calvin College, <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/mission/>, (accessed 5 November 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), ix.

<sup>26</sup> A Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy.

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I wish to highlight a couple of key elements in this statement. The first is the focus on the redemption and restoration of the individual. This is further evidenced later in the document as follows, “As a child of God, the student is the primary focus of the entire educational effort, and should be loved and accepted. The purpose of Adventist education is to help students reach their highest potential and to fulfill God’s purpose for their lives.”<sup>27</sup> Desired outcomes for Adventist education express the intention that students “have had the opportunity to commit themselves to God with a desire to experience and support the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to live a principled life in harmony with God’s will.”<sup>28</sup> These assertions fall within the practical implications of Arminius’ granting of priority to the intellect. Students are granted the opportunity to experience redemption and restoration through education, but when all is said and done, it is still the student who must choose to accept this truth.

The second element is the hope expressed in a new earth. In the grand meta-narrative of salvation history, the choices made by the student as provided by this educational opportunity make a difference. The limited education that is experienced now finds its ultimate fulfillment in the New Earth. What is made of current opportunities will be completed and come to fruition when the kingdom of God is fully established and evil is fully destroyed. Adventist eschatology makes a significant contribution to this philosophy.

George R. Knight contributed his perspective on redemption as the primary purpose of Adventist education:

No Adventist with the slightest knowledge of Ellen White or the book *Education* is surprised by the equating of education with redemption. To them that equation sets forth the core of what education is all about. They have no difficulty with the primary function of education being the introduction of young people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and with a secondary purpose being the development of the *imago Dei* in each child in its mental, physical, and spiritual aspects. Such an educational purpose, of course, naturally implies that the

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



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primary function of the teacher is that of being a pastor or minister to his or her children within the setting of the classroom.<sup>29</sup>

Both of these sources emphasize that the purpose of education is the redemption of the student and the restoration of the image of God in that student, preparing him or her for citizenship in this world and the world to come.

**A Calvinist Perspective on the Purpose of Education**

In the Calvinist perspective of education, these two elements have a somewhat different emphasis, which once again reflects this question of the relation of intellect and will that Arminius and his interlocutors debated.

Thus, Calvinist expressions emphasize the role of education in the covenant community and the bringing about of the kingdom of God in contemporary society. For example, in Calvin College's *Expanded Statement of Mission*, it is expressed this way. "First, the aim of Christian education is to let faith find expression throughout culture and society. Second, the life of faith, and education as part of that life, find their fulfillment only in a genuine community. Third, the Christian community, including its schools, is called to engage, transform, and redeem contemporary society and culture."<sup>30</sup>

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., has written a thoughtful and accessible philosophy of education from a Calvinist perspective. He discusses the ultimate hope of humanity using the Hebrew concept of *shalom* in his introductory chapter, and then again in the epilogue.<sup>31</sup> But his orientation is still focused on the transformation of contemporary society, and reflects the eschatological ambiguity prevalent in Calvinism. He concludes:

Seen in its broadest reach, Christian education is for the kingdom of God, Christian higher education equips us to be agents of the kingdom, models of the kingdom in our own lives and communities, witnesses to

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<sup>29</sup> George R. Knight, "The Devil Takes a Look at Adventist Education," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 10 (2001): 179-180.

<sup>30</sup> Calvin College, <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/mission/part2b.htm>, (accessed 5 November 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Plantinga, 12-16, 137-144.

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the kingdom wherever we go in the world. In a fallen world, Christian education is a powerful engine for ministering to the world along the same line that we hope for the world. From time to time we do need to see this big picture of the kingdom of God in order to find our calling inside its frame. But day to day, the issues of good and evil come to us undramatically. They will come to us in a score of small questions that test and reveal our commitment to God's will on earth.<sup>32</sup>

Contrast this with the first words in Ellen White's discussion of education:

Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Summary**

To summarize the highlighted distinctions, Adventists focus on bringing the student as an individual to a saving knowledge of Jesus, transforming the individual, a bottom-up approach; Reformed educators highlight preparing the student for responsibility within the community transforming society, a top-down approach. Adventists emphasize preparing students as individuals for the joy of service in the world to come; Reformed educators emphasize bringing peace to this world through engaged interaction. These distinctions reflect how Arminius and the Calvinists interpreted the doctrine of predestination, based in part on the argument about the priority of the intellect. Adventists following Arminius assume the individual must make an intelligent choice to follow God and educate to that end; the Reformed following Calvin assume the formation or calling of the community as a divine act, and educate to fulfill the mission of the community.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>33</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 1.

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It is recognized that in both Adventist and Reformed philosophies of education, there is considerable agreement. Full treatments of their educational philosophies cover many of the same themes in complementary terms, and I would argue that much can be learned by both schools of thought from each other. These nuances only emerge when brief focused statements distill certain core values.

**Now What: Implications for Knowledge Exchange in Adventist Theological Education**

Following Arminius, if we as Adventists view the mission of the church to be the exchange of a saving knowledge of God (particularly through preaching), and that the causal priority in salvation lies within the intellect in a bottom-up paradigm, it follows that it is the responsibility of the church as an organization to strive to ensure that the knowledge it provides is as thorough and accurate as possible. The sharing of misinformation, albeit unintentionally or in ignorance, has definite, tangible, and potentially unhappy eternal consequences if it causes informees to reject saving truth. By contrast, in a deterministic perspective, the distribution of misinformation, or even blatant disinformation, does not alter the eternal outcome for the informee.

While this moral obligation to accurately represent the truth applies to all of the communications of the church, one area in my assessment where there continues to be an inadequate flow of knowledge exchange to this purpose is in the training and mentoring of church leaders. Yet it is in those future church leaders that we invest our continued direction. It is imperative that they have access to the best, most accurate and thorough knowledge that can be provided.

Because of the costs associated with current knowledge exchange systems, for example, the publication of books and periodicals, libraries, international conferences such as this one, etc., most students, particularly those outside North America/Europe/Australia, have limited access to the best knowledge resources. And yet it is these global students that will become the leadership for over 90% of Seventh-day Adventists. The publishing of paper based books and journals that would be particularly appropriate for graduate level Adventist theology students targets too small a market for economic viability. More so, theology students are not a demographic known for their financial clout. However, emerging digital technologies are opening possibilities for new

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knowledge exchange systems that can facilitate distribution and access to quality Adventist knowledge products appropriate for graduate level theological education for most educational institutions.

As church administrators reflect on the significance of global knowledge exchange for leadership formation, they should include the following considerations:

1. Recognize that the major economic cost of supporting new knowledge exchange systems will be in time and not cash. Theological researchers and educators need to be supported within their current salaried time to properly author works that share their knowledge, and to be provided with additional tangible non-cash recognition for their contributions. While some of this is currently in place, more ought to be done and to be more equitably distributed throughout the worldwide Adventist educational system.

2. Recognize the critical and biblical role that research plays in fulfilling the mission of the church.

In his epistles, Paul addressed two extremes towards knowledge exchange. The Thessalonians seem to have been cautious to the extreme, unwilling to consider anything new. So Paul counsels them:

Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to the good, reject whatever is harmful (1 Thess 5:19-22).<sup>34</sup>

At the other extreme we find the Ephesians, who seem to have been gullible, ready to uncritically adopt any new ideas that came along.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Eph 4:14-16).

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<sup>34</sup> All Scripture references are quoted from the *Holy Bible: Today's New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica, 2005), available from <http://www.biblegateway.com>, (accessed 5 November 2012).

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And Peter concludes his second epistle,

Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen (2 Pet 3:17-18).

Thus with a deep appreciation and gratitude for the 'Truth' God in His providence and grace has granted, the church must continue to "grow up" while remaining steadfast in her "secure position." Knight has reflected on the role of critical research in Adventist education, echoing Paul's challenge to "test all things."

Philosophy of education is something to which we tend to give lip service. But when it comes right down to budgets and positions, the target is practice, methods, curriculum, and psychological foundations, all too often without the benefit or adequate philosophical undergirding or exacting philosophical critiques on whether a particular practice or approach or theory is even worth implementing from the point of view of Adventist educational philosophy. In short, in most places, including Adventism, serious philosophy of education has fallen on hard times.<sup>35</sup>

Scholarly research serves both as a critique and a stimulus, but to be effective, the knowledge gained must be exchanged, particularly with the up and coming leaders.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the desired outcome is that the message of salvation can be more effectively and more accurately proclaimed to an increasingly diverse world. Rightly conceived, scholarship is one more way to fulfill the gospel commission, to "do evangelism." As such, supporting it can be justified as good stewardship of church financial resources.

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<sup>35</sup> Knight, 174.

<sup>36</sup> As a librarian, I advocate for access to the scholarly output of church. One source that is routinely overlooked is Conference proceedings. The expenses incurred in holding such conferences, and the costs of bringing thought leaders together, is substantive. Yet how accessible is this scholarship to remote Seminary students? Much more could be done using online technologies to bring together and organize this material for ready access by global students.

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3. Recognize scholarly competence as a gift and calling of the Holy Spirit and maximize the impact of this evangelistic ministry by not moving the best scholars into administrative posts, but rather supporting and recognizing their work within the educational milieu.<sup>37</sup> This recognizes that active participation in knowledge exchange builds both individual and community competence from the bottom up, one individual at a time, one new thought leader at a time. Thus, participation should be considered a normal responsibility of all those engaged in theological education.

4. Recognize that because research in theological inquiry is largely text based, the library plays a critical role in accessing prior knowledge. There is a difference in library support between the heirs of Calvin and Adventists. A review of the reported library expenditures for materials at Presbyterian/Reformed seminaries in North America indicates that on average, they invest twice as much per student as Andrews University.<sup>38</sup> The Adventist emphasis on global outreach, on wholeness, and on preparation for the world to come suggest this is an anomaly that needs further consideration.

### **Conclusions**

As one facet of his argument rejecting Calvinist predestination, Arminius viewed the act of preaching as the external and instrumental antecedent to a vocation of faith and faithful living. As his heirs, Adventists view “the primary function of education being the introduction of young people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.”<sup>39</sup> This experience of growing a saving relationship begins with the evidence communicated by an informer in a way that it can be accessed through normal channels by the intellect of the informee, and with the mediation of the Holy Spirit, then leads the informee to a saving relationship with God. Thus, informees become in-formed, and the knowledge exchange transaction is complete. This exchange process finds its ultimate motivation and meaning in the hope of a New Earth. Training and supporting preachers/teachers for God-focused knowledge

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<sup>37</sup> Knight, 176.

<sup>38</sup> “Statistical Records Report (2007-2008),” *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings* 63 (2009): 308-319.

<sup>39</sup> Knight, 179-180. In the context of this article, Knight is describing what happens in education generally. I suggest it applies equally to theological education.

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exchange through effective theological education is one responsibility the church can collectively assume to complete its mission. For the rest, it is the miracle of God's grace embracing new hearers of the Word of truth through the power of the Holy Spirit that bears fruit for eternity.

Improving knowledge exchange systems that specifically benefit graduate theological education students is therefore essential, particularly for the new Seminaries that are currently being established outside North America/Europe/Australia. These knowledge exchange systems are relatively expensive, though emerging technologies are significantly reducing the direct costs of distribution and access to knowledge products.

Are they a necessity or a luxury? The desired outcome of theological education is a church leader who is committed, competent and articulate, who can coherently evangelize the Gospel message in local contexts and lead others to a saving knowledge of God. Investments in leadership knowledge formation promise proportional returns—particularly from an Arminian bottom-up perspective.

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## **Universal Legal Justification: A Failed Alternative Between Calvin and Arminius**<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Olstad, M.A.

### **Abstract**

The concept of universal legal justification has gained significant attention over the past few decades in Adventist soteriology. Universalizing justification without entailing universalism has been proffered as resolving the atonement debate (whether Christ's atoning death saved no one, everyone, or just some) between Arminianism and Calvinism. However, many have seen this approach as fraught with difficulties, creating more problems than it ostensibly solves. First, this paper will show that when the novel terminology of universal legal justification is swept away, it is not a genuine alternative to the Arminian vs. Calvinistic understanding of the scope of the atonement, but is in fact the Arminian position. . . with a twist. Secondly, a discussion will follow dealing with the grammatical and logical difficulties which arise from adopting universalist language to portray a soteriology that is fundamentally Arminian. Lastly, a reason will be proffered as to why this "universalist" mode of expressing the atonement may linger within Adventism for some time.

### **1. Introduction**

The nature and scope of justification has been debated throughout the history of Christian theology.<sup>2</sup> Many sides of the debate are reflected in the different trends of Adventist soteriology as well. One particular form of the

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<sup>1</sup> The following was presented at the Arminianism and Adventism Symposium at Andrews University in Michigan, October 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).



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Adventist debate that has gained widespread attention is whether the atonement is more accurately understood by invoking a legal/forensic, objective justification that is universalized to all individuals. Though these proposals are at least two decades old, their adherents today cross international lines and seem to be numerous.<sup>3</sup> Capitalizing on apparent universal NT expressions,<sup>4</sup> proponents of ULJ<sup>5</sup> argue that all humanity has achieved a justified status as a consequence of Christ's atonement at the cross.<sup>6</sup> Universalism is avoided by bifurcating justification into *objective* and *subjective* categories. It is then argued that even though ULJ is classified as objective (a status accorded to all humanity that is independent of all initiatives or responses), it still must be received. This means, ". . . that although all have been legally justified in Christ's doing and dying, justification is still a gift. . . [and] Like any gift, it belongs only to those who accept it."<sup>7</sup>

These two propositions: (1) an irrevocable, objective, legal, justified status is predicated of all individuals (2) individuals must subjectively exercise faith in order to ultimately be saved, form the tensional parameters in which proponents of ULJ explicate their views. The conjoining of these propositions is also seen as providing an alternative to the impasse between the nature and scope of the atonement between Arminianism and Calvinism. This paper will first examine the success of that claim. Secondly, once ULJ is shown to be fundamentally Arminian, the question emerges as to whether the Arminian position is articulated better by utilizing ULJ language.<sup>8</sup> Does ULJ language square with Paul's overall use

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<sup>3</sup> At the risk of being anecdotal, this was the strong impression I received from a number of students from different countries at the International Adventist Seminary in South-East Asia (AIAS).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Rom. 5:18; 2 Co. 5:18, 19; 1 Tim. 4:10; Tit. 2:11; 1 Jn. 2:2.

<sup>5</sup> "Universal Legal Justification" that is both forensic and objective will subsequently be abbreviated ULJ.

<sup>6</sup> The mechanism for this is the corporate solidarity of humanity assumed in the human nature of Christ which was condemned and therefore justified at the cross.

<sup>7</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Beyond Belief* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 55.

<sup>8</sup> A good example of how this has occurred in the past is the acceptance by the Society of Evangelical Arminians of the corporate election perspective which differs from the traditional Arminian view of individual election based on foreseen faith. Both views are allowed in the SEA because they both hold to election as being conditioned on faith in

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of “justification by faith”? This option is also not sustainable because of the logical and grammatical difficulties that arise and the biblical maneuverings that would have to be adopted to justify such a position. Lastly, some important comments by Robert Wieland will be examined that show why maintaining ULJ is considered so essential to their understanding of the atonement.

It should be noted from the outset that the focus of this paper is on why ULJ is a failed *alternative* between two competing theologies; it is not an exegetical paper showing why ULJ is a failed *system*. However, there are preliminary exegetical issues raised here that challenge the ULJ approach.

The primary exponents of ULJ are Jack Sequeira, Robert Wieland, and other members of the 1888 Message Study Committee.<sup>9</sup> Since Pastor Sequeira has expounded more on this issue than Wieland, and in some sense has popularized ULJ for Adventists in general, it will be his argumentation that will be primarily considered. There are some shades of difference to how each speaks about “justification by faith” and unless otherwise noted, it will be Sequeira’s understandings that will be represented.

### **2. The Claim**

In the introduction to his book, *Beyond Belief*, Jack Sequeira presents his solution to the competing atonement views between Calvin and Arminius:

For four hundred years, Protestant Christianity has been divided into two camps regarding salvation. The first, Calvinism, confesses that Christ actually saved human beings on the cross but that this salvation is limited only to the elect—those whom God has predetermined to be saved. The second view, Arminianism, holds that on the cross Christ obtained salvation for all humanity, but that this salvation is only a provision; a person must believe and repent for the provision to become a reality. Both

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Christ. This illustrates the possibility of two ways to articulate or nuance a fundamentally Arminian view of election.

<sup>9</sup> This committee began meeting as a group in 1984 and describes its purpose as “to study and learn more about the message of Righteousness by Faith which was presented by Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner to the 1888 General Conference session of Seventh-day Adventists.” Over time, an official organization was born which includes a board of directors and annual meetings.

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these views are only conditional good news. I believe that neither camp presents the full truth about salvation. I believe the Bible teaches that God actually and unconditionally saved all humanity at the cross so that we are justified and reconciled to God by that act. . . .<sup>10</sup>

Sequeira offers a similar assessment of the inadequacy of Arminianism: “. . . according to their view [Arminians], Christ did not *actually*<sup>11</sup> save anyone on the cross, but simply made provision for our salvation. Hence, for this salvation to become an actual reality, one has to meet certain conditions. . . .”<sup>12</sup> These conditions consist of believing, repenting, and confessing. The dilemma is thus immediately drawn—if Calvinistic, then salvation’s intent and effect is limited to a few, if Arminian, then salvation is impotent in that, though provisional for all, actually saves no one. Sequeira splits the horns of this dilemma with Christ dying at the cross *for everyone*, addressing Calvinism, and *actually saving* everyone, addressing Arminianism (of course, explicitly avoiding universalism).

On the Arminian side, Sequeira’s assessment that a provisional understanding of the atonement is inadequate is nothing new. John Owen (1616-1683), an English puritan theologian, marshaled his Reformed challenge by stating that the Arminian proposition, “Christ died for all people,” also contains within it the proposition “Christ died for nobody” in that no people are actually and effectively saved by his death.”<sup>13</sup> Sequeira de facto agrees with Owen’s reasoning that if the statement, “Christ died for all people” is understood in the traditional provisional sense, one is committed to the conclusion that Christ died for no one.

For a more recent treatment, Calvinist Edwin Palmer addresses the flip side of Owen’s comment in his contention against Arminianism, “if He [Christ] died for all—then no one is lost.”<sup>14</sup> The comments from these

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<sup>10</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Beyond Belief* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Emphasis his.

<sup>12</sup> Jack Sequeira, “Objective & Subjective Salvation.” Accessed 7/12/10 at <http://www.jacksequeira.org/issues02.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 286.

<sup>14</sup> Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1972), 47. For an excellent discussion on resolving this apparent, and in my opinion, fairly weak argument see Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology* (IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 221-241.

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Reformed scholars form the two horns of the classic dilemma<sup>15</sup> used to challenge the Arminian position—the proposition ‘Christ died for all’ either entails universalism (Palmer) or it entails an impotent, “poverty stricken,”<sup>16</sup> provisional atonement that saves no one (Owen).

Rather than address this challenge to provisional atonement by clarifying or nuancing the meaning of “provisional” and explaining what it does and does not entail, Sequeira consents to the basic premises of these Reformed allegations. He takes seriously the challenge that a provisional atonement translates into a “saves-no-one atonement.” He therefore invokes a universal objective salvation and a ULJ as the solution, all the while repudiating universalism. This forms the crux of his alternative to Arminianism.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> N.B. This is *not* the dilemma spoken of earlier that Sequeira presents. The dilemma Sequeira presented is between Calvinism and Arminianism, i.e. an atonement that saves only a few vs. an atonement that doesn’t actually save anyone. The dilemma spoken of here has both horns pointed at Arminianism.

<sup>16</sup> Palmer, *Five Points*, 48. Palmer comments on both sides of the dilemma.

<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that at least two different atonement theories have been invoked to answer this Reformed contention. Going one direction Pastor Sequeira has in effect said, “This Reformed challenge is valid, therefore we need to say that Christ’s death objectively saved and justified everyone.” But in Sequeira’s view, a vicarious atonement of one person dying for all does not allow for such a conclusion. Therefore, he advocates what he calls an actual substitution theory of the atonement in which all humanity was actually corporately ‘in Christ’ so that we all died, and therefore were all justified and saved at the cross. This is why Sequeira is adamant that the Pauline “in Christ” motif is *not* reserved for believers, but applies to all individuals. John Miley, a Methodist systematic theologian, also agreed to the validity of the Reformed challenge but went the opposite direction of Sequeira for his solution. Olson explains that Miley, along with some later Arminians were convinced that the universality and conditionality of the atonement in the penal/satisfaction theory were incompatible and therefore opted for the governmental view of the atonement. Whereas Sequeira’s view of the atonement puts every individual into Christ, the governmental theory affirms that Christ did not take the actual punishment deserved by every person, “but that he experienced equivalent suffering in order to uphold God’s justice and holiness.” Whereas Sequeira takes the idea of corporate solidarity to its extreme in his theory of actual substitution, Miley and others go the opposite direction and remove the concept altogether that Christ is experiencing the personal punishment merited by individual sinners. Sequeira brings all into Christ; Miley removes all from Christ (though both maintain the concept of substitution). Neither of these reactions seems necessary and I agree with Olson that there is no reason to accept the validity of this Reformed argument in the first place. In common sense fashion, Olson simply states that, “There is no inconsistency between Christ’s representation of all in his suffering and death, and the condition that in order to benefit from

### 3. Analysis of the Claim

So is ULJ a legitimate alternative to the Arminian view of justification? During the first read of Sequeira's and Wieland's material it would be natural to come to that conclusion. The following citations are not standard Arminian expressions of justification or salvation and they lend plausibility that a genuine alternative between Arminius and Calvin is present: "Christ's obedience saved all humanity from second death and pronounced the verdict of justification on all mankind."<sup>18</sup> "What God did in Christ applies to all mankind, so that in Him the whole world stands legally justified. This is the unconditional good news of the gospel."<sup>19</sup> Wieland chimes in that the "the sacrifice of Christ on the cross accomplished for 'all men,' 'the whole world,' a *legal* justification. . . ."<sup>20</sup> Neither Arminius nor Calvin speak in these terms. Does that mean that this view of justification is a bona fide alternative?

The premise of this paper is that a genuine alternative must be based on meaning rather than on articulation. The importance of this distinction is crucial in reaching a conclusion as to the merits of ULJ as an alternative to the universal provisional atonement of Arminianism and the limited/particular atonement of Calvinism.<sup>21</sup> When the fullness of the theology associated with ULJ is taken into account, it is clear that this theology is Arminian enough to simply be called Arminian and does not constitute a third option in the way that Sequeira presents. This is clearly

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that representation individuals have to avail themselves of its benefits by faith." Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology* (IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 238. For Sequeira's full discussion of *actual* vs. *vicarious* atonement see his *Saviour of the World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1996), 51-80.

<sup>18</sup> Sequeira, as quoted by Caesar W. Mwachi, *An Evaluation of Jack Sequeira's Understanding of Justification and Sanctification in Relation to the Doctrine of Salvation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (2005), 25.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Beyond Belief* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 170.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Wieland and Editorial Committee of the 1888 Message Study Committee, *Is Beyond Belief Beyond Belief?* (SE Paris, Ohio: 1888 Message Study Committee, no year), 73.

<sup>21</sup> Though "limited atonement" falls under the rubric of Calvinism, McGrath points out that Calvin himself "did not teach limited atonement" but that Calvin's predecessor, Theodore Beza (1519-1605), "explicitly stated that Christ died only for the elect, and not for all people." McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 275. It is Beza's position that has become a hallmark of Reformed theology.

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the case when one takes into account the extensive statements by both Sequeira and Wieland that faith must be freely exercised in order to experience salvation (never with a Calvinistic backdrop of unconditional election or predestined choice). That is, in order for one to be ontologically in a saving heaven destined relationship with God,<sup>22</sup> a *freely* exercised faith and a conversion are indispensable. One example from numerous quotes is as follows, “Only those who by faith receive God’s gift of justification will enjoy the benefits of Christ’s obedience.”<sup>23</sup> To put it bluntly, Sequeira and Wieland are soundly Arminian in the majority of their works. Only in a few choice phrases such as “. . . God actually and unconditionally saved all humanity at the cross. . .”<sup>24</sup> and all are “legally justified” do they seem to move decisively away from orthodox Arminianism.

The initial difficulty in reading proponents of ULJ is that they explicitly denounce Arminianism and then go on to clearly explicate their own theology in Arminian terms. The trick with sifting through the articulation of ULJ is to realize that Arminius, and Calvin for that matter, utilized no term that encompassed this novel approach which states all are legally justified and “actually” saved but not experientially or subjectively. Therefore, one must be cautious in any comparisons between the term “justification” in the expression “universal legal justification,” and the term “justification” within either a traditional Arminian or Calvinistic paradigm. It is essential to note that the Arminian understanding of the term “justification” is explicated quite well by Sequeira when he is explaining “subjective justification” or “justification by faith.” The differences arise in the discussion of “universal legal justification.” I believe it is

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<sup>22</sup> This phrase is cumbersome but necessitated by the fact that Sequeira has applied the term “actual salvation” universally, though he does not mean that all will inevitably be saved, i.e. walk through the pearly gates. In order to avoid ambiguity, this forces me to avoid the phrase “actual salvation” and to come up with creative substitutes.

<sup>23</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Beyond Belief* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 55. Some supporting statements to this fact: “That means that the condemnation Adam brought to the entire human race at the Fall is inherited by all who are born into this world. In contrast, the justification unto life objectively obtained by Christ for the entire human race at the cross is experience [sic] only by those who believe in Him and have experienced the new birth.” Jack Sequeira, “Objective & Subjective Salvation.” Accessed 7/12/10 at <http://www.jacksequeira.org/issues02.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Beyond Belief* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 8.

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unconsciously misleading of Sequeira to compare and make a contrast of his universal legal justification with the term “justification” in Arminianism, which of course will be different, not because of different understandings of the term “justification,” but because there is no analogous term in Arminianism.<sup>25</sup> But when Sequeira speaks of “subjective justification” or “justification by faith,” it is virtually identical with Arminianism.<sup>26</sup> A more appropriate comparison can be made between what Arminians would refer to as the “meritorious cause of justification” with Sequeira’s “universal legal justification.” As will be discussed later, these two respective expressions accomplish much of the same goals and have led some critics to render this entire debate as merely “semantics” or a “strife over words.”

So though Sequeira perhaps can claim that ULJ introduces a neglected dimension of justification that most of Christendom hasn’t considered, this is not sufficient to be an alternative position for two reasons. One, the utility of ULJ overlaps considerably with the Arminian understanding of the “meritorious cause of justification” which is also objective and universal. And secondly, ULJ can hardly be a full-fledged alternative because Sequeira develops what he calls “subjective” justification virtually down the identical lines as Arminian theology. Especially because the “subjective justification” of Sequeira is the only one most Christians would be *prima facie* concerned about, i.e. the justification that, if predicated of an individual, would equate to an ontologically saved condition. To illustrate the point, Christian tradition assumes that if an individual makes the *true* statement, “I am justified,” and then dies the next moment, there is no sense in which that individual could be lost. This is not the case in Sequeira’s and Wieland’s paradigm. In their paradigm, the person could be thinking of objective legal justification and still make the *true* statement, “I am justified,” and be simultaneously in a lost condition.<sup>27</sup> But one could

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<sup>25</sup> The same argument can be made with the term “salvation” and whether Sequeira speaks of *objective* salvation or *subjective* salvation.

<sup>26</sup> This cannot as safely be said of Wieland’s understanding of “justification by faith” as will be discussed later.

<sup>27</sup> This is the logical outworking of adopting ULJ but not universalism. In this model, those who are ultimately lost never lose their objective justification; in other words, the status of ULJ accorded to humanity is irrevocable. This point was graciously confirmed by Sequeira in a personal email in which he stated (speaking of an individual who is lost), “The

flippantly, though reasonably ask, “Who cares about that kind of ‘justification.’ I’m interested in the ‘justification’ that actually (ontologically) saves me.” Sequeira, if I may speak for him, would then explain “subjective justification” and would sound like an orthodox Arminian, as his writings attest.<sup>28</sup>

Another seeming difference between Sequeira’s ULJ theology and Arminianism concerns the concept of provision. Though Sequeira disparages the term, he uses the concept continually. Remember, in Sequeira’s claim above, he faults Arminianism for being “only conditional” good news and that though “Christ obtained salvation for all humanity. . . this salvation is only conditional” and “a person must believe and repent for the provision to become a reality.” First, to clear up the ambiguity in that last statement, it should be noted that there is nothing unreal about the provision. It is extremely doubtful that Sequeira is questioning the “reality” of the provision itself within Arminianism. What he means is that within Arminian theology, no one is deemed saved or justified unless they first do “something” like believe, repent, etc. This is a somewhat self-defeating critique because the concept and form of the word “provision” appears now and then in his quotes, e.g., “. . . when a person accepts the gospel and is united by faith to Christ, immediately all that Christ has prepared and *provided*<sup>29</sup> as humanity’s substitute is made effective for that person.”<sup>30</sup> This sounds like a solid Arminian soteriological statement. When “something” has been accomplished or made available for an individual, but that “something” is not yet effective, we say that the “something” is “provisional.” Sequeira often encloses the concept of provision in different words than traditional Arminians use, but the concept is alive and well in

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legal justification that Christ obtained for him or her remains objective but is not experienced subjectively.” I appreciate his candor and theological consistency on this matter.

<sup>28</sup> This is crucial to note because much of Sequeira’s criticisms of Arminianism (e.g., seeing faith as a legalistic work, lack of assurance, etc.) apply equally to his own understanding of “subjective justification.” He obviously believes ULJ insulates him from these standard Calvinistic critiques but they plainly do not. I’m confident that if a high Calvinist analyzed Sequeira’s theology, he would deem it Arminianism *incognito*. The traditional Arminian distinction between “faith” as the instrumental cause of justification and Christ’s life and death as the meritorious cause amply answers the “faith-as-a-work” criticism and doesn’t bring with it the conceptual perplexities of ULJ.

<sup>29</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>30</sup> Sequeira, *Beyond Belief*, 102. Cf. 101, 111.



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his theology. For example, an Arminian would say that someone is only saved/justified provided they exercise faith. Sequeira would disparage that view as “only” conditional good news. He would instead insist that *all* have been saved/justified, just not effectively or subjectively saved until they exercise faith. But is this really evading Arminian conditionality? There doesn’t seem to be a significant difference, when it comes to the concept of provision, between the two respective summaries:

(Arminius) Individuals begin ontologically lost until they exercise faith in the provisions of the gospel and then they are saved.

(Sequeira) Individuals begin legally justified or objectively saved but still ontologically lost until they exercise faith and then they are experientially saved.

Thinking evangelistically, how different is it to tell a soul that Christ has unconditionally saved you (à la Sequeira) but not effectually until you exercise faith, than it is to tell a soul that Christ has unconditionally provided salvation for you (à la Arminius) but you are not saved until you exercise faith.

As stated previously, Sequeira’s expositions on “justification by faith,” line up surprisingly close with orthodox Arminianism. So, once a term consistent comparison is made, there is no appreciable difference between the two and they are both provisional. For now, it appears that Sequeira has simply shifted the concept of provision from traditional terminology into specialized terminology that nuances between being justified objectively with being justified effectively. In other words, bouncing between the terms “objective” and “subjective” is a subtle way of using all that the term “provision” entails. “Provision” has simply been recast in more sophisticated terms that ostensibly avoid age long Calvinistic critiques of provisional atonement. Caesar Mwachi, who wrote a favorable MA thesis on Sequeira’s use of justification and sanctification concurs and states that, “It is not clear, then, how this understanding [Sequeira’s ULJ] opposes the idea of a conditional provision. He denies Arminian conditionality, but then appears to affirm it again.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mwachi, *An Evaluation*, 46.

So, in conclusion as to whether ULJ is an alternative to the Arminian position, the answer is that ULJ does not produce a sufficient systemic change within a fundamentally Arminian framework to be considered a genuine alternative. Assuming this concluding assessment is accurate, the difference between Sequeira's theology of justification and Arminianism lies in ULJ as a novel and conjoining aspect to Arminianism's traditional understanding of justification. Sequeira is convinced that this understanding of justification (in connection with his atonement theory) is effective at undermining legalism and correcting the unethical view of vicarious substitution<sup>32</sup> and therefore has encouraging missiological potential. Arminians would note that there is nothing inherent to their understanding of justification that leads to legalism<sup>33</sup> (despite the Calvinistic critique) or an unethical view of the atonement. Nevertheless, the question still is pertinent, "Should the traditional Arminian articulation of justification be expanded to include ULJ?" Unsurprisingly, the answer is "no." Grammar, logic, and an initial reading of Paul on the subject dictate that the traditional terms and articulation of justification be maintained.

#### **4. Grammar and Articulation**

Some reflections on grammar will be subsequently made because ULJ proponents lean heavily on the assumption that their distinction between universal legal justification and particular effective/subjective justification is biblically supported by a Pauline distinction between "justification" and "justification by faith."<sup>34</sup>

Consider a few statements by Robert Wieland: ". . . there are two phases of justification: (1) forensic, or legal, made for all men,<sup>35</sup> and

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<sup>32</sup> "The Reformers, nevertheless, were ethically wrong in their definition of substitution— that the doing and dying of Christ was accepted *instead of* our doing and dying." *Beyond Belief*, 40. Sequeira instead opts for what he calls, "actual substitution" which entails a heavy emphasis on the "concept of corporate solidarity."

<sup>33</sup> See Olson's chapter entitled, "Myth 9: Arminian Theology Denies Justification by Grace Alone through Faith Alone" Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology* (IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 200.

<sup>34</sup> Sequeira, *Beyond Belief*, 32, cf. 43.

<sup>35</sup> Later on in the book, he has a section entitled, "There is a legal or forensic justification that applies to 'all men'" followed by these supporting verses: Jn. 1:4-9; 3:16-19; Rom. 3:23, 24; 5:6-18; 2 Co. 5:14, 15, 19; 2 Tim. 1:10.

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accomplished entirely outside of us; and (2) an effective transformation of heart in those who believe, and thus a justification *by faith*.<sup>36</sup> “Justification *by faith* is distinct from forensic justification, though it is dependent upon it.”<sup>37</sup> Some may see in these quotes the blurring of the traditional division made between justification and sanctification. This dimension of Wieland’s understanding will be touched on in the final section of the paper. For now, it is only necessary to ponder the merit of making a distinction within the concept of justification by the addition of the prepositional phrase, “by faith.”

There are two immediate responses to Wieland’s and Sequeira’s claim that justification is to be divided as such. Both responses are based on grammatical considerations and their force is maintained by the common use of language. A perusal of the biblical passages on justification will show that this common sense approach fits with those passages.

The first response is that the formal character of a head noun, verb, or adjective is not altered by the addition of a prepositional phrase. If Paul writes of status X, and further down the line argues that X is by Y, the plainest understanding would be that Y is stating a dimension of the *cause* of X, *not* a different angle, facet, phase, or stage of X. There would be no reason, grammatically, linguistically, or logically, to think that X by itself would be anything different than the sense of X in the phrase X by Y. It is the identical term with the identical meaning. Plugging in for X, the term “justification” by itself, or any term for that matter, is no different than the “justification” in the phrase “justification by faith.” The prepositional phrase affects no formal difference in the head noun, adjective, or verb.

Though analogies all break down at some point, a quick one may be useful here. Imagine if I told a friend that I was recently hired. I could just as well have said that I was hired by filling out an application, or was hired by the human resource department, or hired by the good graces of the CEO, etc. None of these varied prepositional phrases alter the meaning or sense that is fundamental and original in the term “hired.” In other words, it is not the function of prepositional phrases, whether in Greek or English, to lend shades of meaning to the word they modify. It would be just as anomalous

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<sup>36</sup> Emphasis his. Robert Wieland, *The 1888 Message* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), 74.

<sup>37</sup> Emphasis his. *Ibid.*, 86.

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to conclude that the word “hired” has four different distinguishable meanings/phases as it is to conclude that Paul had four different phases of “justification” in mind, when he writes “justified by faith” (Rom 5:1), or “justified. . . by. . . grace” (Rom 3:24),<sup>38</sup> or “justified by. . . blood” (Rom 5:9), or just plain “justified” (Rom 8:30). Could we add “justified by works” (James 2:21)? It is a violation of normal speech to assume that these different prepositional phrases or lack thereof provide different meanings/phases of “justification.” This point places the burden of proof squarely on the ULJ proponents to show that this common sense notion of speech is being bypassed.

In reference to Wieland’s argument, it seems highly unlikely that the presence or absence of the prepositional phrase “by faith” marks off a magnitude of difference in the meaning of justification in which without the phrase, justification means a forensic legal declaration for all humanity, and with the phrase, it means “an effective transformation of the heart” for individual believers. Regardless of how justification is defined, is it not obvious that whatever it is, it would be caused by faith? Using Wieland’s definition, i.e., a forensic legal declaration, this legal justification would therefore be instrumentally caused by faith. But instead of following the utterly logical conclusion of seeing the phrase, “by faith,” as modifying his legal declarative understanding of justification, he is forced by his theology to conclude that legal justification is *not by faith* (because it is universalized to everyone regardless of faith), and that the phrase “by faith” attached to “justification” alters it to mean a “transformation of the heart.” It is as if Wieland is using two terms, (1) justification (legal/forensic) and (2) “justificationbyfaith” (transformative). Obviously there is only one term involved, but Wieland treats “justification by faith” as if it invokes a second term. The point is that even if Paul desired to bring out different angles of “justification,” this would not be done by attaching prepositional phrases. His readers would intuitively understand the function of prepositional phrases as offering additional information as to the

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<sup>38</sup> The Greek does not contain a preposition in this particular instance. The preposition in English serves as a gloss for the dative case which can semantically overlap with prepositions. This explains why, “. . . the simple dative is phasing out in Koine Greek, being replaced largely by prepositions. . . .” Daniel B. Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 66.

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cause/agency/result/source/etc.<sup>39</sup> of “justification.” If Wieland were to follow this principle without modifying his theology he would immediately run into a contradiction. Plugging ULJ into the phrase “justified by faith” would then translate to “justified (universal legal justification which is not by faith) by faith.”

Sequeira also sees an important distinction between these two “applications” of justification but in a different way than Wieland:

Justification means to be declared righteous. When used in the context of the gospel the word justification is used in two ways — as an objective fact as well as a subjective experience. As an objective fact, justification is applied to the entire human race fully redeemed in Christ. [Read **Rom. 5:18**.] But since this objective justification is God’s supreme gift to mankind, the good news of the gospel, it has to be received in order to be experienced. Therefore, justification, as a subjective experience, applies only to those who have believe and obey [sic] the gospel, and are baptized into Christ. The Bible refers to this as justification by faith [**Mk. 16:15, 16; Rom. 5:1**]. This dual application of justification is also true of the word sanctification.<sup>40</sup>

Sequeira clarifies the relationship between ULJ and “justification by faith” by saying, “When Christ died on the cross, all humanity was legally justified because all humanity died with Him there. Justification by faith is simply making that legal justification effective in the life of the believer.”<sup>41</sup> Conditionality in the block quote above is clear and therefore serves as another reference to Sequeira’s unconfessed Arminianism. Though provision is present in the structure of Sequeira’s arguments, Arminians would take issue in the way he has chosen to *articulate* that provision, specifically with phrases such as “all humanity was legally justified,” and “. . . God actually and unconditionally saved all humanity at the cross . . .”<sup>42</sup> Notice the difference in terms related to the process of salvation pictorially represented in the following illustration.

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<sup>39</sup> For a quick refresher on the function of Greek prepositions see: Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 356-389.

<sup>40</sup> Jack Sequeira, “Justification and Sanctification.” Accessed 7/12/10 at <http://www.jacksequeira.org/issues06.htm>.

<sup>41</sup> Sequeira, *Beyond Belief*, 43.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

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Traditional Arminian Articulation of Universal Provisions to Particular Results



Sequeira's Articulation of Universal Provisions to Particular Results



It is clear that standard Arminian articulation has chosen to reserve terms such as “save” and “justify” to post-faith experience whereas Sequeira and ULJ proponents have not. Following a dialectic of “objective/subjective” terminology and using “by faith” to make “effective” what already is supposedly the case “objectively,” universalism is avoided and basic Arminianism is upheld.<sup>43</sup> So the question emerges again as to whether ULJ terminology should be adopted? This leads to my second response based on the intuitive grammatical use of language. Again, this notion is arrived at prior to any exegesis but I believe exegetically holds true in the Pauline epistles. The principle is as follows: Predicable propositions (X is Y) containing “justified” and “saved” should not be affirmed unless their effectiveness and ontological nature is assumed in the predication. Let’s flesh this out in a question to a ULJ proponent: If one is

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<sup>43</sup> Since Pastor Sequeira is clear that he believes the “Armenian [sic] gospel. . . is anything but good news,” (<http://www.jacksequeira.org/issues01.htm>) I ask that he patiently endure his theology being characterized as such. I think the Arminianism in his theology is a good thing and therefore this is not a case of “name calling.”

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already legally justified without faith, what purpose would there be to exercise faith? The ULJ proponent would say that one needs to exercise faith in order to make that justified status effective. But in reference to the principle under consideration, one should respond that if status is already predicated, then the status *would* be effective. The same holds true with Sequeira's most extreme statement that all were "actually saved" at the cross. If that's the case, why exercise faith? The predictable answer from ULJ theology is that faith is necessary to make effective or to receive that "actual salvation." But isn't it plain that if this predicated salvation is not effective for unbelievers, it is best not to make the predication in the first place, not to mention the added difficulty of adding the term "actual" to the mix? In other words, effectiveness is inherent in the nature of predicate statements. If quality Y is not effective for subject X, then we naturally avoid predicating Y of X. This is the natural way of communicating and this is why Arminians will most likely not be following in the terminological footsteps of Sequeira and Wieland.

When Arminians say, "Joan is saved" they don't want that proposition to elicit secondary questions or clarifications like, "Do you mean objectively or subjectively" or nuances such as, "She is justified, but not effectively." From both a practical and logical standpoint, if the pre-faith predication of universal legal justification, i.e., "I am justified," is "ineffective,"<sup>44</sup> "not experienced,"<sup>45</sup> not "reality to us,"<sup>46</sup> and equally made for those who are saved as well as for those who are lost, its utility as a theological construct is questionable.<sup>47</sup>

Let's briefly review this grammar and articulation section. Both Wieland and Sequeira have invoked a ULJ that is predicated of all humanity. Because this predication of itself is divested of ontological salvation, i.e. no one who is *only* universally legally justified will walk

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<sup>44</sup> The predication is ineffective since it is not "effective" until faith is exercised.

<sup>45</sup> "The legal justification effected at the cross is not something we experience. . ." Sequeira, *Beyond Belief*, 101.

<sup>46</sup> "The objective gospel can become a reality to us only when we experience its power in our lives." Sequeira, *Beyond Belief*, 89.

<sup>47</sup> ULJ does seem effective in undermining a legalistic attitude because one is deemed "already" saved and justified even before faith is exercised and therefore *a fortiori* before any works.

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through the pearly gates,<sup>48</sup> they have had to look for a separate biblical expression which predicates ontological salvation of individuals. They have done this in slightly different ways. Wieland's explication of "justification by faith" verges on turning that phrase into a single novel word "justificationbyfaith." In other words, "justification" spoken without the prepositional phrase satisfies the legal demands of salvation made for everyone, while "justification by faith" takes care of the heart transformation and brings about ontological salvation. We concluded that this is loading a prepositional phrase with excessive functionality. The plain use of language dictates that the definition of the term "justified" without the prepositional phrase is identical to the term within the phrase, "justified by faith." The conjoining prepositional phrase is simply stating some dimension of *how* justification (whatever the definition of "justification" may be) is coming about. As stated above, if Wieland applies the standard function of prepositional phrases to his explanations, he must modify his theology or run up on a contradiction.

Sequeira, in contrast to Wieland, makes a slightly different distinction between "justification" and "justification by faith." He has followed a more plausible line of reasoning that understands "justification by faith" as simply making effective one's previous legal justified status. This doesn't run into the same "preposition-creating-another-term" fallacy that seems apparent in Wieland's explanation. But following this tack has its own problem. The common use of predicable statements dictates that if Y is not "effective" for X, we simply don't predicate Y of X. Arminian articulation has rightly reserved predication of terms such as "justification" and "salvation" until these terms are "effective" for the individual. This understanding forms the conceptual nuts and bolts of the concept of "provision" and explains why Arminian theology feels free to vocally espouse a provisional view of the atonement.

Sequeira, on the other hand, has an aversion to both the articulation of provision and to being classified as Arminian.<sup>49</sup> He therefore has introduced

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<sup>48</sup> Sequeira makes an exception to this in reference to babies, but I have unfortunately misplaced the reference.

<sup>49</sup> My opinion is that Pastor Sequeira has become a casualty of believing the common caricatures of Arminianism instead of the true Arminius or his theology as explicated by his ablest defenders. The following quote represents one of many that support this assessment: "Because of the assumption held by the Christian church, that all persons are born lost, we



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a sweeping theological paradigm of objective/subjective categories which, as shown in the previous sections, is simply a novel way to explicate the concept of provision without using the term.

As a final note, it should be stated that laboring over the point of articulation and grammar is not a display of being narrow, nit-picky, or overly complicated. In fact, in this context, it is to emphasize that the most common sense, simplest, and natural understanding of the grammar involved with “justification” should be followed. In light of this, this section represents a conservative defense that attempts to show that the articulation of ULJ assumes too many exceptions to basic rules of language.

### **5. A Brief Note on the Logic of Paul’s Argumentation**

The purpose of this paper was not to repeat exegesis<sup>50</sup> that shows, directly or indirectly, that Paul’s theology is not in harmony with the basic tenets of ULJ. Its purpose is to show that ULJ belongs to the broader current of Arminianism and does not represent a third option between Arminius and Calvin.<sup>51</sup> Secondly, it attempts at filling an appreciable gap in the critiques thus far made that haven’t addressed the issues of grammar and articulation that plague ULJ. The more accurate, though cumbersome, title of this paper could be, “Universal Legal Justification: A Failed

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as a church have applied the in Christ motif only to believers. Since we hold to the Armenian [sic] view of the gospel, that salvation in Christ is only provisional, we have been teaching our people that only after we have taken the initiative, by believing in Jesus Christ and repenting of our sins, that God is able to put us into Christ and save us. As mentioned in our last study, this is the main reason why so many Adventists have been robbed of the assurance of salvation” Jack Sequeira, “The In Christ Motif.” Accessed 7/12/10 at <http://www.jacksequeira.org/issues03.htm>). In contrast to this quote and others, classical Arminianism places God behind all initiatives concerning salvation through prevenient grace. For more on prevenient grace, see Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 159-178.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, the treatment of Romans 5:18 in Douglas Moo, “The Epistle to the Romans,” *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996). For a more direct treatment, see Larry J. Kane, “Analysis of the Doctrine of Universal ‘Legal’ Justification,” and a handful of other related articles at <http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents.htm#theology>.

<sup>51</sup> It could be argued that there can be no third option to Arminius and Calvin in the way Sequeira makes his claim. This is the case because arguably anything that is other than an unconditional election to salvation (Calvinism) is by definition equated as Arminianism (excluding universalism which is really not an evangelical option). This does not weaken the thesis of this paper, but it makes my conclusion a bit anti-climactic.

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Alternative Between Calvin and Arminius and A Failed Improvement to the Articulation of Arminianism.” Though I believe the paper thus far has attempted to fulfill those goals, an additional observation on the logic of Paul’s argumentation on justification is in order.

This observation is based on the consensus that when Paul speaks in the context of being “justified by faith” (Rom 3:28, 4:5, 5:1; Gal 2:16, 3:11) he is contrasting being justified by “works of the law.” This observation is axiomatic. Taking Sequeira’s emphasis that justification “by faith” is making effective the universal legal justification one already possess, how does this coordinate with Paul’s interlocutors who believed that justification was by “works of the law”? Did they also believe that all humanity was legally and objectively justified and that “works of the law” is what made that status effective? The force of this point is that when Paul argues one is justified “by faith” he is assuming that there is agreement with his opponents on the definition of “justification,” otherwise they would be arguing apples and oranges. The issue is *not* “what is justification?” but *how* one is justified. What use would it be for Paul to say justification is by faith, not works, if his interlocutors had a different notion of justification in mind?<sup>52</sup> Given the assumption that the definition of justification must be uniform on both sides of the argument in order for the issue of “faith” and “works” to be highlighted, I find it extremely implausible that Paul’s interlocutors had the same universal/legal definition of justification that Sequeira ascribes to Paul.<sup>53</sup>

### **6. Motives and Anticipations**

To speak of another’s motives is always dangerous ground. In addition, speculations of this sort are perilously indefensible since all the person in question must say is, “You are wrong. Those were not my motives.” Discussion over. So, to begin, let us rightly and cordially assume that the

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<sup>52</sup> Looking at it structurally, Paul’s debate must be in the form X is by F (faith) against X is by W (works). What sense would the argument make if the structure was instead: X is by F (faith) against B is by W (works).

<sup>53</sup> This argument stands regardless of exactly what is meant by “justification” and especially the never ending controversy on what Paul precisely meant by “works of the law.” It simply argues that unless both sides had a common definition of justification, the discussion in Romans, i.e., whether justification is “by faith” or “works of the law,” could not have gotten off the ground.

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motives of Sequeira and Wieland (and others) in propagating ULJ theology, is based on the strongest conviction that their theology is biblical. This being said, let's also recognize that theological positions (including my own) are not insusceptible to numerous other variables besides the Bible such as denominational identity, personal background, the presence of heresy (real or perceived), culture, etc. This short section seeks to show that ULJ has become a rallying point of denominational identity for segments of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and therefore I anticipate that ULJ will not soon be discarded. This prognosis is based on some fascinating lines of reasoning in a small published book by Wieland that served as an apologetic to Jack Sequeira's book, *Beyond Belief*.

Wieland begins by offering a short history:

In the 1970's Desmond Ford and Robert D. Brinsmead were prominent champions of the Reformationist view. . . they saw Waggoner as teaching Roman Catholicism because he had maintained that justification by faith makes the believer righteous, or makes him obedient to the law of God. The biblical law-court language, they insisted, required that "justification" could not make one righteous because the ancient Hebrew judge could never "make" an accused person "righteous," but only "declare" him so (Deuteronomy 25:1). They maintained that justification by faith therefore is only a legal declaration.<sup>54</sup>

The reason Wieland is unsatisfied with the Reformationist<sup>55</sup> view that "justification by faith" be restricted to a legal declaration is clarified in the book a page later: "The Reformationist view insisted that any change in the believer's heart takes place not in justification by faith but in sanctification; and since sanctification is never complete in this life, the believer can never hope to overcome sin completely until glorification takes place at the second advent."<sup>56</sup> Wieland sees that if transformation is not maintained under "justification by faith," then hopes for complete victory over sin in this life are dashed on the incompleteness inherent in sanctification. The

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<sup>54</sup> Wieland, *Is Beyond Belief Beyond Belief?*, 59.

<sup>55</sup> This and subsequent references to the "Reformationist" view should be understood as from Wieland's perspective and not necessarily that of the Reformers themselves. The Finnish school on Luther merits consideration on this point.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

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popularity of the Reformationist/Ford position in the late 70's and 80's posed a serious theological threat to his transformational reading of "justification by faith."

So what is the connection of all this to universal legal justification? Notice how Wieland in the following quotes utilizes ULJ to refute the Reformationist understanding of justification (all emphasis mine).

I [Wieland]. . . began to understand that the legal justification took place at the cross, long before the sinner repents and believes. And if it took place at the cross, it must objectively apply to "all men." It follows therefore that justification by faith *must be* experiential, and *must be* a change of heart that makes the believer obedient to all the commandments of God.<sup>57</sup>

Wanting to help my congregation at Chula Vista to realize what the issues were, I wrote a little tract giving biblical evidence that the legal justification of "declaration" took place at the cross and therefore applied objectively to "all men," and that justification by faith *had to be* the subjective experience of change of heart and reconciliation with God that produces complete obedience.<sup>58</sup>

Basically, from Wieland's perspective, ULJ is the ideal doctrine to undermine the Reformationist view of "justification by faith" being a legal declaration. The logic is plain. If all of humanity is *already* legally justified (obviously, apart from faith), then it precludes "justification by faith" from involving a legal declaration. The only thing left for "justification by faith" to mean is a subjective transformational experience. It is this argument from elimination that ostensibly resolves the age old debate as to whether justification by faith means to "legally declare" or to "subjectively make" righteous. Wieland has posited that the "legally declared" side of salvation has been applied to all humanity *before* the exercise of faith. The "only man left standing" so to speak, is the transformational interpretation. Wieland is confident that ". . . it [universal legal justification] was called

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 60-61. Emphasis mine.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 61. Emphasis mine.

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into being to refute the Reformationist teachings of our time, which is why we have used it.”<sup>59</sup>

It is because ULJ is understood providentially to combat an alleged heresy and preserve a distinct denominational identity vis-à-vis the rest of “Reformationist” evangelicalism, that I forecast that ULJ will be with us as a denomination for a protracted amount of time.

### **7. Conclusion**

Sequeira and Wieland are both convinced that universal legal justification splits the horns of the Arminian/Calvinistic dilemma concerning the nature and scope of the atonement. Excerpts from their material certainly appear that they have succeeded, at least at first blush. But once the full orbed understanding of ULJ is fleshed out, it emerges as a novel term that serves as an addendum to Arminian provisionality. Sequeira and Wieland see a deficiency in the traditional Arminian method of expressing the universal aspects of the atonement<sup>60</sup> (which in Sequeira’s words undermines assurance, fosters legalism, and encourages ego-centrism) and therefore supplants them with ULJ and other objective categories. To avoid universalism, a sweeping paradigm of objective/subjective categories has been installed, but this too has failed to produce a systemic change in the provisional dimensions of Arminianism.

Once it was understood that ULJ is part of the larger landscape of Arminianism, it was safe to move to the issue of whether ULJ is an improvement to the traditional ways of articulating the concept of justification. The conclusion was that the bifurcation of justification which produces a significant distinction between the expression “justification” and “justification by faith” is not tenable on grammatical logical grounds. Wieland leaned heavy on the prepositional phrase “by faith” as highlighting two phases of justification, a legal universal phase and a heart transformational phase. It was determined that this violates the normal function of such grammatical phrases by allotting them excessive semantic control over the word they are modifying.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>60</sup> Or perhaps they are unaware of the trenchant arguments of Arminianism which preclude legalism, support believer’s assurance, and reserve all initiatives of salvation as divine prerogatives of God.

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Sequeira took a slightly different tack and maintained that the same phrase, i.e., “by faith,” was making effective a legal justified status that had been previously predicated of all individuals. In contrast to that approach, statements of predication, e.g., “She is justified,” or “He is saved,” have been prudently reserved by Arminians as post-faith propositions. Assuming that both Sequeira and Arminians are doing their best to sidestep the Calvinistic charge of placing merit/initiative in humanity’s exercise of faith, they each have articulated how they make this important qualification. Arminians reserve statements of predication, e.g., John is justified, until one exercises faith, but then they *clarify faith* as being a gift from God that serves as the instrumental cause (not the meritorious cause) of justification. Sequeira and friends predicate an objective justification of individuals, e.g., John is justified, but then *qualify the predication* as not being effective until faith is exercised.<sup>61</sup> Each system, in its own way, is striving to avoid the “faith-as-a-legalistic-work” accusation. This paper deems, however, that the standard use of predication should be reserved for that which is experienced or “effective” and that there is no good reason (with an eye to Paul’s epistles) to divest predication of its natural import. This principle coincides with the natural use of language and supports the reason that Arminian/Adventist theology has defined an atonement that is universal in scope, meritorious in nature, but provisionally predicated only to those who exercise faith.

Lastly, some statements by Robert Wieland revealed that ULJ is not just some esoteric subject to keep theologians entertained at symposia. Not only does ULJ have a large popular audience, in which many have “found the assurance of salvation for the first time. . .”<sup>62</sup> it has also been invoked as an effective refutation to what many consider the compromising inroads of Reformationist theology. Held in the one hand as a comforting “assurance of salvation” and in the other as a weapon against heresy, universal legal justification is not likely to be relinquished anytime soon.

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<sup>61</sup> On a reflective note, I have asked myself whether I want to be in the position of either having to clarify the nature of exercising faith in statements such as “being justified by faith,” or rather be in the position of having to qualify predicable statements such as “all humanity is legally justified.” Obviously, I choose the former.

<sup>62</sup> See the back cover blurb on *Beyond Belief*.

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## **A Dialogue Between Contemporary Perspectives and Ellen White on Divine Action and Quantum Physics**

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### **1. Introduction**

The way in which God interacts with the world, or divine action, has long been a matter of discussion for theists in the philosophy of science, and continues to remain a complex and controversial topic.<sup>1</sup> In recent decades, this question has taken on additional complexity with advances in contemporary physics, namely quantum physics, which posits a random or probabilistic world in contradistinction to the apparently completely deterministic natural world of Isaac Newton.<sup>2</sup> Responding to a growing crowd on the periphery of academia that see “God” in the indeterminate

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<sup>1</sup> For example, John Polkinghorne, “The Metaphysics of Divine Action,” in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur R. Peacocke, eds., (Vatican Observatory Publications: Vatican City, 1997); Keith Ward, *Divine Action: Examining God’s Role in an Open and Emergent Universe* (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007); and Anna Case-Winters, “Rethinking Divine Presence and Activity in World Process,” in Thomas Jay Oord, ed., *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See *Sir Isaac Newton, Principia: The System of the World, Vol. II*, trans. Motte and Cajori (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1934); see also, Allen A. Sweet, C. Frances Sweet, and Fritz Jaensch, *The Unity of Truth: Solving the Paradox of Science and Religion* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2012), 71; and Nancy R. Percy, and Charles B. Thaxton, *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 132.



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quantum microworld<sup>3</sup> (while many atheists allege that quantum randomness or “chance” has replaced the need for any “God”<sup>4</sup>), the evangelical philosopher of science, Lydia Jaeger, shares in a recent work that:

We should avoid the idea of quantum indeterminacy being the privileged place for divine intervention. This idea fails to correctly distinguish between physical and theological categories, and so is unsatisfying as much for the scientist as it is for the believer. Trying to fit divine action into the gaps in the scientific description clearly shows a confusion of primary and secondary causes: God is not an additional causal factor alongside the entities that populate the world. His action is therefore not in competition with the established natural order; it is manifested just as much in his providential sustaining as it is by a miracle, should one occur. Looking for “gaps” in the picture which science gives us, and invoking God to explain them, is more deistic than theistic: A solid understanding of creation allows us to reject any kind of idea of a “God of the gaps.”<sup>5</sup>

Jaeger highlights a key point of contention in the current debates. Is it fair to insert God’s interaction into the world at only the quantum level of indeterminateness? Wouldn’t this be limiting God to a pantheistic relationship with nature, where the cosmos is coeternal with God, who interpenetrates it in some special but limited manner? Or should God’s “intervention” in the world be understood and seen throughout whatever

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<sup>3</sup> In particular, William G. Pollard, *Chance and Providence* (Nabu Press, 2011, 1923). Though not named by her, see also the more radical pantheistic recent forms advanced by John S. Denker, *The Quantum God: (Why Our Grandchildren Won’t Know Atheism)* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2010), xx. “A universe with randomness, a non-algorithmic universe, isn’t a universe that just is; it is a universe where God is living. . . . It is where God becomes man and nature,” Ibid. See also, Amit Goswami, *God Is Not Dead: What Quantum Physics Tells Us about Our Origins and How We Should Live* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Russell Stannard, ed., *God for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000), 147-148. See also, Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (W. W. Norton, 2005), 272-274, n. 7; and David J. Bartholomew, *Uncertain Belief: Is It Rational to Be a Christian?* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press Oxford, 1996), 54-55, 185-186.

<sup>5</sup> Lydia Jaeger, *What the Heavens Declare: Science in the Light of Creation*, trans. Jonathan Vaughan (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 93.

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the natural world may reveal, including any natural laws which God is sustaining? Jaeger prefers that we take creation *ex nihilo* as the starting point of a discussion on divine action.<sup>6</sup> In such a picture, God doesn't act *in* nature so much as God's acts *are* what constitute nature. Nature as a whole *is* what God does; nature is not something in which there is a subset *where* God exclusively acts. Correspondingly, for Jaeger, science itself cannot come up with an account of divine action, as only an account of divine action could explain what science *is*. The real question then, for Jaeger, is "how is there room for science in God's world?"<sup>7</sup> This position, however, moves the issue of the relationship of science and theology into metaphysics entirely, which raises a separate number of issues and problems.

Such a picture as presented above by Jaeger clearly presents the situation that faces the philosopher of science in a different light from those who see "God" only at the quantum level. The purpose of this article is to explore the implications of Jaeger's proposal in dialogue with three other thinkers; namely, the respected contemporary Christian philosophers Alvin Plantinga, John Polkinghorne, and the Seventh-day Adventist thought leader Ellen G. White. The rationale behind the selection of the first two individuals is that they offer comprehensive perspectives on the issue, covering both the major philosophical and theological implications in their own respective works on the issues. Ellen White is included because she offers a surprisingly detailed philosophy of science for a layperson that is influential in Adventist circles, and, although she never knew of quantum physics as such discoveries occurred after her time, she does have several statements that could be interpreted to speak to the issues scientists and philosophers are discovering in the world of contemporary physics.

The objective of the paper is simple in that it will examine, through the above thinkers, if the quantum level of reality *does* hold some sort of value for the Christian philosopher of science, or whether the entire issue is moot. The issues at stake are what, if any, might be the role of the strangeness of

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cis.org.uk/conferences/past-conferences/london-2011/>. Accessed April 10, 2012. Lydia Jaeger's talk was entitled "How Does God Act in the World?" See also, <http://graphite.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/faraday/Speakers.php>, accessed April 10, 2012, and her talks, "The Idea of Law in Science and Religion," and "The Religious Roots of the Idea of Scientific Laws."

<sup>7</sup> Jaeger, "How Does God Act in the World?"

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quantum physics (which includes more than just statistical randomness or indeterminacy, such as non-locality, both features that baffled even a scientific luminary like Albert Einstein<sup>8</sup>), if the phenomena are what most physicists say they are, namely, contradictory phenomena to the established picture provided by classical Newtonian natural science which otherwise works very well. Additionally, upon what criteria might we judge or determine what natural law is in relation to the “laws” of logic and mathematics (let alone moral law), which are abstract and not physical or natural, as they are typically understood. Lastly, and separately, where do human free-will and miracles fit into these questions? Attempted solutions to such longstanding puzzles are not the present goal, merely the articulation of where the problems are actually located in the ongoing dialogue. This paper will seek to explore these old but also contemporary questions and the various responses by philosophers, focusing on the above individuals. One major goal of this study will be to highlight the difference between a genuine conceptual mystery (or paradox) and a classical mystery, wherein merely information is missing that prevents a clearer understanding of something assumed true. In other words, the one-hundred trillionth digit of  $\pi$  may be a mystery to mathematicians presently, but we possess the conceptual tools and technology to access it eventually, making this nothing but a classical mystery. A true conceptual mystery is one such that, at least at present, although two or more differing concepts seem true, they are also at surface incompatible. We can’t even imagine what shape a solution might take or be to such apparent problems or seeming contradictions. Such mysteries are often called paradoxes.

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<sup>8</sup> For some primers on the conceptual problems plaguing quantum physics, see John R. Gribbin, *Quantum Physics: A Beginner’s Guide to the Subatomic World* (University of California Press, 2002); Jim Baggott, *The Quantum Story: A History in 40 Moments* (Oxford University Press, 2011); Jim Baggott, *A Beginner’s Guide to Reality* (Pennsylvania State University: Pegasus Books, 2006); Franco Selleri, *Quantum Paradoxes and Physical Reality* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990); Euan J. Squires, *The Mystery of the Quantum World* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, 1994); and Miguel Ferrero and Alwyn van der Merwe, ed., *Fundamental Problems in Quantum Physics* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995).

## **2. The Relationship Between Philosophy, Theology, and Classical Science**

In this section, I'm first going to briefly recount the basic attitudes toward science which have formed our modern conceptions of the issue. This is necessary as a reminder of the general attitudes that frame the discussion even today. Then in section three I will highlight how precisely Jaeger, Polkinghorne, Plantinga, and White discuss the relationship between theology and natural science, with an emphasis on the theoretical aspects of the issue and how quantum physics fits in their respective views. Through this process I will compare and contrast their views to highlight the role of quantum physics in the development of their beliefs, and the implications of what problems, if any, they see quantum phenomena helping them explain or resolve.

### *Common Perception of Natural Science's Relationship to Philosophy*

Following a generation behind the advances of the eminent scientist Isaac Newton (1642-1726) and philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), the words of Pierre-Simon de Laplace, Immanuel Kant, and Lord Kelvin will help to create the contemporary picture of the modern expectations of science that greets us today. Although most contemporary scientists realize there are many complexities concerning the situation, these ideas nevertheless still dominate the picture that "science" paints for itself for society at large. I retrace the thinking behind this picture to provide some background that will illuminate how our above selected thinkers, Jaeger, Polkinghorne, Plantinga, and White, will engage the issues.

The mathematician and scientist Laplace (1749-1827) presents perhaps the most well-known remarks on the determinism of the natural world based upon the assumption of an atomistic closed natural universe with consistent causal laws and behavior. He stated, "If you could only tell me the motion and position of every particle in the universe at any time in the past, then I would be able if I knew all of the laws of nature to tell exactly what would happen in all detail at all future time."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, he also asserted, "The present state of the system of nature is evidently a consequence of what it was in the preceding moment, and if we conceive of an intelligence which at a given instant comprehends all the relations of

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<sup>9</sup> Darin Jewell, *Thinking About Thinking* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2005), 134.

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the entities of this universe, it could state the respective position, motions, and general effects of all these entities at any time in the past or future.”<sup>10</sup> As such, all of reality could be calculated, easily enough, were one to simply possess a sufficient mind that had the appropriate knowledge. Just a moment’s observation or brief time-delayed snapshot of the universe would provide all the necessary data to calculate the universe for all times.

Interestingly, Laplace was also noted for his work on theories of probability. One might wonder how to reconcile the puzzle of a chief proponent of determinism in natural science advocating mere probability? The answer is simple, and he shared it as such. As Darin Jewell explains Laplace’s position, “in celestial mechanics [where Laplace first focused his attention] there are just a few laws, we know them, and we can make the calculations. Ordinary, daily events such as the descent of a feather from the Tower of Pisa or human actions are much more complex.” As such, “they are no different in principle, but it is just so much harder to know the laws which apply, and we do not know them nearly as well as we know the laws of celestial mechanics.”<sup>11</sup> It is simply a matter of knowing all the appropriate laws, which are surely a great number. Accordingly, in Laplace’s own words, “everything in nature obeys these general laws; everything derives from them by necessity and with as much regularity as the cycle of seasons. The path followed by a light atom that the winds seem to transport at random, is ruled in as certain a manner as the planetary orbits.”<sup>12</sup> Laplace remained optimistic that future scientific discoveries would reveal more laws that would resolve the indeterminacies that the science of his time faced. “Several experiments already made give us reason to hope that, one day, these laws will be perfectly known; then by applying mathematics, we will be able to raise the physics of terrestrial bodies to the same degree of perfection that the discovery of universal gravitation has given to celestial physics.”<sup>13</sup> It is in this context that Laplace then reiterates:

Man owes that advantage [in celestial mechanics] to the power of the instrument he employs, and to the small number of relations that [this

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<sup>10</sup> Laplace, as cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

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field] embraces in its calculations. But ignorance of the different causes involved in the production of events, as well as their complexity, taken together with the imperfection of analysis, prevents our reaching the same certainty about the vast majority of phenomena. Thus there are things that are uncertain for us, things more or less probable, and we seek to compensate for the impossibility of knowing them by determining their different degrees of likelihood. So it is that we owe to the weakness of the human mind one of the most delicate and ingenious of mathematical theories, the science of chance or probability.”<sup>14</sup>

Jewell believes that this view of Laplace’s is the one that still holds today for most scientists, and that “the necessity to make probabilistic calculations does not mean the world is not deterministic, but only means it is probably complex and that we do not know enough to realize the underlying interconnectedness as yet.”<sup>15</sup> Jewell realizes the implications this has for human freedom and responsibility, in that a pure determinism would remove the human entity from being utterly responsible for his actions as they were predetermined, while, conversely, a purely random universe would mean there could be no continuity of the self, or inheritance of responsibility from moment to moment.<sup>16</sup> All of the issues Laplace and Jewell raised will continue to play key issues in the development of quantum physics, including, in particular, his attitude concerning the relationship between probability and determinism being governed by ignorance.

The highly influential contemporary of Laplace, the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), shared much of Laplace’s confidence in the rational certainty of reality, including its mathematical relationship to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>16</sup> Jewell comments, “I think we do need to honor this powerful intuition we have that at moments of moral import we could have done something else. The issue is not really free will versus determinism. That is only part of the problem. The issue is free will in the sense of us being responsible for our own actions versus any theory that would free us of that responsibility. It is just that determinism historically in the West is the classic theory that would seemingly free us of that responsibility by claiming that our causes are determined by laws. Yet the opposite position, that we live in an absolutely random universe whose randomness is so profound like coin-tossing that we in fact by the interposition of our moral self cannot alter it, would free us just as much from responsibility and therefore is just as strong a counter to our sense of free will,” Ibid.

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nature and metaphysics. Kant argued that in the development of the entirety of a transcendental philosophy which necessarily precedes all metaphysics, it must be assumed that:

We can only appeal to two sciences of theoretical cognition (which alone is under consideration here), pure mathematics and pure natural science (physics). For these alone can exhibit to us objects in a definite and actualisable form (*in der Anschauung*), and consequently (if there should occur in them a cognition *a priori*) can show the truth or conformity of the cognition to the object *in concreto*, that is, its actuality, from which we could proceed to the reason of its possibility by the analytic method.<sup>17</sup>

Kant clearly held a special place for mathematics and physics in the establishment of the ground for a theoretical understanding of reason and the possibility of a metaphysics. As human freedom was contained within the discipline of metaphysics for Kant, this would encourage his later fellow philosopher Martin Heidegger to remark with dismay that “for Kant . . . genuine metaphysics remains an ontic science of supersensible beings. For him ‘the supersensible’ is ‘the final goal of metaphysics’—supersensible in us, above us, and after us, namely: freedom, God, and immortality.”<sup>18</sup> Given that “the mathematical sciences of nature are precisely what became and remained for Kant the model of science as such,”<sup>19</sup> one can see the tight correlation between mathematics and nature and any metaphysical inquiry. This meant the issues of freedom, God, and immortality were governed by the same rational tools and rules that were determined and applied to and by mathematics. Intelligibility itself, as metaphysics, required these components to work within the specified pattern of mathematical natural science’s clarity. This required Kant to ultimately place freedom outside the evidently deterministic noumenal material world of empirical natural science, to a timeless world beyond from where we experience the world

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<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kant’s Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, tr. Paul Carus (Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 30.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure Reason’*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

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as phenomena, through our mind or soul, a distinct noumenal thing in itself,<sup>20</sup> an intricate dualism.

To briefly encapsulate their thoughts thus far, Kant and Laplace have placed the deterministic law-like behavior of nature in a close relationship with the calculability made possible by mathematics. Furthermore, Kant takes this mathematical calculability as the model for genuine knowledge as such, a pattern that will be continued in the development of science, as will be noted below.

Another one of the famed father's of modern science, Lord Kelvin (William Thomson, 1824-1907) also described very concisely the preponderant attitudes that many scientists today still assume:

When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind. It may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely, in your thoughts, advanced to the state of *science*, whatever the matter might be.<sup>21</sup>

The above words also led him to assert that "I am never content until I have constructed a mechanical model of the subject I am studying. If I succeed in making one, I understand; otherwise I don't."<sup>22</sup> Kelvin also famously

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<sup>20</sup> As Martin Gardner explains, "Kant's view can be compressed as follows: In the space-time world of our experience, the world investigated by science, causal determinism must be assumed; in this sense the will is not free. But morality is meaningless unless the will *is* somehow free. For practical reasons, therefore, we must assume that the human soul, considered as a noumenon, a thing in itself, belongs to a transcendent, timeless realm, and in this realm it is truly free. How empirical determinism and noumenal freedom can be reconciled, however, is a mystery utterly beyond our finite minds," *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 413, n. 8. This has caused problems for contemporary thinkers. As Ted Peters observes, "It has been traditionally assumed that history belongs peculiarly to the human condition and that nature functions in some achronic realm, subject to unchanging laws. What is beginning to dawn on modern consciousness is the comprehensiveness of the category history. Nature, too, is historical. It is not timeless," Ted Peters, *Science, Theology, and Ethics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 114.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Dietz and Linda Kalof, *Introduction to Social Statistics: The Logic of Statistical Reasoning* (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 36.

<sup>22</sup> Aleksandre Tikhonovich Filippov, *The Versatile Soliton* (Rensselaer, NY: Birkäuser, 2000), 8.



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quipped, “in science there are no paradoxes,”<sup>23</sup> and “mathematics is the only good metaphysics.”<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, however, Kelvin also stated paradoxically that “every action of human free will is a miracle to physical, and chemical, and mathematical science.”<sup>25</sup> Were this assumed true, he would have inherited the Kantian gap or Cartesian split between the human mind/soul and the natural world that is represented by a crisp divide. Such divisions create a multitude of paradoxes and contradictions to common sense. This issue is one that our selected philosophers will engage later.

It was in fact René Descartes, through his infamous “Cartesian dualism,” that had set the stage for much of modern thinking. Michael Spenard explains that “Descartes concluded that since the entire existence of the body could be doubted, and since the mind could not doubt its own existence . . . , then the mind must be of a nonphysical substance.”<sup>26</sup> From this, the person was bifurcated into two substances, the body, which was “governed by mechanical clockwork-like laws of physics,” and the mind, which was not bound to such rules.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, mathematics still played a key and fundamental role in both motivating and describing what was possible in either domain, remaining the standard for clarity to be sought. Thus, Heidegger summarizes Descartes’ views as follows:

Did not Descartes, who determined the fundamental orientation of modern philosophy, want nothing other than to furnish philosophical truth with the character of mathematical truth and wrest mankind from doubt and unclarity? From Leibniz the saying has been handed down: Without

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<sup>23</sup> Carl C. Gaither and Alma E. Cavazos-Gaither, *Scientifically Speaking: A Dictionary of Quotations, Vol. 1* (Bristol, UK: IOP Publishing Ltd., 2000), 144. Several quotations on paradoxes are included here.

<sup>24</sup> Carl C. Gaither and Alma E. Cavazos-Gaither, eds., *Gaither’s Dictionary of Scientific Quotations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Springer, 2012), 1139.

<sup>25</sup> John Henry Bridges, *Illustrations of Positivism: A Selection of Articles from the ‘Positivist Review’ in Science, Philosophy, Religion, and Politics* (Ayer Publishing, 1915), 20, 23. As Bridges notes, “From a great scientific authority . . . these remarks are so curiously wanting,” 23. Kelvin’s comment here severely undercuts his previous remarks on the primacy of science.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Spenard, *Dueling with Dualism: The Forlorn Quest for the Immaterial Mind* (Unpublished, 2011), 10.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* See also, Richard A. Watson, *The Breakdown of Cartesian Metaphysics* (Humanities Press International, 1998), 181-186; and Kevin Corcoran, ed., *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

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mathematics one cannot penetrate into the ground of metaphysics. This is surely the most profound and sweeping confirmation of what is proposed straightaway and for everyone as absolute truth in philosophy.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, as Richard Watson notes, in many respects Cartesian dualism failed to adequately address many concerns that philosophers had on how the body and mind could interact, namely how the mind could cause physical actions. In particular, the agnostic empiricists, such as John Locke and David Hume, abandoned many of Descartes' rationalist views.<sup>29</sup> They did not, however, remove the mathematization of reality from empirical natural science.<sup>30</sup> Mathematical natural science rather came to provide the softening of empiricism and rationalism's extremes in the eyes of contemporary thinkers, which remains very much true today, by and large.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, it must be noted that many Christians still retain aspects of Cartesian substance dualism owing to their views on the human soul.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, tr. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 16. Originally, "Descartes, der die Grundhaltung der neuzeitlichen Philosophie bestimmte, was wollte er anderes, als der philosophischen Wahrheit den Charakter der mathematischen zu verschaffen und die Menschheit dem Zweifel und der Unklarheit zu entreißen? Von Leibniz ist das Wort überliefert: Sans les mathématiques on ne pénètre point au fond de la Metaphysique. . . . Das ist doch die tiefste und umfassendste Bestätigung dessen, was man ohnehin für jedermann als absolute Wahrheit in der Philosophie ansetzt." Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik. Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, Deutschland: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 23-24.

<sup>29</sup> Watson, *The Breakdown of Cartesian Metaphysics*, 149.

<sup>30</sup> "Kepler and Galileo, two of the founders of modern science, believed with Plato that God worked according to mathematical models when creating the world. . . . Kepler and Galileo . . . put forward a mathematical empiricism" that would not be dissuaded from its dominance over science by any later generation, R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, (Edinburgh, UK: Scottish Academic Press, 1972), 35.

<sup>31</sup> "It was not until science emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that rationalism and empiricism were wed and sensory information provided that which was reasoned about. Science therefore minimized the extremes of both rationalism and empiricism," B. R. Hergenhahn, *An Introduction to the History of Psychology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009), 34.

<sup>32</sup> Note for example, Garrett J. DeWeese and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophy Made Slightly Less Difficult: A Beginner's Guide to Life's Big Questions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 105-116; and Garrett J. DeWeese, *Doing Philosophy as a Christian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 220-243.

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### *Partial Summary*

From the above sample of classical scientists and philosophers, it is clear that a closed, deterministic mathematical empiricism/rationalism, and its accompanying clarity, played a key role in establishing the conceptual limits of what could be called science. Science here should be understood as both the method of attaining knowledge in general, as well as how such knowledge could be derived from the natural world and its evidently intrinsically deterministic nature which was expressed mathematically, which corresponded to the received view that metaphysics was essentially mathematical in nature. Both scientists and philosophers cooperated in developing this view. Suffice it to say, it appeared self-evident from the evidence. Only the quantum revolution has finally discovered some conceptual cracks in the received deterministic view of the natural world.<sup>33</sup>

### **3. Quantum Science and Theology**

In this section, I will examine the selected quantum-aware Christian philosophers, in addition to Ellen White, who was not, to see how they handle the issue of science and theology in light of the quantum paradoxes or mysteries in nature.

#### *Lydia Jaeger*

Jaeger's perspective on science, which she acknowledges follows alongside the "sphere sovereignty" of the Dutch Christian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd's philosophy of science,<sup>34</sup> aims to create distinct separations between different "aspects," "spheres," or "modalities" of reality (ethics, mathematics, kinetics, biological, lingual, spatiality, etc.) that are irreducible to each other as part of a complex multidimensional

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<sup>33</sup> Sweet, *The Unity of Truth*, 72. "Quantum mechanics changed everything! With the development of quantum mechanics during the mid-twentieth century, determinism's stranglehold on the minds and hearts of scientists began to relax. Although the genesis of quantum mechanics lay in the desire of scientists to better understand the interactions of matter and energy at the subatomic level, the philosophical fallout from its development was destined to question all the assumptions of determinism," Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Jaeger, "The Idea of Law in Science and Religion."

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reality.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the quickest way to grasp the significance of this is to observe how some Dooyeweerdians resolved one of the oldest philosophical paradoxes, that of Zeno's race between Achilles and the tortoise, and its parallel, the flying arrow that reaches its target. These paradoxes of motion and mathematics, for example the arrow that could never cross a specified distance because it would have to first cross over an infinite number of "steps" (dividing the distance by 2 infinitely, or *ad infinitum*), represent an apparent contradiction that we nevertheless know to be true from common sense experience. Mathematicians puzzled over them for millennia, and still do. The arrow does evidently traverse the distance!

For Dooyeweerd, the paradoxes of motion represented a violation of separate law-spheres, namely kinetics and spatiality. As Ronald Nash, both sympathetic and also highly critical of Dooyeweerd, explains on his behalf, "when the important truth of the sovereignty of the spheres is ignored, contradiction or *antinomies* are certain to arise."<sup>36</sup> As such, "the famous antinomies of Zeno . . . are the result of an attempt to reduce the aspect of motion to that of space." Furthermore, as J. M. Spier shares from Dooyeweerd's perspective, "if a scientist is confronted by two mutually contradictory laws, he can be certain that he has violated a modal [aspectual] boundary and has disregarded the principle of sphere sovereignty. . . . The scientist can never be confronted by intrinsic contradictions. Such contradictions can be avoided if a scientist strictly observes the laws applicable in his particular field of investigation."<sup>37</sup> Of course, most philosophers and mathematicians throughout history haven't seen the problem as one that should be simply ignored, and have sought various ways to resolve Zeno's paradoxes with differing levels of success,

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<sup>35</sup> For a brief overview of the Dooyeweerdian perspective, see Roy A. Clouser, "A Sketch of Dooyeweerd's Philosophy of Science" in J. M. van der Meer, ed., *Facets of Faith and Science Vol. 2: The Role of Beliefs in Mathematics and the Natural Sciences: An Augustinian Perspective* (Lanham: The Pascal Centre for Advanced Studies in Faith and Science/University Press of America, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Ronald Nash, *Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), 33.

<sup>37</sup> J. M. Spier, *Christian Philosophy*, 50, as cited in Nash, *Dooyeweerd and the Amsterdam Philosophy*, 33.

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depending on one's point of view concerning the proffered solutions from differential calculus and their application to nature.<sup>38</sup>

Concerning the natural world, Jaeger concurs with virtually all scientists that it is the “‘law’-like regularity and consequent modelability of natural phenomena [that] are the unquestioned assumptions that underlie all scientific research.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, “common to all except for the most extreme relativists is the conviction that there is some basic, deep order in Nature that allows for the emergence of meaningful scientific practice.” For, “if Nature were a completely chaotic aggregate, no comprehensible mathematical description of Cosmic Order would be possible,”<sup>40</sup> but seemingly it is. Jaeger emphasizes this for even the quantum level of reality, something which is very much disputed.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, despite objections from many physicists (of whom, it must be noted, Jaeger herself has done studies in physics), Jaeger insists that although “quantum mechanics has introduced chance at the most basic level of our physical theories,” it remains nevertheless that “quantum probabilities are themselves described by precise mathematical formulae. Quantum theory does not transport us into the daunting world of magic where just anything can happen. It is part of the deep order of Nature that science has been able to partially comprehend,”<sup>42</sup> at least presently. She expresses optimism for

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<sup>38</sup> Some do not believe the paradox has been properly resolved. E.g., Trish Glazebrook, “Zeno Against Mathematical Physics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2001), 193-210. Glazebrook concludes, “mathematical descriptions of physical reality fail, as apparent from the paradoxical results they engender,” *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>39</sup> Lydia Jaeger, “Cosmic Order and Divine Word,” in Charles L. Harper, ed., *Spiritual Information: 100 Perspectives on Science and Religion* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 151.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Lydia Jaeger, “Laws of Nature,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, ed. J. B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 459. Jaeger shares her belief that “the strangeness of the microscopic world does not point to a limit that mathematical description might encounter,” *Ibid.* However, other philosophers working with quantum phenomena suggest that a “new” mathematics *is* needed to approximate quantum phenomena, if one is even possible at all. E.g., Paavo Pyllkkänen, *Mind, Matter and the Implicate Order* (Berlin, Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2007), 66; Pauli Pyllkkö, *The Aconceptual Mind: Heideggerian Themes in Holistic Naturalism* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Co, 1998), 42, 69, 86, 133.

<sup>42</sup> Jaeger, “Cosmic Order and Divine Word,” 151.

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“the development of a probability-free version of quantum mechanics.”<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, from her view that creation was created by God contingently and does not derive from God’s own *nature*, she claims that we should remain “agnostic about the deterministic (or indeterministic) nature of the world.”<sup>44</sup>

On the one hand, Jaeger’s perspective appears to be allowing God to be God, and nature to be nature. This much appears laudable. Where this becomes particularly problematic conceptually, however, is when she then asserts that “we should not look for accounts of human freedom and moral responsibility solely in terms provided by natural science,”<sup>45</sup> as the “achievements of science should not lure us into thinking that the natural sciences, and in particular physics, are the paradigm that should guide explorations of all reality.”<sup>46</sup> Jaeger rejects, correctly from my perspective, any view that seeks to understand God’s moral nature from the natural world. Rather, “If we decipher God’s handwriting in Cosmic Order, we may instead come to realize that the encounter between two persons can be a more sublime mode of knowledge than the encounter of persons with inanimate matter and forces. It is here in the personal dimension that the human subject most fully interacts with reality.”<sup>47</sup>

What the above sentiment by Jaeger leaves open, however, is the inevitable conflict between science and religion. If we don’t or can’t begin to investigate questions that pertain, for example, to human freedom (noteworthy is the fact that at least in the above citation, she uses the word *solely*), then we will inevitably slide into dichotomies in reality covering domains that impinge upon each other that are of even greater mutual interest and application than Zeno’s paradoxes. Where this is most pertinent is when it comes to actually discussing matters that pertain to both Scripture and nature. Scripture and nature cannot conflict about, for example, a recent literal six-day creation because they are separate spheres for Jaeger<sup>48</sup> and many other Dooyeweerdian thinkers. This is because they utilize the “sphere sovereignty” scheme, which doesn’t allow the Scriptures

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<sup>43</sup> Jaeger, “Laws of Nature,” 459.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Jaeger, “Cosmic Order and Divine Word,” 154.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 153-154.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Jaeger, *What the Heavens Declare*, xv, 3 n. 5.

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or Word of God, which is part of the sphere of faith, to impinge upon the natural world and its historical-scientific interpretations. If science says life has evolved for long ages, the Word of God doesn't speak to this, because its purpose is to reveal matters of faith only.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, as Ronald Nash strongly criticizes, many who follow Dooyeweerdian or Jaeger's style of thinking believe that Scripture is not really meant to be the origin of propositional truth,<sup>50</sup> or, to put it another way, an understanding of truth<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> John M. Frame, *The Amsterdam Philosophy: A Preliminary Critique* (Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1973), 28. Owing to the importance of their modalities, "even without explicitly denying biblical authority, it is possible for an Amsterdam philosopher to evade biblical authority by adopting principles of interpretation which distort the plain meaning of the Bible. Dooyeweerd, for example, argues that the 'six days' of Genesis 1 must have nothing to do with astronomical or geological concepts of time, since Scripture is concerned directly only with the faith aspect," 28.

<sup>50</sup> Ronald Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1982), 96-97, 122-123; c.f. Albert Wolters, "Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Worldview, Philosophy and Rationality," in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, Hendrick Hart, Johan Van der Hoeven, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 126-127.

<sup>51</sup> As a matter of explanation, "Logically the most basic notion of truth in any realm whatsoever is propositional truth," mirroring the clarity of mathematics. Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 203. C.f., Francis A. Schaeffer, who compares propositional truth to mathematical truth, before he tries to elucidate a nuanced difference: "In speaking of the Bible's statements as propositional truth, we are *not* saying that all communication is on the level of mathematical formula," Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian View of the Bible as Truth*, Vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1982), 141. The point is not that propositional truth and mathematical formulae are the same, but rather that their clarity is comparable, and their applicability compatible to a given problem within their respective domains. As John MacArthur observes of the postmodern situation concerning propositional truths, "we often encounter people enthralled with postmodern ideas who argue vehemently that truth cannot be expressed in bare propositions like mathematical formulae. Even some professing Christians nowadays argue along these lines: 'If truth is personal, it cannot be propositional. If truth is embodied in the person of Christ, then the form of a proposition can't possibly express authentic truth. That is why most of Scripture is told to us in narrative form—as a story—not as a set of propositions.'

"The reason behind postmodernism's contempt for propositional truth is not difficult to understand. A proposition *is an idea framed as a logical statement that affirms or denies something, and it is expressed in such a way that it must be either true or false*. There is no third option between true and false. (This is the 'excluded middle' in logic.) The whole point of a proposition is to boil a truth-statement down to such pristine clarity that it must

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that derives from Scripture that is conceived as analogically mathematical can't be applied to some other sphere, like actual mathematical natural science. Language, and the truth it represents, can't have clear, precise meanings that would apply to two separate spheres such that one of the spheres might be violated. And, in many cases, their version of grasping the truth of things like human freedom, and even God, are not simply to insist that natural science cannot pierce these issues, but to further advance the notion that *rationality itself* is inherently creaturely, and thus God and spiritual issues like human freedom which are reflected from the *imago dei*, are simply incomprehensible or "irrational."<sup>52</sup> It seems that their commitment to make sense of the natural world through mathematics means that they can't make sense of things like human freedom or God. As I will share later, this is unfortunate, though expected, if one adheres too much to the mathematical and orderly conception of nature and maintains too strict of a standard or ideal for sphere sovereignty, insisting that quantum phenomena are merely another part of the mathematical-natural order.

The above holds true for any miracle, which "by definition," as Jaeger explains, "escapes any scientific account."<sup>53</sup> For her, the same holds true for humans and their rationality and freedom, "which cannot be described by any object."<sup>54</sup> Jaeger is quite content to let science be mathematics, and miracles be "irrational" intrusions or nonscientific outworkings or suspensions of the *natural* law order, as they occur at a higher divine law order that is, *prima facie*, incommensurate with the natural scientific attitude. This is what she considers the obvious result of the belief that if one starts with a "world without physical objects," then it follows that "no scientific understanding of God can be achieved," yet the natural order is

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be either affirmed or denied. In other words, propositions are the simplest expressions of truth value used to express the substance of what we believe. Postmodernism, frankly, cannot endure that kind of stark clarity," John MacArthur, *The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 14.

<sup>52</sup> Wolters, "Dutch Neo-Calvinism," 126-127. For such thinkers, "If rationality is *creature*, and there is no creaturely principle of continuity between the Maker and the made, then rationality disqualifies as that principle. There is no rational order that encompasses Creator and creation—not because the Creator is irrational, but because rationality is creature," Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Jaeger, "How Does God Act in the World?"

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



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theoretically perfectly understandable in scientific terms, including even the quantum level, which does not provide insight into a different aspectual sphere or modality beyond the realm of mathematical physics.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, Jaeger doesn't believe that the laws of nature are necessarily causally closed, meaning God can intrude when he wants, as "the whole universe serves God's law,"<sup>56</sup> as expressed through the various spheres. Rather, there are, corresponding to the different spheres of sovereignty, different laws for different spheres. Some of these laws, like those governing human freedom, perhaps, are simply not scientific or mathematical. Again, at the surface, this sounds laudable. It is the consequences of this view that are the challenge, because they present *prima facie* contradictions when, for example, we study neuroscience looking for evidence of human freedom. Unfortunately, because of the principle of sphere sovereignty, other kinds of problems that relate to the historicity and accounts of Scripture can also potentially fall by the wayside, as Scripture's purpose is to deal with the laws of faith, not science. The separation is categorical. I will provide a further ongoing critique of her views, noting both their strengths and weaknesses, on divine action below where pertinent as I explore alternate perspectives.

*John Polkinghorne and Alvin Plantinga*

Both Plantinga<sup>57</sup> and Polkinghorne<sup>58</sup> treat quantum phenomena and their relationship to issues in science and theology extensively. In contrast to Jaeger, both of their perspectives aim to more productively utilize quantum phenomena for the purpose of finding explanatory analogies to traditional problems that Christians have faced in both natural philosophy and theology.

Polkinghorne, both a trained scientist and theologian, is somewhat more troubled by the conceptual challenges of quantum phenomena than

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Jaeger, "Laws of Nature," 455.

<sup>57</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, & Naturalism* (Oxford University Press, 2011), especially chapter 4, "The New Picture," 91-128

<sup>58</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship* (Yale University Press, 2007).

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Jaeger appears to be.<sup>59</sup> For him, “there is no question that quantum physics has turned out to be probabilistic,” and that “quantum physics implied the illusory character of the dream that Laplace had entertained” of a fully calculable reality.<sup>60</sup> However, he sees this as a good thing, not something to be lamented. Rather, “living with unresolved paradox” may “not be a comfortable situation. . . , yet it is not an unfamiliar state for” Christians.<sup>61</sup> Polkinghorne considers the possibility that the divine/human duality of Christ appears conceptually analogous to the quantum particle/wave duality, for example.<sup>62</sup> He sees this as also helpful for the conceptual challenges in the trinity.<sup>63</sup> They both clearly and evidently do coexist, and we can phenomenally see this in the text of Scripture and Christian tradition, yet we can’t explain it, except through one lense or the other. It must be noted that Polkinghorne is not intentionally creating a paradox theology, though he is aware that it can point that way if read incorrectly.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, Polkinghorne sees a great degree of similarity on how

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 69. Polkinghorne acknowledges that following “more than eighty years after the initial discovery of modern quantum theory, it is embarrassing to have to admit that there is no comprehensive and universally agreed answer to that reasonable question” concerning the commensurability between the classical and quantum theories, Ibid. Not only are there problems with the microscopic theory, but the macroscopic and microscopic theories themselves “do not fit together,” 70.

<sup>60</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth* (Yale University Press, 2011), 36.

<sup>61</sup> Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship*, 90.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 90-93. “Perhaps theology can take heart from this example of quantum thinking,” 92. “It is worth understanding in a little more detail how quantum field theory reconciles the apparent opposites of wave and particle behavior. This possibility is found to result from the fact that state corresponding to wave-like properties contain an indefinite number of particles. This is a property that Newtonian physics, of course, could not accommodate, for in its clear and determinate formulation there would simply be a specific number of particles present (just look and count them) and that would be that. In quantum theory, however, the superposition principle allows the addition of possibilities that classical physics would hold strictly apart, so that a state can be composed of a mixture of different particle numbers, with no fixed and definite number present. It is the ontological flexibility of the quantum world, whose description in terms of wavefunctions expresses present potentiality rather than persistent actuality (consequently incorporating an element of intrinsic indefiniteness into its account), that dissolves the paradox of wave/particle duality,” 92.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., ix.

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theology and science have approached their respective problems, and that similarity reaches especially fruitful comparison in contemporary quantum theory.<sup>65</sup>

When it comes to the epistemological attitude that the scientist-theologian should have, perhaps Polkinghorne's most helpful admission is that:

A just account of science lies, in fact, somewhere between the two extremes of a modernist belief in a direct and unproblematic access to clear and certain physical ideas, and a postmodernist indulgence in the notion of an à la carte physics. The intertwining of theory and experiment, inextricably linked by the need to interpret experimental data, does indeed imply that there is an unavoidable degree of circularity involved in scientific reasoning. This means that the nature of science is something more subtle and rationally delicate than simply ineluctable deduction from unquestionable fact. A degree of intellectual daring is required, which means that ultimately the aspiration to write about the *logic* of scientific discovery proves to be a misplaced ambition.<sup>66</sup>

Polkinghorne's comments put much of the confidence of previous scientists in their place, recognizing appropriately the restraints that a balanced mix of modern and postmodern thinking places on an individual in every endeavor. This insight, while derivable from standard science and advances in philosophy, is also forced in particular by the conceptual challenges with quantum phenomena. One can easily imagine many more apparent dualisms or dichotomies that Christians struggle with; for example, we are saved by faith, but judged by works. This is similar to quantum phenomena, wherein, it could honestly be said, as of a particle or works, that it "isn't here" that you are saved. Yet, simultaneously, representing the wave which is always present yet not something with a "particle" location, you are judged by works. The analogies could continue, including even possibly for such historically intractable problems as divine foreknowledge and human freedom.

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<sup>65</sup> See also, John C. Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (Yale University Press, 1998), chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship*, 5.

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Of course, there are also what I would consider many problems with Polkinghorne's overall theology, in particular his inability to articulate a solid Scriptural hermeneutics. How the Word of God functions in his theological and scientific methodologies is not well defined. Like the Dooyeweerdians, of which Jaeger is one, there is too little emphasis, or rather a complete lack of effort, on applying the conceptual difficulties of quantum phenomena to Scripture itself, wherein there are clearly revealed truths (propositional), yet the subtleties and nuances of how such things are true (e.g., Creation) are left unexplained. Polkinghorne feels obligated to let science be science to a great extent in reaching across the aisle from the insights of atheistic scientists into Scripture as much as possible in articulating how the universe has evolved.<sup>67</sup> Were Polkinghorne able to take the physicist Richard Feynman's advice, which he cites, and apply it for Scripture, it might help us to grapple with propositional truth in a world of science:

We choose to examine a phenomenon which is impossible, *absolutely* impossible, to explain in any classical way, and which has in it the heart of quantum mechanics. In reality it contains the *only* mystery. We cannot make the mystery go away by 'explaining' how it works. We will just *tell* you how it works.<sup>68</sup>

Imagine the above approach, combined with Polkinghorne's intellectual daring as mentioned above, when applied to Creation in Scripture. There may remain a mystery, even a fantastic mystery, concerning how Creation took place, preventing any *explanation*, yet easily enough one can *tell* what happened after the fact through Scripture's propositional claims.

Naturally, one of the major conceptual problems that Christian scientists have to deal with are miracles. Both Polkinghorne and Plantinga offer a different take on this issue than Jaeger provides, and is one that I think warrants further attention. It should be noted that Polkinghorne also believes that "it is very unlikely that either human agency or divine

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<sup>67</sup> See <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article4790446.ece>, accessed April 10, 2012; Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth*, 114.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Feynman, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*, Vol. 3 (Addison-Wesley, 1965), 7, as cited in Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship*, 18-19.

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providence is exercised solely through processes either at the quantum level or at the chaotic level” of physics.<sup>69</sup> Yet, he does see reality as more tightly unified than Jaeger. For example, concerning human freedom, Polkinghorne recognizes that however mysterious it may be, it ultimately must involve our brains, which are quite physical by the standards of ordinary science.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, although it may always elude a perfect description such as we may wish, perhaps even necessarily, progress should be possible at least to a theoretical degree, insofar as any theory of causation and agency are advanced.<sup>71</sup> Polkinghorne does not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak. Just dismissing the problem of human freedom to some other law-sphere outside of physics, chemistry, or biology is inadequate and unsatisfying.

For his part, Plantinga, concurs with a perspective that is partly compatible to Jaeger’s suggestion that there is no reason to believe that the classically understood natural world is in fact a closed causal continuum.<sup>72</sup> He even goes so far as to assert “that classical science doesn’t entail either determinism or that the universe is in fact causally closed,” making it “entirely consistent with special divine action in the world, including miracles.”<sup>73</sup> It is, rather, only a commitment to the Laplacian picture of a closed deterministic causal continuum of nature that can be described mathematically that prevents divine action.<sup>74</sup> This is the key issue for Plantinga: it is a metaphysical commitment that prevents us from allowing

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<sup>69</sup> Polkinghorne, *Science and Religion in Quest of Truth*, 89.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90. Polkinghorne acknowledges openly that “a full understanding of the exercise of any form of agency is a task beyond our contemporary capacity to attain,” 89. Nevertheless, “we should continue to struggle with it, even if the timescale for progress is likely to be long,” 90.

<sup>72</sup> Plantinga, 79. “It is no part of Newtonian mechanics or classical science generally to declare that the material universe *is* a closed system. You won’t find that claim in physics textbooks—naturally enough, because that claim isn’t physics, but a theological or metaphysical add-on. . . . Classical science, therefore, doesn’t assert or include causal closure. The laws, furthermore, describe how things go when the universe is causally closed, subject to no outside causal influence. They don’t purport to tell us how things *always* go; they tell us, instead, how things go when no agency outside the universe acts in it. They tell us how things go when the universe (apart from divine conservation) is causally closed,” *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

special divine action (miracles) in the classical world. However, he is aware that there is no reason, scientifically, to doubt the closed system, at least within the perspective of classical science.

Plantinga is convinced that even though classical science in and of itself does not demand a closed causal system following alongside Laplace's ideal, nevertheless, "quantum mechanics offers even less of a problem for divine special action than classical science."<sup>75</sup> Although differing interpretations exist for exactly how quantum phenomena should be understood, notable for him is that even if the statistical laws that govern the quantum world *were* assumed to be a closed system, "it is far from clear that QM [quantum mechanics] . . . is incompatible with miracles" of the sort that even turn "water into wine."<sup>76</sup> Plantinga concludes that "given contemporary quantum physics, there isn't any sensible way to say what intervention *is*, let alone find something in science with which it is incompatible."<sup>77</sup> Perhaps most importantly, though, is Plantinga's claim that if one assumes "the macroscopic physical world supervenes on the microscopic, God could thus control what happens at the macroscopic level by causing the right microscopic collapse-outcomes. In this way God can exercise providential guidance over cosmic history. . . . In this way he might also guide human history. He could do this without in any way 'violating' the created natures of the things he has created."<sup>78</sup>

The above claims are undoubtedly strong ones, but to see them from a widely respected philosopher like Plantinga opens the door for a variety of possibilities in the divine action discussion. Rather than separating the quantum world from the macro-world, they should be understood to be in a close, intertwined and inextricable relationship. Therefore, by God affecting the quantum level in a special way, the macro level is simultaneously affected yet without even altering the normal macro laws. The *relationship* between the two, however, remains for the time being a complete mystery. In this sense, it can't really be said that Plantinga is sidestepping Jaeger's desire that we not look for divine action exclusively at the quantum level. Plantinga has God acting through the quantum level,

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 96, 95.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 116.

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yes, but only to not violate the macro-world's laws, which God is simultaneously upholding. This innovative way of looking at the situation maintains God's law-abiding standards even through his intervention, which in many ways is both scientifically discernible and indiscernible. It also allows us greater capability in advocating the coexistence of freedom and determinism.

For example, that human freedom is only explainable in terms of "other worldly" laws that are utterly incomprehensible to anything called science, like Jaeger believes, is too far fetched for many to accept. Although there are reasons to shy away from "randomness" as the underlying principle in a God-governed universe, the real lesson of the apparent quantum randomness is more accurately ascribed, even *were* it random, to its *coexistence* with natural laws and seemingly deterministic behavior. This point is often neglected by many classical theists when they reject it as an un-godlike way to let reality be constructed. However, as noted, even Jaeger herself notes that it does obey laws of its own, in a manner. In an interesting comment along these lines as applied to human behavior at large, Raoul Nakhmanson comments that:

QM is 'microsociology.' Like its humane sister, it makes only probabilistic forecasts. The transition to classical physics is the transition from sociology of persons to sociology of crowds: the level of freedom decreases and behavior becomes deterministic. Feynman's statement [the] 'quantum world is not like anything that we know' is right only if we do not take into account living beings. If a baby, having more experience with his parents than with 'inanimate' matter, could make experiments, the behavior of microparticles would appear to it to be very natural.<sup>79</sup>

In this light, it is all the more fascinating what analogies one can draw concerning human behavior, which is indeed often psychologically and biophysically predictable to a probabilistic degree, and quantum phenomena. For example, one could even suggest that in the Great

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<sup>79</sup> Raoul Nakhmanson, "The Ghostly Solution of the Quantum Paradoxes and Its Experimental Verification," in *Frontiers of Fundamental Physics*, ed. M Barone and F. Selleri, (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1994), 596.

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Controversy context described by Ellen White,<sup>80</sup> sinful human actions appear free, but God is slowly demonstrating the deterministic pattern of where a sinful freedom that is outside the influence of God will lead humanity, were one inclined to view QM negatively. Of course this is admittedly a very speculative notion. Other possibilities surely exist as well that are more morally neutral. As has been noted, the real mystery of human freedom in any account is that it is partly free and partly deterministic, governed by various biophysical and psychological patterns and limitations. In the least, quantum physics teases us with the insistence that at some level both a fairly strict determinism and some form of indeterminism do coexist; necessity and contingency coexist. That itself is the mystery.<sup>81</sup>

To summarize the presentation of his views thus far, however, Plantinga asserts that “what we should think of special divine action . . . doesn’t depend on QM or versions thereof, or on current science more generally. Indeed, what we should think of current science can quite properly depend, in part, on theology.”<sup>82</sup> I concur, and would add that different versions of theology, for example, classic double-predestination Calvinism, would not have required a conceptual difficulty like quantum physics, but more subtle and complex theologies might benefit greatly from the analogies that a quantum-inspired world might give us. As wonderfully comprehensible and pragmatically useful as the basic Newtonian inspired mathematical-laws are and the testimony they give of their Creator, how much more so can we think of a God who’s creation coexists with many mysteries that even the greatest minds cannot uncover? It is to this issue that I will turn in this last portion of the study in the writings of Ellen White.

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<sup>80</sup> Ellen White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 281. All Ellen White quotations are extracted from *The Published Ellen G. White Writings CD-ROM*, 2008 edition.

<sup>81</sup> The philosopher of science, Evan Thompson, shares in the context of animate life, which is the heart of the matter, “as an empirical issue, the interplay between contingency and necessity in the history of life will remain unsettled for some time. What can be said, however, is that it is conceptually unhelpful to oppose the two,” Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 217.

<sup>82</sup> Plantinga, 121.



#### 4. Ellen White's (1827-1915) Perspective on the Mysteries of Nature

The purpose of this section is not to recount White's entire philosophy of science or nature. The present focus and aim is more narrow. Does White make statements about nature, and reality in general, that would be open to quantum phenomena's conceptual challenges as discussed by our above philosophers, theologians, and scientists, given that her writings predate the discovery of quantum phenomena? In other words, do paradoxes have a place in her thinking, despite observing that she never used the word "paradox," preferring the word "mystery" instead?

First, it must be noted that in many ways White does support Jaeger's comment which I referenced in the introduction on divine interaction being universally manifested and a creation *ex nihilo*,<sup>83</sup> and that ultimately, in certain senses, God is incomprehensible<sup>84</sup> despite nature appearing generally understandable, following the principle of cause and effect with "unerring certainty."<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, concerning nature, she also shared:

Many teach that matter possesses vital power,—that certain properties are imparted to matter, and it is then left to act through its own inherent energy; and that the operations of nature are conducted in harmony with fixed laws, with which God himself cannot interfere. This is false science, and is not sustained by the word of God. Nature is the servant of her Creator. God does not annul his laws, or work contrary to them; but he is continually using them as his instruments. Nature testifies of an intelligence, a presence, an active energy, that works in and through her laws. There is in nature the continual working of the Father and the Son. Christ says, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' [John 5:17.]<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> "In the formation of our world, God was not beholden to preexistent substance or matter. For the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. On the contrary, all things, material or spiritual, stood up before the Lord Jehovah at His voice," Ellen White, *Selected Messages Book 3*, 312.

<sup>84</sup> Ellen White, *Christian Education*, 192. "Just how God accomplished the work of creation, he has never revealed to men; human science cannot search out the secrets of the Most High. His creative power is as incomprehensible as his existence."

<sup>85</sup> Ellen White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 84. "In the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty," *Ibid*.

<sup>86</sup> White, *Christian Education*, 194-195.

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Interestingly, not only does White support divine interaction in the upholding of nature, but she also clearly wrote that God does not annul his laws, or work contrary to them, despite the fact that he possesses divine freedom.<sup>87</sup> This implies a far more complex picture of laws than simply a closed or completely open natural world. Continuing this theme, she also asserted that:

As regards this world, God's work of creation is completed. For 'the works were finished from the foundation of the world.' [Hebrews 4:3.] But his energy is still exerted in upholding the objects of his creation. It is not because the mechanism that has once been set in motion continues to act by its own inherent energy, that the pulse beats, and breath follows breath; but every breath, every pulsation of the heart is an evidence of the all-pervading care of Him in whom 'we live, and move, and have our being.' [Acts 17:28.] It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth produces her bounties, and continues her motion around the sun. The hand of God guides the planets, and keeps them in position in their orderly march through the heavens. He 'bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.' [Isaiah 40:26.] It is through his power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear, and the flowers bloom. He 'maketh grass to grow upon the mountains,' and by him the valleys are made fruitful. All the beasts of the field seek their meat from God, [Psalm 147:8; 104:20, 21.] and every living creature, from the smallest insect up to man, is daily dependent upon his providential care. In the beautiful words of the psalmist, 'These wait all upon thee.'<sup>88</sup>

The above passages make clear that God's care is present throughout all of creation continuously, thus Jaeger's comments on a universal divine action rather than looking for a "god of the gaps" type of interference located solely in the quantum world are warranted.

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<sup>87</sup> White, *The Great Controversy* (1911), 525. "Men of science claim that there can be no real answer to prayer; that this would be a violation of law, a miracle, and that miracles have no existence. The universe, say they, is governed by fixed laws, and God Himself does nothing contrary to these laws. Thus they represent God as bound by His own laws—as if the operation of divine laws could exclude divine freedom. . . . The natural cooperates with the supernatural," Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 195.

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However, the above insight does not mean that all of nature, or what we can perceive through nature, is simply mathematical/deterministic or rationally comprehensible! We may need to expand our notion of science. Thus White remarked:

Men of science think that they can comprehend the wisdom of God, that which he has done or can do. The idea largely prevails that he is restricted by his own laws. Men either deny or ignore his existence, or think to explain everything, even the operation of his Spirit upon the human heart; and they no longer reverence his name, or fear his power. They do not believe in the supernatural, not understanding God's laws, or his infinite power to work his will through them. As commonly used, the term 'laws of nature' comprises what men have been able to discover with regard to the laws that govern the physical world; but how limited is their knowledge, and how vast the field in which the Creator can work in harmony with his own laws, and yet wholly beyond the comprehension of finite beings!<sup>89</sup>

In this passage, it does appear that God's laws are more complicated than finite man can comprehend. Whether and in what way this takes place at the mathematical realm is uncertain.<sup>90</sup> At this point, however, it is necessary to note the frequency and context of mysteries that mankind cannot understand, and their conceptual realities.

White maintained that several things present mysteries that humans cannot understand, yet are nevertheless subject to "divine science." For example, "human science is too limited to comprehend the atonement. The plan of redemption is so far-reaching that philosophy cannot explain it. It will ever remain a mystery that the most profound reasoning cannot fathom. The science of salvation cannot be explained; but it can be known by experience."<sup>91</sup> Although by no means do I wish to say that the atonement is merely a physical set of occurrences, yet nevertheless, I wonder, will not nature itself reveal mysteries that cannot be explained, but experienced?

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>90</sup> She noted, interestingly, that "the gospel does not address the understanding alone. If it did, we might approach it as we approach the study of a book dealing with mathematical formulas, which relate to the intellect alone. . . . Its aim is the heart. It addresses our moral nature, and takes possession of the will," Ellen White, *Our High Calling*, 105.

<sup>91</sup> Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (1898), 494-495.

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Such is precisely the case with quantum phenomena, at least as currently understood. Perhaps there is an analogy possible that we can draw. For, as White observed, “so wide was Christ’s view of truth, so extended His teaching, that every phase of nature was employed in illustrating truth.”<sup>92</sup> Is not the implication here that there are spiritual truths illustrated by nature? How would that be possible were nature merely mathematical knowledge in physical form? For example, White also shared:

The Author of this spiritual life is unseen, and the exact method by which that life is imparted and sustained, it is beyond the power of human philosophy to explain. Yet the operations of the Spirit are always in harmony with the written word. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world. The natural life is preserved moment by moment by divine power; yet it is not sustained by a direct miracle, but through the use of blessings placed within our reach. So the spiritual life is sustained by the use of those means that Providence has supplied.<sup>93</sup>

White elsewhere compares this spiritual life to nature, claiming that “as the children study the great lessonbook of nature, God will impress their minds. As they are told of the work that He does for the seed, they learn the secret of growth in grace.”<sup>94</sup> If the seed’s growth illustrates a power working within it that mirrors a spiritual reality, then is this knowledge merely mathematical science at work? If God is incomprehensible yet also revealed, then nature must also, as God, be both incomprehensible and understandable at the same time. For, as White shares, “rightly interpreted, nature is the mirror of divinity.”<sup>95</sup> If divinity is incomprehensible, then how

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<sup>92</sup> Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 20.

<sup>93</sup> Ellen White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 285.

<sup>94</sup> Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church Volume Eight*, 326-327. Elsewhere she adds, “Nature is full of lessons of the love of God. Rightly understood, these lessons lead to the Creator. They point from nature to nature’s God, teaching these simple, holy truths which cleanse the mind, bringing it into close touch with God. These lessons emphasize the truth that science and religion can not be divorced,” White, *Spalding and Magan Collection* (1985), 186.

<sup>95</sup> Ellen White, *The Upward Look*, 182. She adds that “the branches are not tied to the vine by any mechanical process or artificial fastening. They are united to the vine and have become part of it. They are nourished by the roots of the vine. So those who receive Christ by faith become one with Him in principle and action. They are united to Him, and the life they live is the life of the Son of God. They derive their life from Him who is life,” 182.

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is nature, which gives only mathematical cause and effect knowledge, able to reflect spiritual truths? It would seem to be a law-sphere violation, unless nature revealed non-mathematical truths as well.

Polkinghorne's example of the dual human-divine nature of Christ as a quantum mystery, clearly self-evident, but impossible to explain, is also echoed with White's description of Christ. She shares, "The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery."<sup>96</sup> Similarly, "The limited capacity of man cannot define this wonderful mystery—the blending of the two natures, the divine and the human. It can never be explained. Man must wonder and be silent. And yet man is privileged to be a partaker of the divine nature, and in this way he can to some degree *enter into the mystery*."<sup>97</sup> This situation sounds very much like an analogy to the quantum phenomena, as we currently understand it. We can, propositionally, know it to be true, namely, their co-existence, but we cannot explain it. We can enter the mystery, but not fully understand it. Some may object to calling this a paradox; I see that as a failure to acknowledge something as true but necessarily mysterious: That is the proper definition of paradox. Thus, if the above example were accurate, we can through *natural science* uncover a phenomena, the mysterious wave/particle duality of quantum physics, that is necessarily mysterious. They clearly both exist, *propositionally*, but we can't explain why. It is a paradox, in the proper, humble, sense of the word.

Interestingly, not only does White make the above statement concerning Christ, the living Word of God, but she wrote the *same thing* of the written Word. "The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man."<sup>98</sup> This is no insignificant comparison, as it indicates an ultimately quantum-like principle as the hermeneutical foundation of the Word. Interestingly, this is precisely what protects it from one-sided "spiritual only" interpretations and historical-critical interpretations. The science behind inspiration is a quantum-like phenomena, requiring one to recognize

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<sup>96</sup> Ellen White, *13MR* (The Baker Letter), 19.

<sup>97</sup> Ellen White, *1888 Materials* (1987), 332 (emphasis mine). C.f. "This union of divinity and humanity, which was possible with Christ, is incomprehensible to human minds," *Ibid*.

<sup>98</sup> Ellen White, *Lift Him Up*, 117.

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both elements, the human and divine, simultaneously, to correctly interpret it. As noted, however, it is also precisely such a quantum-like hermeneutical approach that protects the *propositional* aspect of Scripture, yet without sliding into a complete or strict verbal inspiration, as some do. We *can* know the meaning of Scripture, accurately and clearly, concerning the great truths, while acknowledging that God has nevertheless intentionally given the written Word such that “The Word of God, like the character of its divine Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings,”<sup>99</sup> and also remains given in the often imprecise language of men. As White also stated it more fully, in what I will term the negative sense:

Men of the greatest intellect cannot understand the mysteries of Jehovah as revealed in nature. Divine inspiration asks many questions which the most profound scholar cannot answer. *These questions were not asked that we might answer them, but to call our attention to the deep mysteries of God and to teach us that our wisdom is limited; that in the surroundings of our daily life there are many things beyond the comprehension of finite beings. Skeptics refuse to believe in God because they cannot comprehend the infinite power by which He reveals Himself. But God is to be acknowledged as much from what He does not reveal of Himself, as from that which is open to our limited comprehension. Both in divine revelation and in nature, God has given mysteries to command our faith. This must be so. We may be ever searching, ever inquiring, ever learning, and yet there is an infinity beyond.*<sup>100</sup>

Put positively, however, White shared that “He who studies most deeply into the mysteries of nature will realize most fully his own ignorance and weakness. He will realize that there are depths and heights which he cannot reach, secrets which he cannot penetrate, vast fields of truth lying before him unentered.”<sup>101</sup> Could the quantum world be part of these impenetrable depths? Similarly, from a positive perspective, “In the natural world God has placed in the hands of the children of men the key to unlock the treasure house of His Word. The unseen is illustrated by the seen;

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<sup>99</sup> Ellen White, *A Call to Stand Apart*, 46.

<sup>100</sup> Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 431 (emphasis mine).

<sup>101</sup> Ellen White, *Education*, 133.

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divine wisdom, eternal truth, infinite grace, are understood by the things that God has made.”<sup>102</sup> This seems to indicate that the natural world’s meaning is designed to point to *spiritual* truths. But how could this be, were it merely an expression of a Master mathematician’s, i.e., intuitively comprehensible, work? Is not the knowledge we are to derive from nature supposed to also include helpful hints for appreciating spiritual knowledge, and not merely mathematical-physical comprehensible knowledge? In this case, as noted, I would suggest that both classical (mathematical) ways of thinking, in combination with paradoxical (mysterious) concepts, are combined in both the natural world and Scripture. Scripture then can reveal both mysterious things related to faith only, but also plain, propositional truth that is in harmony with the mysterious truths, even if that relationship is paradoxical. As such, nature does not trump Scripture and special revelation with differing or superior *content* at all, it merely serves to illuminate and illustrate Scripture with *concepts* that we might not otherwise see in Scripture itself, and which our Greek inheritance of the primacy of mathematical rationality might inhibit us from accepting.

I ask again, how would the above be possible were the sphere sovereignty of Dooyeweerdians, Jaeger among them, held too tightly? It is not that there aren’t different aspects to reality, but I believe they are more tightly interwoven than some Dooyeweerdians seem to think. The “mathematical natural world” of Jaeger seems, to White, perfectly capable, and even *designed*, to intentionally intimate *divine* realities which are not simply mathematical (as wonderful as mathematics in itself may be, as another dimension of God’s aesthetic imagination<sup>103</sup>). Nature is not merely the mathematical-scientifically understandable; nor is science as such simply mathematics. Were the current quantum paradoxes resolved through later, more advanced mathematics or empirical research, as Jaeger postulates is possible, then nature would only reveal a yet deeper conceptual paradox or mystery, if White’s comments on the centrality of

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<sup>102</sup> Ellen White, *Special Testimonies On Education*, 61.

<sup>103</sup> I intend no criticism *per se* of the symmetrical beauty of mathematics and its many functional purposes. Nevertheless, as noted above, “the gospel does not address the understanding alone. If it did, we might approach it as we approach the study of a book dealing with mathematical formulas, which relate to the intellect alone,” Ellen White, *Our High Calling*, 104.

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mysteries held true,<sup>104</sup> and if we were to have any hope of entertaining evidence for human freedom from the natural world. In other words, White's notion of mystery includes more than simply a higher  $\pi$  number, or other conceptually classical "objects" of knowledge that are currently unknown or a "mystery" to us. The infinite mysteries that God does plan to unravel to us throughout eternity are not merely akin to higher numbers and patterns; they represent new conceptual paradigms. And it seems that some conceptual paradigms or frameworks He reserves for Himself and not creatures, but that this possibility exists He reveals throughout nature itself. As such, I would rather move away from a definition of natural science that limits itself to mathematical knowledge as it is typically conceived. Inevitably, such a careful exclusionary preservation of classical natural scientific knowledge within our own scientific frameworks and paradigms

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<sup>104</sup> White's most poignant warning on those who resist mysteries is as follows: "To many, scientific research has become a curse. God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in discoveries in science and art; but even the greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation.

"Human knowledge of both material and spiritual things is partial and imperfect; therefore many are unable to harmonize their views of science with Scripture statements. Many accept mere theories and speculations as scientific facts, and they think that God's word is to be tested by the teachings of 'science falsely so called.' 1 Timothy 6:20. The Creator and His works are beyond their comprehension; and because they cannot explain these by natural laws, Bible history is regarded as unreliable. Those who doubt the reliability of the records of the Old and New Testaments too often go a step further and doubt the existence of God and attribute infinite power to nature. Having let go their anchor, they are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity.

"Thus many err from the faith and are seduced by the devil. Men have endeavored to be wiser than their Creator; human philosophy has attempted to search out and explain mysteries which will never be revealed through the eternal ages," White, *Great Controversy* (1911), 522. She adds, "It is a masterpiece of Satan's deceptions to keep the minds of men searching and conjecturing in regard to that which God has not made known and which He does not intend that we shall understand. It was thus that Lucifer lost his place in heaven," *Ibid.*, 523. C.f., "Christ withheld no truths essential to our salvation. Those things that are revealed are for us and our children, but we are not to allow our imagination to frame doctrines concerning things not revealed. Again and again these non-essential subjects have been agitated, but their discussion has never done a particle of good. We are not to allow our attention to be diverted from the proclamation of the message given us. For years I have been instructed that we are not to give our attention to non-essential questions. We are not bidden to enter into discussion regarding unimportant subjects. Our work is to lead minds to the great principles of the law of God," Ellen White, "West Indian Messenger," July 1, 1912.



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will dissuade one from properly integrating the divine lessons into our science that nature was designed to reveal to us. Such efforts will also break down the harsh “irrational” boundary that prevents propositional truth from entering into Scripture, as Scripture presents a quantum-like hermeneutical key to its self-interpretation.

### **5. Conclusion**

Lydia Jaeger’s question concerning divine action having a privileged place in the quantum world opens up a key issue in the current debates about God and the natural world. I believe her initial conclusion, on its own, stands its ground firmly. We must indeed reject the notion that God only acts, in a pantheistic or panentheistic way, in part of his creation, for example at the quantum level. His providential care works through all the natural laws he has made with what can only be described as divine wisdom and power.

On the other hand, as Jaeger expands her views to pragmatically limit natural science to the mathematical, which follows alongside a long established and highly respected history, I offer a cautionary note. I do believe in different aspects of reality, and correspondingly differing laws (e.g., moral and natural, the latter of which has multiple levels, like physics and biology, which can all basically be modeled mathematically). However, I do not think that the sphere sovereignty is as tight as Jaeger suggests it is. Although she certainly would assert that they coexist alongside each other, I would rather suggest that, following Ellen White’s insights, they coexist *within* each other, illuminating each other in a more unified manner.

In explanation of the above, the paradoxes occur not when law-spheres are violated, but rather serve to originate the spheres themselves. They emerge from within the spheres. Quantum physics illustrates this by revealing a paradox at the heart of what was considered a single sphere, namely, physics. The most significant result of this way of viewing nature is that nature will reveal some of the conceptual issues that are found in the “other” spiritual spheres of faith, for example as just noted, specific kinds of mysteries, like faith and works resembling those at the quantum level. I would rather define natural science and the objects of rationality to be more than merely mathematical. And I would rather not so hastily dismiss issues like human freedom and God’s rationality to be “incomprehensible”

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merely because they belong to other metaphysical spheres or dimensions, while acknowledging that they obviously exist within nature (e.g., our biological brains). I believe that nature itself reveals hints toward the nature of these mysteries, and that God has so mingled together the concepts at work in both the natural and divine realities that we can “enter” into the mystery. This means “mathematical natural science” cannot just be left alone to do its thing atheistically, but is subject to the other spheres’ insights, including in particular, the Word of God.

That nature speaks analogically of divine realities is recognized by individuals like John Polkinghorne and Alvin Plantinga. They each see ways in which quantum phenomena are helpful to theologians to conceptually grapple with age-old theological problems like the dual human/divine nature of Christ and the possibility of miracles in a formerly seemingly closed causal natural order. Where they fall short, however, is in applying this to hermeneutics itself, in particular the Word of God, and the possibility of propositional truth emerging from the text of Scripture, despite whatever apparent scientific, historical, linguistic, and cultural barriers may exist in our efforts to grasp the original meaning. Ellen White makes some advances in this regard, though, being unaware of the phenomenal nature of quantum physics, she has no specific analogies in this area, except to assert that nature will, if studied deeply, point toward divine realities that are incomprehensible, which was already in many ways very much the case in her time, but is especially so in light of quantum phenomena. This is not because there is a “sphere sovereignty” violation, but rather because it is intrinsic to the system itself, and is meant to be understood as such. How precisely we communicate these truths is a matter for further thought and careful articulation.

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**Book Review**  
***Understanding Creation: Answers to  
Questions on Faith and Science***

Reviewed by Joe Galusha

Edited by L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi  
(Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2011, 224 pages,  
hardback).

*Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science*, recently published by Pacific Press, will stand the test of time. It addresses important questions being asked by scholars, students of science and religion, and the public-at-large about where things come from. The editors, L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi, have done a masterful job of keeping the 20 chapters by 20 different authors in a similar style and length. In fact, a significant reason the book will be read carefully and appreciated by many is that it is designed to be easy on the eyes and naturally absorbed.

**Initial Observations**

This is a book of essays, and there are very few figures or tables included. At first, my scientific perspective led me to expect this would be a deficiency, but as I continued to read, this fact clearly became a strength. I was regularly drawn to larger questions and considerations that could not be answered or summarized in charts. Details are common but do not detract from the main themes of each chapter.

Another positive feature is that at the end of each chapter there is a paragraph or two that serves as an explicit, succinct conclusion. This alone makes the book readily accessible to non-technical readers and aids for understanding of the sometimes very complicated topics.

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Finally, I really liked the expanded biographical sketch for each of the authors. It was nice and helpful to know something about them, and it also lent credence to what was presented in each article.

**Now to the content of the book itself**

I thought the editors chose a good place to start: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that we are without excuse” (Romans 1:20, NIV, and p. 8). They also identify the shared assumptions of the contributors: “. . . that the biblical record contained in the book of Genesis is an essential component of Christian doctrine, that Christian faith and empirical science can work fruitfully together, that there is a basic difference between data and interpretation, and that our comprehension of truth is progressive” (p. 9).

I have always liked the writing and presentations of Humberto Rasi. His introductory chapter, “Why do different scientists interpret reality differently,” lays the ground-work for the rest of the book. His several-page summary of key concepts and their exhibition in biblical Christianity and secular humanism is laid out in tabular form. This clarity is very helpful prior to a development of the worldview as held by Seventh-day Adventists.

There are several content themes in the book itself that are both broad and specific at the same time. For instance, Gibson, along with Ekkens and Standish (chapters 2, 3, and 5), draws our attention to aspects of the creation activity itself. Regular reference is made to complicated, even unknowable and sometimes miraculous, parts of the creation model. We are reminded that it is not possible to return to an historical miracle and replicate it. By default, we must consider it from a distance. And yet we as Christians have implicit confidence in Christ’s miracles as recorded in the Bible. Furthermore, the time and culture of the audience are important to understand. I found the insight of these chapters to be a very important setting for the next few.

Chapters 8 through 15 provide familiar summaries to most of the questions asked by traditional Adventist Creationists for example, when did creation occur (Geim), where did life come from (Javor), how reliable is radiometric dating (Webster), was the flood worldwide (Roth). Having them together in one source is valuable and probably worth more than the list price for the book.

### *GALUSHA: BOOK REVIEW*

One really interesting chapter is by Roberto Biaggi, in which he addresses a number of creationist misconceptions. I found myself smiling as I was reminded that authentic footprints of humans and dinosaurs are not really found alongside one another in the bedrock of the Paluxy River in Texas and that Adventist creation scientists were the ones who debunked this claim some years ago (misconception 4, p. 135, and Neufeld 1975).

Secondly, many creationists would hold that the entire fossil record was laid down during the one year of Noah's flood. I must admit to liking that explanation myself. But in this chapter, Biaggi asserts that we now know that the "record is more complex than a single event could produce." He continues with explanations involving pre-flood rocks, major aquatic catastrophe, and post-flood rocks. Later in the same chapter, he summarizes the best evidence he can think of for a short-age geological model. I found some of this fresh and especially worthy of further careful study (pp. 136-142).

Next, Clausen and Esperante cover two topics of great interest to the informed creationist believer: dinosaurs and plate tectonics. On both of these topics, the authors conclude with summaries of what is known and a call for considerable humility about what is not. It is clear that much more study is needed on these topics soon. I applaud the integrity and insight of these two chapters.

I was impressed by the tone of the last several papers. Each deals with a general topic of import to creationism of broad significance. Are there moral implications of evolution (Aagaard), is the theory of evolution scientific (Brand), and how to live without final answers (Burdick) are crucial issues to resolve no matter what perspective one has on creation.

#### **Endthoughts**

This book is one of the best creation sources I have read. There is a straightforward honesty and humility about it. The editors have kept the tone of openness and forthrightness consistent throughout. Information is an important purpose of the book but not an end in itself.

The summary of conclusions the reader will finish with can serve as a safe guide for years to come. I will recommend it to my friends.

As the editors closed their introduction, I conclude these reflections with the ancient prayer:

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*From cowardice that shrinks from new truth,  
From laziness that is content with half-truths,  
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,  
O God of truth, deliver us!*

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