September 9, 2011

This Week at Adventist Today Online

**Taking It Seriously** Nathan Brown says Christianity is powerful and even dangerous, and must be handled with care and metaphorical safety equipment. Those who tamper and play with it can and will be terribly hurt.

Australian 'Person of the year' says stay generous, connected. In an era of long hours at the computer and less and less interaction with neighbors, Nathan Brown interviews Simon McKeon, an investment banker, who says the experience of 'giving back' is as important to the donor as the gift is to the recipient...thoughts well worth pondering this weekend of September 11 commemoration.

**How Modern Faith Has Strange Bedfellows** Charles Darwin came from a family of theologians, and recognized faith when it stared him in the face. Herbert Douglass says evolution requires faith—and evolutionists know it.
Forged* Writing in the Name of God Christians have been insulated against the perceived dangers of 'higher criticism.' Edwin A. Schwisow says learning about its claims has informed and settled his Christian faith and improved his ability to talk about Christianity with educated classes. (*Adventist Today subscription needed)

The Association of Adventist Women's Annual Conference is being held at La Sierra University, October 13-16, 2011. The keynote presentation will be given by Adventist Today Foundation board member Chris Oberg. See Association of Adventist Women for more details.
Taking It Seriously

Writer Annie Dillard asks the question: “Why do we people in churches seem like cheerful, brainless tourists on a packaged tour of the Absolute?” She goes on to observe, “On the whole I do not find Christians...sufficiently sensible of the conditions. Does anybody have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT…It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews.”

It’s worth thinking about. Amid the bustle of Sabbath mornings, the mechanics of church organization and the comfortable mediocrity of our week-to-week religiosity, how often do we stop to think about the Consuming Fire (Hebrews 12:29; see also Deuteronomy 4:24), supposedly the centre of our faith and lives?

Sometimes God scares me — and He probably should scare me more often. We need to remember the truism that He is God and we are not. We must take it seriously. We talk much about friendship with God and this is an important way of understanding our relationship with our Creator and Saviour. But like all real relationships, it must be based on serious respect: “Friendship with the Lord is reserved for those who fear him” (Psalm 25:14, NLT).

The mystery and magnitude of God cannot be allowed to slip down the back of our religious couches as we settle in for another episode of consumer church.

When we take it seriously, the Bible stories are not just morality tales for children, rather we recognize the same God as has touched our own lives at work in awesome ways. Taking it seriously, the death and resurrection of God-in-our-world become the most profound facts of history and in the individual histories of our lives. But without sanctified seriousness, worship will simply be a routine to be endured or a succession of experiences to be sampled. Unless we take it seriously, concern — and action — for the wellbeing of others will be considered merely an optional extra to our convenience Christianity. Until we take it seriously, the Second Coming is just a nice idea, instead of an earth-shaking reality — an alternately terrifying threat and joyful promise, perhaps often both.

Only when we take it seriously will the teachings of Jesus begin to make sense in our lives. When we take it seriously, we can begin to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (see Matthew 5:44), even if it means being ripped off. Taking it seriously, we realize there is real value to “treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). Until we take it seriously, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) will never sound like more than an exercise in pious idealism. And so it goes.

Half-hearted faith is nonsense. Half-hearted unfaith is equally so. Given a glimpse of the eternal significance of our lives, we step back into the banality of our world, either with a divine mission or with utter hopelessness. These are the only two ‘serious’ options — and we must take it seriously.
But this ‘taking it seriously’ is not a prescription for somber and narrow introspection. Paradoxically it is the foundation for true joy and creativity. It was precisely because he took it seriously that Paul could exhort his readers from his prison cell, to live lives of rejoicing (Philippians 4:4). And on this solid, ‘serious’ foundation, we can best celebrate the good things of life, engage with those around us and risk ourselves for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Perhaps it might be worth dressing differently for church next week — helmets and life preservers recommended — even if only to remind ourselves of the awesome Mystery we approach in worship, in Whose terrifying presence we live out our unwitting lives and Who reaches down to touch our lives in alarming, glorious and eternal ways.

1 Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters, HarperPerennial, page 52.
concordance to look up the word "worship" I didn't find very much. The word "worshipped" was far more revealing. What I found was a series of people who have encounters with God and their response is worship. Notice and keep this straight: they first had an encounter with God. Their response was worship. How did they worship? We are seldom told how. A wider study of postures involve with worship finds about equal numbers of verse talking about kneeling, falling on your face or standing with your face toward heaven. It isn't your posture or place, architecture or music that defines worship. It is the question of if you are having encounters with God and responding back to Him with your own adoration and praise. How you do it will not always be the same and there are no rules except those imposed by traditions that destroy faith. The most important question you must answer is not how to worship, but if you are having encounters with God so that you will be able to worship Him.

Vernon P. Wagner

'Churches' made without human hands offer far more comfort, and insight than the man made variety. My visit to the Vatican was more like a trip to Disneyland, but most of the world considers it to be the epitome of Christian worship.

Vernon P. Wagner

An observation by the comedian Cathy Ladman is worth repeating. "All religions are the same: religion is basically guilt with different holidays."

Elaine Nelson

Yes, people are enamored on visiting the Vatican, but then so are Adventists from small country churches on visiting the Loma Linda church for the first time! Quite a comparison!

William Noel

Elaine,

Yes, but I can show you a long list of people from larger churches like Loma Linda who say they've never felt closer to God or had a more uplifting worship experience than in our little church that is a remodeled house!

Vernon P. Wagner

That's what I meant when I said more spiritual insight can be gained on a hilltop than in church. I attended both LLU & White Memorial Churches during med school. Frankly, all I remember was having to leave the sanctuary on several occasions due to near asphyxia from an amalgam of perfumes!

William Noel

Elaine,
The perfumes have driven me out on many occasions because I am allergic!

Elaine Nelson

Why do we even feel we must "go to church" to find peace and spirituality?

William Noel

Elaine,

That concept is backward. Worship is our expression of adoration and praise back to God after having an encounter with Him. We should find peace and spirituality in our individual relationship with God. We should generally not be going to church to find spirituality, but to express our adoration and praise to God as a community of believers.

A person who goes to church to peace and spirituality is weak. Whether or not they find that reconnection depends heavily on what happens at church. If they are surrounded by the traditional architectural elements that have come to represent religion and the primary element of the service is a sermon in an order of worship that hasn't changed in ages, their risk of not finding that new connection with God is very high.

My experience was that, for many years, attending a tradition-bound church was leading me to spiritual death. I praise God that he has delivered me from that trap and restored my relationship with Him. Today visiting a traditional church leaves me depressed and hungering for the freedom to praise and adore God that I enjoy at my home church.

Preston Foster

This is a very important thought, Nathan. Thanks for sharing it.

Could it be that we really don't believe? Many take James' admonition that, "Faith without works is dead," as license to focus on works as a means to salvation. Perhaps James was saying, "Faith without works is not serious."

If we took what we believe seriously, would we not act on it? Is that not the evidence of our belief?

Belief in His Advent would, one would think, create an urgency of action. What we believe is demonstrated by that urgency -- or lack of it.

Elaine Nelson

What does "urgency of action" look like? We have been told since Christ was here that the "end is near" and it's been preached by Adventists for nearly 150 years. Yet, what does it look like? What
is our mission in practice? Cliches are meaningless and repeated ad nauseum yet what should we as a church, or individuals be doing?

Matt Britten

For me, urgency looks like: People jumping for joy at God's goodness and bowing low at His greatness. It looks like people being continually filled (Ac 2:4) and blasted (Ac 4:31) with the Holy Spirit in our meetings and going out to preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and to cast out demons on the street, at work, in the store etc (Mt 10:7-8).

It looks like people gathering the lost in their homes to worship, study, receive ministry and minister to others. It looks like people coming back to corporate gatherings and sharing the spoil (testimonies) of what God has been doing and living in greater expectation of what God can do in our meetings, in our neighbourhoods, and in our cities.

Urgency is about getting serious about the Kingdom of God (Mt 6:33) and the the power of the Spirit (Ac 1:8) to complete the mission of Jesus: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Mt 24:14).

Preston Foster

There it is, Matt! Well said.

Elaine Nelson

"What we think or what we know or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only thing of consequence is what we do." John Ruskin

This harmonizes beautifully with Jesus' words to those who cared for those in need--Mat. 25.

Elaine Nelson

“Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.” Francis of Assisi

Elaine Nelson

Neither worship nor spirituality are necessarily enhanced in any certain environment. Worship may for some be meaningful in community; while others may find both spirituality and worship solitarily in the beauties of nature with no cacophonic disturbances. Some particular church settings may invoke such thoughts--difficult to escape in the large cathedrals of Europe with the music of the choir and organ. Different strokes for different folks.
Ian Rankin

Hi Nathan,
I miss your friendly, provocative editorship.
I agree that, too often, worship is a human excercise, untainted by awareness of the awesomeness of God. (Gen 4:3)
Our awareness of our falling short, indicates we believe that true worship is achievable and therefore a true goal, but how do we measure success? How do we acknowledge the awesomeness of God?
To keep it brief, to my mind the answer is a developing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the consequent image of Jesus. You do not develop that by willpower or exposing its absence. You only develop it by allowing God to work. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are aspects of the character of Jesus and the potential of each gift is only realised when all gifts are actively in service. We will not need any public relations campaign to make people aware of the SDA beliefs if we follow God’s plans. If we get serious about each one giving of our HS gifts in service in our local fellowship, then the worship experience in our local fellowship will be such an extraordinary thing in our community that people will flock to it.

Please don't think this is the only thing I think we need to do, it is just a beginning.
'Person of the Year' Says Stay Generous, Connected

Giving isn't important just for the beneficiary, it's vital for the giver

31 Aug 2011, Warburton, Victoria, Australia

Nathan Brown

Each year on our national day -- Australia Day, January 26 -- a prominent person who is considered to have made a significant contribution to Australian society is named "Australian of the Year." I'm told this style of award happens only in a few nations around the world. Not only does this honor recognize a lifetime of achievement and community contribution, it also offers a platform for the award recipient to speak on issues close to their heart during the year in which they are the "Australian of the Year."

Simon McKeon, an investment banker, was designated as the "Australian of the Year." He says charity benefits the giver and helps them stay better connected to the community.

I recently had the opportunity to interview this year's "Australian of the Year" for an article soon to be published in the Australian-New Zealand edition of Signs of the Times magazine. Simon McKeon is an investment banker, who has contributed much to a variety of charitable organizations and is an outspoken advocate of both corporate philanthropy and individual giving.

McKeon says he is using the platform this award has given him to champion such generosity, saying that where any of us have any capacity for giving, we should consider that as a valid option to make a difference in the lives of those who need it. As such, he had many worthwhile things to say about giving well, something he keeps coming back to in the 700 times he estimates he will speak publicly this year.

Read more:

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But one comment particularly caught my attention. From his perspective, McKeon says giving is not just important for the beneficiaries, it is also vital for the giver. As an investment banker, he is attuned to the business realities. He urges that the most successful organizations are those prepared to give to and work with their communities.

"The most successful businesses will be those that will be doing their fair share of the heavy lifting on community issues," says McKeon. "They will be connected with their community, not operating out of an ivory tower. And they will be better businesses for it because they will actually understand what the community is needing and asking for. It is important to be thinking seriously about giving one’s time, as well as material resources. Not to do that means you end up being an unnecessarily narrow and unsuccessful person."

While in many ways the church should be more than a business, McKeon’s insight is helpful to our practice of faith, both individually and corporately. However we might judge the success of the church -- whether in numerical growth, spiritual growth, benefits to the community or faithfulness to the call of Jesus -- our connection with our community will be a vital ingredient.

Church should never be about "ivory towers" or merely looking after ourselves. As Jesus taught, the church should be both salt and light in the world (see Matthew 5:13-16): "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father (Matthew 5:16, NLT).

We should give because of what we have received (see Matthew 10:8) and we should serve primarily for the benefit of others but when we do this, we will soon find that we receive more in return. Perhaps this was one of the meanings of what Jesus said: "To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance" (Matthew 25:29, NLT).

And there is also a personal benefit for those of us who work together as a church to connect with and serve our community. Rather than risking becoming "an unnecessarily narrow and unsuccessful person" -- as McKeon put it -- we step into a life of generosity and cooperation, created and creating anew "in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (Ephesians 2:10, NLT).

McKeon was talking about business, but his wisdom also reveals a dynamic of life -- and even more so of the life of faithfulness.

--Nathan Brown is a book editor at Signs Publishing Company, near Melbourne, Australia. He is author of five books, most recently "I Hope" (Signs Publishing, 2011).
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How Modern Faith Has Strange Bedfellows

Submitted Sep 3, 2011
By Herb Douglass

I know that I may be opening myself to scalding censure when I refer to two modern examples (among many) of seduction in the ‘high places’ of government and academia! Imagine: In the third week of August, the Texas Governor is labeled as ‘anti-science’ for disputing humans are causing global warming and evolution is ‘a theory’ with ‘some gaps in it.’

Seemingly blind to their devotion, advocates of ‘global warming’ and ‘evolutionary theory’ jumped to the occasion, proclaiming their faith as sincerely, and yes, as aggressively as Elmer Gantry and his copycats!

Many once-true believers are now saying in full-throated regrets how wrong they have been. And the frustrated anger of the ‘faithful’ who sense cracks in their ‘impregnable’ temples rises almost in synch on their favorite airwaves and newsprint.

Makes one wonder, as an aside, about all those who believe they follow truth wherever the facts take them. True, when Darwin published, The Origin of Species (1859), the protozoa were thought to be very simple and primitive. It was much easier to dream, imagine and speculate.

But along came the development of high definition electron microscopes, the discovery of DNA, and the developments in chemical engineering. Modern molecular biology has demonstrated cells are actually enormously complex. For those who built their faith on facts and not on imagination, and after reviewing the data, there is overwhelming evidence that no naturally evolving process could ever have produced life in any form.

But mental and psychological imprints are very hard to erase. This happens in all fields of study, as much in theology as in the natural sciences. This is not a criticism or indictment — just a recognition of reality we all must confront, in ourselves as in others.

One of the interesting pillars of evolutionary faith is ‘time.’ Evolution religion is built on the foundation of the doctrine of time. The theory becomes the fact. However, regardless of the amazing advances in mathematics and computer technology coming together to demonstrate that given an unlimited amount of time, even trillions and trillions of years, no amount of time is enough for life to happen by chance.

In the Introduction to the 1971 edition to Darwin’s, The Origin of Species, are these words: “The fact of evolution is the backbone of biology, and biology is thus in the peculiar position of being a science founded in an unproven theory. Is it then a science or faith? Belief in the theory of evolution is exactly parallel to belief in special creation” (Dr. L. H. Harrison Matthews).

Matthews is not a nut-case. No more than Charles Darwin was when he wrote in his chapter called, Difficulties with the Theory: 1 “To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely
confess, absurd in the highest degree.”

For me, this is not only honest but a profound statement that seems terribly overlooked or at least forgotten.

How come the Darwinian Theory saw the light of day beyond a few lectures in England? How come one man’s theory without internal logic could capture the imagination and help alter dramatically the course of 19th Century philosophical and theological thought?

For those who know the philosophical and theological currents of the mid 19th century, nothing could have been more timely, more welcome. Confidence in the reliability of the Bible had been shattered by higher criticism. Schleiermacher’s broad thrust of subjectivism was finding a lot of support, the winds of optimism were blowing as never before, modern inventions on all levels were helping create an atmosphere of progress (which, in itself, helped to spawn a new level of idealism) — and then came Darwin to provide a ‘scientific reason’ that the world is indeed ‘getting better.’ The time had come for Darwin’s theory of evolution to explain everything! It not only explained, it exploded, imprinting the minds of most every child over the next 150 years.

Michael Ruse, professor of philosophical biology at Florida State University, considers himself an atheist and states plainly it is impossible to reconcile the Christian faith with evolutionary theory. But he states clearly that evolution is a religion: “Evolution as promoted by its practitioners is more than mere science. Evolution is promulgated as an ideology, a secular religion — a full-fledged alternative to Christianity, with meaning and morality. I am an ardent evolutionist and an ex-Christian, but I must admit one complaint…the literalists [i.e., creationists] are absolutely right. Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution today.”

Many are the directions I could now go but perhaps Sir Antony Flew is about the best illustration of a great champion of atheism who stunned the natural science world in 2004 when he admitted DNA discoveries changed his whole picture of how life happened.

We remember his famous article, Theology and Falsification, in 1950 that set the agenda for modern atheism. In reviewing his earth-shaking decision in 2004, in part, he said: “In this symposium, when asked if recent work on the origin of life pointed to the activity of a creative intelligence, I said, "Yes. I now think it does…almost entirely because of the DNA investigations. I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite intelligence. I believe that this universe’s intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God. I believe that life and reproduction originate in a divine Source."

“My departure from atheism was not occasioned by any new phenomenon or argument. Over the last two decades, my whole framework of thought has been in a state of migration. This was a consequence of my continuing assessment of the evidence of nature. When I finally came to recognize the existence of God, it was not a paradigm shift, because my paradigm remains, as Plato in his Republic scripted his Socrates to insist: We must follow the argument wherever it leads.”

Although Flew blew a hole in what some called ‘settled science,’ we must also note he did not become a convert to Christianity.
Some other time I would like to look at the argument for ‘the irreducible minimum’ that altered ‘settled science’ with the continuing torrent of information from those working with unraveling of DNA. What a story!

What I have learned over the years is to avoid the cult-of-experts trap. It happens in theology as well as in all other branches of knowledge. We see it on most news programs where certain experts get hooked on a certain story line, year after year. Such as anthropomorphic global warming, or spend ourselves out of recession (Keynesian models), etc.

To avoid this cult-of-experts trap, we should ask a simple question: Who is quoting whom?

In this day of academic hyperspecialization, it is too easy to hitch one’s car to a star, hoping some of the star dust will fall on him or her. It surely can ruin bright young people — until they catch on, perhaps. Plato was right, speaking through Socrates, “We must follow the argument wherever it leads.”

We must avoid bending facts or logic to fit in with the group. That’s the opposite of falling into the cult-of-expert trap.

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Herb,  
You wrote:  
"One of the interesting pillars of evolutionary faith is ‘time.’ Evolution religion is built on the foundation of the doctrine of time. The theory becomes the fact. However, regardless of the amazing advances in mathematics and computer technology coming together to demonstrate that given an unlimited amount of time, even trillions and trillions of years, no amount of time is enough for life to happen by chance."

I am curious, the computer technology you mention, might that be a reference to those researchers who see advanced software being developed without human programmers through emulated evolutionary processes, or is your mention of computer technology limited to the increase of computing power?

One way of identifying good science is the ability of the paradigm to produce predictions which when confirmed adds strength to the model while if rejected reduces it. Therefore, because the world was created in one week ~6kya, we expect to make this observation when studying the genetic code, whereas making a different observation would require either rejection or rethinking the model. I know this process is used regularly in biology including those branches thereof.
which work with evolution as its main tool. I am however unaware of this process being used with creation science. As you undoubtedly have studied the subject in preparation for this blog, I am sure you will be able to provide me with the appropriate references.

Finally, in your concluding paragraphs, you advice against using "argument from authority". 
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argument_from_authority
Yet, I find the Texas Governor, Darwin, Dr Matthews, Dr Ruse and Sir Flew quoted or referenced in your text supporting your conclusions. Would you mind explaining this apparent inconsistency for me?

David Read

Herb, great article! Thanks very much.

Darwinism and creationism are indeed competing faiths, which is why it makes no sense whatsoever for Adventists to pay teachers to proselytize for Darwinism. Why should one faith actually collude in and subsidize the conversion of its own adherents to another faith?

I do have a quibble, in that neither side is "following the evidence wherever it leads."

Mainstream science has an absolutely unshakable committment to naturalism. It only considers naturalistic explanations and implications. It doesn't matter that DNA is an alphabet that is arranged so as to create intelligent information, proving that an intelligent mind is behind life; science simply isn't going to follow that evidence to that very apparent and obvious conclusion. Science's philosophical committment to naturalism is ironclad.

By the same token, I as a creationist have a religious commitment to interpret the data of nature according to the biblical model of a recent supernatural creation followed by a world-destroying Flood. It doesn't matter that the evidence could easily be interpreted otherwise; I'm going to follow the biblical model, and interpret the evidence accordingly. To say that I'm "just following the evidence wherever it leads" is a rhetorical device, a form of argument, and not really honest. The fact that mainstream science makes this dishonest claim wouldn't excuse me if I did it, too. (And some philosophically naive scientists make this claim honestly, because they simply do not understand the extent to which some explanations and implications of the evidence have been taken off the table by science's philosophical commitment to naturalism.)

Elaine Nelson

"as a creationist have a religious commitment to interpret the data of nature according to the biblical model of a recent supernatural creation followed by a world-destroying Flood.'

You have that privilege just as every other member. But teachers are hired to teach science and the very word "science" means there must be some evidence for their subject. Science must, by its very essence, eliminate "supernatural" events" (a requirement for belief in the Bible's account). All the events of the creation described in the two accounts are outside the realm of explanation, and
all supernatural events cannot be dissected, analyzed, or even explained.

If such "science" were to be taught, why the need of analyzing, dissecting, and studying the intricate parts of all life if it all could be so easily explained as "that's a miracle"? Please explain how a science teacher can explain a miracle.

JaNe 1 month ago Reply

http://www.answersingenesis.org/
http://www.creationmoments.com/
http://www.icr.org/
http://www.grisda.org/
http://www.crev.info/

Thomas "Vastergotland" 1 month ago Reply

David, to paraphrase Kuhn's paradigm theory, both you and the scientist think within the box, especially when viewing the evidence, and both of you make sense within your own box, and for both of you the box of the other person is entirely incomprehensible. It would then be more correct to say that both sides are following the evidence wherever it leads, as long as it stays within the box, ie being explainable through natural causes for the scientist and being in agreement with Genesis in your case.

David Read 1 month ago Reply

That's right, Thomas. In fairness, there is a great deal of freedom within each model, so someone within a narrow specialty can "follow the evidence wherever it leads" without running up against the boundaries of the model. Thus, it probably appears to most scientists that are following the evidence wherever it leads, and they'd probably be offended by the suggestion that they really cannot. That is in part due to the narrowness of specialization, and in part due to the fact that it would never occur to mainstream scientist to interpret the data other than according to the dominant model, or to suggest that his discoveries implicate design or point to a designer, etc.

Thomas "Vastergotland" 1 month ago Reply

David,
This applies equally in both directions. Someone with a narrow reading of genesis will also be convinced he is following the evidence wherever it leads in the same way as does the scientists. Similarly, as it would not occur to the scientist to see a designer in biology, it would not occur to the YEC to see a natural explanation for the same. Both are equally blind to the other box.

Elaine Nelson 1 month ago Reply
From a non-scientist, it appears that scientists are always seeking answers; and one that might be "it" today, may not be tomorrow.

OTOH, to a non-scientist, it seems that YEC and ID has already found the answers, but are seeking better explanations.

The former does not stop seeking answers, but the latter has all the answers in an Intelligent Designer with supernatural abilities--something that also can be neither studied or explained--it is simply the inevitable conclusion to all questions.

Ervin Taylor

I have been wondering when Herb would venture into this topic and what would happen when he did. Now we know. As expected, David Read uses the occasion to make his often repeated comment that “Mainstream science has an absolutely unshakable commitment to naturalism. It only considers naturalistic explanations and implications.” This is like saying that “Mainstream science has an absolutely unshakable commitment to science.” (There is a term that my teen age granddaughters use when someone says something obvious and a little odd, but since I’m trying to be polite and this is a serious and responsible blog, I will not repeat it here since I can’t repeat in writing their tone of voice).

Thomas has, in my view, offered an interesting and very helpful point by noting that what we have here are two, non-overlapping, conceptual “boxes.” There is the “modern scientific” box or worldview with its assumptions, rules of argumentation and what can be used as evidence. And then there is the “fundamentalist theological” box or worldview with its own assumptions, rules of argumentation, and what can be used as evidence. The question is which “box” has been more successful in explaining how the “real” world works. I think the answer is obvious.

Stephen Foster

Erv,

You have perhaps set up a false question. Modern science certainly seeks to discover, and helps to explain, how the natural world works; but cannot determine how the natural world that it investigates began.

Ervin Taylor

Stephen is absolutely correct. As far as I understand my physics colleagues, how the "natural world . . .began" is, in the strict sense, not a scientific question. It is a theological or philosophical question, about which, scientists, speaking personally can have an opinion, but that opinion has no standing above a theological or philosophical opinion.
Elaine Nelson

It is always amazing to watch the creationists scorn science as if they could even be the judge of the entire world of science. When these individuals decide to trust the biblical model of origins, at the same time they ignore the biblical models given by God in Leviticus on the proper diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Why the absolute willingness to accept in one area of science but in medical science they refuse to accept the Bible's direction and resort to the latest medical science has to offer, particularly if they are their loved ones are in need of the best that medical science has to offer.

This "pick and choose" method which all Creationists adopt, reveals that they have a one-track system of categorizing what has little or no affect on them personally.

Herbert Douglass

I, with Erv, was interested to see how an emphasis on faith in evolution would be accepted. Tom wanted me to elaborate on my appeal to authority when it seems like I was using authority to prove my points. I don't think I used authority as something that should be avoided. But I did note the cul-de-sac of appealing to the cult of experts. I think that Kuhn's paradigm has been a neat way of simply saying with different words what I mean by mental imprints that are unconsciously laid down by our parents and early school experiences. None of us find it easy to replace those imprints as we face the real facts of life, theologically or "scientifically."

All we have to do is review the history of the last hundred years to see how once blind "experts" were willing to get out of their boxes. I think of the paleontologists who now recognize that the so-called evolutionary march has never produced even one sample of transition or gradualization. Or the biologists who simply stand in awe at the reducible minimum of the complex cell that requires so many components to even exist for a moment. Or tell us how the female "cell" suddenly appeared and sex happened! Hard for those in another box to simply accept the excuse that all we need is more time--that answer doesn't sound very "scientific."

I think Theodore Roszak, professor emeritus of history of California state history, has it right: "The irony is devastating. The main purpose of a Darwinism was to drive every last trace of an incredible God from biology. But that theory replaces the God with an even more incredible deity--omnipotent chance." Unfinished Animal, 101, 102.

Perhaps, when our last day comes, it may matter as to how we "feel" about these topics. Cheers, Herb

Pat Travis

On the above issues I agree with you. To me, perhaps more important than the "day of worship" is it's importance in identifying we indeed do have a creator by whom all things were made and
The science behind the evolution of man and anthropomorphic global warming alike discard our "active" creating and sustaining Creator God. Mankind thinking themselves wise has become but fools even declaring "manmade CO2" a dangerous gas. Attempting to control the less than the 6% that humanity has anything to do with.

Cheers,
pat

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Ervin Taylor

I wonder if Herb would please explain a little more about his comment about "the cul-de-sac of appealing to the cult of experts." Let me change the question a little: When Herb or anyone of us have a major medical problem, what type or group of individuals would we like to have telling us what needs to be done--a "cult of experts" or a group of individuals who are not medical experts?

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Herbert Douglass

Thanks, Pat, for that delicious man-made CO2 gas! Now, Erv, you know that we are now playing with words. I surely have nothing against experts but I am fearful of the "cult" of experts. Perhaps 25 years ago, the best of the experts didn't have a clue as to how to remedy certain physical problems but we used the best we had at the time. I am sure that there are certain experts in your field that you quarrel with.

From time to time, I go back to the first Easter. For those who are most interested in truth, where would any truth seeker look for what was happening--to intellect, science, common sense? Or is there a truth bigger than human reason, truth that transcends our ability to understand, the truth that flies in the face of the reality we experience and read about in the newspapers? Is there a reality more real than the harshness and finality of death?

We gather in churches to say yes, there is a reality that transcends our intellect. Yes, there is a God who can make a way where there is no way. The resurrection is the kind of truth that we cannot handle alone. I like what Emily Dickinson once said, "Truth must dazzle gradually or every man be blind." Just think, what if the resurrection story is actually true, not just someone's hope. What if the resurrection was this planet's lifetime happening, designed to demonstrate that there was hope after death, would that be a life changer?

Perhaps someone may say he would believe it if he could see it replicated. Would this be worth following as a reasonable challenge? Cheers, Herb

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Thomas "Vastergotland"

Herb,
If you plan a second article on this subject, may I challenge you to take a look at the strongest points of support which biology has and make an analysis from there.

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago

"Perhaps, when our last day comes, it may matter as to how we "feel" about these topics."

Not sure if you left out it may "not" matter--as I am probably as close as you, Herb, to that "last day" and that, I can assure you, will not even be a thought. Either where we come from or where I may be going is totally of no concern. If we are truly judged by Christ's remarks in Matt. 25, nothing more than how we treated others will be of the least significance.

As for the lack of evidence of evolution; there are equally no evidences whatsoever by what method we are here, or the origin of this earth we call home. They are equally only choices one makes: where did the right proportion of gases for our life originate? Where did the storms, floods and hurricanes originate? At least, our ancient ancestors had answers: everything came from their god. Simple?

BRAVO, Elaine!

Ervin Taylor
1 month ago

I don't want to turn this into a bifucated exchange, but may I respectfully suggest to Herb that, at least as far as I am aware, we are certainly not "playing with words."

There are certainly individuals within the scientific area I know something about with whom I disagree. But the disagreement is at the level of specific interpspreations of details. I am not aware of any contemporary research-active archaeologist with an appointment at a major research university who thinks that human socieites have been on earth less than 10,000 years. That would strike them as simply a ludicrous belief not worthy of any serious discussion because the weight of the field evidence is overwhelmingly against it.

Likewise, I am not aware of any research-active chemist who does not "believe' in the validity or meaningfulness of how the periodic table of elements is constructed. Even putting it like this would strike a chemist as a little odd. Likewise, I am not aware of any serious contemporary biologist who does not "believe" in the germ theory of disease. It is called a "theory" but the theory is so well established from a scientific perspective that it is simply a given.

I am also not aware of a contemporary research-active molecular biologist with an appointment at a major research university who questions the general idea that organisms have evolved from simple ot complex over a very long time measured in billions of years. Now some may certainly have and do question the explanation of how the dominant mechanisms of macroevolution works. In other words, they question if the NeoDarwinian natural selection model is adequate. There are
certainly a few well-trained biologists who question the whole idea of macroevolution over billions of years. However, their objections are derived fundamentally from theological concerns and then they pick and choose the scientific literature to find little bits and pieces of things about which they can raise questions. Whether one likes it or not, these individuals are not taken seriously by the scientific mainstream.

Herb, you may wish to include 95-99% of the current research-active biologists as belonging to a "cult," but I am sure that most readers will understand the context of why you make such a statement as well as why I must take issue with you.

Elaine Nelson

When theologians believe that they are well-versed in the sciences and can easily dismiss all the wonderful discoveries made in the various field in the last 200 years they raise questions about their ability to criticize what they are most unfamiliar with. Theological questions should be addressed by those who specialize in that discipline; scientific questions should, likewise be left to those expert in those disciplines. Gould was right: trying to merge the two magisteria results in time wasted and only proving that they can never be otherwise.

Herbert Douglass

Strange, all I tried to do was to raise several core questions that everyone is studiously avoiding. Everyone knows that I am not a specialist in geological time, nor in any other natural science area. I can ask questions, however, regarding the internal logic of some of these areas. Perhaps I'm not supposed to ask these questions. Frankly, I don't enjoy talking about the freaks of exhibits that seemed to be in most every museum that our schoolchildren are lectured on, imprinting them as as if what they see before their eyes are really the pre-historic animals and early human, man or woman so fabricated.

Going back to the issue of the cult of experts, I certainly have to recognize that it is just as dangerous in theology as in any other field of interest. That is, group-think may take time to sort out, but time has away of getting at the truth and yes, it takes experts to do it who do not belong to the cult. Such seems to be the way history is made.

It seems to me, that faith in the supernatural needs the same kind of faith a wise scientist will have-- the key word being humble. It keeps friendships together. Cheers, Herb

Ervin Taylor

I'm all for humility—just so it is handed out in equal measure both on the scientific and theological side.
A comment by Herb revealed, at least to me, why there might be such little common ground on this topic. Herb said: “Frankly, I don't enjoy talking about the freaks of exhibits that seemed to be in most every museum that our schoolchildren are lectured on, imprinting them as if what they see before their eyes are really the pre-historic animals and early human, man or woman so fabricated.” “Freaks of exhibits”? Do you really think that these exhibits are made up? Is it possible, just possible, that you might even entertain the idea that dinosaurs and human fossils are just “made up” by “evolutionists?”

Elaine Nelson

1 month ago

Reply

Should we equally disparage theologians who "make up" all sorts of reasons and explanations for the supernatural events which fill the Bible? Those are much more difficult to explain than the specimens in museums.

What about telling school children that all the weird events in the Bible actually happened? Those even lack models.

Nathan Schilt

1 month ago

Reply

Thank you for this blog, Herb. It is interesting that you did not set out in any way to use scientific authority to argue for creation. Yet what your antagonists have done is to try and shift the focus by debunking Creation as science. They seem to take the position that what scientists believe occurred in the distant past, how and why it occurred (theory - not science), is settled science until scientific evidence is produced to refute their theories. Until those who question the Ptolemaic theory of evolution find retrospectoscopes to peer into deep history, and produce incontrovertible evidence refuting evolutionary theory, 21st Century astrologers will continue to consider evolutionary models settled science.

Those who produce mere logic and reason to question evolutionary theory, the distant past being for the most part inaccessible to the scientific method, are immediately forced into the Creation science camp by the true believers. To question the evidence behind a factual or scientific claim does not prove an alternative theory. The fact that I agree just about 100% with Herb's blog does not mean that I believe science proves SDA Creation theory.

Ervin Taylor

1 month ago

Reply

Nate says: “Until those who question the Ptolemaic theory of evolution find retrospectoscopes to peer into deep history, and produce incontrovertible evidence refuting evolutionary theory, 21st Century astrologers will continue to consider evolutionary models settled science.” The “Ptolemaic theory of evolution” and “21st Century astrologers” phrases are priceless. Well done! My scoring of this sentiment: 10 out of 10 for great rhetorical skill, 0 out of 10 for meaningful logical argument.
But Nathan, is it so wrong to challenge those who reject Einstein's theory on time and space on the grounds that no one knows where the first blob of matter in the big bang came from, and ask these critics if they might produce arguments which are a little bit closer to the time-space question? Certainly the question of where the stars came from is an interesting one, but can it really be said that the answer to this question is foundational for how they interact once here? Would the concept of gravity wells crumble and fall if the matter came about through the command of God rather than through being teleported from a parallel universe? Highly unlikely.

I should note that Herb is probably innocent in putting up the argument in this way, that he have retold it the same way it he first read it. Would it be such a bad thing if arguments against evolution actually dealt with evolution rather than with abiogenesis? I’m just asking..

I really appreciate all these contributions but I was really hoping for someone to help me with my three questions: 1) why, despite the extensive research undertaken by countless dedicated scientist, we have not found a single transitional form in the fossil record; 2) why are school children presented, for many decades, the latest drama of how apes become a man (think about the TIME bombshell in 1999, which supposedly presented man's oldest ancestor) and think the Neanderthal Man. Lucy, Nebraska man, etc. None of these famous "discoveries" stood the test challenging the proverb that the end justifies the means. 3) why don't biologists everywhere simply tell the world that it is absolutely impossible, even given time, for life to evolve from that first cell, which exists only if the complexity of its components were in place before it is even a cell. We call it the irreducible minimum. 4) and we could add the complexity of the egg that needs a chicken before there is an egg. Just thinking about the egg opens up the marvel of creation, especially its "magical" shell with its 10,000 pores providing oxygen, etc.

No, I am not a scientist but that obvious fact does not prevent me from asking logical questions. Is there anybody who wants to help me answer these questions. The same procedure should be put to every theologian as to what cult of experts he belongs to and what exactly is the basis for his beliefs in anything. Cheers, Herb

Herb's four questions strongly suggests to me that this line of discussion is going to go down hill quickly and end is very unpleasant ways. Herb as a fine Christian gentleman and anything that I say from now on about his lack of current grasp of relevant scientific understandings would not be positive. Herb--let's just leave it here and agree to disagree on these matters.
Nathan Schilt

Very cute, Erv. And don't think I am unappreciative of the zero. Had you magnanimously given me a 2 or 3 for logic, I would have been forced to concede that perhaps you are not quite the fundamentalist you sometimes seem to be. But as a conservative, it is reassuring for me to see that some things do not change - that fundamentalists are firmly holding down both ends in the Adventist dialectic; and that there is indeed a faithful remnant in the land of Darwin guarding faith from the acids of doubt.

And Thomas, I much appreciate your thoughts and questions on this thread. I do not believe that the Genesis accounts should be read as literal descriptions of actual physical processes chronologically taking place in time as we understand it. So yes, to my way of thinking, the only valid arguments against evolution are those that deal with the inferences that can and should be drawn from the science and math, many of which raise serious doubt about the adequacy and accuracy of evolutionary models to explain what they claim to understand. Whether the dividing line between abiogenesis and evolutionary thinking is so clear as you seem to imply is well above my pay grade.

These arguments and doubts about how much evolutionary science can really know bend us back towards metaphysics, though certainly not the rationalist a priori of traditional Adventist thought. The challenge of faith is to act on the belief, while accepting the evidence of science, that the stories of Genesis and the Bible yield more accurate and adequate information about the nature of man and the nature of ultimate reality than the stories of science. The challenge of science is to remain humble and pure to its methods, and to resist the temptations of money, power, and authority that come with service to academic, political, psychosocial, or religious agendas.

Thomas "Vastergotland"

If you watch the entire documentary: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNGeXjpL1Hg&NR=1 you will find answers given in an accessible manner.

Roscoe Fogg

Addressing Herbs Questions:
1) Here is a list of transitional fossils: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_transitional_fossils
2) It seems that apes have only evolved into straw men. The theory of evolution does not say that man evolved from apes but from a common ancestor that evolved not only into apes but also into man.
3) Biologists don’t “simply tell the world that it is absolutely impossible, even given time, for life to evolve from that first cell.” because it has not been shown to be impossible.
4) Eggs are marvelous; I had a magical omelet for breakfast. The idea of irreducible complexity is warmed over God of the Gaps. When the gaps are filled what do you have?
Roscoe and Herb

The 'fossil transitions' are in transitioning out of the darwinian world into the simple sub-specian. Some do speak honestly about the fossils. David Raup of the Chicago Field Museum, Prof. of Geology, Univ. of Chicago has stated, "A large number of well-trained scientists outside of evolutionary biology and paleontology have unfortunately gotten the idea that the fossil record is far more Darwinian than it is. This probably comes from the oversimplification inevitable in secondary sources: low-level textbooks, semipopular articles, and so on. Also, there is probably some wishful thinking involved. In the years after Darwin, his advocates hoped to find predictable progressions. In general, these have not been found. Yet the optimism has died hard, and some pure fantasy has crept into textbooks." New Scientist, Vol. 90, p.832, 1981

And, Richard Lewontin, Prof. of Zoology, Harvard, "Look, I'm a person who says in this book [Human Diversity, 1982 that we don't know anything about the ancestors of the human species. All the fossils which have been dug up and are claimed to be ancestors we haven't the faintest idea whether they are ancestors. ....All you've got is Homo sapiens there, you've got that fossil there, you've got another fossil there...and it's up to you to draw the lines. Because there are no lines.", Harpers, 2/84

Irreducible complexity is not a 'god of the gaps;' it is positive evidence of design and intelligence. Many researchers are open about this fact:

"'Survival of the fittest' and 'natural selection.' No matter what phraseology one generates, the basic fact remains the same: any physical change of any size, shape or form is strictly the result of purposeful alignment of billions of nucleotides (in the DNA). Nature or species do not have the capacity for rearranging them, nor adding to them. Consequently no leap (saltation) can occur from one species to another. The only way we know for a DNA to be altered is through a meaningful intervention from an outside source of intelligence: one who knows what it is doing, such as our genetic engineers are now performing in their laboratories." (Cohen, I.L., Mathemetician & Researcher, Member of the New York Academy of Sciences, (1984), Darwin Was Wrong: A Study in Probabilities, New York: NW Research Publications, Inc., p. 209)

"There is no agreement on the extent to which metabolism could develop independently of a genetic material. In my opinion, there is no basis in known chemistry for the belief that long sequences of reactions can organize spontaneously -- and every reason to believe that they cannot. The problem of achieving sufficient specificity, whether in aqueous solution or on the surface of a mineral, is so severe that the chance of closing a cycle of reactions as complex as the reverse citric acid cycle, for example, is negligible."

Elaine Nelson  
1 month ago  
Reply

But it all goes back to who created the Intelligent Designer? Who was the First Cause? This is a philosophical Mobius strip.

Vernon P. Wagner  
1 month ago  
Reply

"A philosphical Mobius strip'....well said!

Roscoe Fogg  
1 month ago  
Reply

God (or Intelligent Designer) of the Gaps

The Argument:
1. There is a gap in scientific knowledge. [e.g. a complexity has not been explained]
2. The gap is filled with an act of God (or an intelligent designer) and therefore the existence of God (or intelligent designer) is proven. [Del Ratzsch, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2005).]

"...how wrong it is to use God as a stop-gap for the incompleteness of our knowledge. If in fact the frontiers of knowledge are being pushed further and further back (and that is bound to be the case), then God is being pushed back with them, and is therefore continually in retreat. We are to find God in what we know, not in what we don't know." [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, letter to Eberhard Bethge, 29 May 1944]

Ervin Taylor  
1 month ago  
Reply

The quotation from Bonhoeffer quoted by Roscoe Fogg is right on target and the weakness of both the God-of-the-Gaps and Intelligent Designer arguments is well stated. I don't know of a better type of response.

Elaine Nelson  
1 month ago  
Reply

There is a cartoon of two white-coated older professors explaining a complicated formula, filling an entire blackboard, but then one stops and says:
"And then, a miracle happens."

This captures the essence of creationist debates.

Nathan Schilt  
1 month ago  
Reply

Isn't it remarkable how defensive the doubters become when others raise doubts about the metanarrative by which they (the doubters) seek to invalidate competing metanarratives? Why are
those who worship at the shrine of doubt in the realm of religion so resistant to those who raise doubt about the adequacy of naturalistic faith?

Elaine Nelson

Any who claim for certitude should be doubted.

Darrel Lindensmith

One does not need to explain the origin of the intelligence to detect intelligence. This is a typical false syllogism. The resulting 'infinite regress' must obviously stop somewhere and this would, by definition, be 'eternal.'

Trevor Hammond

Well…well, faith does indeed have some strange bedfellows. Can I throw in the secular state as well, in the same bed with the atheists, agnostics and hoo-ha evolutionists? Dr Taylor mentions ‘evilutionists’[sic]. I think his usage of such a term is quite appropriate. (I’ll give you ten out of ten, for that one, Sir). The God Who reveals Himself in the Holy Bible as the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent One, is the Creator of all things visible and invisible and makes absolutely no reference whatsoever to any evolutionary process occurring with regards to our origins and existence. If such sophistry didn’t come from Him then it can only be from the great deceiver, the ‘evil’ one: satan himself. Can I include satan as an additional strange bedfellow too?

Who would have thought that the 21st century scientific community in cahoots with secular society would so quickly choose to forget that Western science as we know it was motivated and spurred on by a direct result of a deep interest and admiration of what God has created and how marvelously our world and universe is all put together? So it seems that ‘evilution’ [sic] is nothing other than a philosophical sub-culture masquerading as legitimate science which has been given pole position by a secular godless culture propped up by its equally godless legislature which I might add, adds yet another ‘strange’ bedfellow in this dodgy philosophical romp with faith.

“The philosophy of science can be divided into two broad areas: the epistemology of science and the metaphysics of science. The epistemology of science discusses the justification and objectivity of scientific knowledge. The metaphysics of science discusses philosophically puzzling aspects of the reality uncovered by science.” [p809 the Oxford companion to Philosophy] So how can we conveniently exclude the ‘metaphysical’ from the reality of the mega philosophy found in stuff like scientific method etc., which, even the hard core empirical sciences AND the dodgy pseudo kind have put their faith in? That’s why they’re all bedfellows with faith. Strange!

T
Elaine Nelson

Who needs to study science when the Bible has all the answers?

Vernon P. Wagner

It sure did help me care for my slaves, and sell my daughter!

billman

I was privileged to meet Denis Alexander, Director of the Faraday Institute at Cambridge University, earlier this week. Google it. Denis was giving a lecture on reconciling science and faith. One observation that stuck with me was that in the UK, science faculty were more likely to believe in a God than the arts faculty. Broadly speaking, science asks the how questions, whereas theology asks the why questions. And both are needed.

In Alexander's writings, four different models have been posited for relating science and religion. In order, these were:

The conflict model - science and religion are in irreconciliable conflict.
The NOMA model - (Non-Overlapping Magisteria). Each has something to say in their own realms, but have nothing to add to the other.
The Fusion Model - this tends to blur the distinction between scientific types of knowledge, or attempts to utilise science in order to construct religious systems of thought or vice versa.
The complementarity model - essentially maintains that science and religion are addressing the same reality from different perspectives.

All food for thought. I wonder which models the contributors subscribe to.

Kevin Riley

I definitely favour the fourth option. If science and religion are operating in the same real world, then they are ultimately addressing the same reality. To rule theology out of the attempt to understand the real world is to declare that the Bible is merely myth. And if both address the same reality, then it is equally wrong to rule science and other forms of human knowledge out of place in trying to understand the Bible.

Elaine Nelson

There appears to be little difference between the NOMA and the complementarity model. Tell us your perspective.
The irony in all of this perhaps, is the hypocrisy of the West in the way it has mustered a significant war mongering effort against the faith of Atheist Communism yet unabashedly has aided and abetted the Atheist Capitalism faith right in its own back yard. That is perhaps also one very BIG reason why so many in the West have progressed their way AWAY from God; true faith; and obedience. Evolution theory has made them Atheists for crying out loud and has turned Western society into a Godless unbelieving bunch of alternative 'faith' practitioners. Blinded and intoxicated by the doctrine of evolution right from their formative years, they mature after been insidiously force fed all this ungodly hoo-hah which is faithfully preached from their iconoclastic pulpits: or should I say beds?

To those (a remnant perhaps?) who still celebrate the memorial of Creation: ☺ Happy Sabbath ♫♥!

Joe Erwin

Science is many things to many people. To some, it is a "body of knowledge." To others, it is an assembly of laws, and theories, and hypotheses. Some consider it dogma. Apparently some regard it as a false religion. And perhaps it IS a religion to some. Perhaps to many. I have always taught my students to use science as a method of improving understanding of the world. I see science a method of gaining knowledge. And I mean by that, objective evidence. But I also stress that knowledge must be held very gently--what evidence we have now might not hold up under further examination. When we write a scientific paper, we write an introduction in which we review some of the relevant evidence previously found. Then we describe the methods we used for the study to be reported. This is so anyone else anywhere can attempt to replicate what we did. Then we report our results, along with some statistical analyses to place them in perspective and give some idea of how confident we can be of the objective evidence obtained. Then we write a discussion of what we think the results mean, and a summary or list of conclusions follows, along with acknowledhements and references. Each part of a scientific paper has its place. Some scientists are very confident of the arguments they make about what their evidence means. Others understate the possible significance of their data. Professional scientists must learn to read critically and be open to new information that can require them to revise what they thought they knew. In this sense, science is a dynamic epistemological machine that defies dogma. Even so, many scientists, being people, go far beyond the objective evidence they have and make statements about things about which they have little knowledge or expertise. Their hubris feeds the notion of science as religion, and that is kind of sad. But the scientific process discovers evidence that requires intellectual flexibility. One can only examine the fossil record so much, or examine comparative genomics so much, until one can no longer believe in young earth creation. One can often argue that a fossil is not exactly 2.3 million years old as a scientist may have asserted, but to assert instead that all fossils are frauds, oh my! Or that science is just a matter of belief, like any religion. How can anyone be that ignorant? Yes, IGNORANT!
What we need to be teaching children is how to think critically and how to evaluate evidence. We do need to be teaching them to seek truth, wherever that leads—not to make up the answers in advance or accept some set of answers without question. That would be true education. So, don't just accept a scientist's conclusions, examine his data. Don't just uncritically follow your doctor's orders—learn about disorders and their causes and about the effectiveness of various therapeutic approaches. Don't be a "Darwinist" or "Mendelian." Smart people can say smart things, but they can also make mistakes. Learn to evaluate evidence. Learn how to discover or create knowledge. Wonder about what objective evidence means. Revise your opinions on the basis of new evidence. Do not depend on the opinions of authorities. Become an authority yourself—and do not take yourself too seriously. Being an authority often means knowing enough to say "I don't know" or even, "I doubt that anyone knows." Darwin assembled a lot of interesting information that did not seem to him to be consistent with what everyone thought they knew. He called into question accepted ideas. He and Wallace proposed natural selection as a mechanism by which biological change could occur. Neither of them knew much about the real mechanisms of biological inheritance. But the more one knows about genetics and genomics, the better one can see how biological change occurs. Don't take my word for it. Just open your mind and examine the evidence. Or, make up your mind about how things are in advance and decide to ignore the massive amount of evidence. Decide to be ignorant. Celebrate your ignorance. Nice seeing you again, Elaine and Erv. I'm afraid you are wasting your time talking with those who are deeply committed to ignorance.

Anthony Aaby

Some observations:

Truth: The correspondence theory of truth involves a mapping between a domain of interest and some sentences in a language. Reasoning within the language when using truth preserving rules of deduction, results in true conclusions. Both science and religion employ rules of inference which are not truth preserving. Science attempts to construct universal statements from a limited set of particular facts. Consequently it should be expected that scientific theories change with additional observations.

The coherence theory of truth expects a collection of sentences to have an internal logic that satisfies some desired criteria -- a work of fiction need have no relationship to the natural world.

Theory: There are several kinds of theories. An explanatory theory offers an explanation. Genesis offers a number of explanations of things we see in the natural world and in society. Predictive theories are valued by engineers. These theories enable the construction of useful objects. Heuristic theories spark our imagination and stimulate research.

Evolution and YEC: YEC offers an explanation. Evolutionary theory supplies explanation, prediction, and heuristics. Medications are available which are derived from evolutionary theory. Electrical engineers produce chips which are developed using genetic and evolutionary algorithms.

Pragmatism: I would like to hear about consumer or industrial level products which have been produced using YEC. It appears to me that the debate between YEC and Evolution has yet to
produce anything of practical value. Perhaps there is a better use for the resources that have been devoted to the debate.

Nathan Schilt
1 month ago

Interesting points, Anthony. While I don't believe in YEC as science, I don't believe in straw men either. I seriously doubt that any YEC advocates question evolution as a biological reality, or the validity of algorithms developed to test evolutionary hypotheses. Rather, they question the closed systems and presumed constants of the evolutionary worldview. One need not believe that life on earth evolved through natural selection and random mutation over billions of years in order to accept the scientific and mathematical models used by many disciplines other than evolutionary biology.

I think you utilize a narrow and biased concept of YEC theory to deny its predictive and heuristic value, though I would certainly agree that YEC is not science, and therefore it's predictive value is qualitatively different from the predictive value of say genetics, which I assume you mean to include within the "evolutionary theory" rubric.

Of course neither YEC nor evolution per se produce anything. But one could make a compelling argument that the foundations of modern science were built upon the thought, discoveries, and creations of people who believed in the God of scripture; people who believed that His creation was orderly; and people who believed that the secrets of His universe could be discovered and known through diligent study and application of logic and reason. So in a very real way, the giants on whose shoulders evolutionary theorists stand were YEC believers.

It seems to me that the relative contributions of an evolutionary worldview versus a YEC worldview to the products of the age of science, the industrial age, and the age of technology cannot be clearly defined, as their roots are inextricably intertwined.

Ella M.
1 month ago

Someone on here mentioned a "young earth." I don't think many Adventists who have studied it believe in a young earth (6,000 years). This is a fundamentalist stance. I found an article in an old Review from the late 1800s addressing this, and the author promoted an earth already in existence as in Gen. 1 before the creation week began.

Is it possible that the creation story that was handed down without a written language (not needed in earth's earlier days) from the beginning was not exactly as it happened? This does not mean that the seven days had no significance. My question: Is the obsession with making the story so literal a distraction from its divine meaning? Are we trying to force it to fit into the modern idea of "science?" It obviously can't with its two versions and the problem with light, stars, and sun on different days.

This does not mean that the fall never happened. Of course, it did and brought with it death; otherwise selfish and wicked humans would destroy all communication with heaven and turn earth into hell and finally destroy it. For those who don't believe in human-caused environmental change, read your Bibles!

Because modern scientists will not go where the evidence leads and many Bible believers are
inflexible,  
I see little chance of either jumping out of their boxes. Someone would need to turn their boxes upside down. I am not a scientist; just a simple person. But I can't believe my computer evolved--that just doesn't seem scientific to me!

To show what creationists are up against, take a look at the following. Evolutionists do think they have found the "missing link." [http://www.npr.org/2011/09/08/140294922/mosaic-fossil-could-be-bridge-from-apes-to-humans](http://www.npr.org/2011/09/08/140294922/mosaic-fossil-could-be-bridge-from-apes-to-humans)

Nathan Schilt  
1 month ago  Reply

Nicely stated, Ella. However, we must not overlook the mystery, profundity, symbolism, and poetic symmetry of the Genesis stories that confirm their transcendent provenance. It is not only possible, but quite certain, at least in my mind, that the Genesis stories do not reflect a literal chronology. But it is much much more than an oral tradition.

Thomas "Vastergotland"  
1 month ago  Reply

Where does the evidence lead, if I may ask?

Joe Erwin  
1 month ago  Reply

Make that SOME "evolutionists." Others evaluate the evidence and reach different conclusions. Modern scientists who do not follow where the evidence leads are not using scientific method. Here's a thought. Things that work, continue to exist and develop. Things that don't work, or work less well, are discarded or fall into disuse. Competent modern scientists MUST go where the evidence leads. They really have no choice IF they are to survive as scientists. There is, of course, plenty of dogmatism and defensiveness and people who think they have found ultimate truth in science.

Elaine Nelson  
1 month ago  Reply

How else would science continue to develop if they didn't go "where the evidence leads"? This is EXACTLY how it works.

Nathan, your statement: "the Genesis stories do not reflect a literal chronology. But it is much much more than an oral tradition" needs clarification. How else would Genesis have ever been written had it not been an oral tradition for perhaps several millennia, or much longer? With no literacy at that time (did God teach man to write and all of their scribblings have been lost?), orally telling stories was the only method for transmitting. Can you suggest another method?

Nathan Schilt  
1 month ago  Reply

I didn't mean to suggest, Elaine, that oral tradition was not incorporated into the Genesis poem.
To say something is more than one of its elements is not a repudiation of the element. Not being a student of Hebrew language or culture, I must rely on those who are to understand the grandeur, beauty, and profundity of the creation story, particular that of Genesis 1. I don't believe that rational humans on their own could or did come up with the substance and symbolic ordering of creation?

Tracking the human origins of the Creation stories is a highly speculative undertaking. Accepting it as divine revelation of truth is an *a priori* act of faith that rings far truer to me than the science of evolution, which tells me nothing about the character of God or the essence of what it means to be human.

---

**Joe Erwin**

1 month ago

I would hope that reasonable and well-informed adventists would reject the 6000 year-old notion; however, unless I am mistaken, that is the affirmed and absolute position of the church--maybe even a requirement to be a member of the church as a "test of faith."

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**Joe Erwin**

1 month ago

I probably should not just drop into your blog a few times every couple of years and then just return to my regular life. Even so, that is what I do. And when I do, I see all sorts of fundamentally false and misleading assertions regarding science and scientists and evolution--mostly by people who really seem to have no understanding at all of what science is, how science works, or what evolution is. I have no idea why this amazes me so much. The reasoning is the same as it was among many of the people I met at PUC more than 50 years ago. So, I generally provide some brief and pedantic description of what science is and how it works. Here goes again, briefly. (1) the basis of science is the observation and description of something, e.g., an artifact or a pattern of behavior--something objectively real that can be described. (2) some falsifiable questions are asked and hypotheses are formed; (3) more observations are made, usually systematically, sometimes within a research design; (4) hypotheses are revised in accordance with additional evidence (that is, mainly, aspects of guesses about what was observed and why are found to be false and are discarded; or, if they are not falsified, the failure to falsify them leaves them as possible answers); (5) this process continues, over and over, and knowledge is gained and refined. As hypotheses survive much examination, confidence in them increases. Some gain the status of "theories," or even "laws," depending on how durable and comprehensive they are--but they are always subject to revision based on new evidence. Reliance on "authority" does not get one very far in science. And yet, the way nonscientists use scientific information is often totally inappropriate. They are always expecting scientists to PROVE something to them. What science is good at, though, is the opposite--that is, rejecting hypotheses. Falsifying assertions, hypotheses, inaccurate aspects of theories, etc. Scientific knowledge is not the comforting kind of knowledge that is provided by religions that generate "knowledge" by assertion, and "facts" assembled from "authoritative" sources. Okay. I've said enough. Too much, no doubt. I do wish you all well. Please be kind and decent to each other, and don't spend too much time or energy intellectualizing about things that are of absolutely no consequence. Be a little sensitive to the complexity of the rationalizations you must make in order to resolve the dissonance between what you know from your tradition (SDA or Adventist Today : How Modern Faith Has Strange Bedfellows http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=829&action=print
whatever) and the objective evidence that exists. Live and be well. Love & Peace, Joe (agingapes AT gmail DOT com)

Nathan Schilt
1 month ago Reply

What you describe about how science works, Joe, would, I suspect strike even fundamentalists as quite a good summary. I think the false and misleading assertions come from both sides of the faith-science divide. Each attempts to exercise dogmatic hegemony over a larger realm that its epistemological methods permit. Both make generalizations about the other that are probably more untrue than true, but nevertheless form helpful shorthand ways to describe positions and advance arguments.

Much of the work of truth seekers involves exposing fallacies and clarifying concepts that are spun and distorted to advance Truth claims that reveal only partial truth, becoming falsehoods when they are promoted as Truth. Those who seek truth generally spend far more time clearing away falsehood than actually discovering truth, most of which has already been discovered, at least in the moral realm. Most of the Truth claims of science fall into step (5) of the process you describe, and when they achieve consensus, usually in service to some religious or political agenda, they are very resistant to criticism or revision.

Herbert Douglass
1 month ago Reply

Look, friends, I am grateful for everyone's contributions. It shows what happens when anyone starts out, consciously or unconsciously, from his own imprinted world view (assumptions). It helps when anyone simply states his/her philosophical "home." But it seems so hard to do. For anyone! And then state his simple logical reasons, etc. I think no one has disputed Darrel's appeal to recognized scientists on those questions I asked earlier. In fact, I went to Wikipedia on "transitional" fossils and this is what I read:

"This article needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding reliable references. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (June 2010)"
"This documentation needs attention from an expert on the subject. See the talk page for details. WikiProject Paleontology or the Paleontology Portal may be able to help recruit an expert. (April 2010)"
"This is an incomplete list, which may never be able to satisfy particular standards for completeness. You can help by expanding it with reliably sourced entries." All emphasis in article.

These are the same words of caution that Darrel's specialists above were urging. And Darwin said about the same thing in his Origin, But this kind of caution is not heard by high school and college students or by excited journalists.

It may be that real discussion here can only proceed with each one admitting the basis for his faith out of which he/she forms his/her "facts." I will state mine first: Reality made its hardest hit when Jesus was resurrected--that surely pierced the curtain between the world as we know it and the world yet to be more perfectly known. Studying who this Jesus was and is, for me, seems to be the most important subject that human beings can pursue. Everything flows out from here, even back to Genesis--but in that order. Does this make any sense? Cheers, Herb
Herb, Wikipedia writes these warnings when it wish to show that not enough support has been attached to their article. It does not mean that the citations do not exist. Otherwise the same caution you show here against transitional fossils must be used towards the Sabbath, which also has a note of warning regarding citations on Wikipedia. This time it says: "This article does not cite any references or sources. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (January 2011)"

Surely you will not take this warning provided by the Wikipedia editors as a cause to deplore the lack of caution heard from pulpits and AR journalists regarding the Sabbath?

As for the basis for my faith, I agree with you. It has its centre in the person of Jesus and the event of the resurrection. The bible is the story of how God has sought a relationship with humans, and how He has worked towards finding men willing to be made in His image. Anyone reading the prophets will quickly see that this has not been an easy task.

Ella M.

"Everything flows out from here, even back to Genesis--but in that order. Does this make any sense?"

Yes, it makes very good sense to the believer.

Elaine Nelson

The one most important word in all these discussions is "believer." One is either a believer, or one chooses to rely on evidence. They are seldom in harmony. Even the Resurrection is on the basis of "belief" and while it is the most essential doctrine of Christianity, it is based solely on belief; otherwise, it would be an accepted fact.

We can all state our beliefs but they must first be stated so that anything following that will be read and interpreted through that lens. Adventists are "believers" but most of the particular, even peculiar beliefs are not shared with the majority of Christianity. This is the reason that for most of its history, Adventism has looked for new converts from existing Christians: Christians who are largely ignorant of the Bible and are a fertile field for converts as Adventists do have a superior knowledge of the Bible, and especially in quoting texts to prove those particular beliefs while prospective converts are not able to refute by their lack of Bible knowledge.

Herbert Douglass

Dear Elaine, Old Friend : Please, tell me what you do "believe with all your heart." Cheers, Herb
Elaine Nelson

Herb, I believe in the simple goodness of people and have found that if you expect the best of people you will usually find it. Most people find what they are looking for. There are far more good people in this world and fewer evil, although we may occasionally run into them.

I believe that the way we treat people is far more important than any possible doctrinal positions and that we often fight over the latter but seldom the former. I believe that Christ's great commandment is Love and we should demonstrate that by our lives; few care about our private beliefs. I also believe that all those who have tried to be kind to their neighbors and been compassionate to those in need will find homes in heaven if that is the final destination for all.

Everything else that is argued and discussed, and Adventists have much to disagree as they have so many doctrinal positions, that all 28 FB can be thrown out and your neighbor, your co-worker, your casual acquaintance will neither know nor care, but they will be concerned how you treat the less fortunate among us.

That's all I can find worthy of believing. If there is more, it was forgotten as being non-essential.

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Trevor Hammond

The humanist approach is admirable, noteworthy and even a viable option at times; but it does NOT and CANNOT remedy the problem of SIN (NEITHER CAN SCIENCE for that matter). We are ALL SIN Positive which is our true condition and only, only Jesus provides the healing balm for this terrible malady. Can I say this without sounding rhetorical? There is power in the Blood of Jesus Christ. This is a fact. Millions throughout the ages, before and after the cross have had the opportunity to be covered by His Blood, through His Grace and Mercy. By faith this Salvation becomes a tangible experiencial priviledge, thanks to HIM of course. Evolution faith and empirical science makes NO provision whatsoever for Sin: the Bible does; and reveals this plan of Salvation which has been tried and tested and evidently a reality we can embrace. A PERSONAL God is revealed in Christ Jesus - and can I say this too: HE IS GOD!

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Elaine Nelson

Yes, the beliefs that I personally submitted does not mention sin, nor any religion. Sin is a many-worded thing and all religions have their own set of sins which their particular deity has prohibited. There are millions who are uncommitted to any particular belief and if it's humanism, then it embodies the command to treat everyone as you would like to be treated, and to love your neighbor as yourself, which are basically the same motif.

What you believe; what anyone else believes is their personal position but those that I listed are basic to all peoples everywhere and at all times. As Rabbi Hillel said when asked to quote the
entire Torah while standing on one foot, simply repeated the Golden Rule and added "all the rest is commentary--and I can add nothing more.

Ella M.  1 month ago  Reply

The problem here is the existence of sin and evil that are much more widespread than you are admitting. Actually most people are selfish (maybe this is the original sin)--I would say all people. Such people cannot inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. If they did the same thing would start all over again. By assuming all people are good is flying in the face of facts. Sure some may be polite and born to good families and raised well, but they are still selfish. Others may be downright wicked and serial killers and unable to think beyond their passions. All will have had a turning point to accept or reject the Spirit.

The only way of salvation is through Jesus Christ who died "before the foundation of the world" that all may be saved. There is no time factor with God, He provided for us before we were born. But we must choose (not reject) His love that comes through the Holy Spirit that pervades the earth and battles the forces of evil.

JaNe  1 month ago  Reply

TRUE. Nice post.
I view evolution, especially in light of genetics, to be nothing more than the hocus-pocus of modern science. It'sd modern flat-earth science.

If we evolved from a single cell, then why is tghere beauty in nature and why do we have the senses to observe that beauty?

And where is the anti-matter in the universe? And one could go on & on & on. Christianity and evolution are incompatible and today there are scientific answers to challenge evolution.

Roscoe Fogg  1 month ago  Reply

JaNe,
Would an explaination of the matter/anti-matter inbalance in the universe really matter to you?

Elaine Nelson  1 month ago  Reply

Roscoe, your question: "Would an explanation of the matter/anti-matter....really matter" is most appropriate: one must first understand the question to begin to understand the answer.

Ervin Taylor  1 month ago  Reply

Virgin Mary at Lourdes?

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago

"Believer" is one of the most over-used and meaningless words in Adventism. Would someone care to define it? Or is it simply each person's subjective evaluation?

If speaking of Creation: Who refuses to acknowledge we live in a world of wonder and beauty? Does the "correct" explanation of this creation demand either a "believer" or "non-believer" status? Who cares what other's believe? Personally, I only care how they treat other humans (animals, also).

Trevor Hammond
1 month ago

Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.
Rom 4:3 For what doth the Scripture say? And Abraham believed in God, and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness.

I like this definition below which to an 'unbeliever' may not be fully comprehended and therefore misunderstood:

- "The greek word for believe is pisteuo(pist-yoo'o) and means to have faith, to trust in. To believe, as in faith is far different than simply to believe in something. For instance, the devils believe God exists, and fear him, but it does not save. The scriptures uses the terms to "believe in" and "to believe on". To believe on connotes trust. To believe in simply agrees that something is." - [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_greek_meaning_of_the_word_believe]

G4100 (Mickelson's Enhanced Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionaries)

G4100 πιστεύω (pist-yoo'-o) v.

1. to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e. credit
2. (by implication) to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ)

[from G4102] KJV: believe(-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with Root(s): G4102

This ain't 'pie in the sky' belief/believe/believer as suggested by Mrs. Nelson in terms of 'overuse' and 'meaningless'. In fact, in the context of the Laodicean Church, one may find that there is a LACK of true believers, rather than 'overuse', hence the admonition and subsequent counsel. It is therefore my opinion that 'believer' won't just be limited to a 'subjective evaluation' only, especially when the object of our belief is God in Christ Jesus. Hey, I'm a 'believer', subjective; objective; emotive; whatever! Faith in God makes this a tangible experience and a living reality (for believers of course). PS.- Skeptics and doubters by default won't/can't fall into the 'Christian believers' category which they by their own choice have chosen to 'disbelieve'.

T
As it is often the case there are some difficulties here I see with Mrs. Nelson's post:

Mrs. Nelson quotes Mr. Douglass: "Everything flows out from here, even back to Genesis--but in that order. Does this make any sense?"

Mrs. Nelson then adds: "Yes, it makes very good sense to the believer." A later post after that Mrs. Nelson talks a bit about 'Believer' and 'relying on evidence' and then (just a post before this comment of mine) She declares and adds: "Believer" is one of the most over-used and meaningless words in Adventism. Would someone care to define it? Or is it simply each person's subjective evaluation?" .......Madam sometimes it is difficult to understand what are you trying to say and put forth, going right and then left coming back to right and then sides and so on...... One reason I believe in reading and posting in AT is to take and show our stands and opinions (There might be many reason though) but at times it is difficult to respond to your concerns as to what you want to know....sometime you look like you know a lot about the issue you are talking about and some other time you seem to be just writing for the shake of writing as you are also one of the most engaged person here in AT when it comes to posting comments, Oh you are there in Spectrum too (No offense).

Mr. Douglass I guess has been very straight when he asked you: "Dear Elaine, Old Friend : Please, tell me what you do believe with all your heart." I think he is also asking you not only in the context of that immediate post rather his question to you was related to his overall article/blog (this)....Please don't call me mind reader (lol) like the otherday a friend here in the blog was stating how initially he was labled as not understanding anything and later declared to be a mind reader......funny things do exist a lot in this world of ours......

By the way Mr. Douglass sincerely acknowledges: "Studying who this Jesus was and is, for me, seems to be the most important subject that human beings can pursue. **Everything flows out from here,** even back to Genesis"

Yes, indeed everything flows from JESUS.....In HIM WAS LIFE AND THAT LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN'......God indeed reconciles the World in CHRIST. If people have problem with EGW, 6DC (Genesis account) and even the SDAs that can be understood but if they say they have problem with the Biblical explanation just because the God of the Bible and His workings didn't fit into their Seminary and universities degree studies or lets say even the non-Adventist beliefs they sport for that matter then nomatter how loud they trumpet they believe in God and goodness of all men etc.they are bound to fall in the pride of their academic and so-so achievements etc. I believe it is difficult for some people to accept the comments that some SDA brethrens post in here not because they don't agree with them but rather they feel they are the only ones with the right understanding which most of the times they love blaming on those SDA commentators (again a mind reader, lol).


Somewhere here Mrs. Nelson even talks of throwing the 28FBs to the dustbin but then my concern is how do you tell people what you believe and why are you a different people, what stands you
have (the list goes on) and moreover don't you think in an age like ours that we need them more often however the fact that SDA is more than 28FBs rather it's a movement to take the everlasting gospel to the farthest ends of the earth is as clear as crystal I guess but it is still not a sufficient reason to throw 28FBs. Other day a person after hearing a word on sabbath asked me 'Why you guys emphasize so much on 1 and forget the nine' I replied 'no we haven't forgotten the other nine but others have forgotten the one we are talking about hence the need to speak beautiful truths that often sounds bitter to most may be.' there is so much to write but then in my country they say 'You can wake the person who is really asleep but you can't who is pretending to be asleep'.......folks I am ready for getting some backfiring at least on the last two lines but that's fine.....good day

J. David Newman

How does evolution explain the fact that humans are the only species who wear clothes? Why did we not just evolve thicker skin or hair or fur to deal with colder climates? Second, how does evolution explain the fact that every society on earth considers it improper to discard all clothing in public? Why is it improper to live fully nude in public when the climate will allow it? Every culture whether Christian or non-Christian follows this practice. Why?

Kevin Riley

Actually, there have been societies where going without clothes is totally proper. The Tierra Del Fuagans and Australian Aboriginals are two that come to mind. Nudity in various situations was considered acceptable in a number of cultures before contact with Western culture. I share your scepticism of evolution, but arguments need to be made on accurate facts.

J. David Newman

Kevin, thank you. Please clarify whether these examples you gave lived totally without any covering such as loin cloths. I am not familiar with societies like that but I am willing to be corrected. However, you did not comment on my main point: Why are humans the only species that did not evolve thicker skin or hair or fur to deal with different climates?

Kevin Riley

There was nowhere in Australia where clothes were worn habitually. Skin cloaks were worn in winter - where it exists - but loin cloths etc, were not worn. Any strings of bead or fur that were worn were purely decorative. It was, however, possible to be either decently naked or indecently naked. The Yaghan of Tierra del Fuego also went completely naked when first encountered. I am not sure there is an answer to your question, except the obvious answer that humans don't evolve in that way. As I don't really believe in evolution as a theory of origins, I will leave it to someone who does to give an answer.
Herbert Douglass

Dr. Newman asks simple questions that go along with several that I have raised after reading some of the most recognized scholars in their various fields: Why has not someone somewhere ever produced a specie in transition, either a half man or a half horse, etc.? Or, how can a cell of whatever nature be found with only half of the ingredients needed to exist? How could even a cell with all of its more than 200 of its ingredients ever just happen, on the basis of just evolving into a full cell? How come the most skilled mathematicians have tried to figure out how many zillions of years it would take to get all the stuff within one cell to come together at one time? BTW, what are the chances of one cell, or collection of cells, figuring out that to increase that had to be sexually mated? How does that work? You can see what the editor of *Adventist Today* did to my brain?

Cheers, Herb

Ervin Taylor

My Adventist Today colleague asked “How does evolution explain the fact that humans are the only species who wear clothes?” What a fascinating question for an Adventist blog! I will be happy to offer a point of view from an anthropological perspective if my Adventist Today colleague would promise to tell me his opinion on this topic from what I assume is a theological perspective. I am very curious to know why he asked and what view he has of this topic. Fair enough?

First, a clarification: There seems to be a need to make sure that we are using the word “evolution” in the same context.

If my AT colleague is using “evolution” as “biological evolution,” then the question is being asked in that context and an answer should respond from a biological perspective. Perhaps that question is related to the one which asked why humans are the only species that did not evolve thicker skin or hair or fur to deal with different climates. The fact is that our species has evolved a number of genetically-mediated externally observable physical features that did respond to environmental variables. The best known is the amount of melanin in the skin of some human groups. This is almost certainly an evolutionary biological response to increased amount of skin exposure to the intensity of sunlight. On the other hand, there is the possibility that all early Homo sapiens had dark skin pigmentation and that other human sub-groups lost that pigmentation with time as they moved out of Africa (see below). Some other examples which are explained in most physical anthropology textbooks would include the loss in genus Homo of the gene which expresses a sagittal crest at the top of the skull and another gene that controls the size the size of the jaw creating the characteristic chin structure of anatomically modern Homo.

On the other hand, if “evolution” here means “cultural evolution,” then certainly that is an understandable question. Unless one believes in some type of genetic component, the wearing or not wearing of clothing is entirely a cultural issue, i.e., an idea or concept held in common by the members of a given human society. There is obviously a general correlation between the mean annual temperature of an environment and the amount of clothing that is considered appropriate. But there are certainly exceptions to this generalization.

I assume that the question is a little more basic. Why body coverings of any kind at all? It is a fact that the human species is the only one where almost all of its members habitually cover parts of
their bodies with some type of material. Kevin already responded that there are certainly a few human groups that do not wear any type of clothing. This is correct, but it is also correct to say that there are a relatively small number of societies where it has been reported that this is the general practice. Almost all human societies do indeed wear some type of covering.

From an anthropological perspective, this question is related to some degree with the observation that, in contrast to other primates, humans have lost most of their body hair. The question is why? There is a lot of speculation on this point. One suggestion is that the migration of Homo sapiens out of Africa, which is roughly dated to 100,000 years ago, is associated with both the loss of hair and the need to acquire some type of clothing since average temperatures as populations move northwards tends to decrease. There may be some connection to the loss of pigmentation mentioned earlier. There are also those who argue that human language behavior begins to appear about the same time. We know that human burials begin to appear in the archaeological record at about that time as well. Perhaps all of these changes are linked together, occurred at roughly the same time, and reinforced each other in a complex manner. But direct archaeological evidence is very hard to come by.

My reading of the ethnographic literature suggests that the most widespread taboo among human groups required a covering of the genitals. There are (or were up to relatively recent contact times) a number of hunting and gathering societies in topical environments that wore nothing else than such a covering. The Hebrew creation narrative about Adam and Eve brings that point up in the interesting question of “Who told you that you were naked?” and the fig leaf thing. So we know that even among the ancient Hebrews by the time the Genesis narratives were written down, this taboo was well established and they included an explanation of how it got started in that story.

The acquisition of a natural language system enabled our species to begin to develop all sorts of “ideas” and other abstractions about the nature of the world and about themselves. That is what lies at the center of why the human species is so different from all other species. Taboos about what is permissible and what is not permissible in your little group would then emerge and now could be communicated from generation to generation. The idea that a taboo developed about what part of the body could be exposed and what could not be exposed to certain people is not much of a stretch. Then some type of covering would then be used.

Once the idea of “clothing” was developed, then all kinds of factors would influence how the idea of clothing could be expanded to represent many other kinds of ideas as human societies increased in size and complexity. Among the most obvious categories, clothing reflects and signals gender, social status, ideology, and occupation.

That’s one “evolutionary” explanation as to why clothing is unique to human societies and how the taboo about wearing and not wearing clothing originated. Now what is your explanation?
simply lend credence to the contention that much of evolutionary theory has nothing at all to do with science?"

Ervin Taylor

Nate again exhibits his great rhetorical skills with his questions. As for his first question: Why have confidence in one theory as opposed to another? The serious answer is that generally in science the model or theory that explains the largest amount of relevant data with the least number of ad hoc elements is the preferred explanation. As for his second question: The style and form of the question as posed must have worked for him at least once in a court room environment. It doesn't work very well any place else.

Nathan Schilt

My questions, Erv, were not intended to be rhetorical. You begin with an a priori rejection of non naturalistic explanations, which produces a closed system consisting of self-referential, circular reasoning. This indeed makes sense if you are dealing with empirical scientific methodology, which admits to the limitations of its epistemological tools. But attaching the label "science" to rationalistic models that are highly speculative, and calling them "preferred explanations" really puts the genre of science fiction on a solid scientific footing. If you are going that route, surely you would want to invoke Richard Dawkins infamous space aliens as a reasonable possibility for the introduction of clothing to homo sapiens.

My second question was simply an observation that you have conflated reason with science. They are not the same. Your explanations, reasonable and even compelling as they may be, come from the realm of reason and logic, not science. You offer multiple potential theories, excluding those that elude your rational net. In other words, you only entertain as relevant the data that your discipline lets in the door. Similarly, global warming alarmists glommed onto the one element of climate - CO2 - that scientists understood, and concluded, despite their inability to understand 97% of the climate system, that CO2 must be the primary driver of climate change. Scientists with a vested interest in the outcome, particularly paleoclimatologists, proceeded to selectively retrieve the data, cook and "smooth" the data, and then deny legitimacy to their critics, in the end fabricating one of the greatest frauds and cover-ups in the history of science. And I am quite confident that you were one who accepted the scientific consensus built on that fraud as "settled science".

Is it not ironic that, as science and mathematics have over the centuries disproved their own assumptions and theories, demonstrating the unlimited vastness of human ignorance, the one theory that persists as inviolable scientific Truth can neither be proven nor disproven with current empirical tools of science - namely, that life on earth evolved, unguided by any higher intelligence, over a period of hundreds of millions of years. We must, it seems to me, cautiously and humbly continue to rely on the scientific elements of the Ptolemaic theory of evolution until someone comes up with a version of Galileo's telescope to allow us to see the distant past as clearly as he saw the phases of Venus. When that happens, I suspect both the evolutionists and the creationists will be greatly amazed.
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| Erv: Despite your many words you never did answer my question from a scientific point of view. I do not question variation within species and adaptation within species. Micro-evolution is not an issue. What you did not answer is why mindless evolution would produce humans from whatever pre-humans they came without the ability to survive in their environment as the other creatures could survive. All other creatures are able to survive in hot or cold climates without the need of external coverings. Let’s forget the other part of my question right now about why current humans feel the need to wear clothes even indoors where the climate is regulated. Let’s stay with the biological or anthropological issue. Your discussion of pigmentation is beside the point. Most of the time you spent answering the other part of my question. You did not answer my key point: What evolutionary mechanism would produce the uniqueness of humans when it comes to surviving without external coverings? If evolution is producing the survival of the fittest it would never have produced humans without the fur or hair to survive in hostile conditions. All those not adapted would have died. Perhaps the most honest answer would be to say: this is one of the mysteries of evolution for which we are still seeking an answer. Because you gave me no answer in your reply. And as to my answer. You can guess, I am sure, but I do not want to clutter up your answer to my main question with theological issues. Let’s stay on the scientific side of things. I am still trying to understand how evolution could make this unique distinction and what purpose it would serve evolution to evolve a creature that could not survive in its environment. That seems very counter evolution. In your answer to Nate you say: “the serious answer is that generally in science the model or...
theory that explains the largest amount of relevant data with the least number of ad hoc elements is the preferred explanation.” The challenge is that you actually did not present any model and no relevant data. I am still waiting.

J D Newman

you have a good point "if evolution is producing the survival of the fittest it would never have produced humans without the fur or hair to survive in hostile conditions"

Evr answering your question? good luck... when the kitchen get hot, you are alone my friend. You have a bigger chance to see in person the "pithecanthropus erectus", or his cousin the "sasquatch" teaching the next sabbath school.

"Mindless evolution"

To use this prejudiced adjective shows a priori rejection to any answer given. It is not an honest question but a statement of belief.

this link to research conducted by University of Edinburgh which considers that there is an inverse relationship between intelligence and belief in religion.

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/religion-and-beliefs/news/article.cfm?c_id=301...

Elaine, are you saying that evolution has a mind?

Perhaps both creationists and evolutionists should remember that neither belief can be shown during the process. This leaves either position to be demonstrated.

Creationists rely on supernatural events; scientists find that a constantly moving and unstable thesis: whenever something cannot be explained the answer is that it was a supernatural event. Scientists are driven to search for answers, creationists already have the answers. Scientists who do not have all the answer, nevertheless continue studying; creations have no need to study, as the answers are all the same: simply read the story in Genesis for the explanation.
Creationism has not changed since the Bible was written, if so, it is because scientific discoveries demonstrated unmistakeably that the interpretation of the Bible was wrong. We know there were ideas believed then that have proved erroneous and many cannot stand up to scrutiny. Science has changed, is always changing, and with new evidence, it may also change the conclusions.

This is how I see the difference.

Would you care to describe the two versions?

J. David Newman

Elaine, you tempt me but I must resist. I want to stay with the key question I raised. I notice that you have studiously avoided answering but have added detours. Sometime we need a blog on presuppositions. Herb are you reading? A blog on world views and how we arrive at them would make for a fascinating blog.

Elaine Nelson

It is a waste of both our times when minds are already settled. Carry on.

David

not kidding.... when was the last time you change your mind?

David

J D Newman

you have a good point "if evolution is producing the survival of the fittest it would never have produced humans without the fur or hair to survive in hostile conditions"

Evr answering your question? good luck... when the kitchen get hot, you are alone my friend. You have a bigger chance to see in person the "pithecanthropus erectus", or his cousin the "sasquatch" teaching the next sabbath school.

Trevor Hammond

@cb25

I only raised the issue regarding the honourable Dr. Walter Veith whose name was mentioned by you Sir. I was rather surprised at your remarks regarding Dr. Veith as he is a very credible scholar and scientist. I can’t help but think whether you were looking for someone with data to fit your beliefs or some beliefs to fit your data. If that was the case then I can understand why you would react in such an ‘over the edge way’ to the lectures on the media lent to you.
You must remember also that Dr. Veith is not alone in his findings as others also subscribe to much of his research and can reasonably say that he is a very credible scientist and scholar whose findings support the Biblical narrative you have rejected. One thing clear to me from all this discussion within this blog and elsewhere is that evolution and creation CANNOT be conflated as they contradict each other.

Secondly, I have to state, that evolution at its core is contradictory: in that life’s intricate COMPLEX biological systems evidently and unambiguously reveal remarkable intelligence and design, which leave natural selection and ‘chance’ or whatever, left clutching on to major straw-men which is really just over the top dodgy theory and sensationalism. The bottom line is that evolution is contradictory as it has NO basis or rational reasoning for the very EVIDENT phenomena of intelligent design.

T

Trevor Hammond
1 month ago  Reply

Oops - apologies - I posted this on the wrong blog but enjoy! ☺

T

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago  Reply

David, if you're asking me "when was the last time you change your mind"? It is constantly changing with new information, and I hope I continue to be better informed by new (to me) information. A static mind contains no new thoughts; a growing mind is open to new thoughts.

J. David Newman
1 month ago  Reply

Elaine, if you visit my office you will see a framed cartoon on the wall. It pictures a farm wagon with SQUARE wheels on the axles and ROUND wheels poking out of the top of the wagon. The man pulling the wagon is saying to the man pushing the wagon: "Harry, just keep pushing. If you would stop asking so many questions we would get there faster." I am actually Harry, I have changed my ideas so many times in my life it makes my head spin sometimes. Here are a few examples: I used to be against drums in church. Now we have drums at my church. I used to be against women’s ordination now I am even against men’s ordination. I used to be for capital punishment now I am against it. You are absolutely right "a growing mind is open to new thoughts."

The reason I am conservative when it comes to creation is because I have not yet been able to reconcile what science says about origins and what the Bible says about origins when it comes to death. I wonder why God would used death in his creation when the Bible calls death an enemy and the Bible tells us that there will be no death in the New Earth. That does not make sense to me. If death is necessary to produce life why would it now be unnecessary in the new earth. I have read all the articles on theodicy on Francis Collins website biologos.com and none of them adequately explain how to resolve this dilemma. I prefer to believe that the entrance of sin in some
way altered some of the fundamental laws of science which would explain the tensions we have today. Otherwise we have sin (death) co-existing throughout God's creation from the very beginning. And if death has been with us from the beginning what kind of death did Jesus save us from and why would he need to save us? But I write too much. I can live with a lot of diversity of opinions as long as people have a dynamic, living, and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. In the end it is not how much knowledge we have that will save us but who we know.

Elaine Nelson 1 month ago Reply

At least an open mind allows new ideas to enter; a closed mind is locked against any intrusion.

Yes, the Bible writers claimed that sin brought death. But death has always been a part of life. If Eve took the fruit; if they ate the herbs, there was death; out of death brings life. It would be a Hell if this earth were to follow the command to be fruitful and multiply and no one, no animal, no plant ever died. Contemplating such an existence is not one I would choose to inhabit.

Death is usually a blessing. As the story goes, only by keeping the pair from the Tree of Life brought death. If inside the garden there was no death: what would the pair eat? Death of decaying vegetation to nourish the earth, no animal deaths, we cannot imagine that sort of life. Only the earth as the Bible writers knew could be described, and they imagined a pleasant utopia which existed before them, none by personal experience. Just as heaven is a utopia in imagination since no has been there either. With such imagination millions of pages have been written to take us, for awhile, out of the humdrum of daily existence. Hope springs eternal.

David 1 month ago Reply

I’ll agree with you that for people death is a blessing, people with untreatable pain, with cancer, with all kind of diseases. Why to live when life is miserable? No hope, no faith, and no love.

I don’t know about you, but is a blessing to understand and experience John 17:13 “eternal live is to know GOD and JESUS”. This is not an intellectual exercise, is a miracle, an experience that changes lives. Lives full of Hope, Faith and Love.

This is like pain; no one will understand what pain is until is experimented.

David 1 month ago Reply

is john 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Trevor Hammond 1 month ago Reply

RE: Mrs. Nelson's comment: " It would be a Hell if this earth were to follow the command to be fruitful and multiply and no one, no animal, no plant ever died."

------
You have omitted one important thought with regards to the blanket statement you have made above. NO ONE SAID THAT WE WOULD BE CONFINED TO THIS PLANET AT CREATION. (Anyway the Earth has a plenty of room especially if the Oceans were land areas - think about it). Sin brought death and decay which as a result has confined us this side of Eden. I have trust and hope in Jesus the Creator to have made ample provision for the creatures of His hand should sin not have entered the world. He is not called Jehovah Jireh (Praise God!) for nothing. He is Provider to all of the Life on this planet and has Provided too a plan of redemption to reconcile us to God. Please accept his invitation Ma'am. Time waits for no man but He is waiting for you. Just surrender your life to Him! You have this right to believe in Him: let no one take your crown of eternal life away!

God Bless!

T

Elaine, I understand your delima about life in Eden before Adam and Eve took the fruit. But you are operating on a BIG assumption--that the laws we live under today were the same in Eden. My worldview is that sin dramatically changed the landscape of God's creation. I believe different laws operated in Eden that would take care of all the issues you raised. Nature is no longer a perfect revelation of God. It has been corrupted by Satan, the great deceiver. His great desire is to act against God and show that God is not loving. Therefore I need special revelation, the Bible, to help me interpret general revelation, nature.

There is a great story in the book of Joshua where the Gibeonites deceived the Israelites by pretending they came from a great distance. They produced moldy bread, old garments, cracked sandals and the Israelites accepted the age of these items as genuine and they were genuine but they put the wrong interpretation on them. We read in Joshua 9:14 "The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD."

If we do not inquire of the Lord we will be deceived in the evolution creation debate. And because each side comes from a fundamental different set of presuppositions there will never be agreement. We all have the same facts, everyone, the challenge is how we interpret those facts. If I interpret primarily through the lens of science I will come up with one interpretation. If I interpret through the lens of the Bible I will come up with a different interpretation. Until we agree on the rules we can never play the game and that is why arguing over the data is pointless unless we first agree on the rules to interpret that data. We will just keep going around and around in circles with no circles ever meeting each other.

Yes, we all operate under differing assumptions: to choose to believe that the world has always been as it is because there is no indication otherwise, is easier for me to believe than at some time in the past the entire laws governing this world, human nature, and all the plant and animal life were suddenly changed. This would mean that the molars and digestive systems suddenly changed where before they had lived peacefully together but suddenly became predators; that the insects
and other life forms that carry death, were previously beneficial to mankind and now became carriers of death. Was Satan given permission to make such drastic changes? Where in the Bible is Satan said to have made such changes? Were these experiences simply what the writers were experiencing?

This defies rational understanding and must be built on so many assumptions that with every question, new assumptions must be added. With each question, there is an answer that cannot be verified, but simply believed. We either give scientific findings consideration, or we let the Bible give the answers; answers that are dependent on human interpretation. Why bother with studying science if it might not conform to the Bible?

It is so much simpler to merely let the Bible be an answer to all such questions. Why bother with trying to harmonize science with the Bible when it a foregone conclusion to reject anything that does not agree with the Bible? Limiting to a set of rules closes all questions that would disagree with the interpretation of the Bible. It is very apparent that there are many and varied interpretations within the Bible even among Adventists. Some have suggested that there should be a uniform voice on every subject.

If "Nature is no longer a perfect revelation of God" when did it cease being a revelation? Nature reveals something transcendent, beyond humans that has led millions to worship a god they saw revealed in the beauties of nature. Have they ceased to be wondrous and beautiful? Is it your premise that Satan has a hand in changing nature? How has Satan corrupted nature and how do we know he is the villain? Wasn't God the one that uttered the curse with its effects, not Satan?

If so, Adventists must believe that Satan has powers equal to God in affecting nature. Is he limited? Does anyone know where and what he can change? Has Satan always had such powers? Isn't it odd that the early Hebrew writers knew nothing of Satan and everything, both good and evil they believed to come from the hand of God? At what time did this major change take place?

Kevin Seidel

It is curious that the garden of Eden had the Tree of Life. If there was no death before the fall, why was it needed? Perhaps its presence in the garden prevented death there, but what about outside the garden? It would seem that some sort of death existed before the fall for the Tree of Life to prevent.

Nathan Schilt

Fascinating observation. And if the world outside the Garden was perfect, why a garden? The whole world must have been a spectacular garden. And since sin occurred in the Garden, wouldn't one think that the Garden would experience the effects of sin, so there would be no need to banish the disobedient couple? Could it be that an all knowing, loving God set in place a process - evolution - which prescinded human sin, and would both reveal its awfulness and mitigate its consequences through death? In the vast dimensions of eternity, could it be that cause and effect could work backwards as well as forwards - or neither?
A question to which I have no answer is: what effect did Lucifer's fall - and that of 1/3 of the angels - have on the universe? Sin existed before Adam and Eve fell. When I look at the universe, with the birth and death of stars and the destruction of suns and planets, I find it hard to believe that this is the perfection that God created. I do not like the idea of evolution with death and destruction as the method of God creating, but when I look at the universe, that is what I see happening. It isn't just the fossil record or the geological column that raises questions about creation 6,000 years ago followed by sin and the resulting death. Do we need to extend the realm of sin to the outer reaches of our universe? Where then are the unfallen worlds? I still want to believe in God creating in 6 days, but it is by faith, and despite the evidence, not because of it.

The "unfallen worlds" are securely ensconced in the Red Books. They could be somewhere out there too. It doesn't really impact my perception of who God is or who I am in relation to Him. I believe that the first three chapters of Genesis convey compressed Truth about the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of sin. Precisely what happened, how it happened, and how long ago it happened are as inconsequential to me as understanding the laws of physics that tell me why a bumble bee can or cannot fly. I am thrilled that others find those questions fascinating, and I marvel at their discoveries.

But the Bible is a book of moral wisdom and transcendent realities. God speaks to me through that book as He spoke to the patriarchs and prophets - not so much to inform me as to evoke a response that empowers Him, through me, to break through encrusted epistemologic barriers of the natural order. By anthropomorphically judging God, requiring that His Word conform with our linguistic understandings and our childish notions of truth-telling, we, like Job's comforters, seek a foolish consistency that, as Emerson observed, is the hobgoblin of small minds.

I suspect we are not that far apart - and as long as we didn't talk politics, all would be well :) Anyone who agrees that "in the beginning God created", that Jesus saves us from our sin, and he is returning 'soon' (as defined by God) is welcome to claim to be an SDA and I won't argue. I still don't like evolution as a method of creating, but if I discover when I get to heaven (being somewhat presumptuous) that God did use evolution over millions of years, or that he did it all in less than 1 second and only used 6 days as a literary motif, I think I could live with that. If I get to heaven, I will be willing to accept anything God says :)

Elaine, well it seems that we actually agree on one thing--that our views arise out of differing
assumptions. And you simply say that your assumptions are easier to believe than my
assumptions. And to that I reply that my assumptions are easier to believe than yours. In either
case faith enters into the picture. The core of the Bible is God becoming human, dying, and rising,
and coming back for His people. Using your assumptions I could never accept that because they
are totally unscientific. So that leaves me without a Savior and without hope for a future life. To
have a Savior I need to know what I am saved from. I need to know when sin entered and
distorted God's creation. Maybe you can see why I have so many questions about evolution since
it cannot explain sin and how it fits into the evolutionary pattern.

As I have written earlier I can quite well live with theistic evolutionists if their understanding leads
them to a close relationship with God and where they experience God living in their lives and give
Him glory and praise. Just as I can live with a legalistic Christian if the same results occur. The
bottom line with me is not knowledge but who you know. If you know Jesus and love him with all
your heart and love to share him with others I will accept whatever assumptions and ideas you
have in other areas. But if these other ideas discourage me from having a relationship with the
Creator of the Universe then they become hurtful for me rather than beneficial.

Nathan Schilt

Well stated, David!

Ervin Taylor

I'm sure that all Christians of good will, including Christians who happen to be progressive
creationistics/theistic evolutionists, can concur with the sentiments of David Newman and Nate.
The only proviso might be that one would hope that both of them would not have problems when
some of us use non-traditional phraseology to address traditional religious sentiments, hold
different assumptions about how the natural world works, and might have a slightly different take
on what is involved when one talks about "sin."

Nathan Schilt

Suppose, Erv, that you got into a conversation with Hugh Hefner about love, and you expressed
your deeply held convictions about the joy and meaning that comes from a lifelong commitment
to a monogamous relationship of trust, love, and sexual fidelity. Hefner responds that of course
all who happen to believe in love can concur with your "sentiments"...the only proviso being that
one would hope you would not have problems when some believers use non-traditional
phraseology to address traditional sentiments about marriage, hold different assumptions about
human sexual psychology, and have a slightly different take on what is involved when one talks
about "love."

Do you get my point? Do you think we're stupid - that we can't see through your condescension?
Your clumsy attempt to appear reasonable, while verbally denigrating the legitimacy of any
reality underlying our faith commitment, which you belittle as sentimentalism, belies
your intention to use the language of faith to advance an anti-faith agenda. You unduly flatter
you by presuming that the phraseology you use to address matters of faith is non-traditional. In fact, there is nothing more traditional among non-believers than the rhetoric you use to describe faith perspectives. It's just a different tradition than I choose to live by.

You can of course define words however you wish. The serpent also had a "slightly different take" on what was involved when one interpreted God's Word. My point here is not to equate you with the serpent, Erv. Rather, I just get testy when people reject common word usage and understandings in order to mainstream ideas which are anything but. The Orwellian use of language to control the debate signals that one is less interested in conversation than in bending minds and hearts to a revolutionary agenda.

Elaine Nelson

Nathan,

Your message to Erv borders on both arrogance and defamation by claiming to "see though his condescension." To charge someone with that is only an indication that there is less than Christian forebearance to anyone with differing views. Can't we all get along if we have the same goal, although our journeys may follow different paths? Is there only one path, the official Adventist path that leads to eternal life?

Nathan Schilt

Well Elaine, I must defer to your proven expertise in arrogance. Obviously you have no understanding of what "defamation" means. Let's see, if I referred to your convictions about evolution as scientific sentiments, would it not be reasonable to conclude that I was denigrating your beliefs? Sorry, I don't think Erv has any plausible deniability here. Of course we can all get along. But we should not be fooled into dissolving critical differences in the meaningless illusion that we "have the same goal."

I suppose you might have said the same thing to Christ in His battles with the Jewish leaders - "Can't we all get along if we have the same goal, although our journeys may follow different paths?" "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." If Christian forebearance precludes one from speaking the truth, then Christ was certainly a poor example of Christian forbearance. Clarity is often - usually -more important than consensus. Linguistic relativism leads to fuzzy thinking, which is an acid that eats at the sinews which bind us to God and to one another in committed communities of faith.

Ervin Taylor

Nate found me out. I didn't think he would be able to see through my consescension. I thought I could get that past him. But he is too smart. Didn't work. But the highlight of his post was: "The Orwellian use of language to control the debate signals that one is less interested in conversation than in bending minds and hearts to a revolutionary agenda." I never thought of that--"bending minds and hearts to a revolutionary agenda." Hmm. That has
possibilities . . . . Now let's see how I might be able to bend Nate's mind and heart to my revolutionary agenda. I will think on that.

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Darrel Lindensmith

These are my thoughts about why life experienced death long before we were created. Death entered the world through Adam and Eve’s sin. When we look at this statement from the limited per-quantum view that forgets that there is no ‘time-stream’ in eternity, then we are confused as to how there is ‘death’ before the event that brought into reality. Adam and Eve representing all of humanity, in sinning exercised free choice to disobey God–otherwise known as learning. Avoiding creating the world preprogramed, God choose free choice that we may have an active part in our own programing.

From eternities’ prospective the concepts of "before and after" are completely relative. Speaking of Christ’s coming, Peter teaches he "was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake." 1 Peter 1:20

From the very beginning of the temporal creation God knowing the effects of free choice, created the world with these effects fully anticipated. God did not have to wait to see humanity (Adam and Eve) actually sin to adjust nature for this reality. Nature was created ‘front-loaded’ for adaptation, and death was a part of this system based on the reality of a world where the law of free choice (cause and effect) are normative.

Wherefore, as by one man’s sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for all sinned. Romans 5:12
"All sinned" because Adam is all humanity. Paul’s statement specifically says death passed to all humanity, saying nothing regarding the animal creation. But he includes them later. Paul expresses that the whole of creation that was ‘unwillingly’ [it was humanities free choice] brought into the situation of death by God who also gives the hope of creation’s redemption, as mankind finally makes all his choices. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:20-21 Someday soon I hope!

Darrel Lindensmith

I forgot to reference this verse showing the fluidity of "before and after" in the eternal "Now" of
God’s reality, "... the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13:8

Elaine Nelson

But the question is: Was it God who cursed the earth and caused thorns and thistles, etc., or was it Satan who he allowed to "mess" things up? Was Satan a later "co-creator"?

Trevor Hammond

Satan cannot 'CREATE': he however can 'MUTATE' what is created. Satan is the author of evolution.

Darrel Lindensmith

Here's my view Elaine. God declared, "cursed is the ground for thy sake." Genesis 3:17 Toil and a reasonable amount of hardship are redemptive disciplines necessary for learning and making wise choices and moral characters. Setting up a world based on free choice will involve unreasonable hardships too--genetic mutations, chance accidents and random disasters. Jesus said that "it rains on the just and the unjust."

None of these are "acts of God," [or satan in my view] but the natural consequences of a ‘physics set free’ of absolute control. Free within bounds--fine-tuned by the Creator for optimal balance for all his purposes. God has asked us to tip the scales in the ‘Right’ direction. Man is to use the incredible mind he has been blessed with to develop medicines to fight disease, build dams to protect areas of habitation and create legal systems and governments to protect the weak and punish the evil.

God encouraged man to begin the work of science and stewardship of the earth. "God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." Genesis 2:15 And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field . . . Genesis 2:19-20

"Naming" all the things of creation was the beginning of science and "dressing and keeping," were the beginning of stewardship of the planet. All this so we may someday experience the "new heaven and the new earth"— God will not need to ‘force us’ to enjoy His Kingdom; it will actually be the fulfillment of all our deepest aspirations. Or should be!

Ervin Taylor

A defender of the Adventist Church in the Solomon Islands just posted this on a local newspaper: "The Seventh Day Adventist Church believes and teaches that despite being the true Church of
God, God has a people in every religions of the world both Christian and non Christian religions and even among the atheist and the Catholics." With friends like that, we don't need any enemies.
Forged - Reviewed by Edwin A. Schwisow

Submitted Sep 9, 2011
By Edwin A. Schwisow


At least one Adventist university currently is struggling to reach an accommodation on how to teach — and not teach, science classes in which the church's traditional interpretation of Genesis 1-12 is respected, at least, and if possible endorsed.

Ten years from now, the issue will have run its course and I predict that a new one will emerge very likely surrounding the issues discussed in the book, Forged, by Bart D. Ehrman, professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and a leading authority on the Bible and the life of Jesus.

For most Adventist readers, this book will present a whole new dimension to the study of Scripture, from the point of view of the much-feared ‘higher criticism,’ an approach much maligned (but quietly studied) by many preachers we deem fundamentalist. Bible colleges and Adventist universities in general skirt the question of higher criticism by simply saying, “We don’t believe in it, therefore we don’t use it.”

This book is essentially a rehash of views that have been around a long time, but this is perhaps the first book written by a former Bible college student who presents this topic in a way that the general Christian and non-Christian reader will find interesting enough to actually read the whole book.

If Forged can be said to have a theme, it might be, which parts of the New Testament are truly written by the authors of record, and how and why did the rest come to appear in its current form? From a reader’s standpoint, the book offers a great deal of, who-done-it, mystery. Though the author does not claim to solve every riddle, he does give entertaining insight into how the much-feared ‘higher criticism’ actually works, or doesn’t work, depending on your point of view.

Evangelical Christians can run, but they can’t hide from the evidence this book presents. Like sexuality, our children are going to find out about higher criticism somehow. It is better to gain insights from a reputable source than from one who hates Christianity and finds joy in destroying faith.

To read is not necessarily to believe. As a journalist, I find a lot of what he has written overly speculative. Like evolution, some of the early conjectures of higher criticism have lost considerable
traction; others have gained some mainstream acceptance.

This book is by no means the final word as an introduction to higher criticism of the New Testament. But it’s a good beginning and can be criticized for its brevity (305 pages). Even so it earns a four-star rating (out of five possible) from Amazon.com readers.

I do a lot of visiting with educated nonbelievers and being acquainted with the claims of higher criticism is a tremendous boon in explaining why I stick with my faith. I face the questions of higher criticism in my typical head-on way, quietly but coherently. I now carry on an avid email exchange with several seriously ‘interested’ people who want to bring religion into their families’ lives. In my case, knowledge of the elements of higher criticism has brought nothing but greater confidence in my Christian interaction with others.

Reviewed & posted by CWH

Jim Miller

I cannot speak for undergraduate study on Adventist campuses, but "Higher Criticism" is already studied on the graduate level. Of course it is. It is studied, first, because someone with a scholarly degree must be acquainted with these ideas, with or without acceptance of either the premises or conclusions. This level of study goes back decades.

The second reason it is studied is because, properly speaking, the Adventist church is not fundamentalist -- even though many (most?) Adventists are fundamentalist. Ellen White was careful to NOT apply infallibility to the Scriptures -- and to herself. Also, anyone who has paid much attention to the controversy over Ellen White's writings over the past three decades is aware that her prophetic gift cannot be crammed into the fundamentalist model. In fact, anyone who carefully read Nichol's Ellen White and Her Critics before 1980 was already aware that fundamentalism is not an option for us.

This doesn't mean that Adventist scholars can or should swallow the whole Higher Criticism system, hook, line and sinker. It does give us some room, however, to critically examine Higher Criticism, and work with its methods. As the reviewer noted, much of this stuff is speculative. If you get past the speculation, you may find a few gems worth picking up.

Ella M.

This sounds like a reasonable approach to the subject. It is certainly true that we are not fundamentalists and I wish this fact was taught and presented more from the local church on up to the hierarchy, which currently sounds more fundamentalist than any time in the past.

Steve Billiter

WHY USE A FANCY TERM FOR THE OLD MAXIM--UNBELIEF!

Kevin Riley

Perhaps because many of the people who use higher criticism are believers. One can believe in
God, the Bible, and even Ellen White without being a fundamentalist. I don't accept many of the results of higher criticism, but that doesn't mean I can't recognise the belief of those who do. Some have no faith in God at all, but many do. Can we choose who is classified as a 'believer', or is that something we don't have the right to do because we often have neither the information nor the wisdom to do?

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<th>Ella M.</th>
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<td>A good point, Kevin.</td>
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<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
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<td>Having read at least three of Ehrman's books, I find them the most heavily documented of any books covering the early history of Christianity. One can certainly disagree with his findings, but cannot attack them with similar facts. He is esteemed as one of the best scholars of the formation of the NT canon and the many contradictions. Ignoring them, especially when conversing with someone who is also well versed in this subject, may find that individual going back for more studying. His findings are inescapable and may be ignored but cannot be refuted.</td>
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<td>Most Christians know little or nothing of Christianity's origins and have accepted by &quot;faith&quot; whatever they have been told. This is deplorable and affects Adventists as well as all Christians.</td>
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<td>I am familiar with the author but would rather spend time on other researchers without such an agenda. There really are reliable and great scholars in the Christian world who would disagree with this man's findings and interpretations. I would rather study from them. I would suggest N.T. Wright as noted on another post.</td>
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<th>Edwin A. Schwisow</th>
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<td>Thanks for adding that author's name to resources regarding Higher Criticism. This particular book appealed to me, as a reviewer, because of its brevity and readability for an audience not yet invested in this kind of analysis of Scripture. On the matter of who actually wrote what, it's interesting that this kind of criticism continues regarding the work of William Shakespeare, but this in no way discredits the value or literary inspiration of the work that appears under his name. Many Adventists would be astounded by the amount of &quot;ghost-writing&quot; and &quot;ghost-rewriting&quot; that occurs in denominational circles even today—and certainly in an earlier time, this same practice was</td>
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applied to the writings of Ellen White.

Elaine Nelson

Ignoring the recent discoveries of the canonization of the NT as well as the many additions, and contradictions, is often a complete surprise to Adventists. I remember my son, studying the Bible at Walla Walla 25 years ago as the only non-theology student in the class, to find that those students found this information completely new and rather disheartening. How much of this information is now taught at Andrews Seminary?

I have read four books and heard a number of lectures by Ehrman. He is recognized as one of the best NT scholars now living.

Comparing the Bible to Shakespeare is inappropriate:  Shakespeare was never claimed to be divine, although he had almost the ability of more than a human in understanding the human condition.

Once both the Bible and EGW has been claimed to be both inspired and untouchable, the results are seen today.
The Matter of Governance

Submitted Sep 1, 2011
By Lawrence Downing

The recent letter from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), addressed to the resident of La Sierra University, identified several areas that were of concern to WASC officials. WASC questioned the composition of the University governing board, the role and authority of the University president and that of the board chair, the potential conflict of interest as evidenced by those board members who sit on the boards of other Adventist educational institutions, and the board’s independence to fulfill its responsibilities to the University.

The points enumerated in the WASC letter are not limited to educational institutions. I believe these concerns apply with equal force to every level of Adventist church governance. The recent dust-ups that have roiled within the Adventist church are evidence that governance is a significant issue.

As I recalled past events that have had a negative impact on the Adventist church: the Pacific Press - Mary Kay Silver matter, the Davenport fiasco, the Harris Pine sale, and others like these, the thought came that it might be instructive to re-visit an old and trusted source. I turned to Prof. Peter Drucker’s works.

In his book, *Managing the Non-profit Organization*, Drucker writes the following:

To be effective, a non-profit needs a strong board, but a board that does a board’s work. The board not only helps think through the institution’s mission, it is the guardian of that mission, and makes sure the organization lives up to its basic commitment. The board has the job of making sure the non-profit has competent management — and the right management. The board’s role is to appraise the performance of the organization. And, in a crisis, the board members may have to be firefighters.

A board that understands its real obligations and sets goals for its own performance won’t meddle. But if you leave the board’s role open and undefined, you’ll get one that interferes with details and yet doesn’t do its job.

Wherever I’ve seen a non-profit institution with a strong board that gives the right kind of leadership, it represented very hard work on the part of the chief executive officer — not only to bring the right people onto the board but to meld them into a team and point them in the right direction. In my experience, the chief executive officer is the conscience of the board. That may explain why the strong, effective boards I’ve seen are almost all boards where members come on through a nominating process. I very rarely have seen a truly strong board in co-ops, for instance, where boards are elected by the membership. There the chairperson has no say about who sits on the board, or has the CEO. Then you get boards which may represent this or that segment of the membership, but they don’t represent the organization, at least in my experience.

Over the door to the non-profit’s boardroom there should be an inscription in big letters that says: Membership on this board is not power, it is responsibility. (pp. 157-158).
In his classic, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, Drucker lists three tasks of an executive board:

1. The institution does need a review organ — a group of experienced people of integrity, stature, proven performance capacity and proven willingness to work. This is the group management can talk to.
2. An effective and functioning board is needed to remove top management that fails to perform.
3. The institution needs a “‘public and community relations’ organ.” It needs easy and direct access to various, “‘publics’ and ‘constituents.’” It needs to hear from them and to be able to talk to them.” (pp. 631-632.)

In the Adventist church structure, (though not in the health systems) board members are selected by the constituents. In the Adventist conference structures, the president (CEO), by policy, is the board chair. In his role as chair, the president can set the agenda, control the discussion, and use his position to assure the vote is as he desires. (And in conferences at every level, the president is a he.) This administrative construct has high potential to interfere with Drucker’s view of an effective board, whose task is to monitor the organization’s practices, hold the organization to its mission and, if necessary remove the CEO. The cozy Adventist system is further complicated by the fact that a high percentage of the board members are church employees who are themselves beholden to the president for their jobs, advancement and financial security.

When the governance of the local church is examined there are different but related matters from those associated with the conference administrative levels. A church board is composed of members of a local parish. The board is composed of individuals who are members by virtue of their office, by nomination from the church members, or by board invitation. The Church Manual stipulates the pastor is board chair.

It is to be noted that viable options exist to modify the governance structure that now exists within the Adventist church. On the local level, which is where most funds that support the Adventist church originate, the local church boards can elect a person, other than the pastor, to chair the board. Many congregations follow this practice.

On the conference levels, church members, at the time of the organization’s constituency meeting, can amend the constitution and by-laws to state that someone other than the president is to chair the executive board and define how that person is to be selected. This change will not be welcomed by the presidents and other conference administrative staff. The present system is comfortable and politically safe. If constituents wish to maintain the status quo, then do nothing. Before the decision to take no action, reflect for a moment on what Drucker wrote about the effective board. Does he describe the present Adventist governance structure? Does what he wrote make sense? If it does, how should we church members respond? This is, after all, our church. Administrators, including G. C. President Ted Wilson publically say they are our servants. How do we want them to serve us and how can their service be optimized? These are our questions to answer!
Wow, Larry, this is very provocative! I have a question though. It is my sense that, even in the NAD, the overwhelming majority of the active laity trusts and wants institutional Boards to be under the direction and ultimate control of clerical leaders. The model of institutional sisterhood is to submit tribal loyalties and potential conflicts to the "greater good". Conflicts are to be surrendered, not protected. Doesn't the Pacific Union Conference, and by extension the Church, "own" La Sierra? How can you tell the owner of an institution that he has too great a voice, and too many conflicts to control how that institution is run, unless of course you have surrendered de facto or de jure autonomy to others for the sake of image or credibility?

Therein lies the conundrum for La Sierra. You don't exactly make yourself more independent by surrendering Board autonomy to the demands of non-owner external reviewers and employees, do you? Once you get beyond fine theories and concepts, isn't autonomy often in the eye of the beholder?

I see Church structure in a rather different light from the issues at La Sierra. Local church boards usually are dominated by those who are particularly generous to both the local church and the larger denomination with time and talent. They do not want a high degree of independence in vision or mission, though I realize this is changing, particularly in larger churches.

The only way I see to meaningfully alter Church infrastructure is by changing the composition of constitutencies. Doesn't this mean that progressives, who would prefer a more congregational model, must start investing time and resources in their local churches if they are to effect structural changes? Do you see any other way?

Elaine Nelson

When the larger numbers of board members are either church employees, or owe their board position to those who are denominationally employed, the board has, in effect, surrendered its autonomy.

Even in privately-held corporations, a board member are not usually employees, but members are made up of community civic leaders, business owners, or those who have a vested interest in the continuing prosperity of the corporation. In the apparent case of the PUC and LSU, who had the most power: the SDA conference employees, or the schools officers? Why weren't there more members who were alumni or from the community at large who are eager to see LUS grow?

Kevin Riley

Perhaps the church needs to consider whether the same type of governance that may work well in other church organisations is necessarily the best type of governance for an educational institution. I suspect many church leaders and church members have never given the issue any thought. We tend to like to go with the 'one size fits all' approach.
Kevin, universities are quite different than a parish church. The church is a voluntary group of members who can be asked, but cannot be administered as students. A university must have students, and students must pay tuition to gain the benefits and that requires teachers. Churches can be self-supporting, but not a university with its rules and requirements demanded by both an accrediting organization and the supporting church institution. Comparing them is not practicable. Some of the problems with the recent turmoil at LSU may have been because the same method was being used for entire different entities.

Kevin Riley

Yes, I realise that universities are different, you realise that universities are different, but I was suggesting that many of our members and even administrators have probably not thought much about that fact. The way the board is structured is typical of the way we structure all our boards. Many administrators believe it works elsewhere, so why not in a university? It is, after all, in their eyes, simply another church institution like a publishing house or a conference or whatever. The history of our church organisation is a history of trying to avoid concentrating power in the hands of a few balanced against avoiding losing control. Losing control is the issue most dear to the hearts of some of our current administrators, so I can't see them contemplating any structure that does not leave the administration of the union in charge and stacks the board with church employed appointees. The idea that all church institutions are there primarily to fulfill the mission of the church, and therefore should be under the direct oversight of the church, is still widely held.

Of course, if you believe politics does not play a big part in the appointment of administrators and board members (and even faculty) at a public university, then perhaps you should look into the matter a little more closely. University politics are as messy, and at times as uncivilised, as anything you will see in the church.

Elaine Nelson

The larger and longer an institution is in power, the more heavily it is influenced by politics. The only difference: the church is guided by God. Believe that and I've got lovely beach front property in Wyoming, cheap.

Lawrence G. Downing

Nathan,

It my be so that the people in the pew are satisfied with clergy control, although I've never seen a study to document this theory. It is true that changing the board structure does not assure all will be well. Think Enron and numerous other "bones" lying about. And yes, the Union does "own" LSU and one can ask how another can tell an owner what to do. WASC and other organizations do have a clout: do what we ask or we'll pull our accreditation. There is also the issue of whether
leaders of an organization can implement significant actions on their own. What is the purpose of protocol, policies, by-laws if the "owner" can ignore at will?
One cannot ignore the effect denomination leader's decisions have on the church people. The internet has created a whole new environment. Actions and secrets travel round the world at the click of a button.

The educational system, I believe, is the only entity that has potential to bankrupt the Adventist church. The church took care of the health care liability by spinning it off to independent corporations. The risks in the educational system continue. If one or two colleges went bust is the denomination accountable to pay off the debts? The effective demise of Atlantic Union College may provide a hint.

There are no easy answers and one can always second guess.

Elaine Nelson

Physicians are not as easily controlled as denominational employees. Teachers, the church may discover, also have such an esoteric term as "academic freedom" that must be honored if the educational system is to survive. Already, there are indications that certain disciplines in science are not being filled in SDA schools. Why should they when these teachers are already in heavy demand outside the denomination?

Those in the religion department most likely are ordained so have a different standing with the SDA church and can be more easily controlled. Even so, are teachers under the G.C. or the particular educational university? Who has the last word on employment as well as class discussions and curricula?

These are not unimportant questions, but who has the answers?

William Noel

Governance in the Adventist Church has, for the most part, become a cruel joke because it is more focused on self-preservation than achievement of mission. There is punishment for questioning the decisions of church leaders because the assumption is made that if someone is in a position of leadership then their decisions must be according to God's direction.

Further, there is no real accountability to the membership. There are two reasons for this. First, so long as there is any increase in membership, most members believe the church is accomplishing it's purpose. Second, in my conference, church employees are a voting block at the meeting separately and in addition to the delegates from churches. They typically are the largest single voting group at the meeting. That is a conflict of interest because they are supposed to be subject to the authority of the membership instead of dominating the vote and controlling decisions.

Seeing those problems, when my church was formed we consciously adopted a governance structure that has proven both quite different and highly effective. Instead of a nominating
committe, we have a Connections Team that trains and guides people into ministry instead of picking people for positions. Further, there are no terms of service because God doesn't put expiration dates of giftedness. Instead of a church board, we have an Administrative Committee that handles church business matters. We also have a Spiritual Focus Team that is composed of elders and ministry leaders. Our part-time pastor is not the chairman, but an occasional observer. By the way, our conference leadership are our greatest fans because of how well our church operates and how focused we are on actual ministry.

Ella M.

This sounds like a good system. I am all for more creativity in structure and getting out of the rut that has caused so much distrust and sometimes disillusionment with the system. We need more flexibility.

I have always thought we need leaders who have expertise and education in management and business for the positions they are put in. Why pick an ordained pastor (usually a man) to be in a position that needs an experienced business manager who has proven himself or herself outside the church as well as in it? Trained pastors should be pastors, in most cases, and trained in counseling, management, and theology.

Good pastors do not necessarily make good CEOs (though some may with experience). I don't always see leaders being chosen for their gifts.

Jim Brauer

As you very well know, governance is all about the art of making good decisions.

In the Rocky Mountain conference before I left, we were conducting powerful experiments in governance at the local church level.

For years prior to starting the experiments I had waited for the system to become more missionally focused, but nothing happened. "A system is designed to get exactly what it is getting"

I watched and saw young professionals becoming increasingly disenchanted with the church, and the complex, political machine it has become.

When we instituted a governance process in which employees were held accountable to lead, to be missional, to be externally focused, to be held accountable for specific parameters that were measured to determine the health of the local church. Employees and non-employees (I really don't like the pastor/lay divide, its not Biblical and it kills mission) who understood the process, and spent the time reading, and were capable of reframing around a new paradigm became very excited. Participation in externally focused ministries went way up, internal ministries in the church grew, giving patterns changed has they all contributed heavily to what they believed in. Alas, this appropriate North American experiment in missiological contextualization came to an abrupt end. I have started several articles, but threw them away when my cynicism and pain has crept in.

A GC VP who I highly respect, and who understands governance well, and travels around the world attempting to help various institutions understand the principles of appropriate governance, mentioned a very important clarification, that became the brick wall we slammed into at 90 mpg. "Governance principles are appropriate for institutional boards. The local church governance
process is based on an executive committee system, in which all boards are tied together with oversight and supervision being vested at the next higher committee. This is what is spelled out in the church manual."

So I was accused of not abiding by the church manual . . . and you can imagine yourself what happened next.

However I would simply ask, is the local church healthier today than it was five years ago. Are there specific parameters that are kept track of, that allow any and everyone to agree that the local church is accomplishing its mission. That disciples are more involved, more passionate about the areas of ministry that God is calling them. That Christian freedom and the gifts of the Spirit are showing up as the inappropriate control mechanisms are removed, replaced by appropriate governance accountability.

If not, then I do think it is time in the North American mission field, for appropriate contextualization to be allowed!

Gailon Arthur Joy

Governance is a dual edged sword as experienced by the outright rebellion at La Sierra University. Governance can abrogate its purpose and function and alter its mission turning the institution into a hypocrisy of it's purposed mission.

There is a falacy in the Downing blog including some respondents allegations: That WASC has authority to govern a church based institution and set standards that are violative of the religious mission of the Adventist University even though it is supported by a clearly rebellious faculty and administration of La Sierra University. It is a religious and educational 501(c) 3 organization owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist church and dedicated to the mission of perpetuating the Mission of the church as defined in its fundamental beliefs. To interfere with the right of conscience of the Seventh-day Adventist church is unconscionable and it is simply unconstitutional!!!

While the administration and faculty at La Sierra would prefer to abscond with the La Sierra University, a Seventh-day Adventist Institution of “higher learning” of dubious ethical and moral values, and turn it into a bastion of secular humanism and progressive “sophisticated” evolutionary studies under the guise of “progressive Adventism”, they are best defined as NON-ADVENTIST.

It is time for Governance to establish right here a clear line in the sand and either bring Revival and Reformation or shut it down and sell it’s assets.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter

Elaine Nelson

That is not as easy or profitable as it may sound to those who apparently do not understand the...
charter of a university. LSU has been defined as a university with the approval of the SDA church. In that designation, they must comply with WASC to continue to receive accreditation as a university.

If the church makes the decision that it no longer wishes to operate a university there are two choices: no longer comply with the requirements for a university and become a Bible college; or if the wish is to maintain university status it must allow the WASC to make recommendations that are necessary for that status.

It is important to know that without university status the government student grants would drastically drop as students and parents would not pay for tuition at a non-accredited school, nor would students be able to enter graduate studies from a non-accredited school. Without government funding, there probably would not be sufficient funds to continue the schools operation. It is a Sophie's Choice. Which one should be made?

And so you have declared so many times...now it is time to declare with specificity just what, in the charter and bylaws of WASC, that allow them to supress religious freedom???

And, if it does exist, this suppression MUST BE CHALLENGED.

Elaine Nelson
WASC is areligious: they take no position whatever on religion. Their charter is to qualify a school for university accreditation and there are very particular specifics for that. It's like asking a parent or student why he should care if a prospective school is accredited, or if your physician is accredited. Does it not make a difference? Most of us care less about our physician's religion, but a great deal about her qualifications. For those who don't understand the requirements, check out the WASC requirements for more info and become educated.
Thinkin’ about Ya, Irene

Submitted Aug 30, 2011
By Cindy Tutsch

How do you wait for a hurricane? I’d asked God for protection, bought supplies, purchased, baked or boiled the requisite food to potentially last several days, filled the bathtub with water, checked my flashlights. Then I closed my windows, crawled into bed, and slept peacefully.

In the morning, branches, leaves and a fallen tree or two littered the neighborhood, but my electricity was still on (buried cables). I took an early walk through my usual haunts, now eerily devoid of cyclists, joggers, and dog-walkers. Everything was still — even the birds were silent. It was a great time to walk and talk with God, praise Him for safety and the beauty of the morning, and reflect on the times in which we live.


As Christians, we know what is next. More disasters, one following the other with rapid succession (Matthew 24), a loss of religious liberty (Revelation 13) and a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation (Daniel 12:1). And then? And then?

And then, angels will fill up every inch of the sky. Heaven’s trumpets will sound, the dead will rise, and best of all, we will see Jesus! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! We’ve sung about Him, prayed to Him, written books about Him, drawn pictures of Him — but now we will see Him, face to face! What a day that will be! I want more than anything to meet Him with joy, with my family, with my friends, with my neighbors.

So, in the meantime, who is causing all these calamities? Is it God, bringing judgments on a planet that has largely rejected Him? I don’t believe these disasters are caused by God, though judgments may occur when God removes His protection.

Here is an intriguing passage from the book, The Great Controversy:

“Satan works through the elements [the weather] also to garner his harvest of unprepared souls. He has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses and children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment. It is God who shields His creatures and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer. Satan has control of all whom God does not especially guard. He will favor and prosper some in order to further his own designs, and he will bring trouble upon others and lead men to believe that it is God who is afflicting them.”

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he [Satan] will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce
tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. "The earth mourneth and fadeth away," "the haughty people…do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." Isaiah 24:4, 5.

And then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils.” –The Great Controversy, 589,590

There’s more and I invite you to read the entire chapter 36, titled The Impending Conflict, in The Great Controversy, which can be accessed [here online](http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=822&action=print).

If these ideas are new to you, I encourage you to approach them with an open mind. If these ideas are not new to you, but you have rejected them long ago, I invite you to re-consider, as we see the biblical prophecies fulfilling before our very eyes. And if these ideas are part of the fabric of who you are, determine by God’s grace to be faithful to Him, whatever the price.

I should add, if you are new to this site, do not be surprised at some of the reaction to this blog. Last Sunday, CNN Belief blogger Stephen Protherd wrote, “American society as a whole no longer interprets natural disasters as signs of some coming apocalypse… and those that do, we generally regard as cranks and outliers — relics of a bygone age.”

Peter warned the believers of his time that such skepticism would exist:

“Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. They will say, ‘What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.’ They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends. Be on guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” from 2 Peter 3 NLT

How do you wait for a hurricane? Prepare, and trust. How do you wait for the coming of Jesus? Prepare your heart and trust in your Savior. Here’s one of my absolute favorite texts regarding The Wait:

“Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for He is faithful.” I Corinthians 1:7-9 NLT

Oh, we may lose our earthly lives. There is no promise we will remain alive until Jesus comes. But our eternal lives are safe, if we accept Him as Lord of all our heart. (I John 5:13) And really, eternity is what matters most. This world, sick as it is, will soon pass away. The good news remains: pain and
heartache cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!

Bill Garber

Cindy,

Many thanks for sharing how you were feeling as Irene came up the coast. A storm is a storm, even when in the midst of one of the lightest hurricane seasons in a long while.

As you rightly inply, the issue is never the storm it is always the heart. Thank you for reminding us that embracing a quiet heart in a storm is truly a good thing.

And while the end of storms is a byproduct of Jesus' return, is has yet to be and there is no promise that it will be yet for us the answer to pain and suffering. Thank you for reminding us that pain and suffering cannot overshadow a peaceful heart when that peace is by reason of our faith in Jesus' non-condemning mission to save the world, which includes us. He declared this in his own words in John 3:16-17. Those who have yet to understand this gospel are understandably 'condemned' by their own fears as Jesus noted, which is perhaps why he so straightforwardly declared he had come to save the world without condemnation.

As for our eternal lives, indeed by Jesus declaration, they are safe. To the degree that we have not understood this, it seems, does not inhibit God's willingness nor his ability to make good on our salvation, or as Ellen White noted, the creator would be obligated to the creature, and that just cannot be or God is not God.

Thanks for encouraging us to find in our own hear such peace.

Nathan Schilt

My faith is weak in this area, Cindy. I certainly see many signs of the times around me - but natural disasters, which are not proliferating in number or severity, are not "signs" in which I am inclined to put any stock based on the hard evidence.

If experts who follow hurricanes and other natural disasters provide objective evidence (which they have) that natural disasters are not increasing, would it make a difference in your end times perspective? I doubt it. So what is the point of invoking, as evidence of end times, events which do not show the long term trends that you seek to find? Since your belief in end times can't be falsified, isn't it intellectually dishonest to argue that when hurricanes increase they are evidence to substantiate your belief, but if they decrease they are not evidence to disprove your belief?

Haven't we matured as a Church to the point where we can live within an end times paradigm without needing to seize signs that every generation throughout history has experienced and erroneously interpreted as harbingers of the imminent end of history? Mind you, I'm not saying you are wrong. I'm just asking why, since it won't matter to you if you are wrong, should it matter
to anyone that you might be right? Even a broken clock reads the correct time twice a day.

Cherry Ashlock

I feel conflicted about this topic. I remember my grandparents who lived into their 90's lamenting about weather events all during their lifetime as signs of the end. I think of it this way......the end times and signs started the moment Jesus died. Since we know not the hour, we will be 'seeing' signs from now until it happens. I am not sure the scare tactics are useful though. My time might end today and it is really hot and clear outside.

Elaine Nelson

It is the Adventist obsession: every time a new catastrophe occurs, of which there always have been and always will be, there are some who love to remind us that this is a "sign of the end."

So what? How does one suddenly prepare when in the eye of a hurricane, or in an earthquake (I've experienced many) when there is no warning? This becomes almost hysterical, especially as Nathan points out, there is absolutely no evidence that there has been an increase in such natural disasters by any scientific evidence. Today, with instantaneous reporting, we are very much aware, but in past centuries, news traveled very slowly if at all. The Lisbon Earthquake was widely claimed by Adventists to be the "time of the end" and that was more than 250 years ago--and we forget that God's time is not man's time. How many have died since Christ made this prediction? Or EGW?

Remember the boy who cried "Wolf." Repetitive claims of end times reach deafened ears by the insistent warning each time such a catastrophe occurs. As Natan remarked: none of us knows when it is our last day, and by far the majority of deaths have nothing to do with "natural disasters" but ordinary causes.

William Noel

We're so addicted to seeing everything as a "sign of the end" that we're failing to see a lot of present opportunities to introduce people to the true nature of God. Natural disasters are commonly referred to as "acts of God" so we have a huge conceptual roadblock to overcome. But it can be done. Let me give you a recent example.

Back on April 27 here in North Alabama we suffered the worst outbreak of destructive tornadoes in recorded history. My home was untouched, but a family in our church lost their home. That they survived unscathed was a miracle because three of their neighbors died and dozens were injured. The next Sunday more than three dozen from our church of just over a hundred members gathered at the home to help the family recover their belongings. more than ten thousand volunteers covered the tornado track and hundreds could be seen across the neighborhood working on every house. It was an incredible sight the likes of which I had never witnessed before.
A utility crew came to remove downed electric and telephone wires and a power transformer from the driveway. A backhoe operator pushed debris out of the way, then stopped to chat. He was stunned by the scale of destruction he was seeing around us. "Isn't it incredible what God did here?" he asked. "Do you really think God did all this?" I asked. "The Bible says every good and perfect thing comes from God but bad things are caused by the devil. So, how can you accuse God of doing the devil's work?" He paused to consider my question, so I continued. "Look around. You see all these volunteers helping people recover their belongings? You're seeing the love of God in action. This is God at work." The man thought about what I had said and nodded. "You're right. I never looked at it that way before. You've just given me something to think about."

Instead of first reminding people about impending doom, wouldn't it be better if we took the opportunity disasters give us to show God's love in action?

Nathan Schilt
1 month ago
Reply

Terrific testimony and great illustration of how evil in the world presents us with opportunities to demonstrate God's love and "character".

Ron Corson
1 month ago
Reply

I don't know that William presented a picture that was really any better: "The Bible says every good and perfect thing comes from God but bad things are caused by the devil. So, how can you accuse God of doing the devil's work?"

No the Bible does not say the last part of that sentence, If nature and natural disasters are caused by the devil, you have to say why does God allow the devil to do such things and it all comes back on God. No the only answer is that there are natural processes to nature and God likely created and set things in motion but does not preform miracles to prevent the happenstance of nature from causing problems for people or animals etc.

Interestingly enough contrary to Cindy's article Ellen White had three positions on disasters, 1. caused by God. 2. caused by satan and 3. caused by nature. You have to give her credit for covering all the bases, but it lets those with poor reasoning skills determine which of the 3 they will choose to declare. So naturally God and Satan get top choice because nature is too nice to be random.

Nathan Schilt
1 month ago
Reply

Point well taken, Ron. My endorsement of William's comment went to the response of love in action overcoming chaos and destruction, not the explanation he offered for chaos and destruction. I, like you, have a difficult time attributing good or bad things to divine or demonic intervention in the courses of nature or human affairs. It may well happen. I just don't think we can rationally assign causation to transcendent forces.
Elaine Nelson

William, AMEN!

William Noel

Thank you, Elaine. What surprises me is not that it happened, but that so few people who claim to be followers of Jesus are lost in debating minutia instead of ministering God's love. Events like that story are typical in my ministry.

Ervin Taylor

Nate asked “Haven't we matured as a Church to the point where we can live within an end times paradigm without needing to seize signs that every generation throughout history has experienced and erroneously interpreted as harbingers of the imminent end of history?” I assume that this is a rhetorical question since, to me and I assume to Nate, the obvious answer is no, the Adventist Church as represented by a cross section of its members even in North America, have not matured when it comes to this topic.

Now my answer is totally and only a personal opinion since we don’t have survey data from a scientifically-designed survey of North American Adventists on this or any other topic. I suspect that church administrators would not undertake such a survey for fear what it might uncover.

A question that might be asked is: Why do a large majority of Adventists still believe that these kinds of natural disasters are “Signs of the End” in light of the fact that all previous “Signs of the End” have been disconfirmed as being Signs of the End? I know. I know. What a silly question. The reason is that to maintain its institutional credibility Adventism needs to constantly reinforce this belief with all kinds of strategies. There are also well known sociological principles at work.

One important reason is that Adventism continues to be a church that must cater to its recent converts. Many of these converts were attracted to the classical Adventist evangelistic message that “The End is Near!” Those who grew up in the church have heard that tired phrase so many times over so many years that they know that it is simply not true.

However, the Adventist Church as a corporate body can’t admit this obvious truth as it would severely damage its theological and institutional credibility and that must be prevented at all cost.

For those of us who are second, third and beyond generations of Adventists, perhaps the best that can be done is to see if “benign neglect” might work over the long haul. Our new converts as they mature will slowly come to see that the end is not near as well. Let’s help them understand that every faith community slowly evolves in its understanding of reality and that this process goes on generation upon generation until the percentage of converts and born members are about equal. Then the maturing process can start to accelerate. I suspect that none of us reading this will be around when it will become an obvious development, since it usually takes multiple generations for this process to work itself out in the larger denominational community beyond localized groups of Adventists.
Perhaps some continue to believe every event is a sign of the nearness of the end because they want the end to come. I personally doubt every storm or natural disaster is a sign that the end is near, but I do know each one - and many things besides - makes me hope the end is near. The idea of things going on as they are for multiple generations does not fill me with hope. Of course, for me, even if I live as long as some of my recent ancestors, the end is not that far away. I would be very surprised if I am not more than half way there.

Stephen Foster

As they say Nathan, Erv, et al; you are entitled to your own opinions, but you are not entitled to your own facts. I don’t know much about you, but if you any of you were seismologists, I think that you would have included that in your Atoday bio. (Obviously, I am not a scientist either.)

The following is either true, or it is not. Why not accept some evidence?

http://www.earth.webecs.co.uk/

I’m sure you can find some evidence to the contrary, but why try? Admittedly, I have an agenda for looking for and presenting this information. Do you?

David Neal

The following news item from a UK Christian magazine fell into my inbox the other day. It seems we have a Christian friend of evangelical conviction (and a person of global influence) not to far away from the take as outlined in the Great Controversy - and in short declaring herself to be an Adventist, a person of hope. I don't think anyone would describe Anne Graham Lotz as someone who focusses on the sensational. Better still, she's recognised the signs of the times and come to a wonderful conclusion as a result - Jesus is Coming Soon - and with her lifetime. What a hope! I like that! Sort of resonates at the core of my soul - your soul? Seems as though most SDA's in the West prefer to be ostrich on this - and put their head's in the sand. And we can make 101 excuses for this which we don't have time to go into here. Perhaps we sould remember a picture also from our heritage. If God's people refuse to do the Lord's appointed work for him - he will raise others to do the job. Seems that there are far too many Seventh-day Adventists (particularly in the West) who seem to have lost the beauty of putting faith in an imminent Blessed Hope - (we've matured, become far too respectable among other reasons) who regard His coming as light years away even when there are signals of his coming all around us. Enough from me... read what Lotz says...

“Preacher Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham, sees recent world events as signs of the imminent return of Christ. Lotz’s latest book, Expecting to See Jesus: A Wake-Up Call for God’s People, lists the events that point to the Second Coming and describes 9/11 as a reminder from God. Lotz says: ‘The signs that Jesus gave and the headlines in the news are coming together in a dramatically sobering way. I have held the conviction with intense focus since I was in my
early 20s that if I live out my natural lifetime, I will live to see the physical return of Jesus to earth! … Within my lifetime, I have seen the fulfilment of every sign Jesus gave his disciples 2,000 years ago.’ (Christian Today 22/8/11)

Stephen Foster

I should hasten to add that I know that Irene was a hurricane/tropical storm; but Nathan referenced “natural disasters,” and Erv has previously referenced earthquakes. So, sue me.

Trevor Hammond

When my kids were smaller and traveled with us on a road trip we would have one important occurrence. At the first impressive or big road sign they would ask: "Are we there yet?" "Are we there yet?" They were young and the signs meant different things to them. The road signs did inform us many important things and we knew that we were on the RIGHT road. The Bible is our Kingdom of Heaven Road Map - Jesus (the Word) is the Author and Finisher of the Faith we find in its pages: information signs, regulatory signs, warning signs, they're all there. So kids, be patient we'll be there someday soon and I know you won't ask "Are we there yet?" When you 'mature' in your faith and belief in God through Jesus Christ then the 'signs' we see around us are but the road signs along the way. We will reach our destination though: whether we sleep a while or are alive we will be caught up in the clouds of glory and see HIM face to face...and that will JUST be the 'end' of the beginning. So go to bed now without fear or anxiety for we are ALWAYS safe in the arms of Jesus - no matter what.

☺☻♫☼
T

Trevor Hammond

Imagine if Jesus were to have visited NYC and was sleeping through the storm, would the residents have called on him to do something? I would. The disciples called on him in the boat that day and He said to the winds and the waves: “Irene! Be still” [Mark 4:39] The disciples marvelled and said: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” [Mark 4:41] I know He can ALWAYS calm a storm but sometimes he calms His child in the ‘midst’ of a terrible storm. Our prayers are with you guys on the East Coast: I’ve seen the pictures and we hope and pray that more lives aren’t lost.

Irene means peace...

♥
T

Trevor Hammond

Edit - “Irene! Be still” (Italics paraphrase supplied) [Mark 4:39]
Stephen - I think you fairly lump me in with Erv on this issue, and I also think it is reasonable to view earthquakes and hurricanes as part and parcel of SDA geoapocalyptic, although Jesus only references earthquakes and famines. I will look up what you referenced, but I would also encourage you to take a look at a 1999 unpublished manuscript from the Institute for Creation Research entitled *Earthquakes and the End Times: A Geological and Biblical Perspective*. It can be found at [http://www.ldolphin.org/quakes2.html](http://www.ldolphin.org/quakes2.html). Certainly current USGS data does not support your contention regarding an increase in severity or number of earthquakes. And the article I referenced provides a penetrating analysis from a Christian perspective that debunks both the factual claim of increasing earthquakes and its theological significance. Because our Protestant brethren have not been blessed with the "Gift of Prophecy", they cannot as easily add hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis to the geoapocalyptic brew.

What I found fascinating in the Institute for Creation Research article wasn't so much the reminder that earthquakes or other natural disasters, according to Jesus were **not** a sign of the imminent eschaton - I already knew that, despite EGW inspired SDA urban legends to the contrary. No, what was interesting was the historical backdrop for Jesus' Matthew 24 discourse, which sheds light on and underscores His warning against using natural disasters as harbingers of end times.

Apocalyptic expectations of First Century Jews associated catastrophic events with the nearness of The End. Earthquakes in Scripture are a frequent *leitmotif* for God's appearance and judgment. In the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras, Ezra asks the Lord when the signs he has been pointing out will take place, and the Lord responds: "...when you see that some of the predicted signs have occurred, then you will know that it is the very time when the Most High is about to visit the world that he has made. So when there shall appear in the world earthquakes, tumult of peoples, intrigues of nations, wavering of leaders, confusion of princes, then you will know that it was of these days that the Most High spoke..." (2 Esdras 9:1-5; cf. 2 Baruch 27:7, 70:8).

Contrast the foregoing with Jesus' words in Matt. 24:4-8, where He warns against being misled by false Christs and alarmed by cataclysmic events in the cycles of nature: "**See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place** [they are part of the natural order], **but that is not the end...there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.**" So we see that, as He does so often, Jesus takes conventional religious dogma and turns it upside down. Fundamentalist SDAs seem bent on giving Apocryphal theology authority over the teachings of Jesus.

Adventist apocalyptics has done precisely what Jesus warned against: It has given iconic status to select phenomenon in the natural world in order to validate its own self-serving Truth claims. The scientific data is there for all to see. Why do fundamentalists insist on embarrassing themselves and the Church by making factual claims that can easily be disproven, and theological claims which are not supported by Scripture?
Does the statement that the Devil is the creator of all the evil in the world not coincide with much of Adventism? Where does this idea originate if not in the religious teaching? This is distinctly opposed by the Hebrews who believed that everything, both good and evil came from God.

How long will it continue unless there is a major effort to deny it? But then, how would that be possible if, as Cindy writes that Ellen gave three reasons for such disasters: God caused, the Devil caused, or caused by nature (who is charge of nature?). Are there any other possibilities?

Elaine Nelson

It wasn't so simple to the writers of the Hebrew Bible, was it? They gave God all the credit for both good and evil; the ancient Israelites recognized no single archenemy of God which is why God sent famine, pestilence etc.

Strange, how it took the Persians to enlighten them about a Satan who represented evil and a god who represented good. Even in Job, the adversary is called one of the "Sons of God" and "Satan" was one of them. This is why when comparing 2 Sam 14:1 and 1 Chron. 21:1, "The Lord" was substituted for "Satan" in the same account.

There is nothing in the creation story identifying the serpent with either Lucifer or Satan. This is a much later concept that Christians in the first century A.D. conferred on Satan. This was taken from classical mythology where Lucifer was the bright Morning Star. Strangely, in Revelation Christ is called the bright morning star. Go figure. Lucifer was given a prominent position in later Christianity by John Milton in his "Paradise Lost" and liberally introduced by EGW in her writing.

Elaine Nelson

I used to get lost in discussions about question such as you posed until God taught me that it was far more important that I understand and know Him now.

Elaine Nelson

How can you understand someone you have never seen or talked to if only from a book
where many writers describe him? Why bother with reading the Bible at all if you communicate with God on your own? Without the Bible would you have ever known or heard of God and would you simply believe what everyone including all the preachers told you? How would that not be creating your own god?

Nathan Schilt
1 month ago

Keep at it, Elaine! I have confidence that one of these days you are going to catch that tail. I would caution you, however, on the off chance that it could be yours, not to bite too hard when you catch it.

William Noel
1 month ago

Elaine,

The answer is exceedingly simple: Do what Jesus commanded us to do and get acquainted with the Holy Spirit! God is waiting for us to connect with Him so we will know him intimately and from present experience.

Trevor Hammond
1 month ago

Many who claim the name of God may believe very differently from each other. Deists and Theists for example believe very differently. Some on these blogs are clearly deists who find no need for a personal God, even though Jesus is as personal as personal can get AND HE lives in our hearts by faith. This of course is the big choice we all must make.

There's a chorus we sing which sums this up for me:

How big is God? How big and wide His vast domain?
To begin to tell, these lips can only start;
He's big enough, to rule this mighty universe,
Yet small enough, to reign within my ♥.

T

Stephen Foster
1 month ago

Nathan,

How is it remotely possible to conclude from Matthew 24:7, 8 that, in answer to the Matthew 24:3 question of “…what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” that the verses 7 and 8 answer that “…famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. [Verse 8] All these are the beginning of sorrows,” actually means that an increasing frequency of earthquakes in divers places represents business as usual and/or something other than an unmistakable sign of the of the end-time “beginning of sorrows”?
Verses 5 and 6 (of Matthew 24) clearly describe things that “must come to pass” that are not to trouble us. These things precede the verse 7 description of that which are signs of the “the beginning of sorrows;” as are those which follow, through at least verse 14.

The more salient question, it seems to me then, is whether there is an increasing frequency and/or dispersion of seismic events (and famines, and pestilences) around the world; and whether or not those other things (verses 8 through 14) are now happening.

The prophecy of 2 Peter 3: 4 is more relevant to Adventists than is any danger of being seen as silly.

Ella M. 1 month ago Reply

My opinion is that we have been in the last days since Christ ascended to heaven. I believe he wanted us to watch and be ready for his return and said that only the Father knew the time. However, humans have not been ready, many not even for their own demise, which is the same thing. I would suggest that disasters may have helped generations before us to take God seriously. God has a way of taking what was intended as evil and turning it into a blessing or warning for survivors.

The early Israelites did attribute every act of nature to God. The book of Job seems to turn that on its head. Whether that was a later book, I don't know. It used to be taught as an early OT writing. But I don't think we can get that from the NT. One has to study deeply to get these truths as an overview in the Bible.

I am not convinced that there are fewer earthquakes now; I have heard the opposite from other sources. But they do seem more destructive; there are more people. The media also makes news more accessible. But getting back to how they are perceived in a contemporary sense--that they are more frightening--gives them a certain meaning for our society. If it is observed as a "sign," then perhaps it is. Just as the "falling of the stars" and Lisbon earthquake were perceived as a sign to the people of that day, then it served its purpose. As postmoderns would say, it is all relative.

Elaine Nelson 1 month ago Reply

Few people knew of the earthquake in China, the largest in history, which killed more than 800,000 people. It was in the 16th century when news traveled very slowly, so with the rapidity of news today, there may just seem to be more earthquakes. Certainly the "ring of fire" has many more than other areas of the world. But China is not in that ring but they have had many terrible quakes.

Like Ella, I too believe that Jesus said we were in the last days and that we know not the day nor hour, yet many have been predicting its imminence since that time. We all like to believe that we, alone, are living in the "last days."

Steve Billiter 1 month ago Reply

Adventist Today : Thinkin’ about Ya, Irene http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=822&action=print

12 of 14 10/27/2011 11:41 AM
Nice, traditional, solid Biblically sound article. Thanks for standing behind Ellen White, Cindy. Happy Sabbath!

Ella M.

Considering the immensity of time and space and that one day is as a thousand years to God, the two thousand years since Christ ascended from earth is a short time and part of the last days. And we have always had earthquakes, wars, accidents, and natural disasters.

The difference now is that humans have accelerated the building of their Babel tower using their technology and research to replace God and claiming themselves gods. Western civilization consumes most of earth's resources and is wealthy and increased with goods while most of the world lives in poverty.

For the first time in history humans have the capability to send information everywhere, locate people and keep tabs on them. They can destroy each other and have the ability to bring the end on themselves. It wouldn't take much for the planet to self-destruct, so the coming of Christ to rescue those who have not rejected him, will need to be relatively soon.

Nathan Schilt

Fine perspective, Ella, as usual. And I certainly agree with your conclusion. We just have to be careful about the facts we use to support our conclusions, and how we use those facts. I share your belief that the world is teetering on the brink of chaos.

While it is true that Western civilization consumes most of the resources that are produced and harnessed, you must also concede that without the West those resources would not exist in any usable form. The entire world, including the Third World, is much wealthier and healthier because of Western Civilization. How much of the wealth it produces the West is entitled to consume and retain is a legitimate question. But it is not legitimate to conclude, as you imply, that most of the world's poverty is a consequence of Western consumption.

Values and creativity, not resources, give rise to wealth. But mitigating or eradicating poverty has not changed the human heart; it has not ended envy and greed. The world's increase in wealth and well-being has only briefly attenuated, and now seems to be feeding, the resentments, distrust, and ambitions which signal the resumption of history and the end of time.

Gailon Arthur Joy

I will stand with the written word of God and the message of the Spirit of Prophecy...and now that is not mature??? Not only are men of faith in the adventist message not "sophisticated" but we are immature.

Well, let me perpetuate that immaturity into yet another message that defines the immoral hearts that eliminate God's message from adventism:

Thousands who pride themselves upon their wisdom and independence regard it as an evidence of
weakness to place implicit confidence in the Bible; they think it a proof of superior talent and learning to cavil at the Scriptures and to spiritualize and explain away their most important truths. Many ministers are teaching their people, and many professors and teachers are instructing their students, that the law of God has been changed or abrogated; and those who regard its requirements as still valid, to be literally obeyed, are thought to be deserving only of ridicule or contempt. ELLEN G WHITE

"In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Law-giver…. The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers." GC 598 ELLEN G. WHITE

and thus saith the Lord!!! So be it...oh, but it is it!!!

Cindi Tutsch is compelled by her Faith to share her Faith!!! For those who have none, it is clearly not understood and fodder for scoffing and bemusement...you will face the Judgment, as un-sophisticated and immature spiritual beings and will reap the whirlwind thereof. and will scoff no more!!!

Gailon Arthur Joy,
AURemitter
One of the things that I always loved about being raised as an Adventist kid was mission stories. At a young age they took me all over the world. They were filled with adventure and the war with disease, suffering, poverty and evil. I learned to see the world through the eyes of compassion and hope.

For a couple of hours recently that experience was reclaimed as I read two new volumes by Dr. James Appel, a contemporary of my children who served until recently as a missionary doctor in Chad. He has an undergraduate degree in theology from Southern Adventist University and a medical degree from Loma Linda University, completed a family practice residency at a county hospital in southern California and then went off to be medical director at Bere Adventist Hospital, the lone doctor for 150,000, mostly Muslim, desert people.

His quiet courage and unrelenting faith comes through despite his unblinking honesty, even about his own frustration and despair on occasion. His stories of hand-to-hand combat with Malaria, HIV-AIDS, drunkenness, hunger, and all manner of disease and pestilence are simply heroic. It will renew your faith and your pride in your church to read these unadorned accounts of front line missionary activity.

Appel wrote the one book literally in the trenches. It is a collection of his Email and Blogs written to relatives, friends and distant supporters of his little hospital, written at odd moments in the haze of long days and sleepless nights. And it is precisely that flavor of random notes, unexpected events and one painful intrusion after another that makes this a really gripping read!

It even includes a romance. The young doctor falls in love with a Danish nurse in faraway Africa. They take an interlude in Europe to get married (which he skips over in the book) and more recently are the parents of twins. But his blog about her is a priceless expression of love.

*Naasara: Dispatches from a District Hospital in Chad*, will give you a very realistic, nitty gritty picture of the people who are battling the vast problems of public health and community development in the Southern Hemisphere. It will reassure you that a new generation is doing God’s work, unrelenting in their dedication and sacrifice.

The second book describes what Dr. Appel was thinking about theologically while he was doing surgery and delivering babies in rural Chad. *Children of the East*, is an extended Bible study on the topic of Islam. How does God see the seemingly insoluble, often violent differences between Christianity and the Muslim faith that includes one quarter of the Earth’s population? No small problem for a young theologian-physician to tackle and one that he admits being forced to consider because of the context in which he found himself working, a Muslim community.

Both books are self-published (with the help of an editor) and available on Amazon.com through the marvels of new technology. If you grew up like me reading mission stories, you will enjoy these volumes. If you did not grow up in that milieu, I strongly recommend that you read these books just
to better understand the rest of us, if for no other reason. The experience will also provide you with other dividends.

More than anything, reading these two books gave me a strong sense of assurance about the new generation of Adventists. They are just as willing to give themselves to the work of healing and sharing faith as any Adventists have ever been. They are just as likely to take the risks of going to the ends of the earth, whether that be in rural Africa or the inner city of an American metropolis. They are just as deep in their theological thinking and dedicated in their reading of Scripture. God is working in the lives of new generations of His people.

Stefan Burton-Schnüll

I guess I need to re-borrow my wife's Kindle :-) Thanks for the recommendations.

Ella M.

Thank you for a positive blog; I plan to order his books. As we look at our own sheltered lives, it raises the desire to do more in our own sphere of influence. I have a friend who has served in several different relief agencies (including ADRA), and I marvel that she has given her life (still single and attractive at 40) to serving those in poverty. Most of the time she has worked in public health in Africa.

Gailon Arthur Joy

Praise the Lord...the purest example of Faith in action.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AUReporter

Nic Samojluk

Thanks for reminding us about what unites us as Seventh-day Adventists.

Edwin A. Schwisow

Monte: As a missionaries' kid myself, I have noted that though many, many Adventists born in the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s left the church, shortly before, during, or after the removal of Desmond Ford from the Adventist ministry, those of us who had been with missionary parents outside the U.S. during a portion or all of the 1960s and 1970s tended to remain. The hypothesis has been presented that an Adventist who has been reared in a variety of cultures tends to see Adventism as the unifying element in an otherwise unstable cultural upbringing. That may well be, but speaking here from my own experience, as a lifelong Adventist who spent the 1960s in South
America, I see the primary factor being that of experiencing a far broader picture of the totality of Adventism, and consequently being less prone to leave in protest over a single manifestation of ecclesiastical overreach and miscalculation—which is a very charitable and understated characterization, in my opinion, of the evil done Desmond Ford, and by extension to the church. The mission experience, either personally or through books and stories, anchors a person far more securely to the totality of Adventism, rather than to a small aspect of it as represented in an English-speaking, white, Anglo-Saxon congregation, which otherwise would have been my primary and perhaps only touchpoint with Adventist culture. I recognized that the treatment of Desmond Ford was wrong, but I felt that the fallout from that decision would provide its own natural punishment and corrective. I believe it has, far more than I could have ever thought possible. Today I continue to work for reform in Adventism, from within, while many of my contemporaries continue to carry their departure as a badge of honor. The fact that ours is a "world church" has a tremendous unifying effect on those who have experienced it most profoundly.
Koppel’s Complaint

Submitted Sep 1, 2011
By Mark Gutman

“The commercial success of both Fox News and MSNBC is a source of nonpartisan sadness for me. While I can appreciate the financial logic of drowning television viewers in a flood of opinions designed to confirm their own biases, the trend is not good for the republic. Fox News and MSNBC... show us the world not as it is, but as partisans (and loyal viewers) at either end of the political spectrum would like it to be. This is to journalism what Bernie Madoff was to investment: He told his customers what they wanted to hear, and by the time they learned the truth, their money was gone.” Ted Koppel, Washington Post, November 14, 2010

Koppel is referring to “confirmation bias,” when people selectively associate with, listen to, and remember mainly what will affirm their existing positions on issues. I work as an auditor, and I guess my field gets credit for coming up with the term “opinion shopping” to refer to clients who look for auditors who will tell the world that their questionable accounting practices are allowable. But opinion shopping also applies to people who look for doctors who will give the desired diagnoses, as well as to folks who hunt for the religious prescriptions or guidelines they want. 1 Kings 22 recounts a story of opinion shopping. Ahab called in his prophets to tell him that he would win if he went to battle against two kings. Jehoshaphat was uncomfortable with Ahab’s process, so he asked for a second opinion. King Ahab grumbled that the only other prophet he knew of, Micaiah, never said anything that Ahab liked, but the king grudgingly sent for Micaiah. Sure enough, Micaiah gave the wrong “opinion” – he predicted Ahab’s death in the upcoming battle, so Ahab sent Micaiah to prison and then went off to die as Micaiah had warned.

Since we can’t put those who disagree with us into a prison, we simply refuse to listen to them or read their material or associate with them. We listen to Rush Limbaugh but not Randi Rhodes (or vice versa). Or we watch Rachel Maddow but not Sean Hannity. Actually, I’m not encouraging the watching or listening to of any of those people, mainly because of the way they talk about people who believe differently - snickering, putting the worst possible construction on the intelligence and motives of the other side, never pointing out good in the other side, calling others “morons” and “idiots”, etc., etc. Luke 18 refers to this method of dealing with differing views.

Jesus “told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and regarded others with contempt....The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues ... “(Luke 18:9, 11, NRSV). It’s easy to look at others with contempt; it becomes even easier when we refuse to listen to or associate with them.

Dr. Madeleine Van Hecke, in Blind Spots, tells of assigning her students to write a “poles-apart” paper, for which they are to investigate the belief of someone who holds an opinion very different from their own. (She gives examples of public school/home school, born again Christian/Scientology, pro-choice and abortion, among others.) She was surprised to find her students resistant to the assignment. While the students were able to compare and contrast different points of view for lots of subjects, they didn’t want to investigate a differing point of view on something they felt strongly about enough to explain how someone could logically believe that way.
“They had the intuition that the more clearly they were able to grasp the pole apart, the more difficult it might be for them to judge that perspective as wrong.” (Page 124)

Perhaps because we fear deception or “the shaking” or the slippery slope, we may be tempted to avoid books or magazines that are not published by “safe” publishers. But we may also be forgetting that we grow - physically and mentally and spiritually - from encountering resistance and learning to deal with it. We shake our heads over people’s prejudice that keeps them from attending Adventist evangelistic meetings that might affect their beliefs, while we refuse to read non-Adventist material (or the “wrong” Adventist material) because it might challenge our beliefs. Then we wonder how people can believe such weird stuff that is obviously wrong. If we’re ever accused of a crime, we will want a chance to defend ourselves, but we often accuse people of wrong (beliefs or actions) without letting them defend.

The Bereans of Acts 17 were commended for listening to Paul and checking out what he said. “But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men [and women] rest satisfied with the light already received from God’s word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion.” Gospel Workers, pp.297f

Becoming conservative and seeking to avoid discussion and shutting out Micaiah (or, the other viewpoint) can lead us not only to view others with contempt but give us reason to avoid helping them (especially the “down and out”). After all, we figure, they got into their problem because of their disgusting views or practices, so why should we use our time or hard-earned money to reinforce their inferior beliefs or habits? The prodigal son’s brother (Luke 18) wasn’t too happy to see his inheritance used to celebrate the return of his younger brother.

As we limit our investigation of differing viewpoints, we lose out on the richness to be contributed by other perspectives, we stop growing, we look down on those other people, and we come up with a list of reasons we don’t need to help others. Is it any wonder that Ted Koppel lamented the idea of flooding ourselves with only what we want to believe? Or that Jesus told the story he did in Luke 18?

How about if we read some material by “the other side” (I usually search the internet for critiques, other viewpoints, of books I like), associate with people who don’t think the way we do, and look for ways to help people who aren’t our type? How about if we look for the good in those other folks and their ways of doing things? Even if they or their beliefs seem obnoxious to us, we can recognize that they are usually as honest or well-meaning as we are. We might learn something from them, and we might also give others more opportunity to learn from us.

Charles Rodeffer

Yes there are two ditches. Different views. God must love diversity. Just look at the flowers.
With the new G.C. president who discourages reading non-SDA writers, his reasoning is that if we don't know the "other side" of a view, we will continue to be wedded to our previous views.

The best way to introduce students to opposing views is to assign them a topic and be prepared to debate either side. In debates, the participants are given position they must take 30 minutes before the debate. Only in this way will they be fully informed of both sides. Too bad this isn't a requirement for religious believers. They might find a lot of positives in other religions than their own, or that their previously held positions simply don't stand up to interrogation.

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This whole article is built on the false premise that Fox and MSNBC seek to confirm their own biases. Which would be true of MSNBC which really has no conservative opinions, (Joe Scarebourgh was never even as a Republican a conservative) While Fox started out to be fair and balanced. Which it is far more then MSNBC or CNN or the three networks. Remember the news on MSNBC is NBC it is far from unbiased. Most Newspapers or also biased.

Those who don't listen to people like Rush or Glenn Beck (9 million) don't hear the same ideas as those who listen to Randi Rhodes. However few that may be. But there is something else to consider why does Rush have more then 15 million listeners and Rhodes less then a million? Could it be that those more popular people are not simply insulting people as the above author seems to think (I am quite sure he does not listen to either Rush or Hannidy (14 million)) but that these listeners find the information and entertainment value as worthy of their time to listen. Many of the calls on these shows are from people with some disagreement with the hosts views, all of them play audio from people from all over the spectrum. Perhaps it is more then just to confirm their biases, which frankly is what the first part of the above article tries to do, not by being at all objective but by accepting conventional wisdom and without first hand knowledge disparaging the people named with his own brand of slander.

When you can't be objective about your politics, you will not be objective about your religion or your history or even your ability to acknowledge current events. The assumptions in the above article are simply biases passed off as if they have some higher objective, a common method of manipulation.

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I have listened to Rush for probably dozens of hours (mostly before 1995). I've heard Randi Rhodes several times in the last couple years. I've heard Sean Hannity a few times over the years. My description of the way they talk about "the other side" is from my memory of hearing them. I know they let some from all over the spectrum talk on their program as well, but the vast majority of callers that I've heard (not a scientific sample) side with the host and have similar sentiments about the intelligence and motives of the other side. While I may have heard...
that those hosts are one-sided, I don't remember them as sounding balanced. If I had never been
told that they are very partial to one side, I think I would still have figured it out on my own.

Koppel's article has a lot of truth in it, even if there is some balance in Fox or MSNBC. When
we limit our intake to what we've already decided is right, and when we mainly hear how stupid
or wicked those who disagree with us are, we're going to have trouble learning from "the other
side." When they see our contempt for them, they'll have a hard time being interested in dialogue
with us.

Elaine Nelson

Only listening to confirm our biases is exactly what the new G.C. president recommends. Only
read SDA writers and we will have no need to question what comes from the Silver Spring.

Ron Corson

Now here is the difference, I listen to these people every work day, Glenn Beck, Rush, Michael
Medved. When people like the author above say that these people "snickering, putting the worst
possible construction on the intelligence and motives of the other side, never pointing out good in
the other side, calling others “morons” and “idiots”, etc., etc." I know he does not know what he is
talking about. I would agree with the assessment on the Liberal side, not just because I disagree
with them but because there is a reason they don't have large audiences and it is because they are
so strident you simply can't listen to someone that you can't trust, you may know that someone is
partisan but if they don't make sense most don't return to listen more. The exception though I have
not heard him in a quite a while is Alan Combs, who by the way according to Talkers magazine is
the most listened to Liberal radio host, his number was I think 1.5 or 1.75 million. What does it say
about me if I enjoy these people and someone like the author acts as if I am just feeding my biases
or listening to people calling people on the other side of the fence as idiots. It is an affront to me
and my intelligence. And it is made by someone who does not know what he is talking about yet
pretending he does.

It is frustrating when people knowingly lie and act as if their lies are true, a good example is the
recent comments of Rep. Andre Carson, Indiana Democrat and the Congressional Black Caucus
whip, stated “[Tea Partiers would] love to see us as second-class citizens…some of them in
Congress right now of this tea party movement would love to see you and me…hanging on a tree.”

People can make all kinds of claims but if you don't have facts on your side you are simply
slandering others. If you are going to deal with information and be trusted you have to be specific,
it is those who cannot be specific and cannot give examples that are those trying to feed biases.

It is true in politics and it is true in religion.
I could give examples for each of the people I named, but my focus is on the problem of listening with the goal of confirming my belief and confirming my bias against people who hold different views. I am not criticizing every host. The hosts I mentioned make good points - I am more concerned with the attitude toward other people that comes through so strongly when they make their points. Alan Colmes is very different from the type of hosts I was referring to; I like his attitude, even if I don't agree with some of his views.

I do not believe that people who listen to the hosts I mentioned are just feeding their biases or are unbalanced, and I apologize for giving that impression. I have listened to those hosts many times myself, which is why I could describe what I've picked up as their attitudes. I learn about both sides by listening to such hosts. I didn't say that people shouldn't listen to them - "I'm not encouraging the watching or listening to of . . . ." I encourage diversity and balance, but less ridicule or namecalling engaged in by the speakers might help prevent the same in the hearers. If I can find the discussions by someone like Alan Colmes, I can hear the ideas and the arguments with less Luke 18:9,11.

I think it would be beneficial if you actually tried to give examples of the people you named. You would find that your opinion is very biased. What you would likely do is google the particular name and try to find some site which opposed that person and search for a comment you thought fit your description. You would then think you found the evidence of say for example a person like Rush who is talking for about 15 hours a week. You would find some derogatory comment and think that encapsulates that person. I can find examples of people like Rachel Maddow and others on MSNBC (progressive radio is so little heard I won't really deal with it) who flat out lie, which is to me worse then someone giving the opinon that some idea or person is idiototic. But while it would make me not listen to those people anymore it would not make me characterize them as offering shows that were all about lying.

What you call the attitude toward other people coming through so strongly is a fiction. It is not there at all except for those who feel complete disdain (those who have prejudice often). What you are arguing against is what you are doing. It is not objective, it does not take all sides into account and it slanders people. If you can't see that in politics and media what do you see in the church? Are you listening to both or all sides? Are your respecting their other side? The problem is when people are objective in one area of life and not some other area. They have a pet view don't critique the pet view (example Rush is mean and calls people names). But critical thinking is needed in all areas of life and objectivity has to include ourselves as well.

Test what I am saying and give us some of the examples you think make your case...

This is a classic example of how the so-called “coarsening of the culture” is a real and insidious occurrence. When someone is actually challenged…challenged to come up with examples of Limbaugh and his ilk being mean and calling people names (this is a
Hannitarian tactic), we are in the twilight zone of reality; and the culture, such that it is, appears hopelessly coarsened.

Now of course when one is presumably preempted from providing these examples on the Internet on the basis that the sites from which these may be catalogued are liberal, it becomes nonsense by literal definition.

Some of us are neither inhibited nor intimidated by this tact, and never will be; and could issue a similar challenge (as to examples of Maddow lying). Limbaugh of course does more than call people names; he regularly race baits too.

How do I know? I have regularly listened to his radio propaganda for about twenty years and continue to do so. In fact, I have actually gotten through as a caller (some 15 years ago, and loved it). I also listen to and/or watch Hannity, O'Reilly, Levin, Bortz et al; and also watch MSNBC, Fox, and CNN.

I concur with much of what Mark is saying, in that there is value in hearing all sides and not just feeding our own biases. But just because rudeness and hatred sell and are popular does not make them right. There are media personalities and pundits with whom we disagree who are not obnoxious and vicious; and we can all offer several examples.

Ron Corson

Race baiting...classic Progressive tactic, hey if it works for the congressional Black Caucus I guess the general public can chime in also. Stephen I record all his shows since I listen the day later, and if you are a regular listener why not give me some examples of Rush's race baiting. Just tell me the day and which hour and the general subject and I will transcribe it and we will see. You are not being objective at all but this is your opportunity to prove your point. Of course if you were a member of his Rush 24 he provides the transcript...you could then prove your point easily and so could any of the other anti conservative sites. Strange how they still can't support thier claims...just as you won't be able to.

Ron Corson

Really it is the coarsening of the culture because someone asks for an example. Yes we should all just accept without evidence everyones prejudice. If that is coarsening of the culture, you don't have much of an understanding of culture. And then to assert that someone is Race Baiting again with no evidence is just pathetic.

Here is the recent example of Rachel Maddow and her lie: http://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/noel-sheppard/2011/08/05/rush-limbaugh-catches-rachel-maddow-bald-faced-lie-about-him

Or What about Ed Schultz:
"• It takes a lot to move the needle in the angry, angry world of talk radio, but Ed Schultz
did just that when he referred to fellow host **Laura Ingraham** as a “right-wing slut” and “talk slut” on his syndicated show Tuesday. The Internet rose up in revolt Wednesday but thus far no comment from lefty host, who also has an MSNBC show. Ingraham, via Facebook, quipped she “was surprised to learn that Ed Schultz actually hosted a radio show” and tut-tutted about “men who preach civility but practice misogyny.”


Or his edited clip to make it appear that Rick Perry said something completely different: "On tonight's "The Ed Show" on MSNBC, Ed Schultz admitted he was in error in deceptively editing a clip of Gov. Rick Perry, removing the meaning and context of the governor's statement. The deception was first revealed here at Breitbart.tv.

He did not apologize, and he did not explain to his viewers that the deceptively edited clip was used by Schultz to make a false allegation of racism against the Texas governor." http://www.breitbart.tv/nbc-news-ed-schultz-admits-selective-edit-deception-not-false-racism-charge/

You don't find this kinds of thing on the conservative side with near the frequency. Those kinds of lies and statements are the coarsening of the culture, will examples even.

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**Stephen Foster** 1 month ago Reply


http://www.huffingtonpost.com/cenk-uygur/rush-limbaugh-proves-he-is-racist_61805.html

I won’t waste your time, or mine, commenting on any of this. There is, of course, much more.

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**Ron Corson** 1 month ago Reply

So do you know the context or do you just know what was said in that brief moment. Of course you don't you hear cracker and you think insult when he was not insulting steinbrenner at all.

From Mediate:
"On his radio program yesterday, **Rush Limbaugh** took a segment to sing the praises of the recently deceased **George Steinbrenner**, a “cracker who made a lot of African-American millionaires.” It didn’t take long for **Al Sharpton** to call for an apology and liberal websites to go on the offensive, and now Limbaugh tells Yahoo News’ **Michael Calderone** that the fact that he is being attacked for this is a sign of
“how bad things are for the left.”
Limbaugh explained to Calderone, who reached out for comment on the matter, that his intention— and his “stock in trade”— is “illustrating the absurd by being absurd,” and that the use of the term “cracker” (and retelling of his help to African Americans around him) was, in essence, an attempt to ridicule the New Black Panther Party:

“In the past two weeks, the President of the NBPP, **Malik Zulu Shabazz**, has been in the media attacking white crackers. One of the NBPP members from the Philly incident, **King Samir Shabazz**, appeared at a rally and suggested that blacks would only be free when all the crackers were dead and further said that killing cracker babies was called for [...]
So...George Steinbrenner dies and I, being absurd to illustrate absurdity, make my comments, pointing out that this cracker created many African American MILLIONAIRES (and fired a bunch of white managers) to establish HIS CRED!!!”

He also takes a shot at Media Matters, who he admits actually “does listen” to his show, but “purposefully distort the things I say” and then spread the distortion to reporters who “print the erroneous take.” Vice President of Research & Communications **Ari Rabin-Havt** responded by arguing that “Rush just hates that his abhorrent remarks are now available to those not in his listening audience.”

It seems like his comments were, as many on his program are, deliberately baiting the other side to take offense, but it is strange to see Limbaugh so frankly admit that he was intending to be absurd, rather than standing by his words as serious in order to further infuriate (or, as he says in the email, make the left “pretend to be offended” by his “clever” comments) the other side.

Calderone has published the full email he received from Limbaugh to avoid taking Limbaugh out of context over at Yahoo, where Limbaugh explains he appreciation for Steinbrenner in detail."

What most liberals don't understand is there is context and when you are talking you reference things you said earlier in the broadcast. But if that is race baiting then are we just to ignore the statements of true racists like the black panthers?

In an Email to Yahoo News Rush wrote of the incident:

"The only thing I can remember the media and the left ever saying about Steinbrenner is that he was an evil, temperamental dictator who made illegal campaign contributions to Richard Nixon and consortred with hoodlums.

Here's how bad things are for the left: The best they have is to pretend they are offended by my clever compliments about a fellow successful capitalist----who has been portrayed negatively by the left until now---- and are insanely obsessed with the sale of my NY condo---- sold at a profit when home sales are supposed to be a sign of a recovering economy.

This is my stock in trade: Illustrating the absurd by being absurd. Two weeks ago, a DOJ whistleblower revealed that the Obama/Holder Department of
Justice ordered line attorneys to drop a 2008 voter intimidation case against the New Black Panther Party in Philadelphia. The line attorney, J. Christian Adams, said the case was a slam dunk. And we knew it was: there was video evidence.

In the past two weeks, the President of the NBPP, Malik Zulu Shabazz, has been in the media attacking white crackers. One of the NBPP members from the Philly incident, King Samir Shabazz, appeared at a rally and suggested that blacks would only be free when all the crackers were dead and further said that killing cracker babies was called for. No one in what is called the mainstream media has condemned or even reported any of this, though it has been all over Fox News and talk radio and many internet blogs.

So...George Steinbrenner dies and I, being absurd to illustrate absurdity, make my comments, pointing out that this cracker created many African American MILLIONAIRES (and fired a bunch of white managers) to establish HIS CRED!!!

To top it off, and to provoke liberals even more, I said that Steinbrenner was such a great capitalist he even knew when to die. This year, a year in which there is ZERO estate tax. So his family will not have to sell the New York Yankees to pay what will be a 55% tax starting in January.

Simple to understand and even appreciate IF...IF...IF....one listens to my show. Media Matters for America does listen but they purposely distort the things I say and the reporters who then quote MM, and do not ever listen to my show, print the erroneous take."

Ron Corson,

That there are people…even black people…who are offended by terms of racial derision, otherwise known as slurs, even when directed at white people by other black people, is something that clearly is not understood by you. This is indeed tragic; the subsequent irresponsible exploitation of same notwithstanding.

It is also quite clear that your devotion to Limbaugh is such that no amount of evidence, no number of examples, would mean anything to you; as excuses such as “context” would inevitably be used. Perhaps “context” can always be used to excuse those who engage in race baiting?

Ed Fry,
Please see my response to you below; as I fear that it may be overlooked because of my more recent responses to Ron on this thread.

Ron Corson

The problem is Stephen that the evidence is against you. So you have to go to the very subjective offense at a term. Even though it was clear even from the small quote that Rush did not use the term cracker as a term of racial derision (Rush being white as is Steinbrenner and whites rarely call other whites crackers in a serious racial derision way). But you don't care because you have a prejudice against Rush so that only what fits your prejudice is what you hear. Because taking things out of context is what Progressives like to do (I can give you many examples of that). That you think out of context quotes is evidence is the problem here. Context is never an excuse, it is the way people understand each other. For those that want to take it away and replace with small sound bites is classic of propaganda, not reason, not intelligence, and clearly why you seem to have such a hard time with understanding so many things as I have seen in your columns and postings.

Anonymous

This thread is very clearly pointing out how insidiously the coarsening of culture has inured us to accept attacks and the attendant and often buried fallacies, prejudices, stereotypes. A bit of titillating news (oh, like LSU, perhaps), and Limbaugh et al (or the GC inquisition) become rabid in their glee to foment the masses for their own agenda (like, perhaps, pension, and power...just sayin'...) and utilize any means they can wrest. Any questioning then is deflected by all sorts of moral and ethical, logical calisthenics. Some answers here in this thread, perhaps unwittingly, highlight this, glaringly.

This very tactic is endemic even within our church (or especially). Those with predetermined need to preclude any questioning of their standing on deed or doctrine turn immediately to ad hominem and false flag, as well every other iteration of confounding argument, ostensibly to avoid having to engage in answering reasonable question (and in so doing incessantly defend their "truth" by any means, at all costs). I'd suggest this very tendency may actually be the strongest indictment that the organizations/individuals who permit their members/proponents to engage these tactics, willingly aid and abet the very erosion of their own claimed premise (ie claim to "truth").

Truth, if you stand on it it honestly, needs no defense. And if it requires one to attack those who dare QUESTION YOU, i suggest that one does not stand on truth.

Intimating questioning of another posters intelligence is precisely the type of defense that undermines the spirit of these forums (and the progressive quest
for greater truth). Derogatory statements by another (Rush) requires no redacting (purported understanding of usage of "cracker", among other positions taken here) as to how any other poster reacts to them. They have as much right to speak their opinion and perspective as does anyone. The ensuing insinuations (for instance re; their intelligence) against other posters (such as the OP or the author) who dare question you are unnecessary and undesirable.

Why does Rush (or EGW? or anyone else?) need offensive defenses, at the expense of decorum here? Are we not called to a higher plain than this... can we discuss how this coarsening of culture is, seemingly, endemic within our corporate church culture? Without the personal attacks? This is the hope of Adventist Today. I'm imploring you all help us with this.
Thank you, and carry on...gently.

Stephen Foster

1. Malik Shabbazz’s use of the slur “cracker”—in what, for you Ron, should have been a clear and unmistakable example of race baiting—was gratuitously exploited in a “context” in which there was no correlation, thus itself constituting an example of race baiting (for supposed purposes of “illustration”); which for me, as for a black man who is also a longtime Yankees/George Steinbrenner fan, was particularly hurtful—that was, until I considered its obviously venomous source.

2. Its juxtaposition with Steinbrenner having “created many African American millionaires” (itself an insult to the athletes whose talents were available to other franchises on the open MLB market) was patronizing at best; not to mention how it may have come off to African American listeners who were not contemporaneously offered the subsequent “contextual” background, and/or who may not have been at all familiar with Shabbazz or his previous race baiting.

3. You did not carefully read my objection since you obviously felt a need to inform me that Limbaugh’s use of cracker was not in derision of white people; because I said that there are black people who are offended by that term when black people have used it when referencing white people, as did Shabbazz. This is something you don’t appreciate.
4. I cited two other sites which reference several other examples of racially charged outrages from Limbaugh—otherwise known as race baiting—which were curiously (perhaps thankfully) overlooked.

5. As yet another example of what may be your version of “amazing facts” that I previously overlooked as irrelevant, I should now correct your perception of Joe Scarborough, who had a lifetime American Conservative Union voting record of 95 on a 100 scale; since facts are “against” me.

6. If context for racial insensitivity is important, since “it is the way people understand each other,” perhaps Shabbazz’s rant was likewise taken out of context. I’m sure he and his supporters would suggest so.

7. Might I suggest that what is funny, or “illustrative,” to you as a white person, may just be insulting and incendiary to someone who is not white?

Anonymous

1 month ago

As columnist editor, I am compelled to take stand right here. Ron, I did not call you out directly in the previous comment i made. Apparently you missed my nudge. Allow me to reiterate more clearly.

I am deleting part of your comment above this, and inserting only a portion. There is no need noble purpose for your inclusion of the YouTube link, or the xenophobic comment following. This not only derails the thread, it is egregious in the context of the discussion posed by Adventist Today and the author. Please answer to the topic, not a race or a person. If you choose to not answer the topic, please refrain from comment entirely. Please consider this a strong encouragement, and reminder we are serious at AToday at permitting controversial topics to be discussed, but will NOT tolerate slurs, insults, race-baiting, or grossly off-topic detours.

The following is the edited content of deleted post, and is in que just above this one of Stephens

_I did not deal with the other allegations because the principle here is the same, you have to care about context. I would love to hear your account of_
the context for Shabbazz, that would be a trick, see it here:
The YouTube video was pulled, it gave 5 minutes but was pulled for violating hate speech policy. (these words are yours; if it violates YouTube, it surely violates AToday)
What you may find off as offensive, I might not and vice versa. Should that restrict the right to express an idea that we may find useful? That is what PC is all about shutting down peoples speech to only the level of the PC correct crowd and if not then they are racist, homophobes etc. It is foolishness and if you can't tolerate it then you are being more intolerant then those you accuse of race baiting.

Ron Corson 1 month ago Reply

"The YouTube video was pulled, it gave 5 minutes but was pulled for violating hate speech policy. (these words are yours; if it violates YouTube, it surely violates AToday)"

It was no longer posted on youtube and I did not give a youtube link. The link I did give only covered the particular comment of Shabbaz, it was about one minute, the 5 minute youtube version would have given even more context. Stephen said and I quote 

6. If context for racial insensitivity is important, since “it is the way people understand each other,” perhaps Shabbazz’s rant was likewise taken out of context. I’m sure he and his supporters would suggest so."

So I used the you tube hate speech notice to indicate to him that in context there was no redeeming context, that it was not taken out of context is the point. The link I gave had the minute portion and transcript. It was not posted here it was for reference, knowing what you are talking about is more important then assuming that people are just taking things out of context.

Now what xenophobic comment did I make: 
"unreasonably fearful of or hating anyone or anything foreign or strange."

I take it you do not know what xenophobic is! I also kept all my comments in the sub area of the particular conversation. So you edited my post, what a surprise, and you made up an excuse which has nothing at all to do with anything, as there was not you tube link given. Then you insult me and call me, via my comment xenophobic and remove it so no one can see your error. When people like you and Stephen cannot even argue a subject but have to resort to name calling it is evidence of just how poorly some people's understanding of issues really is. For them remove the information is the best they can do. And yet you want to
pretend you look at both sides.

By the way if you post here as an editor it would be helpful if you identified yourself and your statement as that of an editor or someone responsible for moderating the conversation.

Stephen Foster 1 month ago Reply

Ron Corson,

My point #6 was quite simply a direct CHALLENGE to the entire notion that “context” in so far as either Shabbaz’s use, or Limbaugh’s re-use of racial slurs, should be taken into consideration. It would be as illegitimate for a Shabbazz supporter to claim “context” in defending his slur-laced rant as it is for you to do so defending Limbaugh’s responding “illustration.”

I had previously attempted to make this point in an earlier posting when I posed to you the obviously rhetorical question, “Perhaps ‘context’ can always be used to excuse those who engage in race baiting?”

Perhaps if you had read, understood, and appreciated the preceding paragraph in which I clearly indicated that most black people are offended by slurs used by blacks against white people, you would have seen that there was no need to point out to me that any attempted contextual framing of Shabbazz’s rant would be futile.

Finally, I don’t see where Timo Onjukka called you a name; and for you to imply that I “cannot even argue a subject but have to resort to name calling” is, needless to say, laughable.

Anonymous 1 month ago Reply

Ron, you might rather read and consider the thread responses, as opposed to a too-thinly veiled invective-laden personal reaction. You perhaps have absorbed some of this from immersing yourself in Limbaugh too long, who has made himself some not insignificant degree of fame and fortune doing so. I have strong feeling that Rush is a different person than the persona he seems project through his talk show, as I am sure you are as well. I’d suspect that his listeners see in him what they project.

Thank you for clarifying definitions here. The original youtube material which you referenced was followed by very clearly xenophobic invective and comments not worthy or salient to this
thread or forum.

At issue in this thread is the ability (or inability) of people to entertain opposing perspectives. This very thread clearly contrasts some who can, some who seeming cannot.

Observation from my personal perspective; the harder I fight, with greater vitriol (absent secondary, i.e. fiduciary, gain) to deny voice to opposing view may indicate greater need in me person to ascertain more what I think and feel for myself about the subject, and less about what others do-especially those who confirm my too-prevalent bias. I will less quote others who I think confirm my biases-and consequently rail less at those that threaten them. Subsequent to this I need not put the onus on you to disprove my too-tightly-clutched or too-borrowed bias.

I know if I listen more to the ways of Jesus every day, and recorded, hung onto, and reflected each of His words and ways, I will act less like the coarse world I live in and more in tune with the Kingdom coming, and is at hand.

Anonymous

Ron, you have been warned.

Deal directly with the thread issues, and not against specific people or race.
There is a world of difference between respectfully, with brevity and clarity, dicing a thread apart for content, or passing off an insulting view. We are all called to a higher plain.

I want to invite you to write some material for us. You have the necessary tools of literature, and seem to have confidence in the validity of the opinions you present, all requisite for a writer. Having critique of your opinion by our readers will surely enhance your already formidable defensive skills. If you wish I will email you submissions packet as well some complimentary subscriptions you are free to gift to others.

I will add my thought that Stephen has clearly challenged the validity of your claim for "context". I agree; your claim for context has no province here.

Ella M.
All the posts have made some good points, but their biases are evident. And why shouldn't they be? We all have them. I like to listen to both sides of any issue and can be extremely critical of both--that's just who I am. I don't like to be labeled and generally agree with some aspects of any two sides but rarely all of any one. I also think it important to put oneself in the shoes of another and try to look at life from their viewpoint.

I used to listen to Beck. He made some sense (yes, Scoros is a "spooky dude") but also had a tendency to generalize and distort history to his own thinking. I have never wanted to bother with Rush L--he just seems too harsh. I notice Fox gives news that the other stations ignore, because it would be positive to their opposition, and I like that about Fox. But we listen to all the political programs in our home. I have always considered myself a Democrat and felt that party to be more flexible. I am not so sure now; I guess I am independent.

But I agree with the gist of Mark's blog. Getting to know people in other cultures, worldviews, religions, enriches our lives and makes us less arrogant. Listening to all sides gives us freedom of choice that we would not have if we stayed within the prison of our own biases.

Like Graham Maxwell used to say, the heroes of the Bible were people who were willing to listen. David was like that and God called him "a man after my own heart."

Ed Fry 1 month ago
Mark, I think your overall point as it relates to the Adventist church -- as well as politics and life in general -- is well taken. Ted Koppel's opening quote, though, I think is overstated. The highest rated cable news program (Bill O'Reilly) averages less than four million viewers each night (slightly more than one percent of the U.S. population). Rush Limbaugh's radio show averages 20 million listeners a week (about seven percent of the U.S. population). As influential as both conservative and liberal pundits, hosts and commentators seem to be to those of us who are "political junkies," they're really not that consequential in the whole scheme of things.

Stephen Foster 1 month ago
Au contraire my friend Ed, these ideological propagandists are very “consequential in the whole scheme of things.” For example, during the debt ceiling fiasco, I heard prominent politicians being interviewed by one of these guys in particular, who had to answer to his questions as if they had been given a class assignment by a teacher who was dissatisfied with his students' study and/or research.

Many talk show hosts have toxically ideological audiences who often determine the outcome of primary elections. Ask former Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE), or former Florida Republican Governor Charlie Crist, or former U.S. Senator Bob Bennett (R-UT) if you doubt me. Republican statewide or federal office holders wouldn’t.

Ed Fry 1 month ago
Stephen, we may both be right...in our own way. The successful conservative pundits and commentators may, in fact, be consequential...in stirring the emotions of liberals! However, I
suggest the conservative commentators are successful because they "reflect" their growing audiences rather than influencing them. For example, several studies have consistently shown over the past twenty years that approximately 40 percent of the U.S. population consider themselves "conservative." Another 40 percent consider themselves "moderate" and only 20% consider themselves "liberal" or "progressive." These figures haven't changed much during the growth of Fox News, Rush, etc. Therefore I believe the conservative media outlets have been successful because they are tapping into a large population market who have not felt their views were being adequately addressed within the mainstream media.

Ed Fry
1 month ago  Reply

As to Mssrs Castle, Crist and Bennett, they lost their elections because they strayed too far from their constituencies' views (perhaps a bit less so in Castle's case). I've met Sen. Mike Lee. He's a brilliant mind and scholar who I think will someday chair the senate judiciary committee, perhaps even be named to SCOTUS. And, you may not appreciate this, Stephen, but you better get ready in either 2016 or 2020 for President Marco Rubio.

Stephen Foster
1 month ago  Reply

Ed,

It’s hard to have it both ways, but this may be the exception that proves the rule. Some talk show hosts do perhaps merely reflect their audience’s views in a general sense, in that both they and their audiences are basically both on the same cultural and/or ideological page(s); or at least in the same book. But the nationally syndicated talk show hosts, of the “household name” variety, are world class propaganda talents. Those hosts who merely reflect their audience’s viewpoints do not make it out of their local market’s morning drive time slots; in other words, the Peter Principle kicks in.

Another way to look at it is that there truly are very few individuals who actually are not the “refectors of other men’s thoughts,” much less are large numbers of people. The most prominent of these guys and gals are unfortunately recognized as so-called “thought” leaders. They are in fact opinion makers whose listeners and viewers actually look to them to give them the definitive take—including even the talking points—on many given topics, issues, events, or national personalities.

An endorsement from a talk show host with millions of weekly listeners is golden, even if it is merely in the form of a wink or a nod, or perceived negative sentiments towards the other guy. These “alternative media” types demand absolute ideological purity at every turn and now almost invariably get what they want. Bob Bennett had a lifetime American Conservative Union voting record of 86 and was therefore considered too moderate!

Perhaps Limbaugh, the pioneering giant of the nationwide political talk show industry did not, by himself, have the power of political life and death 20 years ago; but now there is Hannity, Beck, Bortz, Levin, O’Reilly, etc., etc., and a national cable network, and national newspapers. If and when they, by and large, effectively endorse a primary challenger, it is
over for that incumbent; pure and simple.

As for Marco Rubio, I don’t doubt for a second that you may be right. In fact, I am on record as long ago predicting that he may be on the 2012 ticket. Believe it or not, I am a realist.

Just think about the fallout, from a religious liberty perspective, of ideological purity and cultural hegemony, by the left or right.

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago

It is rather surprising that so many still listen to radio. I always keep The Teaching Company lectures in my car or either listen to NPR-PBS for both news and music. News: ABC and PBS—and of course the most biased (for all sides) Jon Stewart who brings them all down to size.

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago

Looks like Mark really opened up a can of worms to the extent that this thread has deteriorated down to defending radio personalities. What does that have to do with Adventist Today? Or, if it does, it what way only to cause separation over non-religious issues.

Ron Corson
1 month ago

This seems to be a good time since we are talking about talk show hosts to lists Glenn Becks latest:

Declaration of Rights & Responsibilities

Thus, we the people do hereby declare not only our rights, but do now establish this bill of responsibilities.

1. Because I have the right to choose, I recognize that I am accountable to God and have the responsibility to keep the 10 commandments in my own life.

2. Because I have the right to worship as I choose, I have the responsibility to honor the right of others to worship as they see fit.

3. Because I have freedom of speech, I have the responsibility to defend the speech of others, even if I strongly disagree with what they’re saying.

4. Because I have the right to pursue happiness, I have the responsibility to show humility and express gratitude for all the blessings I enjoy and the rights I’ve been given.

5. Because I have the right to honest and good government I will seek out honest and just representatives when possible. If I cannot find one then I accept the responsibility to take that
6. Because I have the God given right to liberty, I have the personal responsibility to have the
courage to defend others to be secure in their persons, lives and property.

7. Because I have the right to equal justice, I will stand for those who are wrongly accused or
unjustly blamed.

8. Because I have the right to knowledge, I will be accountable for myself and my children's
education...to live our lives in such a way that insures the continuation of truth.

9. Because I have the right to pursue my dreams and keep the fruits of my labor, I have the
responsibility to feed, protect and shelter my family, the less fortunate, the fatherless, the old and
infirm.

10. Because I have a right to the truth, I will not bear false witness nor will I stand idly by as
others do.

Unconditionally, while maintaining my responsibility to compassionately yet fiercely stand against
those things that decay the natural rights of all men. And for the support of this declaration, and
with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence we mutually pledge to each other our
lives, fortunes and sacred honor.

Mark Gutman

Just a reminder of what the column is saying:

1. We can be tempted to look down on others, saying, "God, thank you that I am not like those
folks in the other camp - illogical, dishonest, greedy, etc." (Luke 18:9,11). Instead, let's recognize
that there is good in others who are different, who struggle even as we do.

2. When we only talk with or listen to or read the material of those who think or act the way we do,
we make it harder to get close to other human beings who are probably as honest and
well-meaning as we are. Let's be as willing to listen to folks from different viewpoints as we want
those folks to be willing to listen to our viewpoint.

Elaine Nelson

Perhaps if we didn't take our politics and religion so seriously and could see the fallacies
and humor in them, we would be able to look at both with a little more humor.

Is there anything in either worth dying for? Not in my book because it would have no effect on
either.
Nathan Schilt

I find this post very provocative - in more ways than one. My reading material is very diverse, and includes not only The Claremont Review of Books, Commentary, the weekly Standard, and National Review, but also The Nation, New Republic, and Atlantic.

"Koppel's Complaint" - opinion shopping - is not the problem. The problem, I submit, is fact shopping. Not only MSNBC, but CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, AP, Reuters, NYT, Washington Post, NPR as well, are extremely selective about what stories they deem newsworthy. Brian Williams, for example, felt that the Anthony Weiner scandal was not newsworthy, but had no similar problem reporting on Sarah Palin's purloined, and totally unremarkable emails. How long did it take, after Fox News broke the story, for the MSM to report on the Acorn Scandal? What MSM source has reported on the scandalous selective prosecution and failure to prosecute by the Justice Department? How often do you see reports in the MSM of just what percentage of tax revenue comes from the top 1% or 5% of income earners? Most of my Leftist friends don't know. Which MSM outlet has covered the flagrant hypocrisy of the Left since their blaming of conservative rhetoric for the Jared Loughner shootings? Which MSM source reported, once it was revealed by the informant himself, that it was really an anti-war Democrat who outed Valerie Plame? More examples of reporting bias could fill books. And we haven't even started on the biases built into the fare offered by the entertainment industry on shows like Oprah, and virtually every movie containing any sort of moral theme. To suggest that there is any sort of equivalency of viewpoint exposure between the Left and the Right is to my way of thinking just ludicrous.

So my question, Mark, is this: Where do you propose that we go to get the inconvenient facts that might call into question the prevailing metanarratives of the MSM and academia, and supplement the facts they choose to reveal? I am not a fan of either Hannity or O'Reiley because I want information - not spin by talking heads. I prefer NPR for news. But talk radio - especially Rush Limbaugh - does report a lot of information that the MSM would prefer to cover up, the same type of negative information that gets recycled for days and years when it applies to conservative politicians. I think it is as important to know what we are not being told and why as it is to know what is important and significant to the Left. Where do we go to find that out, Mark?

I know what Saul Alinsky wrote. I know what Jim Wallis thinks, and I know about his relationship with the President. How come most of the country doesn't even know who those people are? Don't you think that a media obsessed with the religious influences on Bachman and Perry would be interested in what religious figures have our President's ear? Do you think the characterization of communism as evil by Whittaker Chambers, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and Natan Sharansky was due to the fact that they got their opinions from Fox News? I tend to think it was because they knew their facts. Do you think that Steyn, Dalrymple, Podhoretz, Sowell, and Scruton depend on Fox News or talk radio for their opinions or information? The historian, Stanton Evans, in his book "Blacklisted by History" exhaustively documents the extent to which the allegations of Joseph McCarthy were supported by facts. Yet McCarthy's name has come to be associated with unfounded calumny.

So explain to me again, Mark, just what opinions I need to be exposed to that will cure me of the
disease of conservatism. Because I am under the impression that overexposure to the Left is what has solidified and vindicated my conservative philosophy.

Stephen Foster

1 month ago

My views of Limbaugh and his ilk are by now known to you and others, but I think that Mark’s point is illustrated by what you have posted.

Some of us are totally convinced that Lawrence O’Donnell, Keith Olbermann, and Rachel Maddow put things in proper perspective and are largely if not always accurate; some of us believe that Bill O’Reilly, Shawn Hannity, and Limbaugh have a handle on reality and put things in their proper perspective.

The point is that those who listen to MSNBC or Olbermann’s station should also watch and listen to Fox News and right wing talk radio, and people such as you should also watch/listen to MSNBC or NPR. Otherwise we are only reinforcing that which we already believe, at best; or being indoctrinated, propagandized, and brainwashed, rather than informed.

For American Adventists, the danger I perceive for either side of the political ideological spectrum is if/when we see biblical prophecy being fulfilled insofar as compulsory observance of a day of the week—or if we see advocacy of religious or sectarian beliefs as public policy which would lead to/precede such compulsion—by the side of the political spectrum that we may be on, will we recognize it? (Acceptance would be as important as recognition.)

Mark Gutman

1 month ago

It appears that Stephen has already answered some of the question for me. And it sounds as if you are already letting the other side talk. I'm not saying that if you don't change your views you must not be listening to others. If you're reading all those periodicals and not regarding the holders of those viewpoints with contempt, it sounds as if you're achieving balance.

I was addressing what I (and Luke 18:9,11 and Koppel's column) see as a problem when we ignore the other side and lessen our chance of seeing any merit in their viewpoint. Even if the other side is "wrong," there is usually some reason people hold to such a belief, and we can at least put together a "poles-apart" paper (described in the 6th paragraph of my column). To use a cliche, we need to disagree without being disagreeable. Even if I think you're wrong on theology or politics or baseball, I can treat you with the respect I'd like you to show me even though I don't agree with you.

One of the reasons I'm writing this column is to allow people a chance to help me refine my views. I don't expect everyone to agree with everything I write, but disagreement is easier to
take if I sense kindness or civility and an interest in dialog, as opposed to condescension or hostility.

Nathan Schilt
1 month ago

I wholeheartedly concur with the importance of being able to separate ideas from the holders of those ideas. I think most, if not all, people believe that their political views will lead to better earthly kingdoms. This does not mean, however, that all ideas are meritorious or entitled to respect, particularly when they need to ignore history and distort reality in order to have credibility.

BTW, The elder brother's problem in Luke 18 was not, in my opinion, his inability to see things from his younger brother's perspective. It was his unwillingness to rejoice with the father and share in the father's forgiveness when the younger brother came home. The point of the story is not a younger brother whose viewpoint or experience had merit waiting to be discovered. The story contrasts God's attitude towards sin, rebellion, and repentance with that of the Pharisees. God doesn't see things from the younger brother's perspective. He loves and forgives. I don't see much in Christ's life or teachings to encourage ideological diversity or to support the notion that folks should expose themselves to a variety of opinions. Now if liberals want to admit the error of their thinking and beg forgiveness… (LOL)

Stephen Foster
1 month ago

You say that you agree with separating ideas from the people who hold them; but I don’t believe that this was Mark’s basic point. You follow with your not believing that all ideas merit respect and then characterize an opposing point of view in a way that would disrespect those belief holders as ignorers of history and distorters of reality. Mark’s point is that there is often something in the perspective of others that merits our consideration; discovered only by exposure to those perspectives.

Nathan Schilt
1 month ago

I guess, Stephen, that we just kind of have to agree to disagree. To me, the fact that I think someone else's opinion is nutty and ill-informed doesn't mean that I disrespect them or the honesty with which they hold that opinion. We all see reality differently. I am disinclined to relinquish my grip on reality simply to make others feel that I think their perspectives are meritorious. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." By pointing that out, I don't think I am disrespecting the person.

The ideas that are usually the most dangerous are espoused by people who are honest and well-meaning. Tea Party sympathizers couldn't care less about whether big government spend and tax politicians are well-meaning and honest. We very well understand their perspectives and the sentiments of their constituents. And we think their ideas are terrible. Jesus didn't seem to think there was much in the perspective of the Pharisees that merited serious consideration, though I'm sure he loved and respected them as human beings.
Stephen Foster

I see your point Nathan. I guess for purposes of illustration, what I hear Mark saying (although it may actually be me), is that although I may find Limbaugh’s worldview, thought processes, and personality absolutely evil, nutty, and repugnant (respectively); there is something about his perspective on things worthy of respectful consideration, because he is a human being with a history that has taken him to where he is, and that fact alone makes him worth hearing.

Nathan Schilt

Stephen, now you sound like Mr. Rogers: "Rush is special, so he's worth hearing." Why waste your time on people whose worldview and ideas you find evil and nutty - unless of course you want to be informed, and are willing to go through Hell for it? Life is too short. If you must find out what the dark side is saying and thinking, listen to Michael Medved or Dennis Prager - much less abrasive and belligerent than Rush. Or better yet, google Townhall or Pajamasmedia.

In the world of ideas, it matters not a whit to me who holds the idea or what his life experiences consist of. It is only the relative convincing force of the idea that makes it worth considering. The reasons you offer as to why Limbaugh is worth hearing apply to your relationship with your wife - not some radio personality that you think is at best a big blowhard.

Mark Gutman

I'm trying to catch up on the day's posts. You and Stephen are both enlarging my point very well (even if I keep thinking, "I wish I had put it that way"). I'm not suggesting that we must listen to all who disagree with us. The fourth paragraph in my column says, "I'm not encouraging . . . ." And I think some ideas are pretty nutty. Other ideas that I can't buy I occasionally get an insight on from their proponents when I listen to them. I hope I can still be somebody's friend even if I disagree with him or her. I may not even have a lot of time to listen to the other side, but I want to at least make sure that some of my time is devoted to hearing from other than my favorite talk show hosts, preachers, or politicians.

Nathan Schilt

Exactly. Some of my finest friends are liberals. It works just fine as long as neither of us attacks the other personally or takes personally vigorous challenges to our ideas. My liberal interlocutors have never persuaded me. But they have certainly made me think more deeply and express my ideas more clearly. And I sometimes find, to my great surprise, that we actually have points of agreement.
So I would concur with both you, Mark, and Stephen, that there is value in seeking positive personal interaction with people who have different values and ideas. This is part of education, maturity, and character growth in a diverse, civilized society.

Stephen Foster
1 month ago Reply

Nathan,
Listening to Limbaugh juxtaposed with listening to my wife; I better quit while I’m behind. What more can I say?

Elaine Nelson
1 month ago Reply

Is it possible that the Adventist description of last day events may not occur as the scenario presented? If a thief comes in the night, he will not enter in the front door, and if things in the world do not prove to be what Adventists have long expected, then what? Being so certain of how everything must "fall in line" is courting disaster.

Ella M.
1 month ago Reply

I totally agree with this. Jesus' first advent--The Messiah did not come as the Jewish leaders expected.

Stephen Foster
1 month ago Reply

Elaine,

Exactly what “disaster” are Adventists courting if our eschatology is wrong? I thought that your position has been that it doesn’t make any difference, and/or we needn’t be concerned with this topic at all.

Ella,

The prophecies of Daniel and of The Revelation of Jesus Christ were given for a reason. Luke 21:28-36 certainly suggests that watchfulness is important. Since prophecies and signs were provided, it would seem reasonable to conclude that somebody might be right in their interpretations of prophecies and signs.

I suggest that that “somebody” is “us.”

Herbert Douglass
1 month ago Reply

Mark: I salute you for arranging this most illuminating trail of keen thinkers. Most of the
contributors are far from being dummies. If anyone in this column has not learned something, I kinda feel sorry. What really got my attention was Nathan's appeal for "facts" ("fact-shopping" being the real test of truth. Now that is hard to do these days, wherever I look. In my blog on another network, I have been making the case for the blindness in succumbing to the "cult of the experts." Especially in the hard sciences ("settled" science? and in theology. I don't have a whole lot of excitement when I see an article or book loaded with footnotes because I am more concerned who is being quoted before I leap. And then "who" gets his line of thought from "whom." Seems it is easier to check out what primary authority or world view a person has "faith" in--or it should be easy, but it often tasks a little time. Real facts rest on indisputable authority, not merely on "peer review." I have seen too much of that. I am an Adventist after going through the rigor of testing alternatives and continually assessing the reasons for my "faith." All I want are the facts, ma'am. Cheers, Herb
Pacific Union Conference Quinquennial - 29th Constituency Session

Submitted Aug 30, 2011
By Elwin Dunn

August 29-30, 2011  Ontario Convention Center, Ontario, California

Analysis:
This meeting was not about worship, happiness, or back slapping. It was held because the bylaws of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists requires it. It was a working session held to fulfill the legal requirements of a rather tired and outmoded organization.

Let me explain:

In the early years of the 1980’s, members of the Adventist Church were affected, as were all United States citizenry, by the country’s financial malaise. They demanded a review of business as usual, particularly in regard to funding, at all administrative levels of the church. One of those who truly heard the message was Tom Mostert, President of the Pacific Union Conference. By 1995, Elder Mostert’s re-organization program had eliminated almost two-thirds of Union employees - to less than 40 today. Similar was done in other Unions, but not nearly to the extent which occurred in the Pacific Union.

The end product not only streamlined the Union organization, but had the effect, even though they underwent some of the same reduction in force, of increasing the authority of the Unions component Conference Presidents, who make up the driving force of the Union Committee.

This process left an organization which, in essence, made it the ATM of its constituent conferences. Union leadership primarily served as facilitators for its constituent conferences and as agent for financial management. The only oversight the Union had left was its constituent universities, Pacific Union and La Sierra, and its mission, Holbrook Mission School in Arizona.

Ricardo Graham, current President of the Pacific Union, in his reprise as the 'State of the Pacific Union,' at the session, made this point quite clearly when he said his current primary function is to serve as chair of some 28 committees, and a facilitator of policies (implementation) which generally originate at NAD or General Conference levels of Administration. His associates complement this process. Graham’s expectation for the future: “policies and more policies.”

During most of the 20th century, the Pacific Union was a completely different organization. It not only was recognized for its leadership in the denomination, providing countless talented leaders, and generally seen as the major funding source for 'the work.' Being called to serve in the Pacific Union, from other locales in the United States, was often viewed by workers as the closest thing as going to heaven, as actually doing so!

The Pacific Union Conference as it exists in 2011, is far more cosmopolitan than which existed half a century earlier. Currently, the Union church membership, ~225,000 strong, is very representative of the overall population, with over half of that number as non-Caucasian. The Conference Presidents reflect this makeup. Of the seven, two are African-American, two are Hispanic, and the
remaining three are of Caucasian background. Their associates reflect the same profile. Membership growth strongly reflects this trend.

Summary:
With the Pacific Union Conference’s basic role limited to serving as facilitator and banker for its constituent Conferences, one must question the need of even the current level of staffing which exists.

As part of the North American Division hierarchy, what should constituent members expect from this level of governance?

Nathan Schilt

Very interesting and disturbing. What I find most ominous is the statement, "policies and more policies". Elwin, could you elaborate on what you think this means? This statement connotes to me the intensification of a regulatory Church, with reduced localism and accountability to the membership as Church leaders proliferate sinecures for themselves. Increasing the half-life of otiose denominational infrastructure is not the direction we should be going as a Church. What practical suggestions do you have for members to counteract this trend?

Elwin Dunn

Nate: I was trying to reflect what I understood from Graham's "vision for the future" of the PUConference statement- namely his use of and repetition of the word, policies. He actually said the word three times. He did not elaborate further.

Edwin A. Schwisow

As a 27-year former communication representative for the northerly "sister union" bordering the Pacific Union, it appeared to me that our union, and perhaps yours too, functioned to some degree as a "Senate" to the Conferences' "House," forming with them a bicameral composite in which the union consisted (on average) of much older individuals with longer terms of office. The union also functioned, however imperfectly, as a bit of a judiciary. As I would travel creating video documentaries and chronicling inspirational news for Northwest Adventism, I would often be asked (probably about 10 times a year, in confidence), "Ed, do you think the unions are going to be around much longer; don't you think modern technology has made them redundant?"

My response generally ran along these lines: "Yes I do believe they will be around, but in smaller form. If we closed the unions, we would probably manage to reinvent them within 10 years or so. Here's why: Our conferences rarely represent entire state territories, so in our dealings with state governments (legally and in religious liberty aspects), the union (which by policy never shares a state's geography with another union) serves a real function. Second, the academic and medical sides of the church equation at least in theory benefit from some executive-level formal liaison, and the unions’ wise old heads seem (again in theory) of a gravitas equal to that task. And third, and perhaps most important, the union serves as a mentoring body of wise [people] to help often very-gifted younger functionaries in the conferences. By having a union, we can afford to entrust
administration of the conferences to younger, more energetic leadership.

At least in theory, I still believe the function of the unions is defensible, though I also believe the pressure to reduce the number of "levels" of conference administration continues to increase. In the old days, unions DID represent "another level." Perhaps today, in much more consolidated form, they represent a "wise forum," and perhaps ideally should continue evolving in that direction, if they are to continue to function at all. There was a time during my days in union work when the unions were unduly large, unduly powerful, and in many cases staffed by younger men and returned missionaries with their eyes on GC positions. Since then the unions appear to have done a better job finding specific roles and functions not duplicated in the conferences, while continuing to provide a resource of (ideally) sage, experienced counselors with strengths in mentoring.

Elwin Dunn

continuing: As to my belief as to what this actually meant... My sense was there was a fair degree of frustration that the present state of the PUConf (bare bones financing and staffing seemed to be the principal issue, for the elected officers and their associates seemed to be working well together and acted like a mutual appreciation society at the meeting).

Reading between the lines during the overall presentation as to the state of affairs, and chatting with several Union Associates later, left me with the feeling that the dramatic cutbacks initiated by Mostert were well intended, but that the other Unions gave primarily lip service to these same efforts, thus continued to have huge budgets allowing them to aggressively develop programs and provide services which the Pacific Union was now in no position to do. In other words, the PUC was truly only able to serve as a conduit and banker for its constituent conferences. This further left them no other options than to interpret policies.
Adventist View of Employer/Employee Relationships by Guido

Submitted Aug 23, 2011
By Guido
"The Seventh-day Adventist view of employer-employee relationships is based on teachings and narratives in the Bible."

Guidelines for employer and employee relationships, voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on October 14, 2003

Young lady, the fact that you work for an Adventist institution does not give you the right to be late every morning!

Yet according to the Epistle to the Galatians, Chapter 5, Verse 22...

Punctuality is not a fruit of the Spirit. Patience is!
the lady said, she is right. Patience is a fruit of the spirit.