This Week at *Adventist Today* Online

**Book Review & News**

**What Good is God?** — A new book by Christian journalist Philip Yancey looks closely at several recent natural and moral calamities (such as the international proliferation of enforced prostitution) and concludes that though God may not directly appear to intervene in these gross violations of moral laws and calamities, confidence in His presence *does* make a difference.

**Where To? The Adventist Search for Direction** - David Newman

The long-awaited book about the current status and future of Adventism is now available through atoday online store. Editor J. David Newman looks frankly at the failings and achievements of Adventism and projects its future with startling but respectful candor...

**Blogs, Columns & Previous**

**Scientists and Theologians Have Similar Problems**

Herb Douglass says a major cause of disagreement between scientists and theologians regarding creation and evolution has to do with extreme preconditioning

**Doing Church as “The Way”**

Christ came to destroy religion, says columnist Don Watson. His early followers simply followed “The Way” without the pontifical intervention of a church
on both sides. Each is absorbed in its own point of view; a bit of humility on both sides could lower room temperature….

**A Life that Matters**

Ellen White was a "progressive" with a strong impetus to foster reformation in the cultural and physical practices of her day, says Nathan Brown. At her death she was eulogized in almost Lincolnian terms as a foe of "slavery, the caste system, unjust racial prejudices, the oppression of the poor, the neglect of the unfortunate..." She ultimately focused on the love of God as the defining element of a united theory of history.....

system. Christ's radical anti-institutionalism explains the vitriolic opposition to "The Way," and Saul's peculiar hatred of such a movement. Can we—should we—go back?

**The Good WHAT?** – Mark Gutman

**Keeping Our Kids in the Church** - Martin Weber

**American Congregations Decline in Overall Health in Past Decade** – AT News Staff

**A Sophisticated Adventist Apologetic for Young Life Creationism: Part II** - Ervin Taylor
What Good is God? - Reviewed by Barbara Gohl

Submitted Sep 29, 2011
By Barbara Gohl

What Good is God? by Philip Yancey

Another Philip Yancey book is reason to look forward to thoughtful answers as he faces difficult questions, and this title is no exception. Yancey professes deep love for God, and as a reader of past Yancey books, I appreciate his candor about his anxious thoughts, as he faces seemingly insoluble challenges. I found that candor again in *What Good Is God?* published in 2010 by Faith Words.

It’s heavier reading than some of Yancey’s earlier fare, as he confronts 10 horrific contemporary disasters that in several cases are compounded by man’s depravity to man. Why does God allow evil to continue, and if He must, what difference does it make to believe in Him?

Yancey focuses on situations he finds in his travels and shares his journey as he seeks answers to the title question. In each stop on his tour, Yancey is asked to address the locals and encourage those caught up in the distress of the moment. Because the tour provides the framework for the book, he presents each situation in a separate chapter—a departure in format from past Yancey titles.

Here each chapter shares the individual background of the tragedy at hand, followed by the talk he addressed to those directly affected. At book’s end, he answers his title question—an answer I withhold here to save what amounts to an unexpectedly satisfying conclusion to a dark journey.

Of special interest to Adventists is his chapter on his invitation to speak at a professional sex-workers’ conference (where the horrific international epidemic of prostitution is addressed—a topic apparently taboo in Adventist publications). At the conference, Yancey listens as former prostitutes tell their stories and questions them in a three-hour session before his address, telling him of the worthlessness they feel.

Adventists can also relate to his descriptions of the Bible college he attended, far removed from the “real” world. He calls it a “bubble” – “a halfway house on the way to maturity.” In spite of and because of what he found there, he declares, “I met God at the school I am writing about, a life-changing experience worth twenty years in prison, let alone four years in a Bible college.” This book will bring back memories for many Adventists.

The standout chapter for me included the story of a young man who studied to be a preacher, and then took medicine, in hopes of ministering to the whole person. Raised in the South and affected deeply by the civil rights movement, he had traveled the nation searching for a model for treating people holistically. He found nothing, so started his own non-profit, which has become a large medical complex serving more than 50,000 uninsured and working poor a year. There he accepts donations and volunteer service from other health workers to provide care on a sliding scale, the average charge being $20. Why don’t more of us share this preacher/doctor’s vision?
Part of the enjoyment in reading was trying to figure out how Yancey would finally resolve the title question, *What Good Is God?* I found the journey very worthwhile and recommend the book.

There are no comments.
Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian, Gospel Revivalist

Total cost of $26.95 which includes $5.00 for shipping.

Author - Milton Hook, Ed.D - Meticulously researched account of the life and ministry of Desmond Ford, to the present. More than 400 pages of footnoted text and photographs. Shipping applies to this item. Click here for shipping details.

Fifth Generation: Thoughts on Mature Adventism

Total cost of $19.45 which includes $4.50 for shipping.

Author - John Thomas McLarty - Essays on the attractions of Adventism's unique culture by an Adventist progressive pastor and journalist. Provides affirmation and encouragement for new Adventists. Shipping applies to this item. Click here for shipping details.

Red Books: Our Search for Ellen White

Total cost of $24.45 which includes $4.50 for shipping.

Pacific Union College Drama Team - A 75-minute drama that deals openly and honestly with the struggles faced in positioning Ellen White in our spiritual and cultural lives. Stimulates positive, thoughtful discussion about the continuing role of Ellen White among Adventists. Shipping applies to this item. Click here for shipping details.

Truth Decay

Total cost of $19.45 which includes $4.50 for shipping.

Author - Albert Koppel, D.D.S. Why does Adventism so readily seem to resort to secrecy and manipulation in its acquisition and use of donated money? It is the first book published in Adventism dealing specifically with the financial mismanagement of donated funds at all levels. Shipping applies to this item. Click here for shipping details.

Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives

Total cost of $24.45 which includes $4.50 for shipping.

Editors - Brian Bull, Fritz Guy, Ervin Taylor - Can science coexist with the Bible’s interpretative treatment of human history? This is an excellent book for Christians who wish to
better understand Genesis and its proper relationship to science—and to speak intelligently on the current controversy about the place of evolution in Adventist colleges’ curricula. Shipping applies to this item. 

**Where To? The Adventist Search for Direction -- International Price**

Total International Price of $20.45 which includes $8 shipping outside the US

Author - J. David Newman - The election in 2010 of a new General Conference president with pronounced conservative views has raised questions in the minds of many Adventists—where is the church headed? Adventist Today editor Dr. David Newman examines the historical evidence and today's trends, and helps us visualize the church scenery ahead... Shipping applies to this item. 

**Where To? The Adventist Search for Direction -- US Price**

Total cost $16.45 includes $4.50 for shipping within the US & its territories

Author - J. David Newman - The election in 2010 of a new General Conference president with pronounced conservative views has raised questions in the minds of many Adventists—where is the church headed? Adventist Today editor Dr. David Newman examines the historical evidence and today's trends, and helps us visualize the church scenery ahead... Shipping applies to this item.

**Who Watches? Who Cares?**

Total cost of $24.95 which includes $5.00 for shipping.

Author - Douglas Hackleman. A 2007 compilation of meticulously researched chapters about some of the major financial calamities faced by the church in the past 30 years. Instructive and useful as a foundational text for helping protect the church from such mismanagement and opportunism in the future. Published by Members for Church Accountability. Shipping applies to this item. 

Adventist Today Magazine is published quarterly by Adventist Today Foundation

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Scientists and Theologians Have Similar Problems

Submitted Sep 28, 2011
By Herb Douglass

Both scientists and theologians often suffer from mental imprints that are caused by, 1) what they have been taught; 2) by their own presuppositions; or 3) by who pays them.

Each of these reasons is often hidden in the unconscious. If you don't believe me, just check it out and see how quickly they respond on any given issue. Many times it sounds like a tape recorder!

Some simple questions to ask theologians:

1. What is sin?
2. Is Ellen White merely a nineteenth-century ‘prophet’?
3. What is meant by ‘forensic justification’?
4. What is the difference between ‘perfection’ and ‘overcoming’?
5. How sinless was Jesus when He was born?
6. Why did Jesus die?
7. Will those who have never heard of Jesus be saved?
8. In what way do we understand Martin Luther's 'saved by faith alone.'

Some simple questions to ask physical scientists:

1. Despite the extensive research undertaken by countless dedicated scientists, why can't we find a single transitional form in the fossil record?
2. Because for many the premise of evolution is the backbone of most biological courses, is it not true that such science is founded on an unproven theory — and thus the theory of evolution is exactly parallel to belief in special creation?
3. What do we do with the individual cell with its 239 proteins, each one necessary for the cell to exist, when we seek an answer to where it came from, knowing it would not be a living cell if the proteins grew within the cell, one by one?
4. Why do those working in classification and comparative anatomy have a tough time agreeing with each other — splitters and lumpers, etc.?
5. How do we account for the clear-cut gaps in various 'classifications' when we would expect 'continuous bleeding' from one kind to another?

Adventist Today editor, Dr. David Newman, observed recently that we all are burdened with our assumptions (presuppositions). This could not be said more simply or eloquently. It seems to me it is unfortunate that it takes more years than time spent in colleges and universities to grasp the secret of humility. And it takes some time thereafter to re-examine the assumptions we learned in school, thus learning the quiet joy of real learning.

There is nothing more debilitating than to suffer through many panel discussions wherein we all share our ignorance, even when what is shared is properly buttressed with footnotes to those we have trusted. I have been as guilty as everyone else.
Anonymous

Herb,

Interesting lineup. I usually read your input with profound disagreement, but this time I cannot agree more with your observation about assumptions and presuppositions.

Could I be permitted to make a couple of observations about it?

You note: "It seems to me it is unfortunate that it takes more years than time spent in colleges and universities to grasp the secret of humility. And it takes some time thereafter to re-examine the assumptions we learned in school, ...".

Would it be likely that the positions or beliefs one reaches or affirms as a result of that "humility" and "re-examine"ing, are most likely to be more sound? This seems to be an implicit reality in what you are saying.

I, like many others, have walked that road. Piece by piece I have been humbled as I confronted my Adventist heritage, and been forced to discard large chunks of it, including a YEC/YLC position....

You also note: "There is nothing more debilitating than to suffer through many panel discussions wherein we all share our ignorance, even when what is shared is properly buttressed with footnotes to those we have trusted". Profoundly true. I confess, I see the SDA Lesson quarterly as an unsurpassed example of such. Similarly of course many SS classes.

Your opening points are a give away to a conservative SDA position, as the answers you seek are implicit in the lineup:)

You have identified the problem well.

What would you advise people to do to ensure they are truly evaluating their assumptions a posteriori? Is this even possible if we hold to a fundamentalist view of the authority of Scripture, as such a view apparently must begin with an a priori assumption?

Horace Butler

Your second set of questions are profound, and they are never given satisfactory answers by evolutionists. If they are addressed at all, the "explanations" are preceded by words such as "possibly," "could have," "may have," etc.

It is true that we all arrive with our presuppositions. It is inevitable, since from the beginning we must be taught everything, and the very process of that teaching will create those presuppositions. But at some point, if we are honest with ourselves, we will examine the evidence and go where it leads. But, when all the dust settles, we take either the Bible, or Darwinism, on faith, not blind faith, but the "evidence of things not seen." Although I still haven't seen any real evidence for evolution.
The process of honestly following the evidence could be facilitated somewhat by convincing parents of the inadvisability of teaching their kids to believe in Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, and other similar fairy tales. At a certain age, when they find that their parents have been lying to them (because it was so "cute"), they may very well reject what they perceive as "fairy tales" about Jesus. By the time they have reached the age where they can engage in some real critical thinking, they have often been so prejudiced against religion that it becomes difficult to change course, evidence or no evidence.

Ervin Taylor 3 weeks ago Reply

Mr. Butler continues to insist that "I still haven't seen any real evidence for evolution." May I offer the suggestion that Mr. Butler can never and will never "see" any "real evidence for evolution" because he sees evolution as running directly counter to his theology. If he wishes to say that "my theology prevents me from seeing any real evidence for evolution", I, for one, would say that such a statement has the virtue of being intellectually honest. But when Mr. Butler and others suggest that evolution is not supported by weight of scientific evidence, then I think the best way to deal with that obviously misinformed statement is to ignore it and move on.

Ron Corson 3 weeks ago Reply

I am not really sure what your point is here Herb, as I think if I asked theologians your questions I would get a wide range of answers, perhaps a less wide range in the Traditional Adventist group but probably some range even there.

As for you science questions well you would probably get more similar answers because the questions are probably more flawed. For instance

"Because for many the premise of evolution is the backbone of most biological courses, is it not true that such science is founded on an unproven theory — and thus the theory of evolution is exactly parallel to belief in special creation?"

The answer will be the theory of evolution is based upon natural selection and that is not a theory but a demonstratable fact. That is in fact what Darwinianism means contrary to how some Adventists think to use the term. The answer becomes more variable when the scientist explains evolution because intelligent design and theistic evolutionists will still see God in the process where as atheistic evolution won't.

Anonymous 3 weeks ago Reply

Ron,

I think Herb has been a silent observer on other threads and this is his way of weighing in on the discussion with a bunch of broadsides. All questions which suggest an entrenched position built...
on assumptions and presuppositions.

Herb, perhaps you could also give me an answer to the question I put to Horrace. No one seems to be able to respond to the actual question as yet.

Horace Butler 3 weeks ago

If evolution is based upon natural selection, then the theory is DOA because natural selection adds nothing; it only selects from what is already there. For evolution to work there must be a mechanism to add genetic material (DNA), and so far none has been found. Therefore it is correct to say that it is an unproven theory. Of course evolutionists will claim that it has been proven, but I'm still waiting to see this alleged proof.

Most damaging is the lack of transitional forms. If evolution has been occurring for millions of years most fossils should be transitional forms. Instead, all fossils are fully formed. There are no undisputed transitional forms. So they invented the idea of "punctuated equilibrium," which is nothing more than a face saving device designed to fool the average layman. It's like trying to prove Santa Claus by saying that the reason no one has seen him is because he's too fast to detect. Yeah, right.

Anonymous 3 weeks ago

Horace,

There are many "transitional" forms and components in wales. see link below.

Problem is if scientists find a transitional form, YEC's call it a new one and scientists are left with two gaps instead of one! Can't win.

I asked this question elsewhere:

What are human milk lines? If they are not vestigial, transitional, or "bleeding from one to another" what are they?

http://www.talkorigins.org/features/whales/

Horace Butler 3 weeks ago

There is no consensus on transitional forms. There is dispute among the experts as to whether these fossils are true transitionals or unique species. But my point still stands. Most fossils should be in a state of transition, since it would have taken a lot of changes go from primordial soup to primates. Instead, we have a few "possibles." A vivid imagination helps, as well.

The idea of vestigial organs is a cop out. Because there is no known function for a particular
organ, they get labelled as vestigial, which reflects the evolutionary biases of the scientists, rather than concrete evidence that they have no function. That list continues to shrink, as we discover that these organs have a purpose.

Anonymous

Horrace,

Are you suggesting that a "purpose" will ever be found for human milk lines!!?? Even worse, that such a purpose could explain the incredible similarity with other mammals, plus their existence in both genders?

Horace Butler

Why not?

Anonymous

Horrace,

I've put comment on the other thread where this is being discussed.

Cheers

Elaine Nelson

All the questions to theologians presuppose answers that all theologians will answer similarly. The problem: All SDA theologians who are on the payroll are usually very circumspect, if identified, of answering such questions that appear to doubt the official position.

For the scientists, the questions are worded showing preconceived bias: "is it not true that such science is founded on an unproven theory — and thus the theory of evolution is exactly parallel to belief in special creation?

Why do those working in classification and comparative anatomy have a tough time agreeing with each other — splitters and lumpers, etc.?

This is similar to "when did you stop beating your wife" for ASSUMING the answer. It is not an open-ended question that could be honestly answered as it doesn't hide the answer expected.

This question asked of theologians might find there would also be a tough time agreeing with each other:

1. **What is the difference between ‘perfection’ and ‘overcoming’?**
2. How sinless was Jesus when He was born?
3. Why did Jesus die?

John Andrews
3 weeks ago

Herb Douglass is dead wrong on his defense of sinless perfectionism.

His dogged stance on this issue has caused many in the church to continue down a path towards loss of security of salvation, depression in Christian life and discouragement.

It's time we reject FULLY and UNEQUIVOCALLY this HERESY from our midst and accept the Gospel.

Paul has a great message for us in the book of GALATIANS, we should read it:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." 2:20

But Douglass says "No", we have to reach perfection and give "ourselves" to God and see if he accepts it.

No wonder Adventist baby boomers who grew up with Douglass' articles in the Review and leaving the church.

Menachem
2 weeks ago

John Andrews... I looked over my bookshelf and cannot locate any HED production remotely suggesting "sinless perfectionism". Please define further or cite your reference. Many thanks!

Joe Erwin
3 weeks ago

It is true, I think, that whatever our current beliefs are, they influence our abilities to process information. We almost automatically accept information that agrees with our beliefs, and we almost immediately reject information that disagrees with our beliefs. Recognizing this, and slowing down the acceptance-rejection process a bit, could really help honest people with different views at least communicate with each other.

But what about people who were taught, and came to believe, positions they later rejected because those positions lacked merit and could not survive examination in the light of evidence? For me, someone who was raised as an adventist and attended SDA schools through a couple of years at PUC (where I was, for awhile, a theology major), I did not simply reject one set of beliefs and accept uncritically another set of dogma. I did not just change over night from being an adventist
Christian with a YEC/YLC perspective to recognition that compelling evidence indicates that the earth is much older than I had been taught. Across many years of entertaining opinions and examining evidence, including—by-the-way—abundant examples of transitional living and faunal forms, I came to appreciate the Wallace-Darwin principle of natural selection as a means of evolutionary change. I had learned about Mendelian inheritance and genetics in an SDA college. What I had not encountered there, was ANYTHING about "the modern synthesis" as proposed by Ronald Fisher in "The genetical theory of natural selection," which then was advanced by Mayr, Dobzhansky, and others, as modern population biology. I had learned very little at PUC about DNA and Watson & Crick's "Molecular Biology of the Gene." I struggled to understand how molecular biology and population biology fit together, recognizing that the potential existed for a new synthesis. But I never became, and still am not, a "Darwinist." Why? Because Darwin lived a long time ago and had very little knowledge or understanding of either population biology or molecular biology. And, because I was not about to be a "true believer" in anything. I had a nagging concern about where the genetic variability comes from that natural selection acts on. It was my impression 40 years ago that we did not know of enough mutagens to produce the amount of variability that had to have been present for evolution to progress as rapidly as the fossil record suggested. I became fascinated with "epigenetic" phenomena, even though many biologists of that time discounted their importance (and usually branded them as Lamarkian). I came to suspect that some portions of DNA were more vulnerable to replication errors than others. Then it became clear that some viruses cleaved DNA (retroviruses) and sometimes inserted sequences of their own DNA into the genome of the host. If this occurred in germ-cell lines, the consequences could be inherited, but even in non-germ cells, there could be functional consequences. By the 1980s, "mobile elements" were discovered that influenced gene expression and genetic variability. The explosion of research on lentiviruses (a kind of retrovirus) since the emergence of AIDS further advanced understanding of virus-host interaction at genomic and functional levels. With detailed studies of genomics, including not only the exonic, but also the intronic, regions of the genome, and by comparing across species (ranging from viruses to humans), it is now very clear that an exceptional amount of genetic variability exists, along with enormous opportunities for environmental influences on expression, function, and replication—and evolution. There is always much more to understand, and we all do well to deal with this complexity very humbly. It is truly awesome and wonderful. I do not mind if you see in all this The Hand of God. For all this to have been invented and set in motion on purpose, that designer would have to have been far beyond our understanding. I see all this as truly remarkable, amazing, etc. I do not happen to see in it the necessity of believing in a designer—but you may, and if that works for you, that is fine with me. Just don't retreat into ignorance and deny that the earth is old or that fossils are real or that evolutionary change occurs. Seek truth. Honestly. And, sure, be humble.

Darrel Lindensmith

Interesting Joe!
Speaking of 'population biology or molecular biology' and the whole 'out-dated' "mutation/selection" love affair,
I have been deeply interested in the newer fields of epigenetics and genetic front-loading. As you say, 'It is truly awesome and wonderful.' Both of these fields speak to deep deep complexity built into the codes of life from the very very beginning. The deep codes (not mutations) being turned over time explain the radiation of life on the planet. The codes were placed there from the very
beginning, so what we see over time, is what many mistake for a 'natural' process of 'evolution,' but in fact is the "unfolding" of designs that the Creator embedded in the genomes from the very beginning. Here is part of a very interesting new finding, reported in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "Genetic Data Overturns Theory of Evolutionary Limb Development"

Genetic Switch for Limbs and Digits Found in Primitive Fish"

Genetic instructions for developing limbs and digits were present in primitive fish millions of years before their descendants first crawled on to land, researchers have discovered. Genetic switches control the timing and location of gene activity. When a particular switch taken from fish DNA is placed into mouse embryos, the segment can activate genes in the developing limb region of embryos, University of Chicago researchers report in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"The genetic switches that drive the expression of genes in the digits of mice are not only present in fish, but the fish sequence can actually activate the expression in mice," said Igor Schneider, PhD, postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Organismal Biology and Anatomy at the University of Chicago and lead author on the paper.

"There previously was the idea that these switches had to be generated from scratch de novo, but no, they already existed, they were already there," said Marcelo Nobrega, MD, PhD, assistant professor of human genetics at the University of Chicago Medical Center and another author of the study. "Maybe the key was expressing a gene earlier or later or in a specific territory, but it was just a modification of a program that was already encoded in the genomes of fish almost half a billion years ago and remains there to this day."

ScienceDaily (July 11, 2011)

Joe Erwin

Thanks for the comment, Darrel. I think it is clear that the function(s) of many conserved sequences has changed across time. I expect there are many cases where changes in function of highly conserved sequences have been and will be found. There are, however, also many derived sequences in every organism and species. They get there in various ways. They include insertions, deletions, translocations, etc., many of which are based on exposure to retroviruses--which, themselves, undergo various sequence changes across time. Also, in humans and all other organisms, there are many, many genetic loci where single nucleotide polymorphisms exist. This means that some of those polymorphisms can have positive consequences for survival and reproduction, others may have negative or neutral consequences. And SNPs are not the only kinds of polymorphisms that exist. There are many, many variable elements in genomes, and they are changing across time. The actual genomic sequences and loci and the proteomic consequences and phenotypic correlates are the data--the evidence. What we think it means, is something else. Figuring out what genomic data mean is a dynamic and creative process. What I think it means need not be what you think it means. Likewise, reference to an authority, such as someone at University of Chicago who holds and MD and PhD, does not impress me much (as the popular song goes). Lots of degreed people do not necessarily understand what the data mean, and they cannot simply make up the answers any more (or less) than we can. One of the most difficult transitions from traditional SDA thinking, which is terrifically authoritarian, to scientific thinking,
is understanding what constitutes evidence and what is interpretation (and often, VERY speculative interpretation). The mass media typically latches onto the most sensational assertions and explanations of what the evidence might mean. Scientists often go along with that to the extent that it feeds their ego or generates attention that might get their work funded. So, feel free to think what you want to, but, please, hold the evidence gently, and be aware that the explanation that appeals to you most might not be the most valid meaning of the data. Live and be well. Keep on thinking. For yourself. Who knows where that may lead?

David

Epigenetics in humans:
Angelman syndrome
Prader-Willi syndrome
Beckwith–Wiedemann syndrome

Darrel Lindensmith

Well Joe, I believe the facts are moving in the direction as outlined in these new studies, but feel free to think what you want to, but, please, hold your evidence gently, and be aware that the explanation that appeals to you might not be the most valid meaning of the data. Live and be well. Keep on thinking. For yourself. Who knows where that may lead?

Joe Erwin

Hi Darrel, Is that an echo I hear? :) I encourage you to think as you do for as long as you can while continuing to examine the evidence. I wish you had been able to attend a symposium I recently organized, where the participants described current evidence regarding comparative primate and viral genomics and translational medicine. Among other things, one participant mentioned that it has now been found that about 10% of the human genome is made up of retroviral genome sequences. Have a look sometime at the rapidly increasing comparative genomic evidence--and look at work from the Batzer Lab at LSU on mobile elements and cladistic genomics. You can probably also find some recent publications by Sara Sawyer. Just read it to find out what they are saying. You need not believe it unless you just can't help it.

Thomas "Vastergotland"

Would the papers presented at that symposium be available for us to read?
Seminary Student

I will disagree with the opinion of John Andrews about Dr. Douglass. This man has been a blessing to the Adventist church. Ervin, I am surprised that you would think that "evolution is supported by a great weight of evidence". Where is the evidence? do you have any insights into that weight of evidence?

Vernon P. Wagner

I'm going to the Galapagos in December where I'll visit the Darwin Station. I expect to return more of a heretic than usual.

Joe Erwin

Vernon, that should be a very interesting trip. I have not done that yet. The Darwin finches is an interesting story, and I think there is some fairly recent and interesting genomics work done on them, following on the zebra finch genome work.

Seminary Student, Erv is correct that evolution is supported by a great weight of evidence. Where is the evidence? It is reported in the enormous scientific literature of the world, and the evidence accumulates more each day. Erv can point you to the literature, but no one can make you read or understand it if you are unwilling or uninterested in reading any of it. I can only urge you give yourself a chance to examine the evidence. It need not threaten your faith in God. If you examine the evidence, though, you are pretty likely to change the way you think about things. I'm not one to advise you regarding your faith (though I was an SDA theology major long ago), but the one piece of advice I would give is: "Don't put God in a box." Anyone capable of designing and setting in motion life in all its emergent complexity (not to mention the universe), does not need to conform with any human conception of Him/Her/It.

Horace Butler

One dirty little secret that is not openly discussed by evolutionists is the fact that the so-called "great weight of evidence," is nothing more than bilge and beanstalks, supported by the shifting sands of scientific opinion. The evidence is routinely manipulated to make it appear more in harmony with evolutionary theory. This is true, not only of how fossils (expecially "hominids") are arranged, but in how their age is determined.

What this boils down to is that the average person will believe what they want to, regardless of the evidence. I happen to believe that the weight of evidence is overwhelmingly against evolution.

David

I been in the Galapagos two times and next year I’m organizing a medical conference there.
Take a few pictures of the giant turtle “lonely George” this is the last one of his kind, who knows after years of his death somebody could expostulate that this turtle was a “transitional” species that proves the evolution.

By the way have I’m have been working using genomics in the rat’s brain to see the toxicity of oxygen in the first moments of live.

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**Elaine Nelson**

Seminary Student asked:

"I am surprised that you would think that " evolution is supported by a great weight of evidence ". Where is the evidence? do you have any insights into that weight (sic) of evidence?

Are you qualified to evaluate properly such evidence? You write "seminary student" which is not usually in the business of teaching the biological sciences. What are you qualifications in those disciplines? Do you accept the findings of anyone, especially someone who is far more qualified (in theology)? Why? How are you able to determine the efficacy of more than half the world's knowledge? Special insight? Or, could it be that you have an aversion to anything that smacks of science that is not found in the Bible, excepting of course, medical science.

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**J. David Newman**

Interesting discussion but hardly anyone is discussing the challenge that Dr. Douglas has issued. How do we arrive at the assumptions to decide which facts we will select for our point of view? I have been reading Michael Polanyi and finding it taking a long time to grasp all that he is saying. He is rather unique because he was an eminent scientist then became a philosopher. His main work is *Personal Knowledge*. Drusilla Scott has tried to explain his position on assumptions in her book *Everyman Revived*. Polanyi says that our assumptions rise out of our experience and from intuitively grasping certain things. He has coined the term "tacit knowledge."

"Everywhere, at all elemental levels, it is not the functions of the articulate logical operations but the tacit powers of the mind that are decisive"

"We know more than we can tell" is the phrase with which Polanyi sometimes introduced tacit knowledge. For instance, you know your child's face, you could recognize it among a thousand with instant certainty. Yet you cannot tell how you know it; you could not specify exactly its
shape, size, coloring, the measurement of the features. You do know these, for you rely on your knowledge of them in recognizing the face, but you can't tell them. You know them tacitly. What you have is the power to recognize a whole (the face) of which you can't specify the parts.

It takes faith (an intangible) to believe there is a God. For scientists it takes faith to believe that either the universe is eternal or that something came from nothing or that inorganic matter can create organic matter, that non life can produce life. The real question is how do we decide where we place our faith and how do we arrive at the assumptions that help us decide?

Elaine Nelson

David, we decide with different factors for the different choices we make. If our child is desperately ill we seek the best medical advice; if we seek scientific answers we seek the most qualified scientists in that field; if we seek explanation of Bible passages we seek someone qualified in the Bible languages to aid in our understanding. Good judgment helps us to know which of the many expert sources offer the best advice.

Religion is NOT a science, it is a philosophical view of life just as atheism or Buddhism or Daoism. If one is a Christian then he will form his opinions based on that particular philosophy. One must first make the effort to determine who is best qualified to answer the type of questions. One must have faith in his physician if he wishes to be healed, rather than the charlatan or neighbor down the street. People have faith in many religious leaders based on the charisma of that individual. Faith is a very loose and ill-defined term.

Trevor Hammond

Evolution is NOT a science...

Horace Butler

That cuts through all the gibberish. Evolution is a religion, just as much as Christianity is a religion. The main difference is that Christians have more "evidence of things not seen" on which to base their faith than evolutionists do. Someone has described evolution as a "fairy tale for grownups." It fits. I just hope many of them realize it before it's too late.

Roscoe Fogg

Then, Mr. Hammond, the title of this blog should have been

Nonscientists and Theologians have Similar Problems

Actually, that title has the ring of truth.
"Evolution is NOT science" is a phrase that begs a question:

Is a seven day creation of the entire Universe exactly 6,000 yrs ago, complete with a deadly tree and talking snake, SCIENCE? We even call the two views as: STORY of Creation, and the THEORY of Evolution. Can we now pass final judgment upon something that cannot be proven from either viewpoint?

Whatever happened to a Flat Earth with Four Corners located at the center of the Solar System? Oh yes, it's that pesky thing called 'science' in conflict with the Church again...TO THE RACK WITH HIM!

Hi Joe, I am glad someone has a sense of humor. I will look at those items. Thanks God bless

So here's the deal: If there is not a Creator (Eternal Mind/Being) then we can not really account for the rationality of minds (I am talking about ours). If there is not a Creator we have no reason to believe in rationality itself. If minds/rationality (logic and science) do exist, then the ground for their existence is a priori. This a transcendentental argument. "It is the firm conviction of every epistemologically self-conscious Christian

that no human being can utter a single syllable, whether in negation or affirmation, unless it were for God's existence. Thus the transcendentental argument seeks to discover what sort of foundations the house of human knowledge must have, in order to be what it is." Van Til, A Survey of Christian Epistemology, 11.

If we were not designed by a thinker, how could we be truly thinking,--it might be our perception, (neurons are firing and we "are dancing to our DNA" but that's all.

Elaine, You are stating your assumptions not facts. How did you arrive at those assumptions? Let me quote from Drusilla Scott's book on Polanyi, It would make it easier if everyone would read this book but here we go, "To state as Polanyi does that one is committed and under obligation to search for the truth, is to state an ultimate belief which is not provable. Is it any different than from Popper's admission that science rests on "faith in quite hazy ideas"? Yes it is different because Popper then tries to construct science on rules as if it were not resting on this faith, while to Polanyi the faith, which is not just an intellectual acceptance but a risky commitment of the whole person, is an integral part of knowledge. This commitment is the link between the personal aspect of knowledge in which it is my knowledge, and the universal aspect in which it is knowledge of reality, valid for anyone. My commitment is from where I am, what I am, to a reality beyond myself. It is the difference between personal and subjectivity." p. 74. Polanyi explains that science is just as subjective as beauty and how we decide moral values. It all
involves how we understand objective knowledge and tacit knowledge. Both are knowledge, both are real, but one is found in rules and laws and the other is found in intuition as in the example Polanyi gave of recognizing the baby in a crowd of babies. When I have finished reading Polanyi and fully understanding everything he has to say I will write an article for AT summarizing his ideas and how science and religion are actually built on the same foundations. He refuses to place them in separate categories that are parallel but never really touching.

J. David Newman

Oh, and a further thought. There are thousands of ideas even facts about everything. We use our assumptions to decide which facts we will select to bolster our case and ignore those that do not. For example, one person uses the presuppostion of uniformitarianism to show that our earth and the universe is millions and billions of years old. Another person will question that assumption and use the assumption that the introduction of sin altered some of the fundamental laws by which we function. Therefore we cannot fully know beyond a certain time. Until we can agree on which assumption we will use there is no point going any further in the discussion since it would be as unfulfilling as a College football team playing an NFL team without first agreeing on whose rules (assumptions) they will play by.

Anonymous

David,

Food for thought. I'm just wondering whether your first question and second point provide a clue.

Here's the points:

"How do we arrive at the assumptions to decide which facts we will select for our point of view?"

and your second point:

"We use our assumptions to decide which facts we will select to bolster our case and ignore those that do not."

You have (I think correctly) made the apriori assumption that there are "facts" we can examine. Perhaps our challenge is to turn your question around thus:

"How can I reduce my assumptions to the absolute minimum in order to be best observant of the most available facts?"

Would it not be correct that only when I sucessfully do this are my assumptions (beliefs) based on the weight of facts and more truly a posterioriori?
Of course, as you note, our ability to do this is going to be significantly impacted by our background, view of reality, and preconceived views etc.

I'm still waiting for Herb to answer my question along these lines:

"What would you advise people to do to ensure they are truly evaluating their assumptions \textit{a posteriori}? Is this even possible if we hold to a fundamentalist view of the authority of Scripture, as such a view apparently must begin with an \textit{a priori} assumption?"

Anonymous

David Newman,

Can I pick up on another of your points:

"one person uses the presupposition of uniformitarianism to.... Another person ...use(s) the assumption that the introduction of sin altered some of the fundamental laws by which we function. Therefore we cannot fully know beyond a certain time."

Totally agree with this dynamic. And, yes until these are dealt with we will never agree. It highlights a key point:

The uniformitarian assumption is based on observable data, and therefore may equally be a considered a conclusion based on "facts", or considered as an assumption.

The assumption that sin altered things is in fact based on an a priori assumption: That the Bible is correct and authoritative in this "fact".

To make this a priori claim about the Bible should in fact be a step considerably "down the road" from analysis of other observable evidence first...

May I suggest the authority of the Bible is an a priori assumption which must be held in limbo, just as uniformitarianism must be, to allow the best assessment of facts/data?

Elaine Nelson

That leaves none of us out, does it?

J. David Newman

Right. Trying to deal with assumptions is like trying to pick up oil. It just keeps slipping through your hands. That is why we work so hard to avoid dealing with the subject. Dr Douglas asked us to deal with how we arrive at our assumptions but most of the posts have avoided doing just that.
Anonymous 3 weeks ago  Reply

mmm..

Did I miss something? Where did Dr Douglas ask us to deal with how we arrive at our assumptions?

I actually thought he just made the point we are burdened by such, and asked a whole lot of questions which provided implicit pointers as to what his assumptions were?

Ron Corson 3 weeks ago  Reply

Seems to be the book Newman is using is incorrect. It says: ""We know more than we can tell" is the phrase with which Polanyi sometimes introduced tacit knowledge. For instance, you know your child's face, you could recognize it among a thousand with instant certainty. Yet you cannot tell how you know it; you could not specify exactly its shape, size, coloring, the measurement of the features. You do know these, for you rely on your knowledge of them in recognizing the face, but you can't tell them. You know them tacitly. What you have is the power to recognize a whole (the face) of which you can't specify the parts."

Just because you don't or could not specify the various facts you know about the face of someone does not mean that the facts are not there. It just means when you get up into the hundreds of facts or more we don't do well at listing them all. The tacit powers of the mind is that you don't have to or you cannot specifically list all of the multitudes of facts that bring you to a conclusion. This is not intuition it is experience, so conclusions arise out of experience and the less understood intuition perhaps but that would not be where assumptions come from. Assumptions are the presuppositions which often are not based upon facts...which is why assumptions are so problematic.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago  Reply

I am reminded of the difficulty some physicians have in diagnosing a strange, new-to-them ailment. Even after all the required testing, there still is not an effective diagnosis. Then another physician arrives and check the tests and looks at the patient, asks a few questions, and comes up with the correct diagnosis. Who would ask all the reasons, as he may not be able to recite them. Experience is of ultimate importance, just in identifying your child's face as well as his likes and dislikes even beforehand, which Ron has written.

J. David Newman 3 weeks ago  Reply

cb25

You make some excellent points. Theologians divide our understanding of the world into special
revelation and general revelation. Special revelation is what is given directly by God whether through a dream, a vision, the Bible etc. (Of course this presupposes a God, but then the atheist has to presuppose there is no God). General Revelation is nature. We have the facts of nature and we have the facts of the Bible. The issue is how we interpret nature and how we interpret the Bible. I operate from the presupposition that the Bible is correct in describing a great controversy between God and Satan. Thus I operate from the assumption that Satan will do everything to discredit God and do everything to try and show that the Bible is not correct and he uses science to do this.

Let me quote Polanyi again, "'The prevailing conception of science, based on the disjunction of subjectivity and objectivity, seeks -- and must seek at all costs -- to eliminate from science such passionate, personal, human appraisals . . . For modern man has set up as the ideal of knowledge the conception of natural science as a set of statements which is 'objective' in the sense that its substance is entirely determined by observation . . . This conception, stemming from a craving rooted in the very depth of our culture, would be shattered if the intuition of rationality in nature had to be acknowledged as a justifiable and indeed essential part of scientific theory.' So why should the strict keepers of the house of science let in this intuition of rationality, this unprobable faith?

'Bascially because all is not so well as it looks in their well ordered house. Polanyi speaks of his persistence in 'rattling all the skeletons in the cupboard of the current scientific outlook.' Insist as they may on the rigid frameword of testable evidence, philosophers admit it breaks down. They can keep their rigid rules only at the cost of losing contact with reality. . . . Even Russell (Bertrand) admitted that there was no solid basis for induction. Laws of nature cannot be proved by any such procedure, since however many times something happens you can never be sure it will always happen -- not with the faith, the intuition of rationality. So you can only live in your house of rules and pretend the faith is not there.

"'Froma a psychological point of view,' Popper wrote, 'I am inclined to think that scientific discovery is impossible without faith in ideas which are of a purely speculative kind and sometimes quite hazy; a faith which is quite unwarranted from the scientific point of view'" p. 41 (Everyman Revived, The Commonsense of Michael Polanyi)
presupposition that the Bible is correct in describing a great controversy between God and Satan. Thus I operate from the assumption that Satan will do everything to discredit God and do everything to try and show that the Bible is not correct and he uses science to do this."

Several points:

1. Special revelation through the Bible is actually the fourth a priori assumption in on the required steps to reach that point. *a priori one* - nature is. *a priori two* - there is a God. *a priori three* - H/he communicates by those methods. *a priori four* - the Bible is the authoritative source of that special revelation from God.

Is it not in fact at a priori one that theists and atheists should share common ground? Is it not from that point we should begin our dialog? You say "We have the facts of nature and we have the facts of the Bible." Surely to say the "facts" of the Bible is take an a priori starting point which puts dialog out the window?.

That puts you or anyone else who takes such a position three steps away from anywhere real dialogue can begin.

2. On the opposite side...nature is a given (a fact as noted earlier). Surely if I begin a priori with its reality and that reason exists it should form the basis for conclusions about reality after gathering of data. Nature, not a book (no matter how good I think it is). To assume authority from a 3rd step in puts us on equal footing with Muslims and Mormons who a priori claim the same for their books.?

3. You begin apriori with the Great Controversy, as do most others here. Again, with respect, this puts you 3, if not 4 steps in from where genuine dialog can begin.

4. It seems to me that Polanyi, Russel and Popper are highly at risk of having begun their work with a polemic rather than in an effort to address the type of question I put:

"How can I reduce my assumptions to the absolute minimum in order to be best observant of the most available facts?"

Rather than address this question or need they (at least in the quotes you gave) are perhaps seeking to undermine the reality and observableness of nature in order to bring it down to a level playing field with their a priori assumption as to some other authority...eg Bible. An authority which at least to me, is several assumptions in from a more sound starting point.

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Anonymous

Quick update on my observations about Polanyi etc.

Did some research into them and I was incorrect about their polemic. I actually don't think what they had/have to say was specifically relevant to this discussion, and therefore using them in this context suggests a polemic use of their words/work?
At initial observation it seems to me there are issues with the tacit knowledge drift, but that's a different theme for another time.

Elaine Nelson

"I operate from the presupposition that the Bible is correct in describing a great controversy between God and Satan."

It won't be found in most of the Bible until the Hebrews were influenced by the Persians during their Exile. Prior to that time, there was no Satan; God was in control of everything, both good and evil. A rather late comer in theodicy.

Presupposing a great controversy theme in the Bible is one assumption; there is also the assumption, or theme, that God is love—which is a continuing theme throughout the entire Bible, not just what was written much later. It is also a theme made unique by Adventism by adopting EGW as the establisher of doctrines; just as the Book of Mormon or the Pearl of Great Price is Mormonism's unique contribution. Being unique is not the best way to determine truth; only a religious doctrine for a specific denomination. What other Christian denomination has "found" this theme? In the overall scheme of salvation, how important a part does it play? Must one accept this theme for salvation? If so, how will it be of benefit?

David

Some of the participant stated, “Evolution is supported by a great weight of evidence”. Really? What kind of evidence? A reproducible one? Not a all.

If evolution is so obvious like the law of gravity or the need of oxygen for us live, every honest person in this planet will accept it. But the reality is not that obvious. Some of us have legitimate objections.

To evolve from lower forms of life to more complex ones requires mutations (fundamental changes in the DNA that can be transmitted to the following generations). In simples words mutations will makes better. The overwhelming evidence tells us the contrary (mutation are deleterious and lethal, in other words mutations make us worse). Here are some examples Trisomy 21, 18, and 13. I could provide hundreds of others diseases.

So I can say the evolution until now evolution is not supported by reproducible evidence, actually is disproved by it. This kind of evidence is superior to any other kind.

Roscoe Fogg

Some Scientific Issues
Induction: In science, inductive reasoning can be used to help formulate a hypothesis.

Deductive logic: Once a hypothesis is stated, deductive logic can be used to predict the consequences of that hypothesis. Scientists have to be able to derive consequences from a hypothesis that can be tested by observation or experimentation.

Proof: Hypotheses and theories are always, to some degree, tentative. They are never proven as a mathematical theorem is proven. A scientist's confidence that a hypothesis is a good one depends on how rigorously it has been tested and on how closely its consequences agree with observations.

Faith: Scientists don't have faith in science in the sense of religious faith; scientists have confidence in science because of its record of epistemic success. It's confidence not religious faith. Science is not a religion, it’s a strategy for learning about the natural world and it’s been very successful. I don’t think scientist and theologians have much in common at all.

The key element for a scientist to have confidence in an observation is because it has been tested with rigor and is **reproducible**. Although the mathematical certainty is never reach the probability to reproduce is high. We use the “p value” the smallest this number the highest is the probability. Now part of the evolution is **reproducible and could be tested over and over**? If we can not do that is just matter of opinion in other words faith.

As a non-scientist, is it not true that "science" is only a method for learning by repeated tests? Religion is a matter of faith and religious belief and scientific knowledge are poles apart because they involve entirely different methods of seeking "truth."

Elaine, Science isn't "only" a method, it's a very powerful method and yes, repeated testing is part of a scientific strategy. Of course, it's sometimes very difficult, time consuming, and expensive to make the observations or conduct the experiments necessary to test a hypothesis.

"Science" is many different things, but most of all it is a method of obtaining and evaluating evidence. It is a method of truth seeking. Science and its methods have been adapted and refined across the years. Science itself is always changing, as scientists seek even better and more reliable and predictive techniques. I hope I don't see many more assertions here that science and knowledge
are the devil's tools. That is just crazy talk.

Which brings up another point, relevant to the topic Dr. Douglass introduced here. Perhaps I should ask your forgiveness in advance for bringing this up, but I'll plunge forward. My field of training is biological psychology. My most recent full-time employment was as head of a department of neurobiology, behavior, and genetics for an NIH research contractor. So, much of my career has involved attention to mental health issues. And, yes, I am stating the obvious fact that some theologians and some scientists suffer from various kinds of mental illness, certainly, obsessive-compulsive disorders, depression, paranoid personalities, and even various kinds and severities of schizophrenia.

Some theologians are extremely dogmatic and inflexible, so are some scientists. Others are warm and flexible human beings who are pleasant to be with. Some of each are highly "authoritarian," in the sense of anchoring what they believe on what they consider authoritative sources. Some of each are always looking for new evidence and new meaning. Others? Not so much. I suspect that many people fill a need for understanding or certainty by turning to theologians or scientists as "authorities." I think some scientists and some theologians greatly embellish what they see as evidence and what they think the evidence means. And, in both cases, I think there is a ready audience of people who are anxious and ready to be misled with easy answers, impressive rhetoric, and distorted reasoning.

As I scientist I choose to hold what I think I know pretty tenuously, because I am confident that what I think I know now is very likely to be changed in the future. What is known changes across time. Many things change across time. How things change across time can be scientifically studied. How things change is not science, but how things change can be a subject of scientific study.

So, for those who are so inclined, how about refraining from the crazy assertions that science is of the devil? When you say things like that, it gives me the impression that you are either ignorant or nuts or both.

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Roscoe Fogg 3 weeks ago  Reply

Thanks Mr. Erwin,
If you please, I would like to know your opinion on applying the methods of science to the study of the supernatural or the miraculous.

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Darrel Lindensmith 3 weeks ago  Reply

I agree Joe; attacking the rational validity of the enterprise of science is shooting ourselves in the foot (actually, in the head.) I was looking for this statement from Darwin for my earlier post. I believe we can trust our rational minds and this belief presupposes we are created by God. If this is not so I would have my doubts like Darwin: "the horrid doubt always arises whether the
convictions of man's mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey's mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?" Darwin, letter to William Graham, Down, July 3rd 1881. In the Life and letter of Charles Darwin. Editor Francis Darwin, D Appleton and Co. 1887, vol 1 pag. 255

More recently the Harvard Atheist Richard Rorty inadvertently invalidated his own worldview/religion as well as any other, as he echoed Darwin's doubts: "The idea that one species of organism is, unlike all the others, oriented not just toward its own prosperity but toward Truth, is as un-Darwinian as the idea that every human being has a built-in moral compass—a conscience that swings free of both social history and individual luck." "Untruth and Consequences," The New Republic, July 31, 1995, pp. 32-36.

Also as scientist I pretty much know the limitations of research. In medicine the great majority of publications does not hold the prove of time and reproducibility. Why? There are many reasons, here are some of them: wrong model, inadequate number, inappropriate statistical analysis, alteration of data, and other reasons. There is also dishonesty you better keep to your self your ideas other wise somebody could literally stilled. Under the pressure of “publish or perish” there is also plagiarism, falsification and manipulation. 

*That is why the only observations then will hold their validity are the ones that we can reproduce over and over.*

I also I’m the chief on the one of most prestigious intensive care unit of the country with world class reputation with several years of research, as principal and also as senior investigator with grants of the NIH, DOD, MOD, and others.

Please call me Joe. "Mr. Erwin" was my father. I am not very interested in using scientific method to study paranormal phenomena, but, of course, if there are people who claim to be prescient, or something, that can be tested–although claims are often made that paranormal phenomena happen only in the presence of those who "believe." There is a body of literature, of course, attempting to deal with this, in a field known as "parapsychology." Check, for example, Charles Tart. I once served as a TA for him. He was pretty strange.

One cannot and should not expect every published study to hold ultimate truth that is not subject to revision. There is such a thing as "sampling error" when inferring/generalizing from samples and case studies to populations, and lots of scientists do not have very strong training in either experimental design or statistics. There are a lot of exaggerated and many incorrect generalizations from epidemiological data too, not just experimental research. So, that is why we try to look at
many sources of information ("meta-analyses" involving review of many studies on the same topic). Research on few, if any, topics is ever complete.

We are mere humans. None of us is perfect. None of us does anything without sometimes erring. What we can do is try to do the best we can. Please don't quote the opinions of scientists, even those who have vast expertise on any topic as if his/her words were scripture or were intended to hold that level of authority. Besides, brilliant scientists often venture opinions on matters on which they have little or no direct information. Scientists are fallible humans. And I'm pretty sure Theologians are too.

Right, when evidence repeatedly turns out the same way, we have much greater confidence in those data. Even so, interpretations of reliable evidence are not necessarily as reliable as the data they are based on. Speculations about human thoughts and minds, along with those of monkeys, have little prospect of being anything more than wild guesses. They are just made up, and we should all know enough to take them as nothing more than idle chatter. We can, however, compare the brains of monkeys, apes, and humans in many ways that provide some reliable bases for discussion. Why we see the differences we see, and what the functional consequences are, are also interesting fuel for discussion and further study.

Whether such comparisons are of interest or have any value may well depend on one's perspective, but one's perspective should not influence the evidence. The objective evidence is whatever it is. What it means is quite another matter.

And, by-the-way, one of the reasons I am not a "Darwinist," is that I'm uncomfortable with the method of reaching a conclusion and then assembling all the evidence one can find that agrees with that conclusion and discarding whatever does not fit the conclusion. Darwin did that. Just as detectives and district attorneys do when building a case against someone. So, some people believe in gathering and evaluating evidence that way, and some scientists do that too. I prefer to try to evaluate things in terms of the strengths and weaknesses I can find. Too often, when I have been studying something, the results of my investigation--the actual objective data--turn out to be just opposite "what everyone knows." I do not claim, when that occurs, that everyone else has been stupid or that they falsified their data. I am usually able to find some reason why the results might differ because the methods or subjects differ. But, the end message is, that something that was thought to be generally true is not as generally true as was thought. Or, that the evidence from other studies which led to the general conclusion was not examined in the same way as I examined the evidence from my study. But agreeing, as I do, that scientists disagree with each other about what evidence means, and agreeing that the results and conclusions regarding them need to be regarded as tentative, does not mean that anyone has been able to falsify the proposition that plants and animals change over time, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically. Fossils are real. They need to be carefully studied and they require some kind of explanation (other than some bizarre notion that they were planted by the devil to test our faith--that is simply nuts). Even more compelling is the genomic record, which shows where changes occurred in various organisms and allows identification of conserved and derived genomic features. Also evident are the myriad of
changes in genetic material, including lateral transmission of genetic changes (by the insertion of viral genomic sequences into genomes of host organisms). Clearly, natural selection requires genetic variation if it is to work. Now that it is clearly known that many mechanisms introduce genetic change, it is quite clear that there has been much more material upon which selection and adaptation can work. It is amazing that fallible humans have gotten to the state of knowledge that is now available. And, of course, none of us knows all the evidence. I'm fine with people challenging any or all of the evidence, as long as they are fair about what they do. But deciding in advance how things are, and then coming up with convoluted and irrational explanations and nitpicking around the edges—for prejudices that do not even have any sort of scriptural basis, is unnecessary and unconvincing to anyone unless they already agree with you.

BTW, David, I appreciate your mentioning your area of expertise, but I was not trying to claim greater authority than you have.

J. David Newman
3 weeks ago

cb25

sorry I have taken so long to reply. I was on a plane all day and my Ipad will not allow me to post so I have to pay in the business center of the hotel. Anyone else with that problem?

Regarding your four a priori assumptions. I would place nature and the Bible equal first. Why? When we lived in Scotland we helped a pregnant Indian woman from Uganda with the birth of her son and had her in our home for a while. He grew up to be a six foot dark Indian lad with a wonderful Scottish accent. If you heard him for the first time on the telephone you would assume that he was a typical white Scottish male. If you saw only a photo of him you would assume that he was a typical Indian with an Indian or English accent. In both cases your assumptions would be wrong. You needed extra data to make the correct assumptions.

In the book of Joshua we read the story of the Gibeonites who showed moldy bread, cracked sandals, and worn out clothes to show they had come a long distance. The Israelites accepted the evidence. After all they were old. the next day they discovered that these people lived over the next hill. There is a telling verse in Joshua which says "they did not inquire of the Lord."

If I look only at Nature I will be deceived. Nature tells me that evil is part of the creative process, that evil has always existed. I need the Bible to explain how evil came into existence and how nature has been corrupted by evil. There is a tension between nature and the bible, between general revelation and special revelation. Nature does not tell me that I need a Savior. Nature does not tell me that there is a heaven, a real place. I need the Bible. Without the bible I am going to misinterpret Nature.

Both nature and the Bible are facts. We have both before us. The challenge is how we interpret those facts and which one informs who. And it is true that we have misinterpreted the Bible to make nature say things it never said but the problem was not the bible but our hermeneutic. An example of tension is an airplane fighting gravity and velocity. Too much gravity and no progress. Too much velocity and it shoots into space. But keep the right tension between the two opposing
fores and progress is made. I believe that is how we should work with science and the bible. There will be tensions. We will never have all the answers. We need to keep working on how we keep the right balance, the right tension between them. We need much humility.

Anonymous

David Newman,

Appreciate your reply in difficult circumstances.

Your points have a nice ring to them, but I admit they make me quite uneasy.

A few points why.

The “Scottish” lad actually illustrates the process, importance and results of validating an assumption. You suggest two possible assumptions: 1 typical white Scottish male, and 2, typical Indian with accent etc.

We needed more data, but that data did not invalidate the a priori assumption – it clarified it. He was male; he was not white; he was in Scotland. He was also of Indian background. Though he was not typical, the core assumption remained.

This is a great example of an a priori assumption, which began with some data, but when tested a posteriori (gathering available data) is improved, clarified and largely validated.

Critical here is that if someone “inspired” told you he was white, and had an Australian accent...you would reject it because the observable evidence disagreed.

Two errors could occur:

* Failure to test it when there is obviously observable, gather-able evidence available.

* Relying solely on the “inspired” dictum he was white and Aussie, when the “other” data which was observable and gather-able said otherwise!

This illustrates the crucial role more data can play in reshaping initial assumptions, but I fail to see how it proves the other a priori assumption that the Bible is the source of the additional data we need.

Why would I make an “inspired” person, particularly if they countered the other data a greater authority than what I can see about this person? So too it would seem for the Bible. (Except of course if I have made another a priori assumption, and validated, that it has greater authority, but I will come to next comment..
Hi David,

Another point if I may. You say “If I use nature I will be deceived”. First, is that not a recognition that nature and the Bible present vastly different views?

You use the Gibeonites to highlight the connection between their deception and the “deception” of nature. Is there not a major difference here?

In the Gibeonite story, God is a third party, he is removed from the deception, but can provide information if asked.

In Bible vs nature, he is not a third party. He is presumed the source of both, and he has presumably provided information. Why should one be so different that it can be considered a deception when compared with the other?

Sure, we say it is the corruption of evil, but this solves nothing because its the same God telling the story, and he should get it right. As more and more data from nature conflict with the Bible account, are we not going to make God actually look like the Gibeonites? Saying one thing, but doing another? Yes, I've even heard people say he made the trees look old in the garden? Knocks the socks off old boots!

I will pick up on this more shortly...

Ok... my last comment in response to your hard worked for response:)

The reason I have taken the liberty to respond at greater length is that I think you raised a vital issue: getting a common starting point. Perhaps doing so is more difficult that we imagine. As you say, oil through the fingers

It seems that one of the reasons you give for giving the Bible authority is that nature cannot tell you certain things. This may be acceptable, but if in fact nature does not speak of, or to, those things - how do you confirm the veracity of the Bible's statements? Even worse, how do you confirm the veracity of the Bible when nature contradicts it? As with the Scottish lad, does this not invalidate an a priori granting of authority to the Bible? We would not take any "inspired" view of him that contradicted obvious and common sense data.

I also have to admit the several points you make about what nature cannot do are not so clear to me:
“Nature does not tell me that I need a Savior.

What about the many religious cultures which do not have the Bible, but do have a saviour or god who “rescues” or “intervenes”? 

“Nature does not tell me that there is a heaven, a real place” again, other religions are not devoid of this theme.

One of the (to me) most significant conundrums faced by atheism is the commonality of these type of themes throughout unrelated, unlinked people groups over vast periods of time. Humanity is part of nature and nature does speak about spiritual things. (but that's a theme for another blog from me).

Ok... enough on that... others may have better things to say!....

Herbert Douglass 3 weeks ago Reply

I am so sorry for my tardiness. Since my last entry I have had to learn the mysteries of the Mac (previous WordPerfect system really crashed!). Believe me, there is a learning curve! I am so grateful for each of the comments, I feel much enriched. We don't have the space to respond to each one, except perhaps for the comments that show complete ignorance of the facts: that I advocate "sinless perfection." If anyone can find that I have written or said those words, please refresh me. I know when those charges were first made and then quoted endlessly--but they are used as a shibboleth for those who can not accept the NT emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit given to all who indeed want to overcome their moral weaknesses. We are meant to "grow up." Those troubled with "perfection" should recognize that only God enjoys "perfection" and such a goal will be the happy venture throughout eternity. Now if one is concerned about "moral" perfection, then we should let the Bible answer that question, IMO.

In relation to similarities in man/animal configuration, we can simply point to the continuing tension within Comparative Anatomy that specializes in form and structure. Those similarities (forearms have the same bones in all limbed vertebrates) are facts, but what do they mean? This is where speculation begins. The creationist believes that the Master Planner saw similar functions and used similar structures, merely modifying these structures to meet the individual requirements of each organism.

I was simply gratified beyond words when reading Joe Erwin's current walk. Honesty is still one of the tests of humility. I am still wondering in this blog trail of anyone suggesting that "scientists" are of the devil, etc. I guess for the same reasons that some think "theologians" are of the devil!!

In both worlds, I am always leery of "doublespeak" where words are used that, in fact, distort or deny the truth at issue. I think when "natural selection" is used, young people now assume that that is a more eloquent way to think of "evolution." Or, when we are told that"printing fiat money" is merely "quantitative easing." Huh! Or Jesus "paid" for my sins!" Really, to whom? In other words,
language must always have understandable referents. Only God can help us during a presidential campaign!

Cb25 really keeps our feet to the fire. At the moment, my only answer regarding assumptions and presuppositions is to watch what happened to the early disciples after the Resurrection. What a change of world views, assumptions and presuppositions! Or with Paul after the Damascus Road experience! Truth seems to find its way through the right response to experience that needs to be tested, over and over again. There may be better ways to say all this. Cheers, Herb

Editor 3 weeks ago Reply
cb25

You raise many great questions and I appreciate very much your approach. You do not indulge in ad hominimum arguments or use sarcasm.

There is so much to reply to. First, my illustration of the Scottish lad was not meant to walk on all fours. I was simply showing how easy we make assumptions and even science at its most basic levels is based on assumptions which is another word for faith. Just some examples:

The assumption that inorganic material can produce organic material. I am not aware of actual testable evidence for this.
The assumption that macro evolution is still taking place today. I am not aware of evidence for this today or a satisfactory answer if it is no longer taking place.
The assumption that after the big bang all the laws we have today just happened. How did chaos produce order.

You ask "Why should one be so different that it can be considered a deception when compared with the other?"

You say
"God is telling the story and he should get it right"

It seems that the basic issue is still the respective authority of nature and the bible. For you nature interprets the bible. For the bible interprets nature. Let's for a moment agree with your premise. To be consistent we will consider all miracles in the bible to be stories not fact. This means that the resurrection of Christ never happened. If someone says there are exceptions then how do we decide the exceptions? This is what will happen when we follow science to its logical conclusion.

If you do not factor in the problem of evil then you come to one set of conclusions. If you factor in evil then you will come to a different set of conclusions.

It seems to me that if we say that God created the universe through evolution then he stepped back and did nothing after that (because we are afraid of a God of the gaps). But then if we do not let the bible inform us of the issue of sin and evil then we will believe that evolution is the only way. If adam and eve are not historical figures, if they are not the first couple then when did sin come
into this world and what is sin anyway?

David Newman,

Wow...Challenging questions:)
Re the Scottish Lad, yes, it is a danger trying to make an illustration walk on all fours. (sounds like Morris Vendon Exodus to Advent(?))

I think on the most basic level we can, as you say, substitute “assumption” for “faith”, though I suspect what is “basic” would need some unpacking.

The three example assumptions you gave could be useful to narrow our focus a little.

- Inorganic material producing organic
- Macro evolution taking place today
- Big bang chaos producing order

I suspect that only the middle one is directly relevant to our discussion of evolutionary processes vs Bible facts. It deals with questions of how change takes place within an already existing framework – nature.

The other two are more, (it seems to me) assumptions about how material (inorganic and then organic) came to be here in the first place. If this is correct, then these two “assumptions” belong in discussion between theism, atheism and questions about how it all began.

To me, it is at that point: before the observable world in which we live was, that we can interchange assumption and faith. The further we move from that point to our time, the greater the available evidence and the more testable become our assumptions. The more testable they are the less of their declaration lies in the realm of faith.

Is the corollary to this that the more testable evolutionary theory becomes, the further into the realm of faith is pushed the a priori granting of authority to the Bible?

You make very valid observations about what (may) happen if we follow science to its logical conclusion. I say may, you say will. It is for this reason I believe it is high time we Christians began working on a compelling apologetic, because if we don't you will be right. And I think it is a very real danger!

As for evolution being the only way, and Adam and Eve etc. Yes, all real challenges. This may appear off subject, but C.S Lewis has been my favorite author for years. It is only in recent times the power of his apologetic has dawned on me. In Surprised by Joy. P 88 he says this:

“If ever a myth had become a fact, had been incarnated, it would be just like this. And nothing
else in all literature was just like this. Myths were like it in one way. Histories were like it in another. But nothing was simply like it . . . Here and here only in all time the myth must have become fact; the Word, flesh; God, man. This is not “a religion,” nor “a philosophy.” It is the summing up and actuality of them all."

For Lewis the myth was bigger, and older than Bible. It caught the universality of myth and the similarity between them that I referred to earlier. I also recall, but can't find where, he speaks of the first moment when man became a sentient being at some point in the distant past. Yes, an evolutionary step.

These things would take on a whole new meaning if we dared to open ourselves toward the need and process of developing an apologetic. Seems to me if Lewis, one of the most powerful Christian apologists of recent times, could balance evolutionary process with faith and a gospel, so can we.

Anyway, appreciate you comments and thought provoking questions... tried to keep this short....oh dear...

Anonymous 3 weeks ago Reply

I found the Lewis quote I referred to above. It's in The Problem of Pain. p 61 & 63

“For long centuries, God perfected the animal from which was to become the vehicle of humanity and the image of Himself. He gave it hands whose thumb could be applied to each of the fingers, and jaws and teeth and throat capable of articulation, and a brain sufficiently complex to execute all of the material motions whereby rational thought is incarnated [. . .] Then, in the fullness of time, God caused to descend upon this organism, both on its psychology and physiology, a new kind of consciousness which could say “I” and “me,” which could look upon itself as an object, which knew God, which could make judgments of truth, beauty and goodness, and which was so far above time that it could perceive time flowing past [. . .] We do not know how many of these creatures God made, nor how long they continued in the Paradisal state. But sooner or later they fell. Someone or something whispered that they could become as gods [. . . ] They wanted some corner in the universe of which they could say to God, “This is our business, not yours.” But there is no such corner. They wanted to be nouns, but they were, and eternally must be, mere adjectives. We have no idea in what particular act, or series of acts, the self-contradictory, impossible wish found expression. For all I can see, it might have concerned the literal eating of a fruit, but the question is of no consequence.”

In the Acworth Letters, he also had this to say:

"I can’t {Take an anti evolution position} have made my position clear. I am not either attacking or defending Evolution. I believe that Christianity can still be believed, even if Evolution is true. This is where you and I differ."
David 3 weeks ago Reply

Some of the participants stated, “As more and more data from nature conflict with the Bible account” “Evolution is supported by a great weight of evidence”.

Really? What kind of evidence?

I challenged over and over in this as well in different bogs of AT to show that evidence, until now no body came to show a single reproducible evidence of evolution. There is allot of assumptions but they are only assumptions. Only one person that I can perceive with solid background in research was honest to recognize the serious limitations with retrospective data specially when is not reproducible.

Some of us, trained with rigor to analyze sustainable data, we are not ready to accept these assumptions. Confidence comes when experiments or observation are reproducible. Maybe some of you assumptions of concepts are enough, but for the ones who expended a great deal of our live in research the “proof of concept” is only admitted when experiments/observation are reproducible.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago Reply

Who is able to separate Bible stories or accounts as fact or fiction? Only the writers knew their intent, and as nearly all of the Bible was told orally before being written, how could it all be accurate?

Did the resurrection actually happen? Well, even according to the Bible no one saw it; they only saw a man, a figure near the tomb that was not recognized, and others only saw something that was able to walk through locked doors and suddenly appear from nowhere. If that sounds like a human, it is not the usual description. All that was written was ABOUT the resurrection which they BELIEVED, but there were no eyewitnesses, and his disciples who had been with him closely a year or more did not recognize him. Strange?

As for the virgin birth, that is one that must be believed by faith. However, it was not that unusual as there were other gods and goddesses that also were similarly conceived and also were resurrected. Could it be that the Gospel writers felt it necessary to give additional support for their story to equal that of the surrounding pagan cultures?

Why try to "prove" something that is all of faith? If it is necessary to give evidence that is irrefutable, there is no need for faith. It's a catch-22 situation and those who continue to try to furnish evidence for the non-repeatable stories of the Bible will always come short.

Horace Butler 3 weeks ago Reply

This is the kind of thinking that causes people to lose their faith. There is always plenty of room for doubt, but there is also more than enough evidence for believing the Bible, just as it was written. An insane person might preach a resurrection that didn't happen, and might even die for it, but mass insanity? 11 people all going insane at the same time and preaching a resurrection, at the risk of their lives? Hardly. Or, they could have invented the story to keep the movement
going. But how many people would be willing do die for what they knew to be a lie? Radical Muslims blow themselves up, thinking they will go to heaven and be amongst virgins, but if they knew it was all a lie, it's unlikely that any of them would be willing to do it.

Faith is not the "proof" of things not seen, it is the "evidence of things not seen."

Anonymous

Horace, could I pop a question in on your point? Hope you don't mind Elaine?

We probably all agree with you that it is unlikely the Radical Muslim will blast off to a well feathered nest with a bunch of chicks (Blokes perspective). As you say "...all a lie".

Yet, I imagine he would confidently tell us his faith is the "evidence of things not seen".

What would you say to someone like that, if the opporunity arose, to try to change his understanding?

I don't want to trap you or be mean, but I do want to confront your thinking a little with the difficulties of the position you take in some of your comments:)

I actually tend to agree with you about the veracity of Jesus's death and resurrection, but probabley for different reasons than you give, though they may well be valid too.

Cheers

Horace Butler

What I would say to to someone like that would depend on a variety of factors. Chances are I wouldn't get that opportunity because once they've become that radicalized they aren't likely to listen to anything an "infidel" says. If someone like that was really willing to examine the issues, then you'd have to start at square one. That would include discussing the points we have in common, and moving on from there. There is no one-size-fits-all way to approach it.

Herbert Douglass

Ah, Elaine, you are real good. You make your case well. You would make a good discussion leader in an upper division religion class--and then we would find who had been doing their homework! Faith is not a leap into the dark, or blind devotion. How in the world did Peter, Paul and others ever get the young Christian community out of the shadows if they only told them to believe something that they had no evidence for? Sometimes we have to role-play with reality, walk in their shoes until we see what they saw. IMO. Cheers, Herb
I appreciate your candor about some of the difficult questions I posed if we are to reconcile science and the Bible. You quote Lewis. He is also one of my favorite authors. However, his view is not supported by most if not all theistic evolutionists. Francis Collins on his website biologos.org does not support God intervening all during the evolutionary process as Lewis describes. Are you saying that God made things change and adapt outside of our perceived scientific laws?

David Newman,

No..I'm not saying Lewis is correct, (though he may be). My key point is that as a Christian he believed it possible to hold a "foot in both camps". You suggested earlier that if we follow science to its logical conclusion it "will" remove miracles, resurrection, Adam and Eve etc. Surely, if someone like Lewis can believe evolution did not destroy Christianity, it is pause for thought, and we should be perhaps less fearful of seeking answers?

re biologos, they have some good material.

Am I saying God made things change outside our perceived scientific laws? Maybe? Maybe not.

One problem is that if I say he did not intervene, do I then allow that at some point he did? I then face questions like, at what point did this take place and how and why? etc.

If I say yes he did intervene during the process, I then end up with similar problems demonstrating how and why.

Which position holds up best under a posteriori scrutiny? It is the kind of question that could well be discussed in a context like this.

It is nice to see you back, Herb. Thanks for the kind words.

David, we are faced with two opposing perspectives/opinions, and I hope my response does not seem flippant. I'm not sure how else to reply. I do not think providing "a shred" of evidence of evolution would present a fair or honest picture of the "overwhelming weight" of evidence that some others and I have indicated. I doubt that there is any substitute for examining for oneself some large chunks of reliable information contained in the enormous relevant scientific literature. What can I do to help? My posts on here are too long as it is, but I just can't use this space to post hundreds of thousands of references for you to look at. All I can suggest is that if you really care to read the relevant literature, just do it.
Maybe I can suggest some places to start. Have a look at the recent comparative primate genomics work, especially as connected with recent viral genomics research. This is a HUGE literature already, even if you only look at the last five or ten years. What we have evidence of in primate genomes is similarities across taxa and evidence of when populations became sufficiently genomically different from each other to be reproductively isolated. We also find abundant examples of primate populations that are morphologically distinct that have some zones of intergradation.

There is a popular piece that could serve as an introduction, though it could have been stronger in some ways, but you might find it interesting: Thomas Hayden's "What Darwin didn't know," *Smithsonian* February 2009.

Of course we cannot directly "observe" and replicate primate evolution, that occurred over about 65 million years. We can, however, examine the fossil evidence and evidence surrounding fossil finds. These physical artifacts can (and are) measured and examined repeatedly and the measurements made are consistent and reliable. That is the replicable part. Discussion and interpretation of what the fossil evidence means is an ongoing process, and understanding is subject to revision. There are plenty of hot debates going on all the time in the paleoanthropology research community.

Another aspect to have a look at variation and change in organisms with short generation times. There is enough time to repeatedly replicate that populations of viruses and bacteria can become reproductively isolated from one another.

I would be perfectly comfortable with anyone examining these lines of evidence, especially the literature of the past 20 or 30 years, objectively, without deciding in advance how things are and came to be. Be sure to examine the objective results first, and recognize that the interpretations and discussions are just that.

So, I think the burden of proof is on those who think there is no "shred" of evidence, to examine at least some of the enormous amount of evidence that exists. Of course, none of us has enough time in a lifetime to examine all the relevant scientific literature. An easy cop out would be to deny the validity of scientific method or claim that fossils are not real or that DNA sequencing is nonsense. Then we can just make up whatever answers suit us.

Joe Erwin

On the other hand, who am I to give any of you advice? My comments seem rather pedantic, even to me. So, I will go right on, and offer more of the same.... If you seriously do not want to believe that evolution occurs and that genetic variability and natural selection occur, please avoid getting into the scientific literature on these topics. What you will find might cause you to question what you believe. If you are not interested in or open to that possibility, you probably should avoid looking at the evidence and what scientists think the evidence means. So, "whatever you do, Brer Fox, don't you go anywhere near that tar baby."

Then go read some of Francisco Ayala's writings about science and faith. I mean, whatever you do,
don't ever read anything written by Francisco Ayala....

Roscoe Fogg

Joe,
Thanks. I appreciate the substance and the tone of your post. I couldn't agree with you more.

Editor

Joe

I am not sure which David you are addressing. But let's assume I am the one you are talking to.

I appreciate your passion in talking about all the evidence for evolution. However, I was surprised that you did not participate in the discussion of the ground rules, the presuppositions with which we come to this subject. To use an illustration I gave earlier. You are playing by NFL rules while I am playing by College Football rules. We will never find a way to agree if we do not establish the basis for our discussion.

The other big challenge is we are trying to interpret past facts. How about talking about where macro evolution is taking place today. Cb25 acknowledged that was a challenge and he gave no answer.

But I do not want to get side tracked. For the real issue are our assumptions. That is where we must begin. What are your assumptions?

Ervin Taylor

I’ve been reading this thread with great interest. My AT colleague David Newman and I have been having an exchange on this topic for some time. We even had an exchange in the pages of Adventist Today about this. He keeps talking about assumptions and I sought to provide him with what I thought was a response from a scientific perspective, but he did not think I was responding to his questions. I’ve been thinking off and on over the last couple of months about why we are having a communication problem.

I think part of this is simply that he is a pastor, a sincere and dedicated “person of faith” and a theologian and I am none of those things. He has the faith gene and I do not.

Parenthetically, I have always wondered why certain kinds of theologians get very concerned about evolutionary biology. The obvious answer is that they think that the contemporary views in evolutionary biology directly contracts major theological tenets which must be held at all cost or they think that their whole theological system collapses. With some of them (I’m sure this is not true of my good friend David Newman but it might be of the other David), it might be a power thing. They realize that any “authority” they might represent or wish to exercise has been eclipsed.
by the power of science. It seems that since they rarely have the educational background or expertise to address the scientific data, they turn to philosophy in their search for a means of countering what they view as the implications of biological evolutionary thought. But I digress.

I think that Joe Irwin is on the right track from a scientific perspective. The assumptions that David Newsman asks for are relatively simple ones from a scientific perspective, but David is smart enough to know that he can’t accept them. He says “you (scientists) are playing by NFL rules while I am playing by College Football rules. We will never find a way to agree …” Bingo! QED.

Elaine Nelson

Erv, your reply is very much to the point: both sides are talking past each other. It is somewhat disingenuous to hear a theologian discuss science as being knowledgeable and yet would dismiss a scientist who dared to discuss fine theological points (especially in the original languages) as out of his realm.

A pastor who has his whole lifetime engaged in ministering to others cannot grasp all the scientific information necessary to engage in such discussions; just as the scientist is not equipped by knowledge and training to engage in difficult theological questions. This has never stopped such conversations.

Because most of the little scientific knowledge that I have is in the medical arena, as one of the very important sciences, I would not dare confront an esteemed medical practitioner with my own ideas of diagnosis and treatment. "Fools rush in....."

Anonymous

David Newman,

I've just read with interest the comments above. I too think Joe is on the right track.

I have to admit, I find it a little frustrating when you bring this ground rule thing up. Can we get this clear: Herb did not set such a rule out. He only reminded us about the problem assumptions can pose.

If I read Joe right, he is not ignoring this problem. He is saying put assumptions and preconceptions aside for a while and look at the evidence.

Which leads me to my other frustration.

You note: "How about talking about where macro evolution is taking place today. Cb25 acknowledged that was a challenge and he gave no answer."
What I tried to do with that is put it into a framework of where it fitted in our assumptions. Of the three you gave it was the one that fitted into our overall topic here Evolutionary process.

True, I did not give an answer....like Joe and others, I believe the data out there is overwhelmingly confirming of an evolutionary process. Even to me there is not space here to even begin, and I'm not a scientist. As he says its a DIY:)

I have to admit, after all our discussion about starting points for assumptions and your view the Bible is an authoritative point to begin - apriori, I find such a position indefensible.

I asked Horace what he would say to a radical Muslim about the "lie" of his beliefs. My point was that both are taking an a priori position on a different book with exactly the same dogmatism. Both would be trying to outprove the other from the same presupposition.

Solution? Move back to a basic a priori assumption. There is one starting point that fits here: Nature. Forget the assumptions before that, and after that eg Bible in or out etc. Let's begin there on common ground (pardon pun).

*What does the world I see, live in, study, and reason about say about how it and I got here?*

*Cheers.*

---

**David**

3 weeks ago

May be after 20 to 25 years from now when I retired I will have the time to participate.

Today I have I nice conversation with a friend (endocrinologist, atheist and evolutionist) some of you would love to be there.

My argument was simple, evolution believe that we evolve from lower from of life to higher ones because of mutations (new information in that is transmitted to new generations). You and I know that mutations are deleterious and lethal to us. This is replicable, and we can probe any day of the week, we don’t know a single mutation that makes better. He agreed. So I ask why I have to think that in the past mutations got us better when the present evidence show us just the opposite? He smiled he could not give a reasonable answer, then he said may be in the future we will be able to prove. I replied well then we have to wait until that day and please just walk to me office and show me that evidence.

---

**David**

3 weeks ago

*The burden of proof in in the ones who believed that mutations makes better when the overwhelming evidence just show the contrary.*

*Evolutionist are trying that is why they expended millions of dollars and several years to show that macroevolution is a fact. The reality...after several decades of observation 50,000 generations of E. coli and millions of dollars E Coli still is E coli. “Actus ipsi locutus” facts speaks by themselves*
Ervin Taylor

David (not Newman) says that the "burden of proof" should be with those who believe that mutations "makes better" (I will not comment on the English grammar here). Let's for a moment say that mutations are not what drive evolution. (I know, I know, anyone knowing anything about the science behind evolutionary biology would say that's crazy, but let's go with this for a moment.)

Regretfully for David (not Newman), this would make very little difference for an understanding that biological evolution over billions of years has occurred on planet earth. From the paleontological/geological record, we know that organisms have changed over time (that's one of the definitions of biological evolution) and that the time frame of that process can be measured in hundreds of millions and billions of years.

If it turns out that mutation and natural selection are not the driving forces, then future scientific research will locate some other process and be able to demonstrate that this force is more important than mutation and natural selection.

I trust David (not Newman) gets the point of this. Evolution--change over time in biological organisms--is a demonstrated fact of the geological and paleontological record. How it occurred--whether by mutation and natural selection or some other physical mechanism--could be an on-going subject of scientific investigation. My understanding is that most biologist believed that the current evidence is that mutation and natural selection can explain the process quite well. But some bright graduate student or postdoc may just come upon another mechanism and become another Darwin.

David

Erv stated, “My understanding is that most biologist believed that the current evidence is that mutation and natural selection can explain the process quite well”. Really? could you provide the evidence that is reproducible? I mean mutations that improve us. If is so evident could you provide the references? Please not educate suppositions.

If some day it is prove that “other mechanisms” and mutations improve us I will accept it. But until that day comes I prefer to believe in what is reproducible; mutations are deleterious and lethal, the reproducible evidence is overwhelming! In regard to suppositions I just take like they are. Reproducible observations are superior to any retrospective observation.

Erv I guess you understood it was a typo “makes us better” plus English in not my second language but my fourth one. Maybe in few years I will get better.
J. David Newman

You write, "If I read Joe right, he is not ignoring this problem. He is saying put assumptions and preconceptions aside for a while and look at the evidence." It seems that I am a very poor communicator. I have said over and over again I have no problem with the evidence, facts. Yes, it is all there for us to see. The problem is how we interpret the evidence. It seems that you do not want to admit that any interpretation is necessary. If that is true then there is no point wasting more time in discussion. That is why I am saying so much about presuppositions which so many people are shying away from. You evidently don't believe my football analogy. When it comes to understanding the Bible there is a whole science of interpretation called hermeneutics. Nature is no different. It too has a hermeneutic which, it seems, you do not acknowledge. You have complained several times that Herb did not say we should be discussing presuppositions. I am not going to argue that point. Except to say, that unless we agree on the rules (which I keep saying) there is no game.

You also say, "Solution? Move back to a basic a priori assumption. There is one starting point that fits here: Nature. Forget the assumptions before that, and after that eg Bible in or out etc. Let's begin there on common ground (pardon pun)." Why are you so against trying to find a common ground for the rules to play the game? I have been giving my assumptions (which you do not like) but I am not clear on your assumptions. You do not state any in this statement.

As I read your comments and others who support you I wonder where God fits in, if he fits in at all. All you are saying the atheist would agree with. So where is God? In the quote from Lewis that you gave, God was very involved. Did He just start the thing going and then walk away with it? You don't want to bring the Bible into it? I suspect that is because you dont know how to deal with the miracles and virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus which science says cannot happen (as we currently use science). You give no explanation of death and evil in nature. If there is no God then we have to accept what we see. But if there is a God then how do we explain him using pain and destruction and death to create his universe? I thought that we were all Christians on this blog and want to find a way to factor God into the equation. If we leave Him out completely then what is the difference between what atheists believe in how the universe has evolved and the respondents on this blog? And what about the end of all things? Will there be death in the new earth just like we have now? If not, why not?, and then it would seem that God does do something different. If he can do it differently at the end of time why couldn't he at the beginning of time?

Yes, cb25 I am just as frustrated as you are. And since it is not my propose to upset people by seeming to be intransigent I will not comment further unless I feel that we are making some kind of progress. In one of your responses you said that I had asked some very important and hard questions but now you dont want to deal with them. I don't want people angry or frustrated. My main job as a pastor is to help people find true joy and peace and fulfillment through a relationship with the God of the universe who came to us in bodily form in Jesus Christ to show us what he is really like. I want people to feel loved, valued, and accepted and if I am not accomplishing this on this blog then I am being counterproductive.
You write, “If I read Joe right, he is not ignoring this problem. He is saying put assumptions and preconceptions aside for a while and look at the evidence.” That is an incredible statement. I have stated over and over that I have no problem with the evidence, with the facts. There are fossils, there are layers of ice in Greenland, and so on. But there is NO such thing as evidence without interpretation. In a courtroom the prosecution presents evidence and the defense refutes it. How? By showing there can be more than one way of interpreting the evidence. So to say that we should put assumptions aside is a really remarkable statement. It means that we are finished with our discussion. You evidently don’t agree with my football analogy. Yet in one of your responses you said that I had posed some hard and important questions. Now you seem to be forgetting all that because this discussion of assumptions is causing distress because as Christians we are trying to find some way to reconcile nature and the Bible.

Yet practically all the discussion on the side of evolution could be made by an atheist. So where is God in the picture? Did he just start the whole process then walk away and leave it? It seems that one of the reasons to leave the Bible out of the picture is the difficulty of reconciling the miracles such as the axe head that floated, the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus and so on. If we use science there then they could not have happened. But if we agree they happened, and once we make exceptions, where do we stop? Paul said to the church in Corinth that if do not believe in the resurrection then we are of all people most miserable and there is no hope for any of us.

You quoted Lewis approvingly but he has God heavily invested in the process. But that does not seem to be your position.

Then near the end of your response you write, “Solution? Move back to a basic a priori assumption. There is one starting point that fits here: Nature. Forget the assumptions before that, and after that eg Bible in or out etc. Let's begin there on common ground (pardon pun).”

I fail to see any solution here. You do not tell me your assumptions on how you deal with nature. As I said earlier there is no such thing as facts without interpretation. If you do not agree then we have no basis for any further discussion. And I do not want to antagonize anyone by seeming to be intransigent. I am just as frustrated as you are. Why is it so difficult to discuss the basis for our discussion? When a person starts an English course the very first thing they learn are the principles of grammar. Why would it be any different here?

Further, if we leave the Bible out of the picture (which you would like) we have an enormous problem of death and evil. Did God use death and evil to create the universe? Where did evil come from, the pain, the distress, the torture, the calamities, that we see in nature? And if there will be no pain and death in the new earth then it seems obvious that God must change some fundamental laws to make that happen and if he does why could he not have done that in the beginning?

For the Christian we cannot leave the Bible out of the story. If we do then we are no different from the atheist who has no use for the Bible. I am a pastor and my ministry is to help people find joy,
peace, purpose, and meaning in life. I do this by showing them how God loves them, came to this world as a human to show that love, gave his life for them, and is coming back again for them. At the same time I have to deal with the issue of evil and where Satan fits into the picture. That is why I come with a different perspective. If you come solely from the perspective of science then of course you will arrive at very different conclusions.

Since I do not want to offend people I will stop being obstinate and not write anything further unless I feel that we are making some kind of progress in our understanding. God bless.

Anonymous

David Newman,

Back again...I'm mulling over your points, so don't leave just yet:) You did and have made some challenging points, though as you note, at the moment there are sticking points in getting a clear direction, and understanding. Others may have further comment, but I will get back to you more on your last posts...

Cheers

David

The reality of mutation in humans:
In the last 10 years is estimated than almost 2,000,000 babies were born with trisomy 21, none of this babies were superior or equal in health, intelligent, or length of life compare to normal babies. The ones who have to break the news to parents we know the limitations that these babies will have. I really wish some day I could say to a mother “your baby has this mutation be happy because he will be healthier, smarter or he will live longer”. We know hundreds of mutation that will affect millions of babies each year. So why I have to accept a theory that says that we evolved (because of mutation) from lower form of live to what we are now, when every mutation that we see in humans results in diseases or early deaths?

Anonymous

David Newman,

First, sorry you are feeling frustrated, perhaps more than I by the sound of it:)

Because of space I will try say what I do mean and you can fit that into the many questions you raise. I hope not to frustrate more:)

First, in the posts you raise a series of questions. If I had answers for all of them I would have an apologetic to present here. I have some, some clear, some tenuous, but to set them out is not simple, and who's to say I am right anyway?
I do place a lot of weight on Lewis's view, and he may well be right, but that is not a call I will make here at this point in time. Certainly, I fully agree with him on relegating Bible to a lesser authority than nature, as I believe he does.

I do not suggest we put aside all assumptions full stop, but that we begin with ONE:

**Nature.** What do I mean by that? At least two things:

1. I put aside, as best I can, conclusions I may already have about whether there is or is not a god/God, whether the Bible is or is not authoritative, whether there is or is not evil, or even what it is or is not.
2. I bring to bear on nature every question I can think of about how, when, where, what, why - what I can observe, understand and reason about in, on, and through nature, including human nature.

In that process I can ask questions that take my evaluation outside of nature: eg what does it say about whether there is or is not a God. What does it suggest about good/evil, beginnings etc. I can put some tentative assumptions to the test: eg does nature support the view that there is a God? What kind of god/God does it point to etc. These and more are good questions that one would hope can lead to an apologetic for Christian faith. But they are not the starting point imo.

You say: “So to say that we should put assumptions aside is a really remarkable statement.”

No, I say begin with one! That is remarkably hard to do. It confronts our fears, our identity, our sense of who we are, or think we are.

What of the Bible? example: I must evaluate it in light of all observable data. If what I see says this world is very old and shows unmistakable evidence of an evolutionary process...so be it. I will then do what I suspect Lewis did, and try to understand the Bible from that perspective.

More shortly.

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**Anonymous**

David Newman,

Greetings again.

I should just note here: I do get that for you the Bible is a "non negotiable" component of evaluating this subject. I fully understand. As I noted in the thread under my blog I grew up SDA with all the certainty that entails. There were no shades of grey. God was, Truth was, we had it all.

For better or worse, I have a very enquiring and analytical mind. Over the years contrary data began to stack up...Walter Vieth CD's on creation pushed the final button. I had to face what for me was reality. This earth is *incredibly* old, as is life on it.
There is nothing more shocking than for an SDA with the "certainty" I grew up with, to look into the night sky and realize there could in fact be no God.

The tragedy of this is that our own emphasis on Truth sets us up for disaster: Everything is black and white, facts, facts and more facts. We have the answers and the information. If for more than a moment we admit other evidence we are undone. We cannot handle shades of gray. Joe's "tar baby" is spot on.

What is beyond that night sky experience? There is nothing more profound than, having done that, to realize that there can indeed be a God, and there can indeed by faith based on a quite different set of paradigms, without requiring every black and white detail.

I smile at the guys here who are hanging all on mutations. Mutations are a hard thing to demonstrate, but over rated on this thread as I see it. However, this difficulty makes perfect harbour: Never mind that so many things about evolution are beyond doubt, this one thing that may not be is a final refuge. What when it falls?

David, is it possible that for you insisting on the Bible as equal fact with nature is also a safe harbour? I don't mean that in mean way, but there can be incredible fear of letting go something that makes it impossible for the other party to gain even "level" ground, let alone an advantage.

I do hope you stay involved, as I'm sure benefit can be gained.

Cheers.

Anonymous 3 weeks ago  Reply

oh no...that was not meant to be italicised ...sorry...

Horace Butler 3 weeks ago  Reply

Interesting that what put you over the edge (the Veith material) is one of many things which provided even stronger evidence for me of the reality that the earth and the life on it, is about 6000 years old. Curious.

David 3 weeks ago  Reply

Cb 25 stated, "I smile at the guys here who are hanging all on mutations". I image a similar smile that yesterday my good friend the "endocrinologist/evolutionist" game me because he knew he could not give a credible answer. The difference is that the endocrinologist has a solid knowledge in biology/medicine and he knows the seriousness of the argument.
“Mutations are a hard thing to demonstrate”,
Yes and no
They are not hard thing to demonstrated, I repeat they are not hard at all, and we use every single
day to explain that specific disease is caused a specific chromosomal abnormality This is beyond a
doubt and if we denied is just ignorance.
Yes is hard, really hard to demonstrated that mutations improves us or produce macroevolution. I
agree with that!

Already you avoided responding in your blog when I ask you for evidence.

“If you refuse to believe in evolutionary processes because you can't "see" a mutation, that is a
very fragile platform. Well show me a mutation that makes us better, I will show you thousand
that are deleterious and lethal, to start trisomy 21, 18, 13, etc etc.

Secondly, it ignores many things that others would say are mutations. Could you mention which
ones are those? And more import can be proved?

Third, it will eventually face the day when incontrovertable mutations are demonstrated even to the
doubters. When that day comes I have not problem to accepted, but until day is just a mirage
(maybe some day also the BIG FOOT will appear)

J. David Newman
3 weeks ago Reply
cb25
I am breathing a little easier. Thank you for your kind post and your wanting me to still be
engaged. You are right the earth is very old and life has taken millions of years to evolve but that
is because of your assumption that the laws we have today have never changed, that it is possible
to use those laws to go back in time and know what happened and when in the past. How do you
prove that assumption? I am serious. I challenge that assumption. If that assumption is incorrect
then you cannot know for sure how old the earth is. So we are back to what I consider the nub of
the whole controversy. And let's admit for a moment to go only by the laws of nature and leave the
Bible out of the picture. Eventually we will have to get to the Bible. The Bible is to be understood
by the laws of nature. So to be consistent there were no actual ten plagues of Egypt, there was no
actual manna, the sandals of the Israelites could not last for 40 years without wearing out, iron axe
heads cannot float, water cannot turn into wine, virgin women do not give birth, Jesus could not
rise from the dead. These are just stories but have no basis in reality. This seems to be the
inescapable conclusion if we make science supreme.

For the atheist there is no conflict because he or she does not accept the Bible at all. But the
Christian does. So how do we balance the Biblical claims with the claims of nature? There is no
way for the Christian to discussion nature only without sometime coming back to the Bible. Am I
correct in my conclusions about what science says that miracles cannot happen?
Kevin Riley

For me it is not even as simple as accepting the Bible. My experience tells me there is a God. So, for me, God is part of 'life in the real world'. Because I believe there is a God, I am willing to accept that the Bible is his message to us. What I am not willing to accept is a world with no God. So, whether or not we start with what is observable, I suspect that what is not directly observable - God - cannot be ignored. That, I believe, is what makes a dialogue with an atheist both interesting and frustrating.

Joe Erwin

I'm not sure what is meant by my playing college ball with NFL rules, but maybe I should not have made sarcastic comments. I do not want to be unfair.

I think it is more difficult to understand why Down syndrome continues to occur, when one might hope it would be "selected out." But maybe the mechanism is such that the cause of trisomy is in the mother, rather than in the affected individual, and since the risk is increased with maternal age, how would that be eliminated if she has already had several non-trisomy children? But, we do know that there is terrific variation of severity in trisomy-21 sequelae, in the sense that the number of stigmata found in each individual varies from a few to 60 or more. Also, intelligence DOES vary, and some DS people have above average intelligence (and there have been DS people who have become physicians and attorneys).

Of course, DS is a chromosomal level defect. That means that it has a huge impact. Most huge errors are lethal, and probably nearly all the rest of the really big ones are profoundly negative. But most genetic replication errors are tiny, single nucleotide changes or short tandem repeats, that are not lethal, and can be neutral, or ranging in value from positive to negative--but may only have effects through interacting with other genes as promoters or blockers. It's complicated. But I think you must already know that.

I'm not quite sure what is meant by "current" evidence of macroevolution. Sumatran and Bornean orangutans are diagnostically distinct due to an easily detectable chromosomal rearrangement. They are classified as distinct species. Likewise, common chimpanzees and pygmy chimpanzees (bonobos) are genetically distinguishable. Three or four (subspecific) populations of common chimps are genetically distinguishable from each other.

But we also have to recognize that the binomial nomenclature system we use is archaic and comes from a time when no one knew much of anything about molecular genetics or population biology or biogeography. A lot of this do not fit neatly into what have been traditionally regarded as "species." But that's another story for another day--as interesting as it is.

BTW, I do not know the "Veith material," so I was not pushed one way or the other by it.

Warm wishes to all.
Joes, I believe that you are addressing me with the football analogy. It seems that you have not read all my responses because I said that college football and NFL football play by different rules and cannot have a game until they decide whole rules they will play under. This analogy I use for this discussion. You are playing by one set of rules and I am playing by another set of rules. Thus we will never have any agreement unless we can agree on the rules under which we are discussing. We are simply talking past each other. That is why I have spent so much time trying to flesh out the assumptions under which we operate.

And regarding species. The Sumatran and Bornean orangutans are still orangutans. I was not asking for evidence within family groups. I was asking for a clear example of one family group becoming a distinctly new family group. It seems that on the large scale evolution has stopped. I know it is said that it takes millions of years to evolve a whole new family group but there should be some evidence today. Why do we see it in the fossil record but not in the living record today?

David

Maternal age is only one factor associated with DS the older she gets the highest the risk. But even teenagers that have the risk 1/1500(so some DS are independent from maternal age; mosaicism and translocation) we know many more diseases; for example more that 300 inborn error of metabolism were identified all of them have serious consequences.

Yes we have constant alterations in the bases of the DNA; and most are been repaired by protective mechanism. For example the UV light in all of us produces nucleotides changes (pyrimidine dimers) in most people the nucleotide excision repair mechanism is efficient but if this is missing even partially the consequences are xeroderma pigmentosum and melanoma (skin cancer)

Could you provide evidence that even single nucleotide changes resulted in positive outcome in humans?

By the way the high achievers DS were mosaicism? what was the quality of live and life expectancy? if you have that information it will be greatly appreciated.

Darrel Lindensmith

Erv’s comment is a gem:

"I have always wondered why certain kinds of theologians get very concerned about evolutionary biology. The obvious answer is that they think that the contemporary views in evolutionary biology directly contracts major theological tenets [The existence of God?] which must be held at all cost or they think that their whole theological system collapses." I wonder why? Truly a mystery :-) 

Now to be fair Erv might be delimiting his evolutionary biology to the evidence of the sequence of fossil progression and homology which could challenge traditional theological views, if this is what he means, I will give him that. But these are not core to the definition. The core is the inorganic to organismic /mutational/selectional myth-- not the oily "change over time," unctuous definition that only seeks to deflect attention to safer ground.
Erv and Elaine remind me of James and Ellen White in the early years. They pull the "Authority" card whenever things are too scrutinized. "They realize that any "authority" they might represent or wish to exercise has been eclipsed by the power of science. It seems that since they rarely have the educational background or expertise to address the scientific data, they turn to philosophy ......" How smug; how gnostic and a tad cultic! "A pastor who has his whole lifetime engaged in ministering to others cannot grasp all the scientific information necessary to engage in such discussions......" Really, has this become a gnostic religion or a Orthodox priesthood were the truth can only be understood by the "chosen few" who are intellectually and culturally in a place to grasp the truth housed in the " vast body of literature" (un-comprehendable even to many qualified scientists) but the brights at the top, from "right estate" will graciously bequeath to us the correct meaning of it all.

A little humility—Please!

Ervin Taylor 3 weeks ago Reply

"Erv and Elaine as James and Ellen White pulling the authority card whenever things are too scrutinized" And the part about "smug, gnostic, and a tad cultic" This is rich! First class! A completely backward suggestion but very, very creative.

Roscoe Fogg 3 weeks ago Reply

There are clerics, the worst kind, that wish they had more in common with scientists. I think they're jealous of the prestige that science has earned. Freud might have called this syndrome Physics Envy.

Ervin Taylor 2 weeks ago Reply

I earlier missed the "Physics Envy" comment of Mr. Fogg. Well put. It would exist deep in the subconscious of some clerics and their fellow travelers and only come out in symbolic language.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago Reply

Too many theologians want to be considered knowledgeable in many fields—even those for which they have no education or training. Few scientists wish to be considered as experts in theology, but the reverse is too often true. Thus, we see those like Cliff Goldstein writing entire columns on the fallacy of evolution, something for which he is eminently unqualified to discuss. But then his readers will probably validate it by showing and proving that this is what we should believe as good Adventists. There is no room for healthy discussion, just ping-pong with no winners. If it were only possible to recognize that Adventism is not one monolithic answer to everything in life, but that's another subject worthy of another article since there are some that prefer to live within the cocoon of Adventism from womb to tomb.
Anonymous

David Newman,

Early morning over here:

Uniformity. As you say, a central issue. I see this as the ultimate "safe harbour" for our YEC/YLC positions.

It is (as we generally see it) ultimately unprovable from either side. That does not mean I don't see, from my study and observations, massive weight of evidence on one side.

You are no doubt familiar with my blog about the flood. As small as the point is, and as insignificant as the evidences are to the whole debate, the import of it to uniformity issues (imo) should not be missed:

**If the salt domes, corals, etc are there and my understanding of the Biblical descriptions is correct the anti uniformity argument is conclusively destroyed.**

That is how I prove that assumption. As I said, I think without that the weight of evidence favours uniformity, and that the debate only lingers because is is a safe harbour, but to me the salt, corals, and Bible story clinch the argument.

You ask about miracles and science. I think Kevin Riley hit the (or at least a) nail on the head when he said:

"I suspect that what is not directly observable - God - cannot be ignored."

I spoke last post about a new paradigm. I have said human nature is part of nature. The human experience provides a link to or pointer to the unobservable. (themes from a possible future blog from me) It and other things say God Is.

But: I can come to that position from one assumption: Nature IS. From there I go backward and forward and see what it says to me.

Do I come to the Bible? Yes, but not in the authoritative SDA view.

Do miracles happen? Yes. But the God I find is sometimes extremely, and frustratingly, non interventionist. Yes, I read the comments on the thread under the flood blog. Beuatiful story. I read Irvin Taylors question, what when that does not happen? I've sat with people who have had the most tragic events happen...God appeared to do nothing.

Are some of the Bible events just stories? I suspect some are. Don't ask me to say which:).
Chris, thank you for believing that miracles take place. I do understand your frustration though about how God intervenes or does not. In Acts he lets James be beheaded but sends an angel to free Peter. Why? We are given no answer.

Another way to get at this situation is to look at it under a world view. "A world view consists of the set of basic assumptions a person holds, whether consciously or subconsciously, about the origin and nature of the world, humans, other living beings, morals, values, and where we are all going" James Sire in Naming the Elephant p. 19. Thus Everyone from Richard Dawkins to Chris Barrett to David Newman and Elaine Nelson have a world view. Thus a world view will by definition not allow certain things to be believed. For example someone like Dawkins has a naturalist world view. When it comes to evidence pointing toward a divine origin of the universe or the occurrence of a miracle such as the bodily ressurection of Jesus from the dead, Dawkins has determined in advance that this did not occur because, as a naturalist, he "knows" miracles do not happen. Nothing will budge him from his belief, and if the evidence seems to contradict it, it is the evidence that must be thrown out or reassessed, not the conclusion. The only possible way he could accept something that does not fit his world view is to change his world view and adopt a new one that does allow for the supernatural or miraculous. And of course, that option is also open to the religious person to consider the atheistic naturalist worldview.

A religious world view will exclude certain ideas from consideration. A Christian will find it difficult, if not impossible, to accept the notion that miracles are impossible or that there is no God, since such ideas are incompatible with the most basic assumptions of a Christian world view. Thus the Christiana will not accept the evidence of gratuitous violence and destruction as a reason not to be believe in God.

And this is the essence of the debate among sincere Christians. There are different world views among us and anything that contradicts that world view is excluded. I do not have an easy answer as to how we change our world view.

Joe Erwin

David Newman, I'm still not quite sure what rules you are referring to, even after reading the extensive discussion between you and cb25. Do you propose that we agree on some assumptions, such as that both the Bible and Nature exist? I have no problem agreeing that both exist, but the existence of the Bible does not tell us what the meaning of the Bible is. I cannot accept that the Bible means whatever it says it means or whatever anyone asserts that it means. It exists, I have read it through and through many times, but I do not view it as an authoritative document upon which all other understanding must rest. The natural world exists. I do not see any magic in its revelation. It just is. It exists. We can study it using the most reliable methods at hand (and the Bible can be studied that way too). So, we can find out a lot about the natural world. It is abundantly clear that the evidence from nature falsifies the young earth hypotheses. Natural physical evidence does not and cannot falsify claims that there is a God or that there is a God who somehow created everything. Somehow. Nature and natural processes can be described. Supernatural processes cannot be described using the kinds of physical evidence that scientific methods require. I'm not at all sure how you and I can get on the same page to have a conversation.
So, you seem to admit variation and speciation (at the species level--two species of orangutans are recognized) but you don't agree that family level changes have occurred. I guess can't really expect you to look at Hominidae, Panidae, Pongidae, Hylobatidae, Cercopithecidae, etc., among the Primate Order (various authorities disagree on some of the nomenclature applied at the family level among primates). I'm just not quite sure what you are looking for.

David,

You are quite correct that even young women sometimes have DS babies. Some are familial, others are not, and there are a number of strange chromosomal aberrations. One source I looked at indicated that young women have about 1/5 the likelihood of having a DS baby as older women, and the rate in the oldest group of mothers was only about 2%. Because younger women have many more babies than the oldest class of mothers, about 80% of the infants born with DS are born to women younger than the median age. I'm not sure the causes of nondysjunction are known, but I'd be interested in knowing, if anyone knows.

So, I think you can easily find many publications reporting many nonlethal SNPs. Of course, most attention in humans is paid to pathology and attempts to find some genetic correlates of physical and behavioral abnormalities. The very existence of single nucleotide polymorphisms suggests a basis for some consequential functional differences, with some being more or less advantageous or deleterious. But copy number variation, viral insertions, etc., also introduce variability, and comparative primate genomics can show where chromosomal and genetic variation is associated with morphological change and speciation.

Herb, I should avoid being too personal, but, don't we know each other from academy reunions in central CA?

Anonymous

David Newman,

mmm. I guess you are welcome to switch from discusson presuppostions and assumptions to replacing that with "world view", though I think it may just add more to confuse with.

I'm happy you like the miracle concession:), but I'm also uneasy that the force of the other points were overshadowed by the appeal of that point.

I'm not particularly frustrated about the absence of God's intervention. That's how it is, but it should challenge our "just pray about it world view/assumption" held by so many.

You say: "I do not have an easy answer as to how we change our world view."

Can I suggest the same as we change our a priori assumptions?

**With humility, honesty, and courage to face our fears of what the outcome might be.**
After all the dialogue on these two threads, I am more convinced than ever that to the degree these are lacking will be the measure of our inability to see evidence that may get in the way. To pick up from Joe about being on the same page....maybe some of us are in a different book.

Seriously, world views will (imo) more often change by increments. When cognitive dissonance gets too great people are moved a little in another direction.

I suspect some writers here have a lot of dissonance being held back by the cost of admitting its existence!

Elaine Nelson
3 weeks ago

A personal perception: It seems that there are some that accept that the Bible is the final authority on nearly all matters (they decide which ones). Others accept that the Bible directs our faith toward God but was never written to be an authority on every possible subject, otherwise, why would we need the power of reason?

The Bible contains stories of supernatural events, believed by those who wrote them. Because they believed them it is not necessary that we believe them anymore than much of their understanding was not prescient and they were not given the ability to see as people thousands of years later. All such miraculous events were REPORTED; just as today there are reports of miraculous healings. However, there have not been any stories of people brought back to life after more than three days. If that was reported, would they be believed? If so, then it is consistent with the belief in the miracles of the Bible. If not, why would a REPORTED event of thousands of years ago be more readily believed than if were reported a week ago. How is such determinations made?

J. David Newman
3 weeks ago

My world view

cb25 and Joe.

Alright, I am going to spell our my presuppostions, my world view. But before I do here is a little preamble. I see death and evil in nature. I see selfishness rampant in our world. I see no purpose except to live as productive a life as possible and then comes the end. But I seek an answer to the problem of evil. I feel there is more to life than just to be born and then die. So here goes.

1. There is a God (most people on this forum would agree with this first one). I accept the bet in Pascals Wager that it makes more logical sense to believe there is a God than not to believe, although Richard Dawkins in the God Delusion does not like this illustration at all.
2. God created the universe (most, if not all, Christians would accept this).
3. God created the laws of the universe.
4. The Bible explains the purpose of life and how it became disrupted and the following assumptions follow from this one.
5. Lucifer rebelled against God and disunity came into the universe with the possibility of death and with the introduction of evil God changed some of the fundamental laws of the universe to account for this new state of affairs (there are consequences to not following God).

6. The bible tells us that when Jesus returns evil and death will be destroyed and we will live for ever on a new earth, therefore fundamental laws must change again to account for this new state. And if they can change at the end of time why could they not change at the beginning of time?

7. There was a literal first couple who infected the human race with sin alienating them from God.

8. Jesus came to restore us back into fellowship with God, died to take the penalty we deserve, and rose again. If there was no sin then what did Jesus save us from? And why do we need a savior?

9. We are not saved by knowledge but by a personal relationship with the God who created us. There will always be questions.

10. Thus we can disagree on many many points but as long as we can agree on the need for a personal relationship with God we will one day all find out which presuppositions were correct and which were wrong as God gently instructs us in the new world.

Now you can see how difficult it is for me to accept what many of you are saying just as Dawkins world view prevents him from considering the God option.

Now a brief plug for the Fall issue of AT just going to press. To let you know that I do think outside the box I wrote an editorial questioning the traditional Adventist teaching of a universal Sunday law. Read it for my reasons. We are also publishing an article on conditional prophecy in Ellen White and how it might affect our end time scenario. We have the editor of the South African edition of the Signs of the Times taking the GC President to task for some things he said in his ASI sermon this past August. A short piece on how to manage if the church splits by a former conference president and much more. Happy reading.

David

While some SNPs are neutral and others definitive are associated to diseases there is a serious lack of being positive for humans. I saw couple of papers, when I examined closely there was much speculation and little substance.

Joe Erwin

David N. and David,
First of all, even though I think Dawkins overstates the case for atheism, I am not a "believer."
Even so, I think there is room between your ten points, DN, none of which fits my "weltanschaung" (world view), and Dawkins positions. I do not think the existence of fossil and genomic records/evidence proves the non-existence of God. I think they do falsify many of the concepts I was taught as a child and young adult. So, I'm not sure we can ever be on the same page, but maybe once in a while we can examine objective evidence that does not require any of us to accept or reject the ten principles.

Genomic information exists in the present. While many genomic scientists are quite open and direct in their interpretations of genomic variation as part of evolutionary process, looking at the
information does not require one to blindly accept the explanations offered. One can be free to try to explain the data in accordance with any world view s/he has.

Discussion of single nucleotide polymorphisms (as well as double and triple and higher order polymorphisms), SINES, LINES, single and multiple tandem repeats, translocations, inversions, deletions, and other sources of variation, along with proteomics, gene regulation, exons (protein producing regions of the genome), and introns (non-coding for proteins regions, so-called "inactive" or "desert" portions of the genome that are increasingly found to have functional influences), does not require disbelief in God. One can look at all this evidence and still believe it was directly designed or initiated by God, and can base explanations of the very real objective information on that premise if they so choose.

That said, it is important to note that there are an estimated 1.42 million SNPs in the human genome, of which about 60,000 are in exonic regions—that is, they code for proteins. But single nucleotide changes tend to have relatively minor effects by comparison with multiple nucleotide polymorphisms. And, when they occur in intronic regions they are even less likely to have any immediate functional consequences. Such changes can build up across time (but that is another story). When complicated machinery is functioning well (as intended or designed to do) tiny changes in various parts may not make the machine stop running, but they are far more likely to make the machine perform less well rather than better. Larger changes may cause a total breakdown to the machine—they are not likely to make the machine run better. By analogy, mutations in humans or nonhuman animals are probably much more likely to have negative consequences for survival than positive consequences for survival, or no serious consequences at all, until they have accumulated to the point when there is some function (and even then, the direction of the consequence might be likely to be negative). BUT, remember that polymorphisms are alternative forms that produce or may influence production of proteins. The proteins produced may be flawed in ways that make them not work, not work very well, result in deficiencies that influence physiological function by inhibiting or failing to inhibit other functional processes. There may be 1 or 3 or 10 different alternatives at a specific locus. Of however many there are, if one is worse than the others, it tends to be selected out. The worse it is, the more likely it is to be eliminated. One can potentially rank all the alternative forms in terms of their consequences, from lethal to bad to not so bad to neutral to slightly positive to very positive. One need not reject God or science to consider such things....
Of course it is in the nature of the differences between material reality, which is subject of scientific inquiry, and spiritual reality, which is the focus of theological inquiry, as well as their respective methodologies, that scientific theories will be falsified with far greater frequency than theological theories. Unfortunately, the true believer fundamentalists within each discipline gravitate towards the fallacy of thinking that, by falsifying the claims of conflicting theories, they can somehow validate their own claims. A unifying field theory, where the two epistemological pathways meet, has not yet emerged, though I believe that Jesus Christ - the Way, the Truth, and the Life - reveals much about the futility of thinking that the Kingdom can be discovered or claimed along theoretical pathways of truth. But is there not abundant information, to say nothing of the history of error and fraud within each discipline, to warrant great humility on both pathways?

J. David Newman
3 weeks ago

Thank you Joe for your kind response and saying there is room within my ten points for some agreement. I agree. No one can know the full mind of God. As Newton is reported to have said we are like a grain of sand on the seashore and before us stretches the whole ocean of truth. My main concern is to have some kind of answer as to why their is evil in the world. This is the biggest stumbling block for atheists. They see the cruelty in the OT some of it instigated by God, they see the cruelty in nature, and even among Christians. That is why at the heart of any response must be the cross of Jesus and what that tells me about God. Through the lens of the cross I can begin to have an answer for why evil exists. And my concern about evolution is how to explain evil in that process and how we came to the place of why we need a Savior and what He is saving us from. The is my dilemma. I am trying to see the whole picture not just a part of it and that is a big big challenge.

I am not competent to comment on your excellent presentation of scientific info on the genome except to say I desire a consistent portrayal of the love of God and His purpose for His creation.

Kevin Riley
2 weeks ago

I am still pondering whether sin in heaven may have a part to play in this. If Adam and Eve's one sin had such huge consequences, what effect did Lucifer and 1/3 of the angels rejecting God have? We see the effects of sin (chaos and destruction) everywhere we look in the universe. Surely we cannot claim that all of that is due to the sin of Adam and Eve? If the rest of the universe was adversely affected by sin before Adam and Eve were created, why not also on this planet? That death came to humans, or to the Garden of Eden, by one sin may make sense, but does it have to be applied further than that? I still don't know the answers to those questions. What I do know is that I am not willing to accept that there can be different answers from science and theology if we are talking about real events in this world.

Elaine Nelson
2 weeks ago

For the first person that can identify and explain evil, he will surely be given the Nobel Peace Price, and receive instant praise. Short of expecting there to be an answer, we often have the
human problem of labeling: "evil" is simply a part of life. Is death evil? Is rain evil? Are earthquakes evil? If thorns are a result of sin, can it be imagined that God wanted mankind to loll around all day eating fruit dropped from trees? Is not work a blessing? Is not a timely death also a blessing? To live forever would be a living Hell.

Then, there is the problem inherent in reading the Hebrew account which is far more sparse than later explanations.

Neither can we understand life as described in Eden, and life outside the garden except a few short verses. Given God's original and only command to the first couple to "be fruitful and multiply" had they obeyed that command and there was no death, this earth would have been over populated centuries ago--at least at the fecundity represented in Genesis.

There have hundreds of postulations about life in Eden and life afterward; most have been sheer speculations. The Bible writers only knew what their life was THEN. They heard stories about an Eden, but before these were written, at least 3,000 years elapsed, and the stories were related through several hundred generations.

But the most important is that there were no observers of Creation. When Adam and Eve were created, God had completed his work.

---

**Joe Erwin**

Joe “One can potentially rank all the alternative forms in terms of their consequences, from lethal to bad to not so bad to neutral to *slightly positive to very positive*. Could you provide references to support reproducible evidence base of *slightly positive to very positive*.

---

**Joe Erwin**

David, yes, of course, there are hundreds of available references, probably thousands, easily available by searching the web, but let me first direct you, and anyone else who is interested, to the web site of the Human Genome Project (just google "Human Genome Project Information"). There is a lot of information available there, including basic "Genomics 101" for anyone who needs it (not for you, David, unless you want to brush up).

(or check Harpending lab at University of Utah--I haven't looked at it, but I expect there are some good newer references listed there)

Sachidanandam et al. NATURE 409:928-933, 2001 (1.42 million SNPs)

I think I might not have clearly indicated what I was talking about when I mentioned ranking SNPs in terms of their consequences. Imagine a locus that has 5 different forms, A, B, C, D, and E. Suppose allele A is found only in severely malformed fetuses that are spontaneously miscarried. And suppose B is found only in infants that are born and survive but have some developmental disabilities. And suppose that C is found in adolescents with some learning disabilities. And
suppose D is found in normal people who have no abnormal characteristics exceptional disease resistance. And suppose E is found in people who are exceptionally resistant to progression of HIV to AIDS. This is a made up example, but it indicates what I mean in terms of being able to rank relative fitness. Further, E would only have advantages for people who were exposed to HIV. In environments completely free of HIV, those with the E allele would enjoy no advantage at all over those with the D allele.

So, have a look at Hawks et al, but feel free to just google around, using whatever terms interest you, like "advantageous SNPs, lethal SNPs, selection among non-lethal SNPs, etc."--really, just look for whatever you like. You will find that many of the discussions of this evidence refer to evolution. Feel free to ignore that to the extent that you can, and just look at the evidence without the evolutionary explanation.

Joe Erwin

David Newman,

Thanks for your comments. I think evolutionists have always had much more difficulty explaining why people are nice to each other than why they are nasty to each other. Competition, "nature red in tooth and claw" is a common characterization of "survival of the fittest." Much effort has been made to try to explain "altruism," in the face of "selfishness." So, selfish competition seems to do pretty well in explaining why "evil" exists. That is, why do people behave badly? Because they are inconsiderate of others and are only seeking advantages for themselves. Why to people do good things? Well, if I am nice to you, maybe you will be nice to me (reciprocal altruism), and such as that.

I really do not see more bad stuff happening than I expect to see. If someone close to you is senselessly and cruelly murdered, I understand why one would have to wrestle for some kind of meaning in that.

But, actually, more people have been amazingly nice to me that I had any right to expect. I'm kind of amazed that you folks tolerate my presence here....

David

Joe thanks, I was familiar with Sachidanandam’ paper. I glance the Hawks’ paper, as soon a have more time I will read carefully paying attention to the references. I did not in find in this work what I was expecting (example certain SNPs producing protection for specific diseases or improving survival) but yes allot of educated and sophisticated suppositions.

David

To be more specific, I was expecting the opposite of diseases and disorders than have been linked to the sort of genetic imprinting, ( Angelman syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, and Beckwith-
Anonymous

David Newman,

Just dropped in again...World views:) I don't think I could scratch up as many points as you have though.

One thing about my journey that touches on world views. I have always appreciated animals. (love dogs etc), but since I came to accept the incredible relatedness of all life (as I see it), my appreciation of and love for creation, in particular other life forms, has increased immensely.

I don't know how it is for other YEC/YLC's who have "switched" views, but for me this has led to a whole new sense of connectedness with animals etc. We are family in a sense far greater than I could understand from a they were "spoken into existence" the day before I was "hand crafted" type of thinking.

Cheers.

Joe Erwin

cb25,

I'm interested in your attitudes toward animals. I feel that literal connectedness with animals too. I had it before the "switch" too, but even moreso as I came to know more about relatedness.

Most of my career has ended up involving animals, especially nonhuman primates (as a zoo curator, journal editor, animal facility designer, as an animal welfare specialist working to improve the quality of life for laboratory and zoo animals, and doing conservation biology field work). And, of course, the companion animals (housecats and stockdogs--border collies & kelpies).

Do you live in NSW? I thought I had seen something to that effect in one of your posts.

Anyway, cheers to you all.

Anonymous

Joe Erwin,

Very interesting to see a similarity. I admit it was not something I would have expected or predicted so to speak.
I'm currently reading the "Great Australian Working Dog Stories" book. You mention altruism. Some stories in there (not to exclude other things in the animal world) leave one with the realization that humanity may not have sole claim to altruism.

I am in NSW. If you or Kevin, (or others) want to email me just put my nic above in front of @bigpond.com

Hope that's ok with the ED?

Cheers

David

Joe I look in Pub Med and for any “positive” studies (SNPs) in humans

1. Genome-wide association study (GWAS), I could not find yet any study, (The human genome consists of 3 billion nucleotides or “letters” of DNA)
2. *Exome sequencing* (1.5 % of those letters are actually translated into proteins, the functional players in the body) *all the studies reported are associated with diseases* (as is expected)
3. *RNA sequencing* also *all the reports were associated to diseases*

*We have to wait the future studies to show the positive effects in humans.*

Joe Erwin

David, I checked PubMed quickly searching for "favorable SNPs" and then "favorable SNPs human." The first search yielded over 600 fairly recent journal publications. The second one yielded 60 publications. You might want to start by reading the one from this year by Mu, XJ, et al. (2011) from *Nucleic Acids Research*.

I'm not kidding you when I say the evidence is abundant. And you don't even have to be very clever to find it. Since you are plenty smart and have enough background to read this literature, I'm sure you will find it interesting food for thought. I should mention that exomes are not all that is of interest. More and more intronic influences on exonic variationon and gene expression are being found.

You will note if you read the papers turned up in the search of Pub Med I mentioned above that many reports of SNPs are not associated with diseases or disorders, although very often at least one of the SNPs at a specific locus has some connection to some disorder (in part, because many studies are conducted to try to find some genetic variant associated with a specific disorder).

My point again, is that if there is variation at any genetic locus, the variants are potentially more or less advantageous relative to each other. If one is worst, others are better than that.

Maybe this discussion is getting boring to others. Anyone many feel free to email me at:
is this article?

Genomics

Xinmeng Jasmine Mu, Zhi John Lu, Yong Kong, Hugo Y. K. Lam, and Mark B. Gerstein
Analysis of genomic variation in non-coding elements using population-scale sequencing data from the 1000 Genomes Project
doi:10.1093/nar/gkr342

Your comment on having few points in your world view was intriguing. Would you mind sketching out your world view? This is actually a good exercise for everyone on this blog. Most of us have never actually thought through what their world view is. I would be especially interested in seeing Elaine's world view because it seems so different from most others here I sometimes wonder why she is even interested in commenting so much on this site. How about it Elaine?

Some 25 years ago as a candidate for graduation from a Jesuit university, I completed the requirement of writing a spiritual autobiography (required of all graduates) in which the student must explain the journey which led to her present spiritual life. This could not be a doctrinal paper for any particular religion, and even atheists were required to give their reasons for choosing atheism.

How many SDA graduates of college or seminary must complete such a paper? The teacher said that the majority of students failed on their first try and had to re-write. Mine was selected as a model of what was required. In it, I began with my early parental assurance of love and believed that same attitude is shown in a loving God, the one most important and simple belief: God is love. Anything that reflected such love was of God; anything that deflected or did not demonstrate love did not emanate from God. The only "religion" that I have had for many years is stated in the Golden Rule; no finer motto has ever been given: simple, no interpretation needed, and if followed, we would enjoy a better world. Where it is demonstrated, there will be love and peace.
Ervin Taylor 2 weeks ago Reply

Would Elaine consider sending that essay to Adventist Today so the editor could consider it for publication? You can use my email address to do that if you wish.

Menachem 2 weeks ago Reply

I suspect Karen Armstrong would love to review and comment!

David 2 weeks ago Reply

Joe you maybe right probably this is boring for the majority. 
Today I talk to the Chief of genetics and molecular lab in my institution. She (evolutionist) concur that all mutation that we now in humans are deleterious and lethal, when we talk about SNPs she also agree up to day we don't have the evidence of certain SNPs makes more intelligent, healthy or live longer. Maybe some of them are related to better response to medications, but the disease was present.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago Reply

Erv,

Thanks for the very nice compliment. Through the years I have been asked a few times for that paper and it seems to have been lost in the house's archives! I will do a better search but it is difficult to re-construct my thoughts as they were so long ago. Time has likely changed them, as one's perspective usually does.

A surprise! I did not expect to discover this paper so soon, but I have it in hand. Shall I send it to the AToday address? I will send in the original, but lengthy version and it will require editing for length and more. As editor, you know the limitations and can suggest eliminations. It is just as written 26 years ago, but nothing has changed in the original ideas presented.

Ervin Taylor 2 weeks ago Reply

Elaine. Please email me at retaylor.ca@att.net your email address and I will give you the address to send it to. I'm glad you found it.

Anonymous 2 weeks ago Reply

David Newman,

mmm re My world view. I considered doing so the other day, but thought better of it. I did not
because it would have been very brief, and also philosophically there are still assumptions and loose ends within it. Now it will also look like I have copied Elaine:) 

Here's what I was going to put:

"God IS. Love God, Love your neighbor."

In light of my previous point or so, you will understand if I suggest our neighbor is not limited to the human form, but don't push that too far!

---

Elaine Nelson  
2 weeks ago  Reply

cb25, Those are my exact sentiments: most simple, yet who can disagree? The more additions, restrictions, dogma that is added are all superfluous. Humans must have a constant desire to add to the perfect!

---

J. David Newman  
2 weeks ago  Reply

cb25.

Thank you for your brief world view. It is excellent. It also means that you could very well agree with my views on science and evolution since there is nothing in your world view that would exclude my beliefs.

As I understand a world view it is designed to help me decide what I will accept and what I will reject. No one accepts everything in the world. So maybe your world view needs to be just a little tighter. But at the moment it well encompasses my philosophy. Thank you.

---

David  
2 weeks ago  Reply

Sound like couple of song of the Beatles “All You Need Is Love” and “Imagine”

---

David  
2 weeks ago  Reply

Or better “Imagine” “All You Need Is Love”

---

Anonymous  
2 weeks ago  Reply

David Newman, 

I appreciate the warm fuzzy, and don't want to put a prickly among it, but I think I need to just tweak the understanding that can come from my "world view" comment.
My world view is actually the *result* of what I have accepted and rejected to this point as a result of this process, not other way around. You may recall the solution I suggested earlier:

"...a basic a priori assumption...: Nature. Forget the assumptions before that, and after that eg Bible in or out etc. Let's begin there on common ground (pardon pun).

*What does the world I see, live in, study, and reason about say about how it and I got here?*

Because I have started from this "end" I accept science as a very valid process to help understand what I see and experience. I am totally convinced that an evolutionary process is the prime reason and process life is as it is today. Because I have begun at that end, I find no validation that the Bible can be considered an authoritative source of information in the final shaping of my world view.

Yes, it contains much light, but to a perhaps lesser degree, so do other "sacred" writings.

I think your world view can include my philosophy, but I was not so sure about the other way around to be honest:)

I do agree with most here...there comes a point in my search that science cannot reach into the fringes of the reality we see, but imo there remain pointers to God nonetheless.

Please don't take this as a criticism, but I don't want to give the wrong impression about world views either..

Cheers.

J. David Newman

cb25

May I respectfully suggest that your definition of a world view is very inadequate. Now you are adding other elements which are your a priori. Those are part of your world view.

You write, "My world view is actually the *result* of what I have accepted and rejected to this point as a result of this process," A world view is the cause of what you accept not the other way around. It seems that we do not agree on our definition of a world view. So I will quote from World View on Wikipedia.

"The Christian thinker James W. Sire defines a worldview as "a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic construction of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being." He suggests that "we should all think in terms of worldviews, that is, with a consciousness not only of our own way of thought but also
that of other people, so that we can first understand and then genuinely communicate with others in our pluralistic society."[12]

The philosophical importance of worldviews became increasingly clear during the 20th Century for a number of reasons, such as increasing contact between cultures, and the failure of some aspects of the Enlightenment project, such as the rationalist project of attaining all truth by reason alone. Mathematical logic showed that fundamental choices of axioms were essential in deductive reasoning[13] and that, even having chosen axioms not everything that was true in a given logical system could be proven.[14] Some philosophers believe the problems extend to "the inconsistencies and failures which plagued the Enlightenment attempt to identify universal moral and rational principles";[15] although Enlightenment principles such as universal suffrage and the universal declaration of human rights are accepted, if not taken for granted, by many.[16]

A worldview can be considered as comprising a number of basic beliefs which are philosophically equivalent to the axioms of the worldview considered as a logical theory. These basic beliefs cannot, by definition, be proven (in the logical sense) within the worldview precisely because they are axioms, and are typically argued from rather than argued for.[17] However their coherence can be explored philosophically and logically, and if two different worldviews have sufficient common beliefs it may be possible to have a constructive dialogue between them.[18] On the other hand, if different worldviews are held to be basically incommensurate and irreconcilable, then the situation is one of cultural relativism and would therefore incur the standard criticisms from philosophical realists.[19][20][21] Additionally, religious believers might not wish to see their beliefs relativized into something that is only "true for them".[22][23] Subjective logic is a belief reasoning formalism where beliefs explicitly are subjectively held by individuals but where a consensus between different worldviews can be achieved.[24]

A true world view is much more sophisticated than what you stated. So maybe we need to start again.

Anonymous

2 weeks ago

David Newman,

:) Maybe I have inadvertently given you the answer to the problem or how we and others on this thread can dialogue better.

"a world view is the cause of what you accept, not the other way around.."

So it may be, but philosophical definitions aside:

My world view today is the result of consciously and consistently testing my presuppositions from an a posteriori approach. (We can never be free of bias I know)

If we took the definitions you have listed, everyone's world view is locked in concrete. We know that is not the case, so as much as we like the definition, world views are rubbery.

I think you asked the question earlier about how people can change their world views? I (and no doubt many others) am your answer:
Recognize our world view, or presuppositions and assumptions require testing, and allow them to be open to a posteriori scrutiny.

The inability to do this, and yes, treating our world views as "fixed", and always arguing from them rather than to them highlights the problem.

Anonymous

David Newman,

Just reflecting you your point "maybe we should start again"

A few things are coming clear to me:

1. You are arguing from a world view
2. You seem sure a priori that your world view is correct.

On that basis we will never get on the same page because we are in different books.

3. I argue that all assumptions, presuppositions, and world views be up for a posteriori validation
4. I have reached my world view through this process and therefore think it can be done and is fair

On that basis we can hope to reach the same page. That page may look more like yours than mine,
   or more like mine than yours, at the end of the day. (or others who dialogue here for that matter)

But: Until you put your world view in "limbo", as with and for me, there will be no genuine dialogue.

Are you up for it?

Anonymous

David Newman,

I'm not sure if the last post from you was in answer to my question "r u up 4 it?" or not.

If it was here is my final comment on this thread:

1. We don't need to agree on a definition, but a starting point.
2. Evolution is not a "fixity".
3. I will consider the supernatural, but not as a beginning point.

(I once used to consider EVERYTHING through the supernatural, and the Bible and EGW as the authority in that.)

Why not now? Because everywhere I looked what I observed created cognitive dissonance with what I believed about a YEC/YLC view. It became a question of integrity and honesty.

Now: Nature IS. It is what I see, what I can observe, what I can study. I am, you are, we can reason.

Bible came much later. It provides no eyewitnesses of Creation, it is open to vastly different interpretations etc etc.

The onus (imho) is on you to demonstrate a posteriori why such a document should take any part in a beginning assumption of what is to begin our dialogue.

If we begin with Nature - and there is truly a Creation and God along the lines suggested by fundamentalists - Nature should confirm it. Both nature and the Bible are, in such a scenario, from the same author and should corroborate perfectly? mmm!

So...for me: Nature is the a priori beginning point.

To allow the Bible any equall footing begs the question why I have a priori allowed "that" book and not some other "book" eg koran etc. Choosing the Bible would clearly be the result of a Christian world view. Again, it may be where I come back to, but it must not be where I start.

Where from here? Herb highlighted the problem of assumptions and presuppositions. This thread demonstrates the problem exists!

Put up a blog demonstrating a posteriori why we should begin with the Bible, and not Nature, as the authoritative source in determining how life came to be. I'm sure such a blog would be a good place to continue this dialogue.

Cheers.

---

**Anonymous**

2 weeks ago

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Cheers.

---

**Anonymous** 2 weeks ago  

Hi Ed, that last post I put was entered under David N's last post and also Elaine's, but somehow ended up double and above it....I used the comment box at the bottom too? Perhaps if you could be kind enough to send it down a few so it fits? tks
But your world view is not rubbery but set in concrete. This is how world views operate and why they are so difficult to change. How do I know that your world view is in concrete? Because you will not consider the supernatural. The fixity of evolution comes first and God has to fit into that somehow. Nature comes first as you said. That is your fundamental world view and it does not allow for the working of the supernatural within that world view. That is why you cannot accept the miraculous because nature does not allow for that to happen. I wish you could talk in person. It is so laborious to do this through writing. Words can be so slippery at times. However, it is 11:34 Friday night here and I do need to go to bed. It is good that I am not preaching tomorrow. Again, one last thought. If we cannot agree on a definition of a world view then further discussion will not be fruitful.

Elaine, you ask "what part of science do you not accept?" I do not accept the faith statement of science. For example it is a faith statement that says the key to the past is the present, that the laws of nature have never changed. That cannot be proved. It is a faith statement that says that inorganic materials produced organic materials. It is a faith statement that says non-intelligence produces intelligence.

I prefer to believe that intelligence, God, was intimate involved in the creation and ongoing creating of this universe. Those who make nature supreme have no place for God in the scheme but that is by faith also. That is why we are at an impasse. We have two very different world views. Just as you do not have answers to the points I have made so I do not have all the answers to your questions about the Bible. That is why we both live by faith. In the end we have to decide which is the more reasonable way to believe. I believe it is in God leading the way rather than chance leading the way.
Excuse my lack of good grammar in the previous quote I hit the submit button rather than the edit button by mistake. One more point. Not to belabor the point. Our world view is made up of the presuppositions with which we come to view life as explained in the Wikipedia article I listed. Since your presuppositions are different than mine we are really two trains travelling together on parallel tracks, seeing each other but never communicating with each other in any meaningful way. And that is what frustrates us both.

Joe Erwin

Dear Friends,

The conversation about the relative rigidity of "world views" made a little uncomfortable. I feel that my personal process of moving from a very rigid "set-in-concrete" perspective on the world began from talking with people from different traditions and cultures. My current personal perspective is much more flexible and accommodates, even celebrates, the incorporation of perspectives from other traditions and languages, although I am not a particularly cunning linguist, and even information from nonhuman societies.

So, please, let's not throw away the potential for dialog on the basis of a rigid concept. "Weltanscauung" is a philosophical term that came from German philosophers, and is, of course, translated as "world view." We have some tendency to just apply that term to our "personal perspective on the world," but in some ways that misses the point. The term originated, I think, as a postulation that social mores, history, traditions, and especially, language creates a kind of lens through which the world tends to be seen by people with that cultural background. The originators of the concept were stressing how rigid the world view of various societies may be, and how pervasively they can influence cognition and discourse among members of those societies. So, maybe we are talking here about a traditional SDA weltanschauung and people whose personal perspectives on the world conform with it, versus the personal perspectives of people who have rejected some or all of that model.

It is worth noting that there are efforts to attempt to overcome the problems of differing rigid world views, and even differing world views that are more flexible, (along with personal perspectives) by fostering international and interdisciplinary integration and communication (e.g., the Center Leo Apostel for Interdisciplinary Studies in Belgium).

Joe Erwin

Sorry for the deleted words and misspellings above. Insert "me" between "made" and "a" in sentence one.

And, of course, I misspelled the central term, which is "weltanschauung."
As most of you know, this term is widely used in sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and cognitive sciences, and the suggestion is often made that concepts for which there is a word in one language do not translate perfectly into other languages. The problem goes further when the same word in the same language means something different to people from one subculture than to people from another subculture. I think we have some of that here.

"Mutation," for example, is now almost an archaic term, with all the baggage and misconceptions regarding it that have persisted from when it was kind of a theoretical construct, to the present, in which we know of so many kinds of replication errors, many of which do not conform with what we might have been taught about the old construct in terms of magnitude or consequence.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago  Reply

Joe, we each have our own weltanschaung and it certainly aids in conversation to admit that we do rather than assuming that we all have similar world views. There is often the assumption that this is an Adventist blog so naturally, we all have "group think" and all have the same beliefs and views. And there is surprise to find that assumption was terribly wrong. How could it be otherwise? As past events demonstrate, one's family and ethnic roots often trump their allegiance to a particular religious view. I freely admit that those have been the most powerful in my life and family still trumps all else. As Steve Jobs has written: of all the innovative and creative events in my life, it all pales in comparison to my being a father.

One's world view must encompass much more than religion. There is national pride, family and friends, vocation, and there are times when one may take priority but if not kept in balance, life can become seriously distorted. I have no religious affiliation or need to have doctrine or dogma but a very simple belief that love is the only thing that matters. If anything in life inhibits that, such a world view is terribly out of kilter.

Joe Erwin 2 weeks ago  Reply

Elaine, I agree that we each have our own personal world view, that is based in our individual experience, as well as our culture. And, of course, this is formed by our participation in varied roles in many spheres of influence. There is no doubt that my personal perspective was influenced by my SDA background, but I was also sort of a rancher and frontiersman, as a child. I grew up working with and caring about animals. I was much less influenced, I think, by urban adventist culture, than by the values (and dogma) learned out on the remote homestead. My perspective was also influenced by growing up on the west coast, by living in Germany during my Army years, and by later social, cultural, and academic involvement. What seems to me to have changed most has been movement toward flexibility of perspective, always finding out about things I did not previously know. That continues and is thrilling. And I have been fortunate to have experienced far more love than hatefulness in my life. Warm wishes to all....
Elaine Nelson  
2 weeks ago  
Reply

I believe in the essential goodness of all humans. The exceptions are those who have never experienced love and goodness.

J. David Newman  
2 weeks ago  
Reply

I seldom comment on blogs. This is the first one that I have been involved in an extended discussion. Ultimately is there any value in these discussions? Has anyone changed their mind as a result of what they have read? If one does not learn anything helpful is this discussion really a waste of time?

My views are only accepted by those who already believe that way and those who believe the opposite are supported by those who already agree with them. So is there really any point? I would be interested in your views.

Anonymous  
2 weeks ago  
Reply

Hi David Newman,

I've just checked back in...my personal view is that it has not been a waste of time, at least to this point.

Those comments above which are currently titled Anonymous are from me. (Asked Ed to check out what I did wrong hopefully)

I do think we are getting off the real point and becoming hung up on definitions etc, so if this continues to be the case I will prefer to bow out of the discussion.

I do seriously think someone needs to set out from an a posteriori approach a compelling reason why the Bible should be considered as equal authority the early parts in discussion of beginnings.

Hope you did get some sleep last night!

Cheers

Gailon Arthur Joy  
2 weeks ago  
Reply

“Mr. Butler continues to insist that "I still haven't seen any real evidence for evolution." May I offer the suggestion that Mr. Butler can never and will never "see" any "real evidence for evolution" because he sees evolution as running directly counter to his theology. If he wishes to say that "my theology prevents me from seeing any real evidence for evolution", I, for one, would say that such a statement has the virtue of being intellectually honest. But when Mr. Butler and others suggests that evolution is not supported by weight of scientific evidence, then I think the
best way to deal with that obviously misinformed statement is to ignore it and move on.”

This comment cannot be ignored but rather requires a clear response that being “Blind in the Faith” of the biblical record with the hope of eternal life is a far better position than intellectually self reliant and “blindly evolutionary” with a hopeless adherence to apostacy.

Horace Butler

I see that we have reached a stalemate. You say that evolution is supported by the weight of scientific evidence; I say that the observable evidence does not support evolution. It is clear that we will never reach an agreement on this issue. Time will tell which of us is correct. I have to wonder, though, which of us has the more closed mind. Accusing me of intellectual dishonesty and ignoring my statements because they are "misinformed," goes beyond what you can know about me. I've been informing myself about this issue for many decades. I find it fascinating. But the distortion and manipulation of data to "prove" the theory will always cause me to be suspicious of the real motives of some of these "scientists." Scientists come to the table with preconceived ideas and opinions, just like any other person; and they are just as reluctant to abandon them when the evidence proves contrary to their cherished beliefs.

A friend of mine (yes, in spite of my "intellectual dishonesty" I still have a few) sent me a book that he hoped would convince me of the validity of the evolutionary theory. It was the same old drivel, full of suppositions, "may have's," and "could have's," sprinkled with a lot of imagination. The book was Science on Trial, by Douglas J. Futuyma. I did read it, cover to cover. He tries hard, but it falls flat, just like all other attempts to bolster the theory.

Trevor Hammond

RE: Mrs. Nelson's comment: "There is often the assumption that this is an Adventist blog so naturally, we all have "group think" and all have the same beliefs and views. And there is surprise to find that assumption was terribly wrong."

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It would be far more appropriate to make the assumption that most Tradventists would be appalled by a public forum posing to glorify Badventism than by asserting that they make the assumption that 'group thinking' should be the norm: even when such do not even remotely rightfully represent the core essentials of what constitutes Adventism. I would also point out that the 'valid' assumption that certain blogs may misrepresent Adventism can be avoided if a website, for example, would perhaps call itself - hmm...NON-adventists today. That would be more forthright in reflecting a cosmopolitan secular 'worldview' (in my humble opinion of course): but what say ye? So... would this comment of mine be regarded as group thinking? I do believe though, that one is entitled to their own opinion AND worldview, even if it may rub detractors up the wrong way. It would, however, be grossly inappropriate for a secular society's culturally biased worldview, to be imposed on Adventism, by partisan factions from within and without whose views may be respected, but not necessarily accepted.

♥T
Brother Trevor I also wonder the title of this web page. I never saw such a systematic repetitive attack to the SDA church or their representatives. Look like it is an agenda behind all of this. Is sadly but is it the reality. I guess the majority of frequent participants have plenty of free time, are they retired? But looks to me they are leftovers of the “DES MESS”

The comment "Des Mess" is another indication that David and Trevor had belonged to what was called the "CBs" in Australia? Or perhaps they were supporters of the CB agenda?. (The agenda of the CBs and the ATS were and are very similar)

Took a little time to find out what is ATS.
The only ATS I knew was the American Thoracic Society, then I found out that also could be Association of Theological Schools, but I thought Erv must be referring something to Adventism so I found out Adventist Theological Society. I looked into their web I found out they have articles written by scholars, well thanks Erv, I will start reading “The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic--Part Two”, by Jon Paulien.

Ah, Dr David my brother, the legendary DESS MESS sums-it-up quite well. One can clearly see the ramification and disastrous effects of what happens when one decides to be bigger than the church. Sadly though, this went on unchecked for decades right under our noses. I think Robert H. Pierson handled this matter par excellence followed on by others including Neal C Wilson and today we see our GC Pres Ted Wilson's effort to reclaim that which was lost. Unfortunately we can see here 'even today' the many casualties as a result of this mess. Yeah ATS does have some excellent scholarly articles. The Thoracic Society may not be my cup of tea though, at least for now 😊.
♥T

Comments posted above, now showing as 'Anonymous' are in reality postings by 'cb25.' Apologies for this operator error, which will be corrected as soon as possible. CH
You begin with nature, examine all the evidence, and see what might conflict with the Bible. So let's begin with nature.

1. We have nature before us.
2. There are laws that we can observe and define
3. Nature has existed for a long time whether we count it in thousands or millions of years
4. There is death, violence, destruction, growth in nature
5. We see changes and adaptations in nature such as micro evolution.
6. Using current scientific understanding many have constructed a history of nature going back millions and billions of years.

I believe that you would agree on the six points that I have listed which I also agree with. Given that scenario there is no difference between what the Atheist or the Theist believes about how the universe developed. The one difference being the atheist takes by faith that something came out of nothing or that something has always existed where the theist believes that God was the first cause and accepts by faith that God has always existed. So both have to begin with faith. Are we still together?

Now as to what nature does not tell me.

1. It does not tell me there is a God. Some may see evidence for a God (see all the usual arguments such as the teleological one) but one cannot prove in a scientific way from nature that there is a God.
2. Since it does not tell me about God it does not tell me that there could be another life after death. And if there is another life it does not tell me how I might exist in that other life.
3. Nature portrays death, etc., as the normal process of life coming into being. Are we still together here?

Now we are introduced to the Bible. The Bibles makes some extraordinay claims such as being totally inspired by God and that there is only One God despite what others might think. How do we know whether the claims of the Bible are correct? During the time of the enlightenment the Bible came under great attack for its historical veracity. For example the Hittites feature fairly prominently in the Bible but there was no record of them outside of the Bible. Herodotus and other ancient historians never mentioned them. Then came the archaeological discoveries of the 19th and 29th centuries and libraries were found documenting that these were once a powerful people. More and more discoveries proved the accuracy of history in the Bible. Prophecies regarding the coming of the messiah have proved to be highly accurate. And I could go on but I have come to the conclusion that the Bible is different from any other ancient book especially when it comes to describing that there is another life after death and tells us how to be in that new life.

But perhaps the most important distinction between the Bible and every other ancient religious book is that the Bible tells us that we can never be good enough for heaven. That good works do not merit the next life. That we enter into that life because of what someone else has done for us.
"For it is by grace you are saved through faith and not of works" (Eph 2:8). No other religion teaches that. So at its core Christianity is unique. Since we are not to make our entries too long I will move to my next point.

The Bible now explains that death is an enemy, that death will not exist in the next life, that there was a time when sin did not exist in this world, that we are all under sin, that we need someone to save us from that sin. None of which I can learn from nature.

Now comes my challenge. How do I explain what the Bible says about the origin of death, the introduction of evil through the rebellion of Lucifer, and the future cleansing of the universe from all trace of sin and evil?

Who interprets who? If Nature is the final interpreter then all that the Bible says in this area is untrue because it touches on a lot of what science tells us about existence. If the Bible is the final interpreter then I must find ways to explain why some of our interpretations of nature are incorrect.

I hope you can understand my dilemma just a little. I am not wanting to be rigid. But our world view does determine what we accept and what we screen out. How do you understand what the Bible says in the areas I have expressed given some of these challenges? Why should I believe anything that is in the Bible?

---

**J. David Newman**

Even though I preview I somehow missed that we are in the 21st century not the 29th. We are really trying to decide what is the ultimate authority when it comes to matters of faith and science. Some would like to see the ultimate authority in science be nature and others the ultimate authority for purpose of life the Bible. So two separate authorities. The problem is when the Bible touches on matters that affect science as well such as death and sin. Then which one becomes the authority?

---

**Elaine Nelson**

"Prophecies regarding the coming of the messiah have proved to be highly accurate."

Only with very free re-interpretation of older prophecies which were not directed to Jesus. It is easy to take an old prophetic utterance and change a few important points and voila! it has become fulfilled prophecy today!

That Herodotus never mentioned the Hittites proves what? Has anyone proved by archaeological or other evidence outside the Bible that there were millions of former slaves living in the desolate Sinai for 40 years without leaving a single shard or bones or evidence that such a large group ever camped there? Nor is there any evidence of their having crossed the Red sea. "The saga of Israel's Exodus from Egypt is neither historical truth nor literary fiction. It is a powerful expression of memory and hope born in a world in the midst of change" (Finklestein *The Bible Unearthed*).
All cultures have myths that evoke national pride. Homer's were written for that purpose and the only way in which all of those stories were captured was the custom of the story tellers singing the poems, a unique device used to enhance memory to retell these stories for days.

Elaine: In your opinion is the Bible just the same as any other so-called holy book such as the Koran? Is the Bible just a collection of stories from long ago? Does the Bible have any real purpose for us today? It cannot be just for encouragement because there is much to discourage in the Bible. So, do we study it just like any other historical document and evaluate it through the methods of historians? If we do then we rule out any information on the supernatural. It seems from reading your writings on the web that you give little if any authority to the Bible. If I am understanding you correctly there is nothing that I can show from the Bible that will be of any help to you. I know there is a tension between what can be proved and what has to be taken by faith but it seems that you want 99% to be proved and 1% to be by faith. Am I reading you correctly?

Have you ever-wonder maybe they were looking in the wrong place? To start the “Mont Sinai” in the Sinai Peninsula, does not match with the few descriptions of the month Sinai or month “Horeb” describe in the Bible.

1. The month Horeb was in **Midian** Exodus 3:1 (Midian is in Arabia)

2. Close to the month was a rock (**Rock of Horeb**) that split by Moses. Water came for the Israelites.

3. Also is described a **cave** where the prophet Elijah hid.

4. Paul went to Arabia and he mention Sinai in Arabia.

This is one among a growing number of reasons that I am not prepared to equate our understanding of the Bible with God inspired words. In between is our process of interpretation, and whether or not the Scriptures are infallible, our understanding thereof is not.
I also once thought it was wonderful that the Bible had been vindicated by the discovery of the Hittites. Until I noticed that the Bible defines them as the children of Heth, who was a descendant of Canaan. Rather than being a mighty Indo-European empire, the Biblical Hittites are simply one of the multitude of Canaanite people, most of whom have left no trace beyond their names. Or, more correctly, we cannot distinguish between what traces there are of them and of their neighbours.

---

Joe Erwin

Greg, old friend, thanks for your note. I'm glad we can be in touch. For those who do not know, Greg is a military and VA chaplain. He was my room mate at PUC and my academy classmate. He was the first student who spoke kindly to me when I entered academy as a stranger. Keeping in touch with former classmates is a wonderful thing that one may miss out on if one severs all ties with the church and its sub-culture. I'm so happy to be in touch with many of my old friends.

David N., I mostly agree with your six plus three statements. With a few quibbles, of course. Under four, I don't see quite so much bad stuff (there is beauty as well as ugliness, and I think a lot more of it; there is peace as well as violence, and hopefully, more of it; etc.). Under number two, I think we sometimes overstate the use of "laws" in nature (occasional exceptions occur to most general principles--because the principles are authored by falible humans, and may not accurately represent ultimate truth, which is pretty hard to come by). We see evidence of change and adaptation. Period. We do not need to break that down into "micro" or "macro" evolution.

So, I agree that nature does not tell you that there is a God, OR that there is not. Nature does not indicate that there is life after death (except that we and other animals have offspring, and our essence/genetic legacy persists through our children). Nature does not tell us that we are lost and require salvation.

So, where do we get that stuff, and why is it so important to us? I'm fine with not believing that I am going to live again after I die. I'm glad to have lived, but dying is no problem for me. I don't see a need to make it into a problem. Why do we need to be lost or saved? Fine and dandy to be appropriately humble, but I do not see why we need to agonize over what everything means in terms of an ultimate purpose. There does not need to be a purpose beyond our lives for our lives to be worth living.

Why is there such a need for some authority as an anchor? Can't we just accept that the world is complicated and to some extent is beyond our understanding? That need not keep us from learning about the world, to the extent that we can and for the benefit of ourselves and others. But to spend so much time and effort agonizing over intangible, unknowable, imaginary, unreliable, magical, superstitious issues just seems like a terrible waste of time and talent.

---

Joe Erwin

Sorry about the typo. "salavation" should be "salvation." Of course, "salivation" is also a good thing....
Hi David Newman,

Lots of ? In there:) Just because I respond should not be taken to mean others better qualified should not!

Pretty much same page, but I will take liberty to add a few points and change the sequence (point 3): (added points in bold)

1. We have nature before us.
2. There are laws that we can observe and define
3. There is death, violence, destruction, growth in nature
4. We see changes and adaptations in nature such as micro and macro evolution. As Joe says Change.

5b. Using observable geological data we can construct a history going back extreme lengths of time
3. Nature has existed for a long time whether we count it in thousands or millions of years
6. Using current scientific understanding many have constructed a history of nature going back millions and billions of years.

Atheism and Theism. Yes – ultimately both statements of faith – thus both are conclusions NOT starting points. In other words either person has, for any of a vast range of possible reasons, come to the faith statement that there is or is not a God.

As I see it: This means that in a true a posteriori analysis of data, theism should be a conclusion, not a starting point, for us too.

SO...is the Bible a valid source of authoritative data? Am I going to use it to confirm, correct, or even deny what I see in nature as I try to reach my faith position?

As you say the Bible tells a different story:
In particular it points to a young life, possibly a young planet, and to some even a young universe. (depending on interpretations) It also outlines a global flood etc.

The key question which you and I (and others) are hung up on is this:
Should the Bible be allowed as an a priori authoritative document in the data about our 7 points above?
If I read right, you are using three things to prove the Bible is right, (and therefore should be used to confirm, correct or deny - interpretations aside?):

1. Historical accuracy. What does this prove? It is a document written within a historical context. There will be historical correlations. How does this prove authority in for example Creation? No one was there, so we move from history to a subjective trust in another's "inspiration". A big, a priori jump in logic. Nature in fact came first and the Bible is a humanly written commentary of much later input. (We could enter debate about inspiration, but suffice to say valid inspiration should not contradict observable data should it? I'm not talking about miracles).

2. Prophetic accuracy. Elaine has covered this with cogent points. The vast array of interpretations, applications, and arguments over what most prophecies did or did not, or do or do not, mean makes this a tenuous argument does it not?
3. Uniqueness. Appealing, but how does that prove it is correct or incorrect? To say so is a judgment call? It is similar to the next point about good works.

You note the important (to you) distinction of “good works”:) I suspect even the author of the blog above would argue with you over the fine points of that one. Seriously, does this distinction actually demonstrate either way? This is perhaps a great example of a world view getting in the way: You accept this as true, you believe it is good, you believe the Bible says it, so the Bible is true? Fact is you probably believe it is true because that's an interpretation of the Bible you have come to believe. Circular reasoning?

**How have these three points demonstrated valid reason to take the Bible as an authority to confirm, correct or deny interpretations of nature?**

Finally: You are correct:

“If Nature is the final interpreter then all that the Bible says in this area is untrue because it touches on a lot of what science {**Nature, geology etc too**} tells us about existence. ...

If the Bible is the final interpreter then I must find ways to explain why some {**I would say for YEC etc “most” not “some”**} of our interpretations of nature are incorrect.” May I suggest that cannot be done without denial of data, dishonesty, or failure to think?

I have just read what Joe Erwin wrote as I was putting this together...valid points...

Cheers

---

**Elaine Nelson**

2 weeks ago **Reply**

Not giving "authority" to a book does not imply that it is essentially of no value. It is a wonderful view of the world of ancient peoples. Their worldview helps us to understand why they wrote what they did, and will always have a special place in the world's great literature, but to put implicit faith in its every word was never intended. It was simply their history--and only their history; and as such, it does not convey anything about the history of surrounding cultures other than how the Israelites viewed them: idolaters (yet the Israelites worshiped those same gods!). No book is worthy of such unadulterated praise.

There are many encouraging words found in the Bible; but there are also many accounts of horrible acts, said to have originated by God. This, again, reflects the writers' understanding just as their contemporaries: their god is in charge of everything that occurs, and they are merely pawns of his.

That a God one is expected to love was also the same god who killed millions of innocent people in a world-wide flood originated in Sumeria some 1,000 years before the Hebrews recorded it; the story of baby Moses is almost identical to a much earlier infant king Sargon. There are so many duplicates of earlier stories, plus contradictions and errors, that it can only be read for historical interest and not as the absolute Word of God, which it is not. It is a product of humans just as Homer's Epics; the Babylonian Genesis (which has many similar features to the Bible story of Creation--also told much later).
The Muslims hold their Koran at even a more revered position: their book can only be read in the original language: to translate is to make it no longer sacred.

Christians should revere God, but there is no book, no special insight that begins to reveal God as He is. Otherwise, why do Christians today almost totally reject the God of the OT, all the while claiming that God's son is an entirely different individual--never destructive, always loving?

J. David Newman

One assumption you have not discussed: the assumption of no change in the laws that govern our universe. Is there anyway to prove that the laws have never changed? If there is not then you are making a faith statement. Then it is possible that the Bible is right because if laws have changed then that brings a whole new picture into view. You do not give the Bible authority because it cannot correlate with what we see in nature. But that is because of how you interpret nature through the lens of present law being the key to the past.

J. David Newman

Elaine, I appreciate your answer. It seems then that we have no common ground to discuss God since the only book that tries to explain him has no authority for us. God is then whatever we want to make him out to be. Thank you for the clarification.

cb25

David Newman,

It is perhaps at this point in a discussion, having noted your point to Elaine as well, that we could remind ourselves of something:

Christians are desperately in need of a compelling apologetic which can account for and encourage faith outside of a "The Bible says it" mentality.

Such an apologetic will present plausible reasons why there can be a God, it will pull together vastly more than the narrow perspective some interpret from Bible. It will take account of and fit into the "fact" this world and life on it are incredibly old...

It will draw on what is in and about nature and human nature and provide reason for faith....

We would do better from this point forward to combine efforts to this end than debating over things which to many are long since proven. eg old earth, Bible not authoritative in such debates etc.
David Newman,

It is perhaps at this point in a discussion, having noted your point to Elaine as well, that we could remind ourselves of something:

Christains are desperately in need of a compelling apologetic which can account for and encourage faith outside of a "The Bible says it" mentality.

Such an apologetic will present plausible reasons why there can be a God, it will pull together vastly more than the narrow perspective some interpret from Bible. It will take account of and fit into the "fact" this world and life on it are incredibly old...

It will draw on what is in and about nature and human nature and provide reason for faith....

We would do better from this point forward to combine efforts to this end than debating over things which to many are long since proven. eg old earth, Bible not authoritative in such debates etc.

davidnewman

David Newman,

mmm lots in those posts:) I'll attempt to pick up your points.

1. I do believe in God.

2. My view that natural laws are uniform, is not the same as "immutability" of the law. It IS, ultimtely a faith statement, but one backed up best by observation.

3. If I read right, the evidence you say you have is from the Bible. Is that not circular reasoning. We are trying to find evidence why we should take the bible as authoritative to confirm, correct or deny what nature "says".

4. Nature "red in tooth and claw" and a God of love. Well, first, I would not want to go to OT to demonstrate a God of love...I would not find one. Secondly, I tend to agree with Joe, and I think Elaine, we are too quick to judge much of nature and these kind of things as "Evil", much of it just IS. Why did God use this process if he did? (if he did not why make things so they look like he did?) That is part of the apologetic we need, though I have ideas I will blog about one day. Suffice to say, we should not make inability to answer that question "proof" that an alternative view is correct. Particularly when the alternative YEC/YLC, is even more
out of sync with how things appear to be.

5. You say "if we cannot rely on the Bible then we are no different than the atheist who tries to be consistent without any reference to God."

I fear that is "baby and bathwater" thinking.

Across thousands of generations, across diverse cultures and among different people groups there has been belief in "being consistent", "worship" "hope", "desire for betterment" etc. True, some contain barely recognizable "light", but, the point is most did not have the Bible, and yet were not devoid of God/god. So how can you say if we can't rely on Bible we are no better than atheists?

Just a little footnote about creation being "very good" when completed. There is a whole area of inconsistency between that "perfect/good" world and what we live in. If nature was NOT red in tooth and claw in Eden: When did it become so? The curse? If so, there were no winters/summers? No migration patterns in animals? No deciduous trees? No perennials? No biennials? No lions? No food chain? No hunting instincts? and on and on. When did these things come to be?.

To say the curse was a "recreation" begs the question how a God of love could impose upon and entire creation 6000 years of "suffering" and red tooth and claw just because Adam didn't have the internal fortitude to say no to his wife!

Nor does any of this address the reality we see evidence for an incredibly old world and life. Did God make it looking old? and on we could go...I think that makes the point.

I'm not attempting to be blunt, but there are massive issues tied up with YEC/YLC, and a literal creation full stop.

---

**Elaine Nelson**

To limit one's knowledge of God to one book only, and that being the absolute authority and nowhere else is to have a god that is much too small and is a god of only Jews and Christians, IMHO.

---

**cb25**

David Newman,

Ok...Lets take the question of whether the laws of nature (universe if you want) have changed or not. Let's test it a posteriori.
1. Let us assume they have not. Now look at the world: For recorded history sunrise and sunset, summer and winter, night and day have not changed. Objects fall, gasses float, wind blows, rain falls. Rivers run, soil erodes etc. You can go on and on looking at our world, from a most basic observation to the most intense scientific analysis. Does any of this very observable data suggest the laws or rules have changed?

Thus: IF I come with no pre judgement: What do I see in nature to suggest they have changed? Nothing.

2. Let us assume the laws of nature have changed. Evidence please? oops....

Which assumption is more demonstrably compelling?

Can I prove it? No. But I can accept that my first assumption was in fact more correct and produces far less cognitive dissonance. It also requires very minimal "explanation" of contrary evidence compared to the second possible assumption.

---

J. David Newman

cb25

Of course your are right if we leave out the issue of why God would use evil in creating the world. I understand that you do believe in God. So since you try very hard to discount what I say about how to explain evil would you be willing to explain how you see the connection between nature with its survival of the fittest, tooth and claw, and a God of love? Or maybe he is not really a God of love and when the Bible says in Genesis that when He created it was good it really wasn't good. Why did God decide to create this way?

And your answer regarding the immutability of natural law is still a faith statement.

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Elaine Nelson

Those who claim that "things are not always as they appear" have the burden of proof to demonstrate that theory. Unless that is given, it is simple avoidance of the facts and contrary to all available evidence: a desperate appeal only to the gullible.

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J. David Newman

cb25

Oh, one other thing regarding you feeling that I have no evidence for laws changing. If you believe in God you would believe in sin. Of course we have to go to the Bible to try and understand this (which Elaine feels has no authority) but hopefully you see the Bible just a little
more positively. According to the Bible there was a time when there was no sin. Then Lucifer sinned and things changed. That is the evidence for laws changing. Now this is a faith statement too but I have a little more evidence than you have supplied.

If sin and evil and not real and have not always existed why should we believe there is a God? Maybe the Bible is just as mistaken about God as it is about sin and evil and origins. If we cannot rely on the Bible then we are no different than the atheist who tries to be consistent without any reference to God.

I guess in all this discussion you view God to be very distant and not involved in his creation. So I wonder how God fits into your view. Sorry I have taken so long to say what I am saying but I still feel we are on parallel tracks close enough to wave to each other but not able to hear each other.

---

cb25  2 weeks ago  Reply

I have made a comment to this, but it entered up further...hoping this one does not, as I used the "reply" button this time instead of the box at the end.

---

cb25  2 weeks ago  Reply

Herb,

You began this blogg...you admit similar problems either side, how do you defend the theologians side of the equation? Where would your starting point be and why? This type of discussion is a long way from some of the fine points of theology you may be used to, but time to get of the benches imho... Unless you are still fighting that Mac? If so, I understand. You are on a good cause,...best computers I've ever had!

Cheers

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J. David Newman  2 weeks ago  Reply

It seems we are almost at the end of this particular blog and are ready for another. I want to thank everyone for the great discussion. I have learned much here that will inform how I answer these issues in the future.

I now realize that it all begins with one's world view whether conscious or subconscious (we all have a world view otherwise we could never make a decision). I will work on sharpening my world view and learning better how to address this issue. A world view is just like a pair of glasses. If I put on blue shades I see the world differently than if I have brown shades on. The world has not changed. What has changed is how I see the world. That is our challenge. How do we get to see through the same lens.

Thanks again for helping me with my thinking and beliefs.
Elaine Nelson

Herb asked:

"How in the world did Peter, Paul and others ever get the young Christian community out of the shadows if they only told them to believe something that they had no evidence for?"

Neither Peter, Paul, nor any of the disciples actually knew of the virgin birth until at least a generation later. Neither they nor any disciples actually SAW the resurrection. They believed what they HEARD, not what they had seen with their own eyes. Is there a difference? Jesus was not recognized and had unusual abilities after his reported resurrection. The courts certainly don't accept hearsay, but in those times, hearsay was readily accepted. Should we be so trusting today we would not be here, as we would fall for anyone who makes claims. Is skepticism never to be used? With the many charlatans who have operated in the guise of religion since its beginning, it would pay to do so. Anytime someone makes supernatural claims, as was recently reported at the Annual Council, should we be ready to believe it? What about the man who was reported as dead and prayed for six hours and was miraculously brought back to life?

Horace Butler

If we used your philosophy to determine the veracity of the gospel story, the New Testament would have never been written and Christanity would not exist. Have you read The Case for Christ, or The Case for Faith, by Lee Strobel? As an investigative reporter, and an agnostic (or maybe an atheist) he submitted the claims of the Bible to the standards of any other investigation that he would make. These books are the result, and he became a Christian because of his investigations.

Your really think the disciples were all duped and the whole thing is a sham? May the Lord do to you what he did to Saul on the way to Damascus. It may be the only way to get through your skepticism.

Elaine Nelson

I believe in the principles Jesus spoke. That is all the case I need. A man is judged by his words and actions and not by the multiplicity of claims. One's life should stand alone as the best evidence. He was not considered divine until many years after he died, but they loved him. Many great men lived, wrote, and died without being called "God" or divine.

If all those who believe and follow his advice to "love everyone" whether divine or not, those were the best way to live. I care not what belief my neighbor has but I respect his life if it is honorable and good.

Horace Butler

Maybe you need to go back and read your New Testament. Jesus claimed to be the God of the OT. "Before Abraham was, I AM." His disciples worshiped Him; they called Him Lord, in its
highest sense. Jesus was either the greatest imposter the world has ever known, or He was God, as He claimed to be. There can't be any middle ground. Based on your above comments you apparently subscribe to the former view, so I'm surprised that you would admire the principles of someone who (in your apparent way of thinking) deliberately and blatantly deceived so many people.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago  

I also amire the principles of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, John Locke and John Mills and a host of others. Divinity has nothing to do with someone's principles; principles should stand alone based on their proven efficacy.

Anonymous 2 weeks ago  

Herb,

Before I accept David Newman's suggestoin that this thread is ending:

I was the first to comment on your blog. (currently titled anonymous).

I asked you two very relevant questions. In fact in light of the outcome of the thread, they were central to the issue.

I am still waiting for your response, so if you have finished getting your head around that Mac, I'm standing by :

I've pasted it below again.

"What would you advise people to do to ensure they are truly evaluating their assumptions \textit{a posteriori}? Is this even possible if we hold to a fundamentalist view of the authority of Scripture, as such a view apparently must begin with an \textit{a priori} assumption?"

J. David Newman 2 weeks ago  

cb25

I am back for a moment regarding your comment "For recorded history sunrise and sunset, summer and winter, night and day have not changed. Objects fall, gasses float, wind blows, rain falls. Rivers run, soil erodes etc. You can go on and on looking at our world, from a most basic observation to the most intense scientific analysis. Does any of this very observable data suggest the laws or rules have changed?"

What you have not factored into your argument is the entrance of sin into the universe. Since you believe in God I assume that you also believe in sin. Did sin exist from the beginning of God's
creation? If it did then what is sin? If it did not the same question applies: What is sin? If sin is an intrusion into the world God made how if any did it make a difference in how the world operates? If we take out the factor of sin then I can see some light in your model. And of course I need the Bible to know about sin but at the same time some on this blog don't believe the Bible can inform us of any ultimate realities. So I don't know how you view the bible in this area.

Elaine Nelson

What were the changes made by sin's entrance into this earth? Where is there evidence that sin is in the universe? How can that be known? Have the astronauts found it in outer space, or on the moon which they've inspected? What can be given as concrete examples of the effects of sin compared with before sin? The Bible account is extremely sparse and lacking in all the many effects that have been assumed. How can we know that prior to sin the carnivores were herbivores? That there were no poisonous reptiles, plants or insects? Were all the plants perennials? Did the leaves always stay green and there were no beautiful fall colors as we enjoy now? Did the human digestive system operate entirely different than we know today? Were there only "good" bacteria? Did humans never risk sunburn? Did the lion and lamb really subsist on grass and there were no predators? Did the fish never eat small fish or even plankton? To suggest that "things have not always been as they seem" is merely a vague hope without any evidence whatsoever.

There are so many suppositions imagined about a "perfect" world existing in Eden, and yet when these questions are asked, few have more than an idealistic view that never existed except in their imagination.

Darrel Lindensmith

Elaine, what helps me to understand the harmony between the science of long ages/death from the beginning and the reality of sins' effects as Pastor Newman is explaining is to give up my "sequential assumptions.

Even if human sin caused nature to be changed, God, knowing these effects, even before creation, could have front-loaded nature at creation that would be pre-adapted for a world of cause and effect were selfishness would rule and lions would need teeth and gazelles would need speed.

God could have pre-programmed a "completely perfect world," but God wished to create beings like himself with free will and moral powers to understand ethics and the gift of reason. God chose to arrive at his goal of perfection and create beings that were free. If God created only robots then "the greatest show on earth," would be just that: a show!

God foreknew sin in this situation of freedom, and those created nature to work under these conditions, even before the creation of mankind. Jesus (God) would take responsibility for choose this effect of freedom by experiencing the punishment for sin on himself on the Cross. "this was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake." 1 Peter 1:20
"The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13:8  As we see from these verses  God from the quantum his eternity, can act or re-act (respond) to 'situations yet to appear' in the stream of earth-based time, even before they "happen."

David Newman,

Hi, I will start with your last puzzle first: You don't know how I view the Bible in this area, re sin.

1. It is indefensible a posteriori to allow the Bible equal standing with Nature in a effort to understand what is.

Just as it would be indefensible to allow the Koran equal standing with nature to understand what is.

I allow what I see, observe, study, experience, to be the prime source of data. So, what about sin?

2. As I've said before, if you allow/require the Bible to decide this for you, on what basis do you take the Bible's version of sin and not some other holy book? Until there is an a posteriori defensible argument for that choice, your position/choice is indefensible.

Sin? Perhaps we overstate the term, and think that just because we "may" not be able to find such clear definitions from nature, that there is no validation for morality, good, bad, right wrong etc. I think this is a mistake.

Whatever we choose to call the way nature is, red in tooth and claw, or sublimely beautiful as we watch the sunset on those autumn leaves Elaine reminded us of, it IS. And it is by every observable method, essentially the way it has been for deep ages. This does not mean the Bible, along with others sources of information cannot shed some light on questions of morality that I may ask.

3. Can you please show me using a posteriori methods how you determine the Bible is the authority to "inform us about ultimate realities"? In doing this, of course, it would be useful using the same aproach to explain why the Koran is not such a source.

(I came across the articles Dr Taylor and yourself did last year on Evolution Yes/No yesterday. Interesting read)

Cheers

Elaine Nelson

Each time the phrase "God could have" implies that it is unknown, but the writer is assuming
whatever follows. Are we unable to live with what is known without making assumptions that align with personal beliefs? That is very simple: simply answer every such question with: "God could have----" and fill in the blanks. Saying that "God could have" front-loaded nature to very suddenly adapt to change their entire digestive tracts to accommodate flesh while first creating them as herbivores. Is this your solution?

If God "could have" foreseen the flood, why did he kill all his creation which he pronounced as "good"?

"Could have, should have, would have" are some of the oldest excuses man has used since the beginning of time. Is that also God's excuse? Does God need man to devise excuses for his acts?

**J. David Newman**

cb25

Wow, I have been going on the assumptionl that you gave some authority to the Bible. No wonder we have been having such a tough time trying to come to some area of agreement. I guess that you don't see much validity to the many many biblical scholars who see the bible as special revelation with its own special authority and nature as general revelation. I have suggested to Herb that he start a thread on apologetics and the bible. The question you are asking me is really another whole subject which I would love to get into. Now I am really intrigued. You said that you believe in God I wonder how you can believe in him when you make nature and science the final determining factor. Since none of them can prove God how do you know there is a God and what evidence do you have for there being a God? By starting there we will find something similar when discussing the authority or lack of for the Bible. I am really curious now as to how you know there is a God.

**Darrel Lindensmith**

Well, Elaine, you are right that my thoughts in my last post somewhat speculative. Thus I remained in the subjunctive mood. However what I do know for sure is that the designs in nature DID NOT (Could Not) have Come about naturally without God. Bible or no bible, I would know this much.

**cb25**

David Newman,

Chuckle...I'm sure I noted before, I give the Bible probably a similar authority as Lewis did.

Herb has failed to answer my questions here, so it will be interesting to see what he comes up with:

I'm not sure my question is a "whole new subject", imho, it is key to the assumptions that are
keeping you, others, and myself on different train tracks. It is the question underlying my very first question to Herb. If he, you or I had answered that question earlier, much effort may have been saved.

You say I "....wonder how you can believe in him (God) when you make nature and science the final determining factor. Since none of them can prove God how do you know there is a God?"

I find this amazing: Does this mean that **First** one has to accept a priori that the Bible is the ultimate authority on these questions. Then, and only **then** can we believe there is a God?

If that be the case, how on earth am I ever going to suggest to an atheist there is a God, if first I must convince him the Bible is the ultimate authority, and no one here can give me any (a posteriori) evidence why that is the case for the Bible.

My apologetic for God's existence will be the theme of a blog from me if I'm still expending time here:)

Re biblical scholars who see it as special revelation... Do they constitute evidence? I guess so too would the millions of Christians who hold the same view if we took that as a proof. But, now we are reading back from world views, preconceived oppinions, and assumptions I guess.

Must run....

---

**Darrel Lindensmith**

2 weeks ago  Reply

Elaine, you do realize the degree to which evolutionary theory on the origins Is filled with 'could haves and would haves?' I think you have closed down any consideration that God has spoken In Scripture. Yes. I know man has spoken in the Bible. I agree. But that fact does not rule out that God also has spoken. Have ruled this out? Or do you believe as Spinoza that God is not Personal at all?
A Life that Matters

Submitted Sep 29, 2011
By Nathan Brown

It’s how all the good stories end and, at least in a general sense, it’s how the big story of our world ends. The good guys are victorious; the bad guys defeated; the wrongs are made right; the world is renewed and restored; “…and they all lived happily ever after.”

But the closing lines of The Great Controversy don’t use this classic formulation. Instead, it goes like this: “From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”

There is obviously something bigger going on here than just the characters in the story having all their adventures completed, trials overcome and problems solved. We are reminded that the real Hero of the story is a God who loves.

And it also wakes echoes of where the story began. The Great Controversy is the fifth and last in the “Conflict of the Ages” series that began millennia and 3500 pages earlier with the opening lines of Patriarchs and Prophets: “‘God is love.’ His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be.”

The big story of the “Conflict of the Ages” and the great controversy is the love of God. Ellen White gave away the ending in the first page of the first book of the series. And the epic story in between — particularly focused on Jesus, the Desire of Ages — is the story of that love being worked out amid the history, tragedy and brokenness of our world.

We might be tempted to assume this is more a story of a higher plane and another place. The workings of God’s love and its final victory can sometimes feel like the business of a distant heaven that we might get to experience for ourselves at some time in the future, if we can sustain that much hope. But in Ellen White’s progressing understanding and urging, this love is as much about transforming the present as it is about final re-creation.

For a variety of reasons, I have been reading quite a lot of Ellen White’s writings this year and I have been struck repeatedly by the significance she recognised in life here and now. One of her major themes is this life matters. The choices, priorities, attitudes, actions and lifestyle we adopt make a difference for today and forever, for us and for others — and this emphasis continues to be seen particularly in the Adventist church’s expansive health, education and welfare work around the world.

A few years ago, I was fascinated to discover the record of Ellen White’s funeral held on Sabbath, July 24, 1915, at Battle Creek (Life Sketches of Ellen G White, pages 462–480), particularly the address by then-General Conference president A G Daniells. Daniells had worked with her for most of the last 25 years of her life, first in Australia in the 1890s and on their return to the United States at about the same time, with Daniells becoming General Conference president in 1901 and continuing in that role until after her death. He knew Ellen White well and offered an inspiring summary of her life’s work.
In his eulogy, Daniells recognised the God-given inspiration that sparked Ellen White’s ministry and emphasised her focus on the Bible and Christ as the central foundations of all that she did, spoke about and wrote. He recognised in White’s writings the role of the Holy Spirit “to make real in the heart and lives of men all that [Jesus] had made possible by His death on the cross” (page 472) and the role the church should also play.

Daniells also pointed to the broader focus of Ellen White’s ministry and writings — the implication of her understanding of the nature of God and His mission that life matters now in so many ways: “Through the light and counsel given her, Mrs White held and advocated broad, progressive views regarding vital questions that affect the betterment and uplift of the human family, from the moral, intellectual, physical and social standpoint as well as the spiritual” (page 473).

He used remarkably strong language to summarise her call for action in the world in response to the issues of her day: “Slavery, the caste system, unjust racial prejudices, the oppression of the poor, the neglect of the unfortunate,—these all are set forth as unchristian and a serious menace to the well-being of the human race, and as evils which the church of Christ is appointed by her Lord to overthrow” (page 473.)

When we re-discover the life and work of Ellen White, we find a strong belief in both the love of God and that our responses to that love matter. In the stories of her life, we also find a life that mattered, a remarkable pioneering woman who lived her life for the God whose love she came to understand more and more, and risked herself to contribute to the mission of the church and care for those in need. Trusting the final joyous ending, we are called and inspired to work toward it now in those same kinds of ways.

Preston Foster 3 weeks ago

Nathan,

Thanks for this article.

How things end (particularly books) gives us a sense of the author's purpose and priorities.

That thought occurred to me recently, when I noticed that the Bible ends this way:

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

William Noel 3 weeks ago

Nathan,

Why are so many in our church so fixated on looking back on the life and ministry of Ellen White instead of seeking the indwelling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit so that we can each have an
effective ministry today?

Elaine Nelson
Because you gotta worship something and she is the closest to the Blessed Mary that Adventism has.

William Noel
:-) !!!

Kevin Riley
Elaine,
For most SDAs Ellen White (or her writings) plays the same role as Tradition does in some other churches: she gives us concrete examples we can follow. I don't think that is a bad thing, as long as we remember that tradition gives us a great place to stand, but can also crush us should we end up under it. I don't believe most SDAs want or need a BVM to worship. What they want is guidance from a source they trust, one that feels familiar and predictable. Which is perhaps also the answer to William's question.

Preston Foster
Kevin,
It seems the Holy Spirit is yearning the we become familiar with Him. Though He is not predictable in terms of means, His willingness to engage and instruct is. Have we forfeited our intimacy with Him by an over-dependence on lesser lights?

Kevin Riley
Many people fear anything they can't control. The Holy Spirit may be the ultimate example of that. He moves to his own agenda, which we often don't know or share. Much easier to read a collection of books where we already know what they will say and what they will ask of us. I think many of us would like to be led by the Holy Spirit, but only on our terms and only if it is safe. Unfortunately, the Bible is full of stories where God is not predictable, or even safe.

William Noel
Kevin,
Meeting the Holy Spirit quickly overcame my fear. Since then He has led me to do a lot of things that I would not otherwise have imagined. Let's just say that it has been an addictive adventure where I far prefer being controlled by him than being without Him.

Jim Ayer

I was not born and raised as a Christian only becoming an Adventist as an adult. Early in my new experience, I realized that I had not been vexed in my childhood, as my church friends had been, by being beaten with the correction stick of Ellen White. While I found comfort, guidance, and God’s love in her words, some of my friends found it very difficult to accept anything she said because of the previous stripes of chastisement they had received at home. The Devil made certain that he fashioned a big enough stick so that their spiritual scares would be life-threatening.

It became evident to me, in my walk with God, that He has always used prophets to communicate with, and guide, His people. This, the Devil hates, but the prophet problem is not a new one—nor is the stick of the Devil used to detour all who would take the name of God upon their lips. The professed people of God—with few exceptions—have treated the prophets He uses to call us from danger to safety, with extreme prejudice: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to her, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!” Matthew 23:37. Did you notice that the mechanism God uses for gathering His children under the protection of his mighty arms is the prophets?

Again we read in 2Chronicles 20:20; “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” It seems evident that in order to prosper, it is imperative that we believe His prophets.

Some may say that Ellen G. White is not a prophet and it's everyone’s free choice to make that decision. If she is not a prophet we must ask, who has God sent to guide His last day people? It makes little sense to believe that the final work appointed to humankind would end without direct guidance from the Lord. “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Hebrews 13:8. His greatest desire is to continue calling us from danger to safety through His prophets.

William Noel

Jim,

Well said. Still, I ask: Why do we as a church treat the writings of Ellen White as if they were the last revelation that God would send to His church? If we are truly God's church, would it not be consistent for Him to keep sending prophets to guide us? So, while taking guidance from the counsels from the past, should we not also be looking for the new guidance He sends?
Logically and theologically we should be looking for a multitude of contemporary prophets, pragmatically we don't want that level of trouble. Prophets are always at their best when they are no longer with us.

I am grateful for the commitment and calling on Ellen White's life. What a blessing that has been. At the same token, from my reading of the NT, certain texts have bothered me like: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11). They are all listed in the plural!

From my reading of Acts, I noticed that there were prophets in the church of Antioch (Ac 13:1) and prophets in Jerusalem (Ac 11:27), some that had trans-local ministry (Acts 15:20). There were prophets down in the Corinthian church (1 Cor 14:32) and over in Thessalonica (1 Thess 5:19,20). There were prophets all over the place!

I have come to the conclusion, they are handy folk to have around (not forgetting apostles, evangelists pastors and teachers), especially if the church is going to come to "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13).

I'd be interested if any of you have/know prophetic people in your midst?

Jim, you have written a mature and practical response to the naysayers. On a personal level the writings of our co-founder (now called) are beautiful and refer to the Bible throughout. In fact much of it is biblical quotes. It speaks with depth and feeling and to the heart of those willing to listen. It opens the way to spiritual living and experience and to knowing Christ as the focus of our lives. The best, of course, is in the books which often picked up the best inspiration writing of the time and added to it.

The problems are the way the material has been used: compilations taken out of context; comments originally focusing on certain situations but made to fit all by controlling parents, teachers, or others in authority positions; cultural comments now irrelevant. You cannot blame the writer--it is the people. Don't hate the messenger, but those who recycle it in their own image! I do not believe these writings should be quoted in pastoral sermons as they give the idea of some sort of guru and insider information as well as pastoral incompetence and lack of creativity. We can't change the past, but we can begin a new future of respect and a willingness to listen.

Ella,
Ellen White actually gave very specific direction to pastors and editors that her writings were not to be quoted in a sermon or article. Nor were they to be the basis for any doctrine or teaching because we are to study scripture and base everything we teach and believe on the Bible alone.

Kendra Perry

Nathan, I don't know if I've commented before, but I love almost every single one of your columns. Thanks for writing.

Christian Rock

If folks could be entirely honest and reflective regarding what they have seen and experienced within Adventism, they would have to agree that it is possible to find Jesus Christ while reading Ellen White and it is also possible to lose sight of Jesus while reading Ellen White; thus is the paradox of Ellen White. In one quotation Ellen's words can be in lock step with the Pharisaical, self-righteous, self-works oriented tone of Christ's own contemporary church, and in another quotation she can completely disagree with the Pharisaical tone and import of one of her own, other published statements and can bless her reader with glimpses of Jesus.

Yes, Jesus is still the answer and the Holy Spirit, is today being poured out on the "five wise virgins", on those who are desperately hungry for more of Jesus; Ellen White or no Ellen White, SDA Church or no SDA Church.

If one believes that salvation is only achieved for Seventh-day Adventists through the mechanisms and machinations of the SDA Church; meaning total, blind devotion and loyalty to Ellen White no matter what she ever said or did, instead of relying upon one's relationship with Jesus alone, relying upon Jesus who gives us strength to stand for even the tiniest bits of truth, then some day, maybe too late and hopefully not, the majority of the body of Seventh-day Adventists could possibly discover that the enemy to their souls has come to reside within their gates, that "some day" when they recognize that religion alone does not save, that "some day" when they recognize that their precious Adventism has become in too many ways, no different than Roman Catholicism or Mormonism or any other "ism" religions, whereby the "church" effectually impresses upon the people that salvation comes through the mechanisms, machinations, and dependency upon the religious institution.

Ella M.

I agree with much of this, because so many seem to worship the church and are concerned about its identity, unity, etc. They find their identity in an organization rather than in Christ. People are baptized into a church rather than into Christ.

As for EGW different emphases at different times, we can also find that in the Bible. These are all lights that lead us to Christ and teach us to live the sanctified life. The Word, of course, is primary because it is the story of Christ.
William Noel

Ella,

I think you touched on an important issue when you mentioned identity. A significant part of the Adventist church's identity is built on the proof texts about God communicating with His people through prophets. Thus the ministry of EGW is used as evidence to claim exclusive (or limited) right to claim the Adventist church is God's only true church in the last days. However, given the time that has passed since her ministry ended and the absence of another apparent prophet since then, it is becoming increasingly logical to question if the basis for the church's claim remains valid.

Ella M.

If there were another "prophet" to arise, he or she would not be accepted by the church, even if they would speak according to the Word.

Actually I am aware of individuals in various parts of the world who have made prophecies on a personal or local level within the church. If brought to the attention of leaders, they are consistently denied as authentic without listening to them. Granted some of these have turned out to be false with self-centered motives, but not all. It is sort of like UFOs--you can explain most of them, but there are the ones that can't be explained away.

The same goes with "new light." Have you ever heard of anyone being taken seriously who brings a fresh idea to BRI or other authority? We stopped progressing theologically a long time ago--probably after White died. She is probably the last church leader who was able to change her mind!

It is possible that some of this might be happening in the seminary, but it isn't well known or admitted.

Doctorf

Ella come on. Trying to decipher "truth" from the utterances of modern day prophets is just as difficult in trying to figure out who are the "true" psychics and who are the charlatans. If an SDA prophet arises today, indeed they would be ignored and if they pressed their point would most likely be taken to the LLU Behavioral instituted and sedated.

William Noel

That may be one reason God apparently has not sent us another prophet. I remember the lament of Jesus as he looked over Jerusalem and wept because of the sins of God's people and how they killed the prophets. Maybe we wouldn't kill them today, but ignoring them has the same result of us not receiving intimate and timely messages from God.
I am grateful for the commitment and calling on Ellen White's life. What a blessing that has been. At the same token, from my reading of the NT, certain texts have bothered me like:

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11). They are all listed in the plural!

From my reading of Acts, I noticed that there were prophets in the church of Antioch (Ac 13:1) and prophets in Jerusalem (Ac 11:27), some that had trans-local ministry (Acts 15:20). There were prophets down in Corinth (1 Cor 14:32) and over in Thessalonica (1 Thess 5:19,20). There were prophets all over the place!

I have come to the conclusion, they are handy folk to have around (not forgetting apostles, evangelists pastors and teachers), especially if the church is going to come to "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13).

I'd say, prophets (as they are meant to function in a NT paradigm) were meant to be a normal part of the Christian church. I'd be interested to know if any of you have any prophetic people in your midst?

I know personally of one individual who may be a prophet, as his visions were rational and biblical. His pastor at the time accepted this, and he was an elder and SS teacher. However, the pastor after that did not, and made his church life miserable. (This last pastor BTW was trained through Amazing Facts.) He was ridiculed and his church offices taken away. Finally, after taking up for one of the members and being put down by the pastor, he began a home church. There are no other churches in this remote rural area close enough to attend on a regular basis. When asked he speaks at other churches.

His vision presented a Christ of great love that begged His people to come to Him, and that our country would be facing a crisis, and the second coming would be near. This was from April 1999 to April 2004 with a total of 35 visions. I know they lacked the rigidity of traditional Adventism. Dependence on Christ was the theme.

I think prophet does not always mean foretelling and visions, however. It can mean an inspired individual who loves and knows Christ, who can give that message and provide fresh direction and ideas. We often call this "a prophetic voice."
Doing Church As “THE WAY”

Submitted Sep 26, 2011
By Don Watson

Some weeks back we began studying Acts 19 in our Newsletter. Paul has arrived in Ephesus and begins to speak to the Jews there concerning the promised Messiah. In doing this, he discovers some of the Jews are already believers, but they had never heard of, or received the Holy Spirit. Paul prays for them to receive the Holy Spirit and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Evidently, this caused some contention among those listening to the gospel and some of the Jews caused so much trouble that Paul decided to move out of the Jewish synagogue and into the town lecture hall.

Ephesus was a city that was highly impressed by the super-natural. A large portion of the population was involved in magic. They either performed it or wanted to, and the city possessed a huge collection of books from the black arts. To root out this evil connection with Satan, God led Paul to work many miracles, and especially root out demon-possession. That was a very powerful twist to the magic Ephesians were working. Usually, in order to work magic, the demons controlled their followers, but here Paul controlled the demons – this was magic of a higher order, so some of the people (The Seven Sons of Sceva) went around trying to cast out demons by the name of Jesus like Paul did. The demons perhaps thought that this might discredit Paul at first but finally turned on these people saying, “Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all and gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.” – vv. 15-16.

The result of this incident caused people in Ephesus to hold Paul and the New Church in great reverence and awe. “Many came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas (several million dollars). In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.” – vv. 18-19.

But it was “About that time that serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way.” – v. 23.

Before we discuss the actual trouble that took place, I wanted us to notice that the early church at this time referred to themselves as “The Way.” This actually wasn’t the first time. In Acts 9:2 Luke, the writer of Acts, says Saul – who later became Paul the great Apostle - requested letters from the High Priest giving him authority to arrest “followers of the Way” and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. However, Paul at the end of his life is brought before the Governor, Felix and declares “I am a follower of the Way.” – Acts 24:14. While we are not told exactly why Paul refers to the early church as the Way, it certainly makes sense. Jesus told His disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” John 14:6. The Jewish religion, as corrupted by their leaders, declared that the “Way” to God and His approval required obedience to over 600 laws, attendance to 7 feasts, washings, cleansings, and a multitude of offerings and blood sacrifices. Jesus, in contrast, said, “No; come to me exactly as you are. I am the Way to God. Do you not know what truth is? - the truth about God or the truth about yourself? In this relationship with me – this Way that you live every day – you will learn the truth about God and His amazing unconditional love, and you will know that you are totally accepted exactly as you are, so there is
never any reason to hide anything about yourself – I know all about you already, yet I still love you with a love so strong and everlasting that nothing can separate us. It is this Way that gives you peace and therefore the LIFE you have always longed for. So I AM the LIFE – not just life eternal, but life right now – My life.”

The early Christian Church was not a religion. In fact, Jesus had actually come to do away with religion. Religion controls my access to God. Think about it. It tells me what I have to DO to be accepted by God – be baptized, repent, believe, take communion, burn candles, pay tithe, do penance, confess, embrace certain doctrines, belong to a particular church, etc. But Jesus – God Himself – came to let us know we can access the Father (In fact, the whole Divine Trinity) directly at any time. HE IS THE WAY.

Now, I don’t think Jesus was trying to tell us not to have churches, or certain unique beliefs about God. But now that Jesus has returned to heaven and His actual flesh and blood body is not with us, it is OUR job to let people know that they can have direct access to God Himself. It is OUR job to embrace everyone exactly as they are like Jesus did and invite them into intimate, nothing hidden, authentic relationship with us and Jesus.

Here is what I’m suggesting: That every church fully receive the Holy Spirit like the church at Ephesus, so that Jesus is truly inside us all and we become the WAY to the Father like Jesus was. We are now the WAY! I believe that if accept this marvelous concept it will mean some radical changes in us, God’s children, and the WAY we do church. Jesus declared that people will know we are His disciples by the way we love each other, not by the way we agree with each other. Unity is based on an unconditional love we have for each other regardless of our differences. In fact, instead of debating our differences, I believe God calls us to celebrate them by seeking to really know each other (Yada – the Hebrew word for "to know", as in marriage intimacy), and understand why certain unique beliefs are important to our brother or sister. Uniformity requires that all who fellowship, agree with one another – that we have a common creed. But if we are to be The Way, I believe Jesus alone must be our creed. We are bonded together by Jesus alone. A real, nothing-hidden relationship with Jesus is the WAY we all must daily walk. That relationship (abiding in the vine) will be our TRUTH and our LIFE, and it will be IN that relationship that Jesus will alter our direction, how we perceive truth, or how we do life. Our eventual goal, as churches, would be that there be no membership to be given or taken away – we are baptized into HIM. We as churches – the WAY – would embrace whoever God has accepted and sent our way and we would continue to embrace them forever. While they might disconnect with us, we would never disconnect with them. I believe it would mean that while we can be confident in what we believe about God, God calls us to accept anyone who wishes to be part of our Grace Family – regardless of how their beliefs or practices differ from ours.

I understand that this is a radical departure from the way most of us were raised or presently practice. But if we are to again become The Way, we need to sink our roots deeper into Christ and Christ alone. He wanted all of us, as God’s children and as His bride, to know that we have direct access with the Father. And anytime “The Church” of His day got in the way of that access, Jesus got very passionate. Remember the Temple scene? The leaders were deciding whose offering was acceptable and not, in fact, WHO was acceptable and not. If we are to be The Way, we must allow Jesus to cast such “money changers” out of His temple. We must be the advocate for sinners.

Which sinners are not allowed in your lives and churches? We are the Way for them; we must face
the truth about ourselves as sinners, and freely give everyone around us the life in Jesus.

William Noel
Don,

Wonderful! Amen!

My congregation (Grace Fellowship SDA Church in Madison, AL) was formed with the primary objective of helping each member discover their giftedness and empowerment from the Holy Spirit enabling them to become ministers in whatever way God wanted. It has been an amazing experience in watching God work and seeing Him work in my own life. The freedom to minister that the Holy Spirit has brought is incredible.

You also mentioned about unity in doctrine. That is a noble goal that is achieved only when our first and foremost priority is seeking the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He has promised to guide us into all truth, so if we seek Him first, we are seeking guidance from the ultimate source and teacher of truth. Where the Holy Spirit is in control, doctrines are no longer an issue. No, we have not abandoned any doctrine, just the extreme views that cause division. Harmony reigns in the love of a redeeming God who is very personal. We have a diversity of ministries that are building the fellowship of the church and creating benefits making the church attractive to others.

At other churches I've attended business meetings where relatively minor issues led to hours of argument and hard feelings that lasted for years. At Grace Fellowship we've decided major financial issues in as little as 15 minutes with ten of them being a devotional and prayer--and without argument or offense. More than just seeing each other on Sabbath, we're in-touch with each other through the week and often help each other in practical ways. For example, this past Sunday, I needed help with an auto repair. I'm not a mechanic. God reminded me to call a young man in our church who is an auto mechanic. He came to the house and needed only a few minutes to identify and fix the problem. I had planned on paying him for his services, but he declined saying it was his privilege to help another church member. That's the Holy Spirit at work.

Timo Onjukka
Don, you highlight a very valid (and sad, sobering) point.
Indeed, what group(s) of people do I disenfranchise? Choose to "love a little less"?
Or perhaps actually disinvite from my faith community?

If God uses the marriage metaphor as his first framework of (vertical and horizontal) relationship, and we are cautioned "let no man come between what God has brought together", what are we really guilty of when we are failing in all-inclusive love?
What are we really doing when we close church doors on any other human being?
And we claim it is in HIS name? Now thats a "high hand"...

Adam did not lose a religion; he lost relationship......
Jesus did not bring a religion, he restablished relationship.
Question is, do you know who you are?
Orphan, or heir?
This determines everything-deeds and doctrines, here,
And eternal destiny, over there.

Ella M.
3 weeks ago
Reply

This blog reminds me of the SS lesson today of the church at Antioch where relationships seemed to flourish and people came-- until some from Judea came with their "truth" that: the Gentiles needed to circumized to be saved.

Fortunately the Jerusalem Council finally overode this false theology, but did present four items to avoid, and this is because they were associated with the surrounding pagan religions. This incident opened the way for Paul's letter to the Galatians that declared nothing could be added to the Gospel. The Gospel was Christ and Him crucified.

We are saved by nothing else but Christ alone. Churches tend to focus on trivia, customs, and self-seeking. They find their identity in their own names rather than in Christ's name. The utopian church described by Noel is ideal. We hope it will last, and can as long as their focus and prayer is Jesus.

I have long felt that we should not be baptized into a church but into Christ. It almost seems blasphemas to be baptized into a church. What do you think about that staement. Am I taking it too far?

Of course we need organization as well, but it turns on us if it goes beyond what is necessary. We do need a belief system that reflects Christ in practical matters--call it doctrine--but it is the frame around His picture; the common sense ideas that describe what God is like--He is love, and it is reflected in His Word sent to us through His inspired believers over the generations.

Barry Wecker
3 weeks ago
Reply

Well written! Thought provoking. Thanks.

Posting as Center for Adventist Research

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The Good WHAT?

Submitted Sep 23, 2011
By Mark Gutman

A certain Adventist university teacher likes to start his religion classes by asking students to complete the sentence, “A Christian is one who...?” What verb(s) would you use? We like short, simple formulas for weight loss, exercise, investing, and happiness, so why not one for religion? Another version of that question is "what do you have to do to be ready when Jesus comes?" People have probably been asking questions along those lines for thousands of years.

In Luke 10:25, a lawyer asked Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” and ended up answering his own question: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...and your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus told him, “Good answer.” The lawyer, though, wanted more specifics, or a narrower specific. “Who is my neighbor?” In answer, Jesus told a story about what we usually refer to as “the good Samaritan.” A half-dead person was ignored by a priest and a Levite, only to be rescued by a Samaritan, who went out of his way to treat the injuries and take the poor fellow to a place where he could recover. The Samaritan even made arrangements for the financing of the future care. At the end of the story, Jesus asked the lawyer which of the three possible helpers was a neighbor to the injured man. The lawyer managed to refer to the Samaritan without mentioning his religion (or ethnicity), and Jesus advised the lawyer to follow the example of the Samaritan.

I submit that for many of us the story of the good Samaritan is like a bottle of soda pop that has been left in a glass too long. Much of the fizz, the punch, is gone. The word “Samaritan” does not anger or disgust us; in fact, we think of it as a rather positive term. Thanks to this story, Samaritan and good are inextricably linked for most of us, in the same way that Romeo and Juliet are paired. We even have Good Samaritan laws. But that’s not the way Jesus’ hearers thought of Samaritans.

Samaritans were looked at by Jews as pagan hybrids. They were descended from Israelites but had been mixed with foreigners. For religious beliefs, they had combined the Pentateuch with religious beliefs from non-Israelites, rejecting all other Israelite writings. Jews traveling between Galilee and Judea would cross the Jordan River to avoid having to go through Samaria. With a history of problems because of picking up the bad ways of non-Israelites, the Jews kept their distance from Samaritans whenever possible. So when Jesus told a story in which a Samaritan was the hero, it hit the lawyer’s prejudice. How could he pronounce the Samaritan as the good guy, the hero? That would be saying something positive about a heretic, someone who was theologically awful and should have known better.

How about if we update the story with words that would provide more punch, that would make us ask, “The good WHAT?” How about if a Baptist went by the fallen victim, and then an Adventist ignored the poor fellow, and then an atheist took him to a hospital and arranged to get him taken care of? “Which of these three...was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” Would we use a roundabout answer so that we wouldn’t end up endorsing an atheist?
You can get a similar impact by substituting other words for Samaritan. What if a homosexual, an evolutionist or a Muslim rescued him? Can we allow that? Those people believe things that are “wrong.” So did the Samaritan. But Jesus described the Samaritan as a model to follow. In John 4:22, Jesus criticized the Samaritan religion but he still put his stamp of approval on the Samaritan here. The Samaritan didn’t just believe the wrong things; he also didn’t follow all the rules that the Jews did. But Jesus pointed to him as an example.

Giving the correct answer to a theological question is often considered to be the ticket to heaven. In other words, the logic for many is that God is not about to allow someone into heaven who doesn’t properly understand the atonement. In that case, I suspect most members of the Adventist church (or any other denomination) would be in trouble. The magic formula for some, though, is more concerned with practice than theology: for instance, those making it to heaven will at least keep the correct day of the week as the Sabbath, because so many Bible texts refer favorably to those who keep God’s commandments, and isn’t it obvious that the main commandment that gets broken is the Sabbath one?

It seems that most of us agree that a good Baptist can get to heaven even if he misunderstands the Sabbath, as long as he can plead not guilty because of ignorance. At least a Baptist is a Christian (never minding his understanding of justification and sanctification). But I’ve read and heard less allowance for those who are not members of a Christian denomination, apparently because of their theological deficiency. And believing in evolution (well, macroevolution) is considered to put one into the same camp as serial murderers and pathological liars – no hope. And practicing homosexuals are classed with evolutionists, regardless of how well they understand justification and sanctification.

So we may not be leaving ourselves much room to replace “Samaritan” in Jesus’ story. Good Samaritan is a safe term; it doesn’t challenge us the way it did Jesus’ hearers. But if we can’t find a word to substitute for Samaritan that will give us a reason to examine our theology, maybe that in itself is a reason to examine our theology. When Jesus talked about the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), he described the sheep as people who went about doing good – providing food and clothing and friendship for people who needed such. If I smugly look down on my neighbors who are doing more to help people than I am (but who can’t explain the atonement properly or worship on the right day or eat the right foods), might I benefit from a change of focus? It might be enriching for me to spend more time reflecting on Jesus’ teachings (such as Luke 10 and Matthew 25) and less time on some of the theological passages in say, Romans.

That doesn’t mean that beliefs and practices don’t matter. Doing what we know is wrong has consequences. But maybe some people or groups that we are sure will end up in hell are people who are more similar to us than we realize in struggling with bad habits and conflicting beliefs. If Jesus were to tell that Luke 10 story to us today without using the words “priest,” “Levite,” and “Samaritan,” what might he use in their place? Priest and Levite are easier for us to replace, but Samaritan? Maybe those people we’ve written off spiritually would replace the Samaritan, to give us a bigger picture of what God is really looking for, of what a Christian really is.

To me this story tells me that God is not as interested in knowledge as how we treat each other. In fact, that is the general theme of Christ's life on this earth. Doctrine in the Bible is not as clear as we like to
pretend it is--you really need to study the Bible as a whole and go with the weight of the evidence and what it says about God's love. However, religious action and attitude is quite clear as that which reveals agape love.

This story says, to me at least, that a "nonbelievers" will be saved if they have the character of heaven. Christ came to reveal that character (what God is like) and is both an example and sacrifice.

Ymous

AMEN. Great article.
Keeping Our Kids in the Church

Submitted Sep 20, 2011
By Martin Weber

The purpose of technology and social media in the church is to facilitate outreach and nurture - winning new souls to Christ while helping existing disciples grow in grace, as individuals and as a church family. Unfortunately, many members are abandoning the church - most painfully, many of our own children. Even pastors' kids (PKs) are leaving us.

To find out why, I devoted my Doctor of Ministry project to the tragic topic of attrition of adult PKs in the Mid-America Union. I mailed an 111-point questionnaire to each of 222 active and retired clergy in our nine-state territory who have adult children (as of 2008). My research question was: "What influences from Seventh-day Adventist clergy parents in Mid-America may affect whether their children experience attrition from that denomination upon becoming adults?"

Data collected from the 113 questionnaires returned by clergy parents identified 40 attrition factors, yielding these conclusions:

Parental conservatism regarding lifestyle standards is not statistically significant in attrition.

Legalism regarding gospel doctrine (soteriology) is a moderately significant cause of attrition.

Legalism regarding practicing the principles of the gospel is a major cause of attrition.

For clergy parents to hold their own children to a higher behavioral standard is one of the highest causes of attrition.

Lack of relationality in the pastoral family is the most serious cause of PK attrition. Pastors with the highest retention rate of adult children are those who managed to provide the most positive and 'fun' family experience in the parsonage and were close enough to talk about anything in an atmosphere of freedom that allowed children and teens latitude in developing their own faith experience.

The greatest predictor of future faithfulness as an adult is whether the PK during growing up years takes initiative to approach the clergy parent to discuss spiritual matters.

Closely associated with family relationality is the freedom and trust expressed in discussing controversial issues. There is no greater cause of attrition than to attempt to shield children from knowledge of, or resisting discussion about, church or denominational conflict.

Congregational criticism of pastoral family members portends future attrition of adult children.

There is definite correlation between the experience of entering the pastorate during one's 30s and the future attrition of one's children.

Having a clergy grandparent is a stabilizing factor in the spiritual life of a PK.

To summarize: The most significant factors in avoiding attrition are 1) being able to discuss church
problems in the parsonage while also 2) managing to sustain joy and togetherness in the family circle and 3) giving teens freedom to develop their own faith experience without the expectation of being super saints because they live in a parsonage.

The final section proposed remedial recommendations based on the thesis: "The parsonage parent's best defense against attrition is to foster the positive elements of joyous relationality and intrinsic spirituality in the family while avoiding negative factors such as suppression, rigidity and legalism; Seventy-day Adventists can pursue this in practical terms by interpreting fundamental denominational beliefs in the context of the gospel and living them out in a missional community of shalom."

What that means, simply stated, is that there is nothing in the 28 fundamental beliefs of Adventists that would cause our children to leave the church. It is the abuse of our doctrines that causes attrition. Each Adventist belief is a channel through which we can experience Jesus. When taught and lived in the context of a fruitful and joyous relationship with Christ, church doctrine is a positive factor in keeping our kids spiritually safe for time and eternity.


Martin Weber is currently editor of Mid-America *Outlook* and director of communication for the Mid-America Union of Seventh-day Adventists. He has served many years as a pastor, most recently in suburban Sacramento, California.

Among books authored are his own story of abuse survival, *My Tortured Conscience*, and “book of the year” *Hurt, Healing and Happy Again*, with stories of people wounded in life before experiencing emotional and spiritual healing in Jesus. His most recent book, *God Was There: True Stories of a Police Chaplain*, was just released by Pacific Press. Weber has shared God’s message of healing love on five continents. He recently completed a Doctor of Ministry project regarding troubled adult children of clergy families.

For another summary of Martin Weber's research, [click here](http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=854&action=print).

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Elaine Nelson 1 month ago  
Reply

If only the children of living pastors were questioned, what about the many adults who once were PKs?

We are many. I am an octogeneraian PK and my leaving Adventism had nothing to do with being a PK and everything with investigating the history of both Adventism and Christianity. Knowing how the "inside politics" works only too keenly was one precipitating factor, as well as the method that the church handles any possible deviant messenger. Truth and justice are the victims.

Close investigation of religious doctrines is very similar to watching sausages and laws made: bad
for health and trust. Too much Bible study without resorting to SDA "proof texts" on which one is taught and heard as a child, do not stand up well to investigation. The only possible conclusion to maintain integrity was to become an ex-SDA.

Elaine Nelson

As an 86-yr-old PK I can testify that it was nothing in my parental training that caused me to leave the church. It is the anti-intellectual positions and doctrines that are too suffocating for thinking, educated people. Reading and studying how the church doctrines were formed and the paucity of analysis, but reliance on "proof texts" is a real turn-off to those who want to dig deeper.

Eventually, to maintain integrity, I no longer wanted to identified as an SDA. This problem will continue as young people are continuing to be better educated, critically thinking adults.

Horace Butler

So, those of us who believe the doctrines of the SDA church have no integrity? Are not well educated? And are unable to thing critically? Funny, I've never felt "suffocated" by the doctrines, but maybe I'm not that well educated and lack the capacity to think. I guess a college degree wasn't enough for me to grasp the mythology inherent in Scripture.

The "paucity of analysis" by our pioneers included all night sessions in prayer and Bible study before arriving at many of our doctrines. But I guess that wasn't good enough.

Well, they said Jesus was possessed by the devil, and they said Paul was mad. So we're in good company. Interesting how some of us study the Bible and become more convinced that the SDA Church is on the right track, and others go the other direction. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." II Thess. 2:11.

Horace Butler

Back on topic. I think it goes beyond abuse of our doctrines. There are a variety of factors, of course. We need to analyze our methodology from cradle roll to youth. I see a dumbing down of our doctrines in the early years in some cases. That hurts the kids. They need to learn the basics as soon as they are able to grasp them. They aren't stupid. Children's church is a big mistake. When will they learn to be adult church members if they don't participate in adult worship until college age? Get them involved at a young age. Older kids can help younger kids in Sabbath School. In our church some of the teens have come up to the adult classes--and had meaningful contributions.

And the myth that they need "contemporary" music to keep the interested needs to be abandoned. That method backfires. It only gives them what they can get out in the world, and provides no incentive to stay in church. Church should provide something better and higher than the world offers. If we give them the devil's music with religious words we've accomplished nothing.
Elaine Nelson  
I didn't say that SDA doctrines had no integrity. A careful reader would have seen that I referred to my integrity would have been compromised if I claimed to be something I could not. It's usually called hypocritical. Personal integrity is not the same as institutional integrity. That is a subject for another thread with many possibilities.

Trevor Hammond  
Juvenile delinquency amongst PK's has always been a major factor causing them to eventually leave the church. I was one of them. A rebel so to speak. Mrs. Nelson's assumption that education led her to 'leave' may have been more of an excuse rather than actual fact. I left without educational influences. Just downright sinful living and textbook worldliness: by succumbing to temptation and bad influence of peers. I find the same thinking pattern with those who brag about been 'progresives'. They say they left traditional Adventism due to their glorified educational enlightenment. This can't be true as so many others have left without educational influence at all: just bad old fashioned sinfulness and worldliness. Talk about progressive regressives OR regressive progressives! Take your pick. So what's the deal? Adult delinquency is also a reality we must face. The uncontrolled, rash, renegade behaviour concerning spiritual matters is a telltale sign of weak delinquent Christianity which ultimately is just common rebellion against God. Living in a state of denial is unnecessary and worsens the rebellion. The more the education the more the rebellion. This is where education plays a major part: in the rebellion stage. Ultimately this leads one to accept darkness as light and encourages disobedience to God. Satan plays a major role in attacking the faith of PK's, even to the extent I would suggest, in some cases, of demon possesion which is often overlooked by many.

Then there is the other much overlooked factor. The regular nitpicking of PK's by some horrid nasties in the congregations their parents serve. Criticising the PK's is a way of getting back at Pastors who cross the wires of some crazy pew-warmer who 'pay' tithes (and also many who don't return tithes) just to have a go at the Pastor who 'works for them' - the 'hired help' if you please - who isn't bowing down to their every whim and fancy at their every beck and call. Darn Office Bullies! These devils agents take swipes at the PK's too.

Elaine Nelson  
Each individual's experience is her own and cannot be compared to another's. What may influence one may have no difference on another. This is how we experience life.;

JIMS Seven  
Hey friends, I've read the issue on PKs somewhere quite long and that was very good (sorry can't
recall but I guess it either was in SOTT or Ministry).

Mr. Hammond:

'They say they left traditional Adventism due to their glorified educational enlightenment. This can't be true as so many others have left without educational influence at all'

Yes there are many in my country who bear testimony to that fact. I became little serious reading your comment, Sir. Thanks.

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Trevor Hammond

1 month ago Reply

By the way the Bible reveals in Psalm 100 that 'we are the sheep of His pasture'. So what does that make us all? Pastor's Kids too! Yeah - Cool! Except, (Hallelujah!) God is our Pastor. He is the Good Shepherd who was willing to lay down His life for His people, the sheep of His Pasture... Praise God! Thank you Jesus!
T

---

Kevin Riley

1 month ago Reply

New research in America indicates that religion is associated with education, not lack thereof. In Australia, the majority of Christians who attend church are middle class, often with a university degree. In Europe historically it was often the peasants who were lost first in some cases. It is the upper and lower 1/3 that are usually missing from church. There is a correlation between higher education and liberal views, and most committed atheists are highly educated. Most of the working class tends to believe there is 'something out there', but they neither know nor care what it is.

There was an interesting piece of research done a couple of decades ago in Malaysia, which has a two stream education system. Those students who attended a science based high school had a strong tendency to be fundamentalists, those who attended a humanities based high school tended to be more liberal. The suggestion was that science tends to work with laws and mathematical formulae, those in the humanities with trends and possibilities. Neither, from memory, was better than the other at keeping people religious. Nor can we argue that one group was more intelligent than the other.

Perhaps we keep people better when the answers we give match the form and depth of the questions. Therefore it isn't education or lack thereof that determines who goes and who stays, but whether the church answers the questions the person is asking in a form that makes sense to them. And before anyone jumps to conclusions, I have worked in non-Western countries and found that people there are as intelligent - and, unfortunately in some cases, as dumb - as people in Western countries. We have notcornered the market on intelligence or stupidity.
Elaine Nelson 1 month ago  Reply

The title: "Keeping our Kids in Church" implies that one can "keep" an adult in a belief system simply because he might have been raised in an particular religious environment.

Did it ever occur that some have been inoculated against a religion in their early years? And many have adopted their parents' religion. Individuals must grow and discover their beliefs on their journey and it is impossible to assure that even two siblings in the same environment will chose the same path. We as parents must learn to love our children unconditionally and not let them feel that because they have chosen a different path than ours that they are less loved and appreciated.

This goes for the children of others in our church. Children are extremely sensitive to small things that adults often don't feel or see. Remember: all the founders of Adventism were either disfellowshipped or rejected their previous church membership.

The most we as parents should want is that our children our compassionate, loving, and productive members of society and that regardless of their beliefs, they will always be loved.

Gailon Arthur Joy 1 month ago  Reply

The reason anyone leaves his roots is because he has no Faith in those roots. When a church has lost it's faith, most vividly described as Laodicean, its membership has little basis to exist. It can be poetically described by a Faithful lifelong believer now deceased: "We are dead, but we ain't buried!!!"

The Bible refers to it as being as dry as the bones on the hills of Gilboah.

God will manifest His Spirit in due time and Faith will be fully developed by a life of complete surrender to the will of God. Those who were grounded in the Faith will return to that Faith when recognized. Those without Faith will move the other direction and the real Remnant will do their work of the "Loud Cry".

Some will listen and swell those ranks and others will be forever lost in the maelstrom of Jacob's Trouble. The defining difference will forever be "FAITH". You must build that Faith or fall off the path to eternal life.

If we are to grasp our children from a very worn out world looking for pleasure and money, then we must offer real FAITH and Faith invokes action and both seem very rare indeed in today's Church.

Very few humans relish walking with the dead but yearn for life with all it's glitter. Even Moses had to spend forty years in Midian before he found his God Given destiny by building a life of Faith. And even then had to practicaly drag the Hebrews out of bondage.

If we diligently search for our Faith, we will find a reason for our Children to stay and get back to our destiny, but be prepared to face adversity designed to build your Faith...accept the adversity...
and lean on God for the solutions and Faith will be fully restored and our children will learn to walk in that same Faith.

Ron Corson 1 month ago  Reply

Gailon Joy wrote:
"The Bible refers to it as being as dry as the bones on the hills of Gilboah."

That is an interesting statement coming in this article thread. Would a statement like that cause a child to question or think of leaving their church. After all the Bible no where says that but it may well be believed by numerous Adventists that the Bible says something to that effect. When they find that it doesn't what will happen? That is just one example of many possible errant statements. What would be the effect on the PK's if they saw their father making errant statements from the pulpet? I don't think questionaires are really going to provide the answers to something that can have so many different causes and effects.

Here is the total mentions of Gilboa in the Bible:

gilboa (KJV)

1 Sam 28:4
4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. (KJV)

1 Sam 31:1
1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. (KJV)

1 Sam 31:8
8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. (KJV)

2 Sam 1:6
6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. (KJV)

2 Sam 1:21
21 Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. (KJV)
2 Sam 21:12
12 And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:  (KJV)

1 Chr 10:1
1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.  (KJV)

1 Chr 10:8
8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa.  (KJV)

Elaine Nelson 1 month ago  Reply

"The Bible refers to it as being as dry as the bones on the hills of Gilboah."

Do us the favor of giving the location of such a text.  Ron has shown each place in the Bible where Gilboah is mentioned, and none appear even related to the comment.  Is it like the statement "Cleanliness is next to   Godliness" that many attribute to the Bible also?

Kevin Riley 1 month ago  Reply

Ellen White mentions being as 'dry as the hills of Gilboah', but I don't think she mentioned the bones.  Her reference was in relation to the SDA church preaching law rather than grace.  I believe she took the reference from 2 Sam 1:21.
American Congregations Decline in Overall Health in Past Decade

Submitted Sep 22, 2011
By AT News Team

According to a report released Wednesday (September 21) to Adventist Today and other media by David A. Roozen for Faith Communities Today 2010 (FACT2010), a study of more than 28,000 randomly sampled North American congregations of many faiths has found the overall health of American churches has seriously declined in the past 10 years.

Not only is attendance down, financial difficulties are far worse than in the past, and spiritual vitality as measured by the poll appears to have seriously eroded. The poll also measured ‘conflict’ in the congregations and discovered that nearly two in three congregations have experienced noticeable conflict in the past 10 years, half of those ‘serious conflicts.’ The level of conflict was associated by the pollsters with the decline in spiritual vitality.

There were bright spots, however, with clear evidence that ‘mission-oriented’ congregations tend to hold their own better than others, and that growth is indeed occurring in churches that take the time and effort to try to make their services culturally relevant to contemporary adults and young people. He also noted the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in particular, is excelling in the conversion and retention of members of ethnic groups.

The contemporary-style churches which emerged from California and have spread across America have now permeated all denominations, and once staid-and-stolid old-fashioned services in old-line churches are now being replaced by the newer format. The format is still better known on the West Coast than in the rest of the country, but during the past 10 years has caught on in the East, the last section of the country to accept the newer styles of worship.

The report also found spiritual vitality appeared to crest at the extremes (among very conservatives and very liberals), while those in the mainstream, or moderate middle in terms of their beliefs, tended to be less committed to their churches.

In a question-and-answer session following the official release of the report, an Adventist Today reporter asked Roozen if in his opinion a ‘conservative’ church is more likely to grow than a moderate or liberal church. Roozen replied that those on either edge of the left-right continuum seem to benefit numerically, while those in the moderate middle seem less able to move forward. “In this study, a church at either extreme of the spectrum seemed more prone to growth than those in the middle,” he said.

He noted that Adventism continues to be one of the most successful denominations in the United States in terms of its evangelization of ethnic minorities, and he sees growth continuing among immigrants, especially in Adventism.

Roozen also noted congregations with less than one-third of their membership under the age of 65 appear to be significantly stronger overall, compared with congregations where more than one-third is retirement age.
Earlier this month FACT2010 released a report (available on atoday.org) that studied the level of interfaith activity among American denominations. This report noted a strong inverse correlation between a denomination's perception of self as 'conservative' and its willingness to coordinate with other faiths in ministry. The survey found that 65 percent of Adventists interviewed saw their church as conservative, compared with members of the Unitarian Universalist Association who saw themselves as containing 0 percent conservative (the lowest of all denominations) and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who viewed their church as 90 percent conservative (the most conservative).

Roozen said that FACT2010 is preparing to release a third report this year, identifying the prime factors for growth among American congregations. “We still have been unable to quantify what makes a successful pastor,” he admitted. “We just don’t have the tools to do that, but we’re trying.”


Gallon Arthur Joy

Wow...this is real news? Have we not known we are "Laodicean"? And personal development is the answer??? That is just another name for secular humanism in the church and no answer to true Spiritual Growth best defined as a daily walk with God.

The answer is in studying the inspired word and adopting a Remnant response...we must inspire Faith and Share our Faith. That will rebuild the health of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Horace Butler

Does the parable of the 10 virgins who went to sleep ring any bells? Even the good guys snoozed off. That doesn't justify it, but it may help explain the stagnation that seems to be so widespread, and the foolishness that sometimes prevails, as leaders attempt to liven things up a bit.

Ella M.

Gallon Arthur Joy

I am wondering where you are writing from. Perhaps it is your culture, but you come across as using stereotyping a good bit in your posts. My question: Isn't it possible for someone to be both "liberal" (the word means different things to different people),and still have a daily walk with God? Can only conservatives deeply study the Word, pray throughout the day, and have their prayers answered? Can a "progressive" be spiritual and live in Christ? What do you think?

Edwin A. Schwisow

Adventist Today : American Congregations Decline in Overall Health in... http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=857&action=print

2 of 3 10/27/2011 11:56 AM
I have found that the "far right" and "far left" in Christianity both differ from the mainstream (moderates) primarily in the intensity of their convictions that THEY HAVE THE ANSWERS. It's the level of commitment to an ideology that sets them apart. They get things done, they take things seriously, and they often express frustration by the lack of intensity of the rest.....
A Sophisticated Adventist Apologetic for Young Life Creationism: Part II

Submitted Sep 22, 2011
By Ervin Taylor

Part I of this blog presented a summary of a 2005 book entitled Creation, Evolution and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation. The author of this book is Dr. Fernando Luis Canale, professor of theology and philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Part II will be my commentary on this book. As noted in Part I, this summary and commentary has been previously published in the Andrew University Seminary Studies.

Part I noted this book was a detailed philosophical and theological defense of traditional Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church understandings of the opening chapters of Genesis. In contrast to the apologetic agenda of the SDA General Conference-sponsored Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), this work does not affirm young-life creationism by using a form of ‘scientific creationism,’ which disputes the interpretation of the empirical data supporting the standard scientific understanding of earth history, geochronology, and evolutionary biology. Rather, the book questions the conventional understanding of the scientific evidence, primarily by focusing what he argues is a postmodern approach to knowledge formation.

COMMENTARY

This volume constitutes a comprehensive treatise that defends with complex philosophical and theological language the traditional and officially-sanctioned SDA young life creationism — where ‘young’ is generally defined as <10,000 years — understanding of earth history (geology and paleontology) and evolutionary biology. To defend this understanding, it posits as a primary assumption the classic Adventist theological system — the Sanctuary, the Three Angels Messages, the Sabbath is a, “complete system of theology and philosophy. It would appear Dr. Canale believes that to reject or modify any part of this package would cause the collapse of what he views as essential contemporary Adventism.

The purpose of this volume has a long history in the Adventist subculture — that of apologetics defending what is viewed as one or more critical components of conventional or orthodox Adventism. Its uniqueness is in the extended, philosophically complex, set of arguments it employs. As far as this reviewer is aware, there is nothing like it in Adventist literature. To understand the author’s approach requires a close and careful reading. Unpacking the arguments, at least to this reader, took close attention to detail. One has to read carefully, both the text and footnotes, to even begin to understand the basis on which the author argues his points.

Despite the dense nature of the prose, the book is a fascinating read as an outstanding exemplar of what a sophisticated apologetic should look like. Effective apologists, both ancient and modern, not only know the beliefs that must be supported and which ones must be questioned and undermined, but also they understand very clearly the end point at which they must arrive. Their task is to devise the most effective manner of demonstrating to others that what they personally believe to be true — and/or what the institution or ideology to which they owe allegiance, teaches is true or can be logically supported.
As noted earlier, this apologetic does not offer alternative or contrary interpretations of the massive corpus of scientific data indicating the earth has sustained life for multiple hundreds of millions of years. It also does not attempt to enter directly into disputes as to how one should interpret the Genesis texts. Rather, it approaches its task of defending conventional SDA theological understandings of Genesis from almost entirely a philosophical perspective, with a focus on epistemology — how one knows what one says he/she knows.

I am informed by those most familiar with this literature that, with one glaring exception, Dr. Canale does a reasonable job of unpacking the contemporary dialogue and debate between modernist and postmodernist historians and philosophers of science as to the nature of how modern science approaches its task of understanding how the world works and how it has come to its present state. He has read widely in the philosophical literature, particularly that which deals with the scientific enterprise.

However, there is a serious problem bearing on the consistency of his approach where he has been selective in his use of postmodern concepts. It is well known that postmodernists of almost every persuasion reject the meaningfulness and relevance of any grand metanarrative, whereas the core point of Dr. Canale’s apologetic is explicitly focused on a defense of the validity of Ellen White’s Great Controversy metanarrative.

In addition, it appears the author’s understanding of how science is actually pursued by practicing scientists comes only from reading and is not informed at all by any direct experience in a scientific environment. This might account for Dr. Canale’s confusion concerning the nature of the modern scientific impulse. For example, he insists scientists “dismiss supernatural revelation as an invalid source of information on which to build their views,” or that scientific methodology, “disregards the existence of God and his revelation in Scripture as fantasy” (p. 22). In point of fact, for the vast majority of scientists of whom this author is aware by personal contact or reading of their writings, it is not a matter at all of ‘dismissing’ supernatural revelation as fantasy or ‘disregarding’ the existence of God or his revelation.

The core of the scientific impulse in Western scientific thought, almost from its inception, sought to express no opinion on the subject of the supernatural — it neither rejected nor accepted the existence of God. A ‘scientific approach’ to a given topic is characterized by a set of methodological understandings — one of which is that naturalist causes are the only agents to be employed in any scientific argument. The ‘supernatural’ was defined as outside of its purview. That Dr. Canale is not aware of this simple consensus understanding suggests he either may have not read very deeply in the history of science or perhaps finds it difficult to understand this approach.

Dr. Canale is also profoundly misinformed concerning the relationship between evolutionary biology and geochronology. While it is correct that biologists utilize the geochronological framework in their efforts to understand rates of evolutionary change, the contemporary geological time scale does not depend on any assumptions about biological evolution. The core data that geochronology depends upon derives primarily from research in such diverse fields as biochemistry, geochemistry, geophysics, and above all, nuclear physics and nuclear chemistry. None of the critical data derives from evolutionary biology. It is simply totally and factually incorrect to state, as Dr. Canale does, that geochronology is structured, “by assuming biological evolution” (p. 68).
Finally, although there are some scientists who do indeed argue that, “real things are only those that can be ascertained through sensory perception and/or technological enhancement” (p. 21), the core constituencies of the mainline modern scientific community express no views about the ontological nature of reality. This is a domain of philosophy and theology. Scientists in their personal lives can and do hold and express a whole range of views — from an absolute ontological atheism, to membership and active participation in very traditional faith communities including traditional Christian faith traditions.

In my view, the most glaring and serious problematic aspect of this volume is the author’s assumption that his interpretation of the data received from his reading of the Bible comes directly from God. Creationist perspective, which a reader would assume means his view, he argues, “springs from divine revelation, God’s summary account of his handiwork…Theological data originates from divine revelation and inspiration.” It appears it is on this highly questionable foundation that Dr. Canale builds the core of his complex arguments. It would appear Dr. Canale assumes that theologians who agree with him obtain their information directly from God and thus can be trusted to provide entirely accurate information about how the world and life upon it came to be. Theologians who disagree with him, and almost all scientists, obviously do not receive their information from God and thus cannot be trusted to provide the correct answers to these questions. I will leave it to the reader to evaluate that position.

In addition, it has been pointed out to this reviewer that Dr. Canale is either not aware of or disagrees with the clear and unambiguous views of Ellen White that the “Bible…is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented…The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech” (E.G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, pp. 21 (1890), 22 (1891).

It should be emphasized, the conceptual framework outlined in the pages of this volume belies the popular imagery of fundamentalists — including SDA fundamentalists — as uninformed, uneducated, or intellectually challenged. This densely-argued work of scholarship should lay that myth to its final rest. If any further evidence is required on this point, consulting many of the articles appearing in the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) should provide conclusive confirmation.

Like most of the chapters in The Fundamentals (the work which became the symbol of the modern American conservative Protestant Fundamentalist movement in the early decades of the 20th Century) Dr. Canale’s work and the other scholarly works contributed by members of the ATS represent a strong intellectualist counter movement to the progressive trends in Adventist theological scholarship in the 1960s and 1970s. The late 20th to early 21st century Adventist ‘Counter Reformation’ mounted by the ATS and its allies is well served by Dr. Canale’s volume. In some respects, it represents an exemplar of an ATS apologetic scholastic treatise. One suspects the late Dr. Gerhard Hasel, the architect of the ATS ‘Counter Reformation,’ would have been very proud of this volume.

From the perspective of this reviewer, the conclusions of the author are profoundly problematic and, for Adventism, reactionary and retrogressive. Its creative and heroic arguments, expressed in complex philosophical language, are employed to defend what are viewed by some as critical elements of the Adventist master theological narrative, a narrative created within, and whose expressive symbols are rooted in, conservative 19th Century American cultural values. Dr. Canale’s
arguments are conceptually complex but, at their core, they advance an essentially fundamentalist approach to Scripture and employ that approach to endorse retrogressive arguments about how 21st Century Adventist Christians should understand the Genesis creation narratives. A number of other Adventist theologians have already pointed out that a positive appreciation of the role of the Biblical Sabbath in an Adventist Christian context does not depend on or require interpretations that the Genesis Creation narratives be understood as representing actual or literal history.

Despite its philosophical sophistication, Dr. Canale’s treatise is an exemplar of an Adventist approach to a theological topic which is fatally trapped by its wholesale commitment to a historically- and culturally-particularistic American 19th century conceptual package. The Adventism of the 21st Century in North America may have a meaningful future if it can reappropriate and renew the commitment to ‘present truth’ that was exhibited in the 19th Century, when its original conceptions were formulated.

However, the general difficulty established faith communities have in reevaluating the validity and relevance of their original ‘present truth’ messages do not give us much hope this process can occur. The tragic results of the SDA Faith and Science conferences, held several years ago, provide vivid testimony of how difficult it is for religious traditions once solidified and institutionalized to come to terms with reality.

Part III of this blog will be a response from Dr. Canale to my review and commentary on his book.

David Read

1 month ago

Ervin, how is "naturalist [sic] causes are the only agents to be employed in any scientific argument" different from "dismiss[ing] supernatural revelation as an invalid source of information on which to build their [scientific] views"? You assert the former, yet you criticize Dr. Canale for asserting the latter.

Obviously, if only natural or material causes can be employed in scientific reasoning, then the revelation that some things have a supernatural origin, i.e., were created, cannot be used as an assumption to interpret the data of nature. Seriously, how is this not obvious to you? Yet you criticize Dr. Canale for pointing out the obvious.

There is at least a workable difference between methodological and philosophical naturalism where it concerns the observable, repeatable phenomena of everyday science, i.e., the observation of contemporary phenomena. That difference essentialy ceases to exist, however, when it comes to origins. If your scientific methodology requires to you posit that God, if He exists, never created and never intervened in the creation, that position simply cannot be meaningfully distinguished from philosophical naturalism or atheism.

If you believe that God never created--and not only believe it but insist that science and all other branches of learning conduct their inquiries accordingly--you're effectively an atheist, because your God can never be the God of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or any other significant religious tradition. So how is your so called "methodological naturalism" effectively any different form...
philosophical naturalism or atheism?

Ervin Taylor  1 month ago  Reply

I don't recall ever stating that "God never created." If Mr. Read can find such a quotation, I would certainly like to know. And I don't ever recall reading that comment from the pen of Elaine. So pray tell, who are you talking about? I would suggest that the distinction between "methodological naturalism" and "ontological naturalism" is an elementary distinction which is widely known and cited. If you have difficulty in understanding the difference, that certainly would be a problem.

David Read  1 month ago  Reply

I would add that Dr. Canale is not significantly mistaken concerning the relationship between fossils and the dating of strata. The strata are dated by their index fossils. This method of dating was established some 70 years before radiometric dating was ever attempted, and continues to be considered the most reliable method of dating. There have been many radiometric results that conflicted with index fossil dating, but never, ever, has the radiometric result been preferred over the index fossil dating. Not ever. Not once.

For that reason, radiometric dating was, is, and will continue to be, an essentially superfluous add-on to the index fossil dating method.

Bryan Bissell  1 month ago  Reply

I would to challenge people to think a bit on the dating issue. We have ~100 methods pointing to a young age for earth and life and ~40 methods pointing to an old age. Does 40 beat 100 or 100 beat 40? Science is supposed to follow the weight of evidence and creation science has it in spades in most areas and easily beats universal common descent. But, the evolution and atheist establishments consistently refuse to follow the weight of evidence. They follow naturalism assertions instead and apriori rule out and actively hide and suppress much evidence that points to God and Bible truth being accurate. This violates even Darwin's own principle which I agree with:

"A fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question" Charles Darwin, 1859, Introduction to Origin of Species, p. 2

Another fact is that even many of the 40 methods pointing to an old earth have recently been debunked by by many cases of soft tissue that have been found in dinosaurs. Even evolutionists agree that all science that we know shows that soft tissue can at max by 15-100,000 years old. So, that means that many of the old age methods can not possibly be accurate. But, of course evolutionists now are choosing to discard science and prop up universal common descent as they have many times in the past and trying to say that there must be a way that soft tissue can last 60+ million years.

See videos 1-5 here..and the notes as well.
http://www.youtube.com/user/TruthIsLife7#/g/c/648C2EAD205F397C

See these links:

a) A summary of 100+ methods for laymen pointing to a young age for
http://creation.com/age-of-the-earth

b) Techniques That Argue for an Old Earth Are Either Illogical or Based on Unreasonable
Assumptions.
http://www.creationscience.com/onlinebook/AstroPhysicalSciences24.html#wp3303729

c) Most Scientific Dating Techniques Indicate That the Earth, Solar System, and Universe Are
Young.
http://www.creationscience.com/onlinebook/AstroPhysicalSciences33.html#wp2534183

d) Many technical papers on dating methods that support a young earth are here (and I have
other sites as well, but most of the scientists here have degrees from secular universities and do
quite good work):
http://www.answersingenesis.org/get-answers/topic/radiometric-dating

e) Scientists on dating methods pointing to a young earth.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKbaHoINReA&feature=related

There's been a recent creation science conference with some VERY good and new insights on
many fronts. I HIGHLY recommend it.

See especially the video by Dr. Silvestru on evidence for a global flood called "Geology and
Deep Time"
Start at 36:00. From ~54:00 there's a very good section on catastrophic plate tectonics.

On naturalism and how science from the beginning didn't point to God or wasn't concerned
with God, that just isn't true on either point. Dr. Hannam has degrees in physics and history
from Oxford and London universities and a Ph.D. in the history of science from Cambridge
University and wrote “God’s Philosophers: How the Medieval World Laid the Foundations of
Middle Ages Launched the Scientific Revolution” This has been reviewed very positively by
major secular scientists and organizations:
“It is engaging, informative and I heartily recommend it.” says Ruth Francis, Head of Press for
/ruths_reviews_gods_philosopher_1.html.

Dr. Hannam also gave an overview of the above book in a presentation at the Royal Society (1st
scientific society in history which was started by a creationist Christian John Wilkins who also
published ideas on speciation in the 1600s, LONG before Darwin.) about how Christianity and
the creationist view of the world laid the foundations of modern science that no other culture
ever achieved (Dr. Hannam is a creationist at present, yet agrees that the creationist view was
fundamental to the development of modern science. This makes the claim even stronger since it is admitted by an evolutionist). Watch it here and a rough summary of it is after the review of the book belw:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-k24Q01vck or download it at: http://tinyurl.com/68s462b

Dr. Hannam isn't a creationist, but he documents some of how creation philosophy was directly responsible for laying the foundations of modern science. Creationists were responsible for inventing/pioneering the modern scientific method (and Daniel pioneered it first), the peer review method, occam's razor, falsification, the 1st scientific society, publishing ideas on speciation and natural selection and most of the branches of science. As time goes by, science again confirms science against the myths that skeptics believe as has happened countless times in the past.

Many more articles and videos of evidence are here:
See esp. www.creation.com and also
www.youtube.com/user/truthislife7 (playlists on creation science). This one is on the flood, which if true, would have distorted many of the radiometric dates assigned to rocks and fossils.

http://www.youtube.com/user/TruthIsLife7#g/c/14FDE276E5C97E24 (videos 2-9 are by Dr. Wise with a Ph.D. in geology from Harvard. He deal with plant order in the fossils, one of the supposedly best evidences for universal common descent, showing how creation science is better even here).

God bless,
Bryan

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Roscoe Fogg

1 month ago

Mr Bissell, Thanks for the comprehensive list of young earth literature. It will be a great comfort to many of my fellow church members. It's just what they want to hear.

Ervin Taylor

1 month ago

I too wish to thank Mr. Bissell for his long listing of young earth sources. I would encourage anyone interested in this topic to read them. They range from strangely interesting to pathetic. But that's just my opinion. The comment that there is ~100 methods that indicate a young earth and young life and ~40 that indicate a old earth and old life. I've read that from the pen of someone I now can't recall and looked at their list. I would encourage anyone interested in this topic to attempt to get the list and form their own opinion about the validity of the 100 vs. the 40.

Horace Butler

1 month ago
Another factor to be considered is the fact that Carbon-14 has a half life of a little over 5000 years. This means there should be no detectable Carbon-14 in dinosaur bones that are supposedly millions of years old. And yet the Carbon-14 is present.

Horace, is this your endorsement of the reliability of the Carbon-14 dating method?

Hardly! I'm just pointing out that, based on current theory, the dinosaurs (and other creatures buried in the same strata) are so old that there should be no C-14 in the specimens. That fact that it is found in these fossils, should cause a honest scientist to re-examine the methods used to date these things.

OK. I thought you were saying that since there is C-14 in these bones, they had to be relatively young, (That's a C-14 method result.) but since we know that the bones are very old, there must be a problem with the dating method. By the way, in your most recent post, you wrote that it was a fact that C-14 "is found in these fossils." C-14 is not found in fossils.

Then we are reading 2 different versions of this. What I have read indicates that C-14 is found in fossils. One of us has faulty information.

OK. I'm probably wrong. There could be organic material trapped inside a fossil.

Horace, Your right. Here's a very recent example of C-14 found in a fossil.

"Microspectroscopic Evidence of Cretaceous Bone Protein"

Reference: www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0019445

To be honest, the authors wrote "Likewise, the amount of finite carbon was exceedingly small, corresponding to 4.68%±0.1 of modern 14C activity"
(yielding an age of 24 600 BP), and most likely reflect bacterial activity near the outer surface of the bone"

This will be an interesting story to follow over the next few years.

Gailon Arthur Joy
1 month ago
Reply

Just another example of intellectual arrogance...an atheistic macroevolutionist perpetuating the premise that only a human mind of progressive intellectual capacity can truly read rocks and undermine the established, biblically based theology that has for generations been built upon one divinely inspired text upon another to establish "THE TRUTH" from a document that clearly and precisely records human history. And is now even further enlightened by the prophetic gift of Ellen G. White, who wrote more in her lifetime to inspire humanity with the GLORIFICATION OF GOD than our pseudo intellectual can clearly comprehend.

Ervin Taylor
1 month ago
Reply

As usual, Mr. Read totally misunderstands or misreads the geochronological literature. To state that "radiometric dating was, is, and will continue to be, an essentially superfluous add-on to the index fossil dating method" is so misleading and incorrect that anyone with even a passing knowledge of the field must conclude that, if this represents the level of his knowledge, anything that Mr. Read says about this topic can be ignored. If his comments illustrate and represent the level of understanding that Young Life Creationists have of geochronology, no wonder they are totally ignored by the mainline scientific community.

David Read
1 month ago
Reply

I can't imagine anyone actually reading the "geochronological literature" other than for laughs. There's no science or logic to at all. It consists entirely of the confirmation of prior expectations, and when those expectations aren't confirmed--and despite everyone's best efforts they very frequently are not--then the excuse-making starts, and that's when it is good for laughs.

Doctorf
2 weeks ago
Reply

David,

Really? Just confirmation of prior expectations? No measurements? Don't know what literature you are reading.

Ervin Taylor
1 month ago
Reply

Mr. Read's comments are just revealing more and more about his misunderstandings. Just as an
exercise, I wonder if he could point to or quote anyone at the SDA Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) who agrees with him that "there is no science or logic ... to all" to the geochronological literature." This is going to be fun. (By the way, remember that the GRI is the official SDA General Conference organization filled with orthodox Adventist creationists).

Horace Butler

The radiometric dating methods are notoriously flawed, but this fact is conveniently ignored by those who are afraid to be out of harmony with "established" scientific theories.

Ervin Taylor

I see that Mr. Read is not the only seriously misinformed individual. Mr. Butler also wishes to reveal his misunderstandings as well. Radiometric dating methods are "notoriously flawed" in the view only of those who do not like the implications of what the well-established results indicate about the age of this planet and of life upon it. Like Mr. Read, I would ask Mr. Butler to quote a current member of the GRI who would state that the science behind all radiometric dating methods is "notoriously flawed." This should be very interesting.

Horace Butler

As if the GRI was the final court of arbitration. The assumption that the rate of radioactive decay has remained constant is untenable. It can't be proved and there is plenty of evidence to show that it has not remained constant. This makes all the dating methods that rely on radiometric dating highly suspect. One example is lava flows that are less than 200 years old, but which have been dated by the potassium-argon method at up to 3,000,000,000 years old. Then there is the assumption that the original rocks (or fossils) contained only parent atoms in the beginning. That cannot be known. I won't cite references because they will be immediately discounted as spurious, given the pro-evolutionary biases of the majority on this supposed Adventist website.

Ervin Taylor

If Mr. Butler fears answers from the SDA GC GRI, who does he thinks will tell him the truth about the science behind geochronology?

Roscoe Fogg

Mr Butler,
Measuring the age of a 200 year old lava flow using potassium-argon dating is like timing a 100 yard dash with a sundial. The method is inappropriate and useful results are not expected.

As far as changing decay rates are concerned, here's an interesting observation. Supernova 1987a was 170,000 light years away. Nickel-56, was produced in the detonation. The nickel-56
decays away relatively quickly with a half-life of 6.1 days into cobalt-56, which in turn decays with a half-life of 77.1 days. The distinctive gamma rays given off in those decays were detected. The amount of those gamma rays died away with exactly the expected half-life. Looking out into space is looking back in time. The half-life of cobalt-56 was the same 170,000 years ago as it is today.

Horace Butler

The skeptics always have an explanation, one that will deny the validity of Biblical chronology. So be it.

Not sure what your point is about the half life of cobalt-56. That's one example. I've read of other examples (can't remember off the top of my head) where decay rates have been shown to be variable. I have no problem with the age of the universe. It's the age of the earth that is in question here. Since God has always existed, one has to consider the possibility that parts of the universe are even much older than the age given by atheistic scientists.

Jack Hoehn

Horace, I've been reading my Bible for about 60 years now, and somehow I've missed the dates in Bible texts? Does your version of Genesis come with dates? I've been under the impression that the Chronology of Bible events was a Victorian gentleman's hobby, based on assumptions and speculations. Now I enjoy assumptions and speculations, and appreciate a good argument in the parlor as much as anyone. But I think it is rather dangerous to mistake my guesses and opinions about Bible dates (chronology) with the same authority as the Bible text itself, don't you?

Therefore it often seems to me that defending any chronology of Bible events, short term or long term, is really defending my opinions or my speculations, or my deductions about the topic, which is different from defending the Bible.

I am prepared fight to the martyrs stake to defend, "In the beginning God created the sky and the land." But I am not ready to base my salvation on a date for "In the beginning" on an opinion first popularized by an Irish Bishop sitting in Dublin, 17 centuries after the Bible itself was completed! Do you get my point?

Horace Butler

Maybe I should have been clearer in my presentation. No, the Bible obviously doesn't come with dates, but archaeological evidence doesn't permit a flood that is much more than about 4500 years ago. This is also in harmony with what Ellen White said. And contrary to the attitude of many here, I do not believe she was a "product of her times." She either wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or she did not. If she did, we best pay heed; if not, then we might as well join any church, since the SDA Church loses its uniqueness and becomes just another wrinkle in the fabric of Christianity--except for those who believe it's a cult, of course.
Not knowing what conditions prevailed before the flood, any suppositions based on today's radioactive decay rates (while knowing that they are not always constant) is fraught with uncertainties. But we remained entrenched in our positions. So be it. The truth will come out in the end.

The premise that the present is the key to the past is the underpinning of old earth theories. I believe that when trying to date events that occurred so long ago, it is a dubious premise, at best. It is the premise that leads to the belief that there was death before sin, when Scripture clearly states the opposite. It would never envision a Garden of Eden or an earth where rain never fell. We humans are reluctant to admit that there are things about the earth that we cannot understand, no matter how much science we use in our attempts.

**Thomas "Vastergotland"**

4 weeks ago  

Horace, could you tell more about these archaeological evidences you refer to? According to wikipedia, the written record reaches approximately 1500 years further into time, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recorded_history, and buildings that are even older have been found. Parts of Jericho for instance are dated to 7825 BC. Therefore I am wish to learn of the evidence you mentioned. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wall_of_Jericho

**Doctorf**

2 weeks ago  

Horace,

You say Ellen White either wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit or not. So where did she get the inspiration for much of her plagiarism? Also she claims to have observed the creation of the solar system with her "heavenly guide" while in vision. You believe that? Claims such as that suggest some psychiatric issues. If she were alive today making these claims I suspect she would have been placed at the LLU Behavioral institute. Its a nice label for the psychiatric ward.

**Vernon P. Wagner**

1 month ago  

Jack, your point is understood by all with an open mind. Sadly, an uncommon trait amongst true believers.

**Roscoe Fogg**

1 month ago  

Horace,

You said that you read of examples of decay rates that have been shown to be variable. Let's be generous and say they may vary by 10%, then the age of a particular formation is 54 million years rather than 60 million years. Does that help?
Ervin Taylor 1 month ago Reply

Mr. Fogg's comment is spot on. Actually, I am told that, in fact, some decay rates have been observed to be variable but, by at most, a few percent. But let's go with 10% I would ask Mr. Butler the same question that Mr. Fogg did, does having a fossil bearing layer be 54 million rather than 60 million years old help?

Ervin Taylor 1 month ago Reply

I keep missing some interesting comments of Mr. Butler: For example he said "The Bible obviously doesn't come with dates, but archaeological evidence doesn't permit a flood that is much more than about 4500 years ago" I'm curious as to what "archaeological evidence" he could cite that does not permit a flood (what kind of flood?) older than 4500 years ago?.

Horace Butler 1 month ago Reply

You know very well which flood I was talking about. Maybe I should turn the question around and ask, where is the evidence for The Flood (you know, the one that covered the whole earth) having occurred longer ago than about 4500 years? It is paltry, at best, and based on assumptions that cannot be verified.

Ella M. 1 month ago Reply

Irv or other: I am not a scientist though do some reading in the astro and quantum physics areas which seem very supernatural to me.

A question: The polar caps of planets tend to be cold; ours is covered with ice. Yet there are fossils there that show it was once tropical, I have read, some are fantastically perserved. How did the change occur from warm to ice? Even with the idea of an asteroid hitting earth and bringing on an ice age, I don't understand how a planet's polar regions could ever be warm (with current rotations in relation to the sun). I know this is getting off the subject, but can I get an answer?

Kevin Seidel 1 month ago Reply

It isn't a single factor that causes the changes. Some of the factors are:

The positions of the continents preventing ocean currents from exchanging heat between the equator and the poles.
Levels of green house gases.
Solar output.
Changes in earth's orbit.

Although I'm not a geologist or paleontologist, I would be happy to respond to the reasonable question of Ella M. My understanding is that fossils of the types of animals which now live in warm zones have been recovered from polar regions. Studies of geomagnetism in rocks combined with geochronological data from several methods have concluded that over geological time measured in hundreds of millions of years, various continents have moved great distances on the earth's surface. Areas which were once in tropical regions where warm adapted animals lived and died have slowly moved into areas which are now polar zones. With regard to an asteroid impact on earth, there is evidence that there was a major impact some 69 million years ago which was responsible for major changes in flora and fauna including in the view of many scientists who have studied this, the extinction of the dinosaurs. Others dispute some of the conclusions and explain the extinction of the dinosaurs by other means. My geology and paleontology colleagues tell me that there is a large literature on all of this and the details are still being debated. I hope this very short explanation helps.

Ella,

Those points are spot on. Something I found really fascinating was regarding heat exchange between the poles and equator.

If you do a google search on "circumpolar currents", and then look at google earth and find Drakes Passage on the southern tip of South America you will get an amazing look at how the land forms are shaped by the current.

The theory is that this land tip was once joined to the south pole. At that time the currents could not circulate around the pole, but were forced up into warmer waters, when they made their way back "south" they came back warm, and changed the climate down "south".

When this gap that you will see on google earth opened up the circumpolar current began. It moves at about 4 kmh. and acts as a barrier to warm waters making their way south.

On google earth, zoom to the south pole and around, you will soon see the massive channel (700 kms wide) and swept pattern showing the current flow.

Actually just did a check...its more like 900 kms wide, and up to 4 kms deep. You will get your best view of it with a google earth altitude of 5000 kms!

I did research once how much water in km3 passed through there every hour...its phenomenal.
Also, you will see the "wash" where land mass has been eroded as the current widened the gap. Continental drift is also a key player.

While I use the words "theory" above, such a view gives very compelling evidence that it was indeed once closed off. Probably until about 40 kyrs ago.

Anonymous

1 month ago

40 mya not 40 kyrs ago.

Darrel Lindensmith

1 month ago

I think I agree with most what you say in your review Dr. Ervin, but with David, I find your thought that "The core of the scientific impulse in Western scientific thought, almost from its inception, sought to express no opinion on the subject of the supernatural — it neither rejected nor accepted the existence of God." This is the standard boilerplate, and might be the ivory tower clinical truth, but not a historical reality.

As George Gaylord Simpson, the leading neo-Darwinist a generation ago stated, "Man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned." *The Meaning of Evolution*, pg. 344.

As the late Stephen Jay Gould, wrote: "Before Darwin, we thought that a benevolent God had created us," after Darwin, "biology took away our status as paragons created in the image of God." *Ever Since Darwin*, pg. 33, 147 and 267.

As Kenneth Miller and Joseph Levine explained in the fourth edition of their popular textbook, Biology. They explain that evolution is "random and undirected" and occurs "without plan or purpose." *Biology* pg. 658 (these words were deleted in later editions)

As Douglas Futuyma’s biology test puts it: "By coupling undirected, purposeless variation to the blind, uncaring process of natural selection, Darwin made theological or spiritual explanations of the life processes superfluous." *Evolutionary Biology*, pg. 5.

The concept that evolutionary science carries with it a truly objective epistemology is completely false.

Elaine Nelson

1 month ago

If science considered supernatural events, how should that be done? How can a supernatural event be examined or studied? By it very essence, it is a one-time phenomenon and cannot be replicated.

Which religious concept should replace or override the scientific discoveries? Mormonism? Islam? Animists? We expect that, of course, it should be Christianity as the accepted explanation. Should that explanation then be taught in the schools? Would that not immediately conflict with the First Amendment?

The scientists that believe in God do not necessarily all hold the same explanations for creation and most have found that their scientific studies do not contradict their faith. It appears that it is
Adventists who find such a view so troubling. If one believes that the story told in Genesis was never intended as a scientific explanation of Creation why must literal acceptance rather than metaphor be the only acceptable account? Why not the story in Genesis 2, which is quite different in the order of creation? Does that imply that unless it is the defined 6-day account it cannot be Creationist? Cannot one believe that God created this world without humans limiting the time and process?

If "evolutionairy science is completely false in claiming objectivity, is the Creationist's explanation the only objective explanation?

Roscoe Fogg

Darrel, I think the quotes you gave to support your conclusion are statements that address questions that a philosopher of biology might ask, not a biological scientist. (Of course, the same person, e.g. Gould, may participate in both arenas of discourse.) I think it's important to make a distinsion between the questions a scientist asks and the questions a philosopher of science asks? What do you think?

Darrel Lindensmith

Yes, I would say this is true Roscoe. But these and more are all biological scientist. And they are not asking questions but making statements--supposed emperical conclusions. And I don't fault them being made. I think they are logically consistent conclusions, given the complete naturalistic assumptions they are based on. I will take an honest Dawkins over an equivicating Dr. Whoever any time. Evolutionary philosophically might be an "undirected process," but the science itself is certainly not undirected; it is goal oriented.

David Read

The statements that Darrell has quoted are philosophical conclusions. They are not the end result of any scientific investigation. If one begins with an irrebutable presumption that God did not create us, one can scarcely end with any other conclusion than that God didn't create us. But both statements are philosophical statements; science, understood as the investigation of external phenomena, was never involved. The statement that God did not create us is not in any sense a conclusion of science, if "science" is defined to mean a method of investigation of external phenomena. It is merely a philosophical statement.

Just to make clear how mainstream science conceives of the philosophical underpinnings of its enterprise, I give you this quote from Richard Lewontin's 1997 review of Sagan's "Demon Haunted World":

"It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori
adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door."

Obviously, if you begin with a militant refusal to even consider non-material explanations, you're never going to reach supernatural conclusions, such as that God created.

Elaine Nelson

1 month ago  Reply

Obviously, if you rely on supernatural events to explain all of creation, then there will never be a need for scientific exploration. Supernatural needs no study as it can neither be explored, studied or explained, but merely believed. This makes all of scientific study worthless if one accepts the Bible as the last word of all science. Is there another possibility?

Darrel Lindensmith

1 month ago  Reply

"If "evolutionary science is completely false in claiming objectivity, is the Creationist's explanation the only objective explanation?"

Elaine, I would say 'objectivity' is a myth. It is completely a left brain fairytale. We can not be completely objective, and if we think about it, we wouldn't want to be. Of course I am using the word "objective" as the Logical Positivist would use it. And I know that's not what you mean. But really, the whole reality of reality is far too complex for just the left brain to be able to grasp and so I believe God created us with two brains that can analyze things using different criteria. Psyche and Science are not totally separate domains.

But to answer your question, yes I believe it is far far more objective to believe the creator designed life on this planet. I would agree with Albert Einstein in "The World As I See It" that the harmony of natural law "Reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection."

Elaine Nelson

1 month ago  Reply

Yes, I understand there is no such thing as total objectivity. But we choose which of several theories which makes the most sense to us personally. And just as we have personal choices of our friends, spouse, vocation and many other areas of life, we must decide which meets the best theory in our minds; and the only way we can make any choice is through our thinking mind. Thank God, we don't all think alike and all have different requirements to satisfy our rational mind. Vive le diference!

The world is a far more interesting place simply because we all do have other ideas, and that allows us to grow and listen if we have never listened to and questioned new ideas, we remain...
stunted with no room to grow and develop. Children are inherently curious; should adults never be curious of new ideas? There is so much of the world to be discovered and to believe we have learned all that is necessary is to die a slow death, IMHO.

Darrel Lindensmith

Amen!

Stephen Foster

Now, does this being open to new ideas stuff apply to the atheist as well? Should an atheist evolutionary scientist likewise be open the idea that there is a supernatural explanation for that which cannot be proven about the origin of life on earth as we now know it?

Is such openness necessary for them to grow, or avoid dying a slow death?

I cannot decipher if Darrell Lindensmith agrees with George Gaylord Simpson or Albert Einstein. Did they somehow agree with each other? Their statements certainly appear contradictory to me.

You are right Elaine, at least insofar as this Adventist is concerned; reconciling a belief in a benevolent, omniscient, Creator as described—and introduced—in the Bible, with a disbelief of the Biblical narrative of earth origins is problematic, if not impossible.

The “process,” or more germane, the six-day timing is integral to belief in the Biblical God. It doesn’t make sense to believe some things about the God of the Bible and not to believe others. Such is logically incongruous and intellectually incoherent. It is the mother of all copouts.

Elaine Nelson

Have scientists now all become "atheistic evolutionary scientists"? Do we now denigrate anyone who is a scientist or studies or teaches any subject in that very wide discipline?

How does one become a medical "scientist" without first spending a number of years in the prerequisite scientific studies? Do we want our physicians to be trained as they were 100 years ago, much like their first predecessors, barbers? Does scientific advancement automatically incur the label of "atheism"? Why such a tirade against scientists? Should we still rely on all the Bible's scientific theories that were widely propagated thousands of years ago? Why, or why not if the Bible is the last word on science? Do we not pick and choose which areas of science are "kosher" and which are rejected? Are Adventists very inconsistent in their subject evaluation of science?

David

According to Erv, Dr Canale’s conclusions “are profoundly problematic… reactionary and
retrogressive… which is **fatally** trapped to a historically American 19th century conceptual package”.

Erv the master of suggestions like: “may I”, “might” now he uses affirmatives like “is **fatally**”. I don’t know where is getting his statistics to show or predict the fatalistic future of the main stream SDA church in North America. As far is known the SDA in North America is growing more that any other traditional protestant church.

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**David**

Is Erv proposing a bright future for SDA Church only accepting the theory of evolution? Erv are you serious?

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**Ervin Taylor**

I am suggesting that if the kind of retrogressive Adventism as espoused and communicated by the current president of the General Conference of SDA continues for more than a couple of decades, Adventism will eventually stop growing in the First World. It is well known that it is currently growing in North America almost entirely due to the influx of members from Latin America. This process will take at least another generation to work itself out and then a decline will begin in the NAD. The prediction of those studying Adventist demographics is that by the end of this century Anglo Adventism membership will drop below 5%. At that point, the General Conference would probably be better off in moving its headquarters either to Latin America or Africa to be nearer its primary constituent populations. It is impossible to predict how North American Adventism and specifically the current flagship educational and medical institutions will react. There probably will be a repeat of what has happened in other denominations when church authorities lost touch with and then lost control of their higher education institutions. I’m kind of sorry I will not be around to witness what will actually happen.

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**Stephen Foster**

Wow! Imagine the General Conference eventually moving its headquarters to Latin America or Africa to be nearer to its main constituent groups!

Somehow I get the impression—and correct me if I’m wrong—that you are implying that this trend of demographic change is an ominous sign of institutional weakness.

It appears that in the so-called First World, “Anglo Adventism” has been in numerical stagnation, if not decline, for some time. When I wrote a blog along these lines upon noticing this reality (“The Pink Elephant in the Room”), I was greeted with a “so, what’s new…where have you been?” reaction, that I did not anticipate.

So, the answer to this “problem,” and it is a challenge, is to embrace evolutionary science and not to take the Bible so seriously, and certainly not literally? The next thing you know, we’ll be asked to not believe the historical Adventist eschatological hype.
Let’s see now, if we abandoned the six-day creation, seventh-day rest model, and the imminent Second Advent model, we might need to change our name.

Doctorf  2 weeks ago  Reply

Stephen,

One can take the bible seriously without taking everything literally. There is truth in "stories" even if they are not literal. Erv's point is well taken as the GC no longer "controls" institutions like LLU. Just had a nice seminar at LLU on the origins of autism from genetic mutations of a particular protein found in glutamate synapses from Dr Walokonis educated at Walla Walla and PhD at Mayo. He now is at Univ of Connecticut. He discussed in his talk about the evolutionary conservation of particular receptors proteins conserved down to the phylum. Once again the prediction of evolutionary theory is that if a gene is necessary for life it will be conserved holds true. He did not learn that at any SDA institution but as I talked with him about his research he pointed out that he came out of the SDA dark ages because of his education which began at Walla Walla. He still regards himself as an SDA but no longer defends the "official" position of the church on origins or age of the earth.

Horace Butler  1 month ago  Reply

Well said, Stephen. The arrogance of North American Adventists is astounding--as if they had the corner on understanding Scripture. This became quite transparent at the GC session in Utrecht, a number of years ago. The reasons for decline in the so-called "First World" are obvious, if Mr. Taylor would analyze them carefully. Does the term "Laodicea" mean anything to anyone? It describes the church in North Americal and Europe perfectly. In the so-called "Third World," where they recognize their poverty, nakedness, and wretchedness, they see their need of the gospel and the only solutions to life's problems. And their faith is simple enough to accept the Bible as it was written, not as it was interpreted by theologians who have more faith in science, so-called, then in Scripture.

David  1 month ago  Reply

Erv you are referring to SDA church’s future with almost mathematical certainty. (hum…)

According to you the solution is accept the evolution to fill-up the churches with Anglo-American member…. really?
Just a quick look to see how successful are other Christian churches that adopted the evolution, not impressive, members are living them. You can have even the “*pithecanthropus erectus*” given be the sermon and the churches still be as they are now.
Ironically in NA the “Anglo “ Christians churches with more attendances are the ones who accept the literal 6 days creation. (go and see you live close to one of them “Grace to You” by John Mac Arthur) or just look the television of the so call Christian channels.
Roscoe Fogg

The Church should not endorse, accept or reject any scientific theory. That's not its business and it's not good at it.

Horace Butler

I would qualify that by saying that, while the church should not be in the business of endorsing scientific theory, it is certainly within its proper sphere when it rejects theories that are contrary to Scripture.

Roscoe Fogg

Care should be taken to remember the long sad history of the Christian church rejecting scientific theories based on its interpretation of scripture. In the end, after centuries, the Church was forced by the weight of the evidence, to reinterpret scripture and apologize to the persecuted. We'll see.

Ervin Taylor

Mr. Fogg is absolutely correct. It is indeed a sad commentary. First the church says that something is absolutely contrary to Scripture. A generation goes by and then the "something" can be understood in different ways. Another generation goes by and the church says "you know, this "something" is not that important. Another generation and the church says, we never really thought that it was contrary to Scripture in the first place (and hope that no one reads history books). Actually, when you think about it, it's both sad and funny at the same time. (I might note that in some cases, there is a retrogressive reaction such as the Adventist Church is currently in. We will just have to wait out the present GC administration. It is a temporary throwback.)

Darrel Lindensmith

Without reservation I believe God created all life on this planet. At one time I was a solid evolutionary theist, but more education into the details of biology, especially genetics, showed me the complexity of these systems, (especially now with the new field of 'epigenetics' being illucidated) leaves no room for any naturalistic union with God in a philosophy of science.

As Shaw stated: "Darwinism seems simple, because you do not at first realize all that it involves. But when its whole significance dawns on you, your heart sinks into a heap of sand within you. There is a hideous fatalism about it, a damnable reduction of beauty and intelligence, of strength and purpose, of honor and aspiration." George Bernard Shaw  *Back to Methuselah* 1921
I would say then as George Gaylord Simpson states, "Man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned," evolution by definition is a destructive philosophy and as science progresses is becoming empirically falsified.

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**David**

1 month ago

If macroevolution was or is a reality or a fact, I’ll believe it. What prohibits me to do so, is not my faith, is my mind, my rationality, my education. *The fundamental cornerstone of this theory (mutations makes us better) actually disproves macroevolution.* The evidence of mutations been deleterious and lethal is overwhelming; every single day I see patients suffering, lives terminated before expectancy because of mutations. I saw thousands of parents crying because their babies had a disease produced by mutations. Until now never was has been demonstrated that a mutation makes us better. It will be so nice so said to mother your baby has this mutation therefore he will be more intelligent, stronger or live until he is 120 year old.

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**Elaine Nelson**

1 month ago

It has already been recognized that Adventism in first world countries is on the decline. If education is the cause, perhaps we should revert to the 19th century when an 8th grade education was usually the highest level achieved.

It will not be disastrous if Adventism moves southward to its larger base. That could be a wise decision. Although Adventism originated in the U.S. there is no right nor reason that it should remain here, particularly when it is dwindling compared to third world countries. The loser in this equation remains to be seen; however, I believe that the U.S. is still the largest financial supporter of the SDA institution at present. How such a move would affect this present situation is anyone’s guess.

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**Preston Foster**

4 weeks ago

Elaine,

Adventism is the FASTEST growing religion in the U.S. It is not "dwindling." It is simply growing FASTER in other countries around the world. You will have to spin much harder to sell this story line.


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**Elaine Nelson**

4 weeks ago

Adventist Today : A Sophisticated Adventist Apologetic for Young Life... http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=855&action=print

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Do these figures also include those members whose names are still on the books, but haven't attended the SDA church in 20 or more years? Many churches retain names on the books for more than 20 years, so how can these ever be recorded?

**Preston Foster**
4 weeks ago  Reply

All I can tell you, Elaine, is what I see. My former church in Atlanta sold its church (seating 850), bought the church across the street (seating 1,275). It now owns BOTH churches and needs a larger one.

My present church in Huntsville (seating 700) has TWO services and is buying a new church (seating 1451). In Huntsville, there are two other churches with similar congregations. If you don't get to church on time, you will be seated in the overflow.

This growth is not a function of "carrying people on the books." It's about preaching, teaching, feeding, loving, and allowing the Holy Spirit to call His children home. It's about baptizing 30-50 people per month. No dry bones here!

The Spirit is alive and working among those who seek him.

**Elaine Nelson**
4 weeks ago  Reply

Preston, that is good news. Would that all towns could have the same results. What I would like to see: the new members counted (that is always done) as well as those who haven't attended in 20 years. Not counting those who have "walked away" gives a far different picture of the actual "growth." If a conference has grown by 12,000 in a specific time but in the period of time it has lost 6,000, what are the true growth numbers? Members are rarely dropped unless they request it; otherwise, unless someone reads the obits, even the deaths may not be counted.

**Ervin Taylor**
4 weeks ago  Reply

Elaine puts her finger on the reason that any GC probably will not initially wish to move out of the United States. It's quite simple actually--it's called money. With a large unfunded liability in pensions--it requires a predictable cash flow to operate. That currently can only happen in the United States. As soon as formally Third World countries such as Brazil can get their economies going and thus a predictable cash flow going for the local Adventist church with large membership, the economics will make sense. And where is the largest concentration of Adventists per capita in the world (outside of Pitcarn Island)--it is Brazil. It's all a matter of resources, i.e., money.
1. Elaine Adventism is not in decline in USA. To the contrary is increasing more than any other traditional protestant religion!
2. To blame to high education in the decline not only to Adventism but also to all Christianity is misleading; they are other more powerful factors. Like materialism, instant gratification, pleasures among others.
3. If you look were carefully you will notice that genuine Christianity grows where is adversity.
4. We are so distracted with some things that we do not practice the essence of Christianity, The day we do so Christianity will flourish again.
5. By the standards of the secular education I’m accomplished individual, but I was attracted to SDA message because a person lived such joyful and faithful live.

Ervin Taylor 4 weeks ago  Reply

I wonder if David could please enlighten us as to what he views as "the essence of Christianity?"

David 4 weeks ago  Reply

Erv I'll  barrow from Paul "faith, hope and love"

Ervin Taylor 4 weeks ago  Reply

Great. Glad to hear that it doesn't include IJ and Young Life Creationism. There is indeed hope.

David 4 weeks ago  Reply

Also I hope we the faith we have is the one described in Hebrews 11, then for sure we HOPE.

David 4 weeks ago  Reply

Also I hope we the faith we have is the one described in Hebrews 11, then for sure we have HOPE.

Kevin Riley 4 weeks ago  Reply

David, I agree that there are other factors apart from education, and they are perhaps more important in explaining the decline of Christianity in the Western world. But, virtually all forms of Christinity are in decline in the US. The areas of growth are on the edges - both edges, actually, not just the conservative edge. Much of that growth is composed of immigrants, without whom
all forms of Christianity would be in decline, not just in the US but across the Western world. The number of native born members is decreasing, not only as absolute numbers but as percentages of the population, in Western Adventism as much as in other forms of Christianity. As Adventism becomes increasingly a second or third generation movement we see the same losses in other areas of the world. The question of why we cannot hold most of our members beyond the second generation is one we cannot afford not to answer.

Kevin
That is a good question that is not easy to answer, in my limited understanding I will attempt only to suggest the following points. Others wiser than me probably will have more complete suggestions.

Why people are initially attracted to Christianity? because responds to the great need that we have, is fulfilling, gives us faith, hope and love.
The favorable response of immigrants to Christianity is not something new. Has been occurring for many years (example few years ago the positive response to Adventism of the German immigrations in both north and south America).

Why in the second o third generation we don’t see that consistency? Why in some homes still after the four-generation are active participants of their faith? What was the difference? This could be multifactorial but let me suggest a couple of things.
a. Maybe at home the 2 or 3 generations are seeing a “gap”?
b. What a bout how is presented the valuables trues of Bible? The PK the 2 or 3 generations have been hearing this trues since infancy. I have to admit that some of the ones who are preaching or teaching are so ill prepare or they present in such a predictable manner that there is not the element of surprise that Jesus used in his days.

Elaine Nelson
Too many kids, including PKs have heard little of the Gospel and much more of behaviors, which are over-emphasized to the neglect of the true meaning of being saved. Especially, for those who attend SDA schools all their lives, that is driven home so repeatedly, that even if other truths were presented, those "necessary" requirements of behavior are long lasting, and too well remembered.

Ask any student in SDA schools K-16 what is largely remembered about that experience.

David
Elaine I don’t know too much about this subject but coming from you, a PK, I’ll take very seriously your post and advice. I don’t know if any serious research was done. But any money invested trying to differedenced the responses between this groups is well used. This may help for future generations in all part of the world.
Elaine Nelson  
4 weeks ago  

A survey of older PKs might be a worthy subject for questioning. While losing young people is more important, but to the extent that behaviors may have changed over the years, as young people may state entirely different reasons.

I have many friends in my age group who have left the church and most that have spoken, indicate it was not personal as they have many friends that are still Adventist, but they could not accept the doctrines and live up to the expectations and did not leave when they were young.

Perhaps this is the reason that new converts must continually be added to replace those who go out the back door.

David  
4 weeks ago  

Brazil a third world country? Brazil is not only soccer my friend! Brazil has stronger economy that Canada and Mexico put together. Is the larger producer of small and mid side airplanes. Is the only big country of the world that is self sufficiently in energy. They don’t talk of the national debt to the Chinese, or how they are going to pay it. If you go to the southern part of Brazil you will think you are in Germany. So that is the country with more SDA. Travel is culture

Ervin Taylor  
4 weeks ago  

It would be very interesting to read an analysis of the socio-economic profile of Adventists in Brazil. That should be very revealing.

David  
4 weeks ago  

Like in any other parts of the world, Adventists in Brazil are in different socioeconomic levels; some of them extremely wealthy and educated (at one time one of them owned the largest health insurance in the country another was a congressman) others are in the middle class and others are poor. The latter ones, thanks to the effective SDA school system in matter of few years are educated to at least college level.

In the last 10 years Brazil really jump up as a strong economy. I visit quiet often that country. Recently I was invited to give some lectures in Curitiva, I went to have a dinner in a regular restaurant, the bill was more expensive that I will pay in any 5 start restaurant in the luxurious city of Coral Gables, FL were I live. So be prepare if you planning to go visit Brazil.

David  
4 weeks ago  

A simple observation of Christianity and migration:
It started and Judea and Galilee, actually the firths Christian were Jews, thousands of them. While
the majority of Jews rejected and persecuted the new converts, Christianity move to other regions of Minor Asia, gradually to Italy and northern Africa. For a while was pretty much install in the southern part of European continent, gradually move in a dynamic way to central and northern part of that continent. They were the champions of Protestantism and great missioners came also from them. North America (USA) inherited that great tradition; this Great Country really contributed the preservation growth in the last centuries. Recently there are several intentions to diminish their influence, maybe that is why Christianity is flourishing in other parts of the earth. Somebody will carry on until the end of this world.

Now the ones we trust in prophesy (revelation 13 and 14) we know that USA will have a pivotal role in last days of this earth.

**Ervin Taylor**

4 weeks ago  Reply

I'm not sure I understand David's last sentence "Now the ones we trust in prophesy (revelation 13 and 14) we know that USA will have a pivotal role in last days of this earth." Could you please explain what you are attempting to say?

**David**

4 weeks ago  Reply

Erv reading your posts:

1. I recall that you have reservations in the books of Daniel and Revelation.
2. You may come from a SDA family or at least you went to PICU and probably took some lessons (Revelation) and you may be somehow familiar with basic prophecy.
3. If you have interest you may read some scholar books from LaRondelle, Paulien, and Stefanovic.
4. In your area lives and teach Jon Paulien, probably one of the best scholars in the book of Revelation not only in the SDA circles but also in Christianity of our days go see him.

**Ervin Taylor**

4 weeks ago  Reply

I have talked to Dr. Paulien a number of times and he and I have viewed together a football game at my residence, so I do not need to "go see him." I know what he thinks about the book of Revelation and he indeed is a well-respected scholar. I suspect that the problem is that you may not have read his books very carefully.

**David**

4 weeks ago  Reply

Erv good for you!
The next time you invite him again to your home to watch another football game ask him directly about chapter 11 of his book “What the Bible says about the end time”. Also may I suggest asking him where he got the main idea, and what he thinks in regard of little lady call Ellen.
Enjoy the footfall, pizza and the drinks

Seminary Student
4 weeks ago

Ervin, I would like to watch a game with you some day the only problem that I like the real football (soccer) Maybe one day I can learn why Dr. Taylor doesn't like the IJ doctrine, and what would you like to see in Adventism. Do you think that if we drop some of those doctrines the church would be better off?

Trevor Hammond
3 weeks ago

My impression from what I have gathered from Dr. Taylor’s views is that he would prefer that the entire church be dropped and we all march under the banner of Rome; but that is just my humble opinion of course. I could be wrong perhaps?
♥T

Ervin Taylor
3 weeks ago

Where did Mr. Hammond get the strange idea that I would "prefer that the entire [Adventist?] church . . . march under the banner of Rome." Very odd indeed--I sometimes wonder about how certain people pick up such off-the-wall ideas. Some of my colleagues are Roman Catholics and they are fine, upstanding Christians. I think that some Adventists I know could learn something from them. And I even know a member of the Jesuit order (No, it is not Clifford Goldstein! Where did that crazy idea come from?)

Richard Ludders
3 weeks ago

David,

You might want to read Sigve Tonstad's book: "Saving God's Reputation". He does not agree with some of Stefanovic's interpretation.

Elaine Nelson
3 weeks ago

Either take the official SDA position, or you might as well head for Roman Catholicism. Is this the only choice available?

Vernon P. Wagner
3 weeks ago

How about just heading for freedom from dogma, tradition, and clerical judgment? A study of how Christianity became institutionalized, and legalized by Theodosius I, and others may result in new perspectives.
David

Richard thanks for the suggestion i'll take a look into Tonstad's Book. The book of revelation has been one of my interest for long time.

Seminary Student

Richard , would you like to share some of the things that Tonsand doesn't agree with Stefanovic ? I have taken classes with Stefanovic . I think with Paulien there was a group of scholars who moved away from " historicism " when Paulien speaks about the trumpets and the seals , he doesn't give any explanation , he is an idealist interpreter . Interesting that before 1844 most of the protestants were " historicists " now they don't what they believe . Desmond Ford's heresies have affected some in Adventism .

Ervin Taylor

May I rephrase "Seminary Student's" comment about Dr. Ford: "Desmond Ford's reasonable and logical reviews of certain theological traditions including non-Biblicall Adventist theological concepts such as the Investigative Judgment have affected some in Adventism"

Horace Butler

We seem to have departed from the orginal topic, but at least we now know where you stand. I should have suspected it, I guess.

Ford's theology is clearly heretical and the IJ is clearly Biblical. Ford's teachings have caused confusion and are responsible for many people leaving the faith. That is a dubious legacy to leave behind. Your reference to Cliff Goldstein is interesting. His treatment of the IJ nails it down pretty well. And it really is "reasonable and logical." I expect your next queston will be whether or not I have read Ford's material. I don't study counterfeit money to be able to recognize the genuine article, so why should I study error in order to discern truth? The fact that he rejects the sanctuary doctrine is all I really need to know, since that doctrine is (as Goldstein says), easier to prove than the Sabbath.

Not much has changed since the time of Christ. The theologians tie their brains in knots and become confused (leading those who look to man for wisdom with them), while the laymen see the truth and accept it.

Ervin Taylor

Let me see if I understand Mr. Butler. Theologians who spend their entire scholarly career considering theological issues "tie their brains in knots and become confused." Laymen who
have no training in any relevant areas of knowledge "see the truth and accept it."

For anyone interested in understanding the concept of "anti-intellectualism," Mr. Butler's opinion here provides an excellent illustration of this concept.

Vernon P. Wagner  

The word 'heresy' means 'choice' in Latin. A 'heretic' is someone who 'chooses' to believe in something other than what is decreed by clergy. Yeshua (Jesus) referred to the clergy of His day as a generation of vipers...an opinion that was openly heretical. Frankly, I admire most heretics.

Horace Butler  

You've arrived at the truth, my friend. It was uneducated fishermen who were chosen by the Ruler of the universe to articulate the truths of the gospel to the world. The Jewish leaders looked down their noses at the ignorant peasants, but it was they, the "ignorant" peasants who grasped the truth, while the theologians murdered the Source of truth. I'm not sure that things have change that much. The Holy Spirit can teach an uneducated, non-intellectual more in a few moments than a theologian can learn on his own in a lifetime.

Thomas "Vastergotland"  

The arguably most important contributor in both the new and old testaments were very well educated; Paul and Moses. All books and letters of the bible were either written by the educated elite, or with the assistance of the educated elite (anyone being able to read and write would have been part of the elite).

Horace Butler  

The elitist mentality lives on. The apostles were educated at the feet of the Master, not at the schools of the rabbis. While Peter and John didn't write as much as Paul, their material is just as profound as that of other Biblical authors. Nothing wrong with a good education--as long as it doesn't go to one's head. Many years ago someone I know (who has a PhD) articulated to me a somewhat cynical view of education. BS=Bad Science; MS=More of the Same; PhD=Piled Higher and Deeper. Too often the highly educated can't see the forest for the trees.

Thomas "Vastergotland"  

That you have to thank some people with "Much""BadScience""PiledHigherandDeeper" for having the apostles texts in a format you can read, and people with "Much""BadScience" to thank for the fact that you can read in the first place is surely lost sight of in the just cause of discrediting everyone with "Much""BadScience""PiledHigherandDeeper" because some of them disagrees with you.
Ervin Taylor

I thank Mr. Butler for confirming my characterization of his views.

Elaine Nelson

Horace, we would never have guessed your astute intelligence: no need for an education as it may be too confusing: "God said it, I believe it, that settles it"

Trevor Hammond

'Intellectual Arrogance' is what characterizes much of what 'cultural liberals' within Christianity subscribe to even in many instances to the extent of arrogantly defying God. This is termed maturing...

The honorable reviewer, in fine rhetorical style, attempts to debunk the Historical Adventist position as just irrelevant outdated 19th century views YET the said reviewer clearly embraces the even older 18th century philosophical views posed by evolution theory. The reviewer then 'imports' the Adventist Theological Society into his review of Dr. Canale's work by saying they "represent a strong intellectualist counter movement to the progressive trends in Adventist theological scholarship". One cannot be blamed for then assuming that such views as held by the reviewer and those who label themselves as non-retrogressive is but only an attempt by cultural Adventism to erode the plain biblical teachings of Traditional Adventist beliefs. Herein possibly belies the true agenda of Canale's reviewer even to the point of intellectual arrogance in that the said reviewer emphasizes yet again that Canale's 'sophisticated' work (according to reviewer) shows that not all SDA 'fundamentalists' are "uninformed, uneducated, or intellectually challenged." The reviewer then takes a swipe yet again at ATS, citing them as further evidence of his claim that SDA 'fundamentalists' are "uninformed, uneducated, or intellectually challenged." Doesn't the reviewer by such wording pose a typical characterization of what constitutes Intellectual Arrogance. (In my humble opinion of course OR maybe I am reading it wrong perhaps, however, I do find strong support for what I say in this review).

It was not my intention to do a 'review' of the reviewers 'review' ☺. I should also point out too that Traditional Adventism DOESN'T need any sophisticated apologetics just to give it some credibility. The Holy Bible provides ample basis and credibility for Fundamental SDA Beliefs. Dr. Canale and others only reaffirm this. Sr. Ellen White points us to this Greater Light...

Seminary Student

very good points Trevor. Ervin when are you going to put the response of Dr. Canale, I only have 34 days until my subscription expires!
Ervin Taylor

It will go up following my next blog which is about Cliff Goldstein's latest AR article "The Room and the Light"

Elaine Nelson

Anti-intellectualism is alive and well in Adventism still. There always seems to have been a thread running from the earliest beginnings (quite uneducated founders) even today where those who have advanced degrees are denigrated. Why? If you learned to read, you were likely taught by a professional with at least one or more college degrees; the Bible you enjoy reading was translated by very educated men who were fluent in at least several languages. Can those who make fun of advanced learning read the Bible in both the original languages? As the saying goes: "if you can read this sentence, thank a teacher."

For those who wish to return to "That Old-Time Religion" it would either be the (feared) Roman Catholic Church, or Judaism. They are much older than the newer Adventists.

Trevor Hammond

I would respectfully disagree with what is implied: that Traditionalists are anti-intellectual. There are many well renowned intellectuals within Adventism who hold true to the fundamental teachings of our dynamic church. They don't however (in most cases) subscribe to pompous arrogant intellectualism. There is a big difference which liberals can't see through due to their shady compromised spectacles. Then there some sceptics and unbelievers who make the 'paper chase' a form of godliness and get a tad bit carried away with their academic achievements which has sadly gone to their heads...
♥

Elaine Nelson

Reading "Traditionalists" into what I wrote indicates a paranoia about those who are traditionalists? Repeat: anti-intellectualism is alive and well in Adventism still. No finger was pointed at any particular group. "If the shoe fits...."

Trevor Hammond

Ma'am your reference to 'old time religion' is a giveaway...
♥

Ervin Taylor

Paranoia is also alive and well in traditional Adventism. If you need a footnote to document that
statement, just read Mr. Hammond's postings.

Trevor Hammond 3 weeks ago Reply

Above a classic case of illogical assumption by both the illustrious Mrs. Nelson and the honourable Dr. Taylor. First they say traditionalists can't think (in their usual posts). Then they say that paranoia is alive and well in traditionalism. Would they make up their minds? Paranoia does indicate thinking! Although I strongly disagree with them on both their illogical conclusions, I sympathize with those who fall victim to maturing cultural/liberal Adventism. I 'think' it does get to you! My ♥ felt sympathy is with you guys...we are praying for you. ♥T

Seminary Student 3 weeks ago Reply

Praying for those who agree and disagree with us is a good thing, we need to have a loving attitude and listen to those who disagree with us. I think this has been a problem in Adventism and in Christianity in general. Elaine and Ervin, as a seminary Student, I am always willing to learn and if there is evidence enough I change my views, I have done it before in several areas. would you be willing to do the same? have you changed your views before or you are just settled and don't want to listen to "anti intelectuals". If progressives and "conservative" adventists build their fences and are not willing to listen to each other we are not going to get anywhere.

Elaine Nelson 3 weeks ago Reply

I have always been willing to hear new views, demonstrated by changing almost entirely my religious views that had been held for more than half a century. Does that indicate a closed mind? I continually study and am open to better and new ideas, but they must be rational, persuasive, and not merely personal opinions.

Often when people change views, they may not always be seen better. Each individual sees differently, and if a need is felt to persuade someone to another view, it should be based on logic and indisputable facts.

Ella M. 3 weeks ago Reply

Elaine: I don't think anyone is entirely logical in their choices--they are always influenced by experience, stereotypes (some more than others), and even facts are interpreted differently. We only think we are using logic. By your examples over time, I would suggest your reading is more limited to one view than you want to admit. Have you read Desire of Ages recently? How can one disagree with material that is totally devotional and uses so much of the Bible (regardless of whether it's original or not)--it is the content that is important and how it is lived.

David from Florida: I would like to suggest the book SECRETS OF REVELATION as the best book I have read on Revelation (by Jacques B Doukhan of Andrews University). As a Jewish
A scholar he presents the book as it was understood by its contemporaries—the symbolism was not unknown to them and was written for a Jewish audience.

Trevor and SS: I feel like you use too much labeling of us. I would not fit into any of your categories but have elements of being progressive, evangelical, traditional, liberal, conservative—I'm all of them. I suspect that is most people here.

David 3 weeks ago  Reply

Ella M. thanks for the suggestion I have also that book!

Trevor Hammond 3 weeks ago  Reply

That Jesus should come to die for a reprobate world like ours and display such immense love to an undeserving sinner such as I (even the chief of sinners) is incomprehensible yet very REAL. I bow in awe to such omnipotent love which is beyond nationality and rationality and clearly defies the much sought after logic of man and his carnal thinking capacity. Christ’s death on the cross defies all logic: for even while we were yet sinners he died on the cross for our sins. He taught - love your enemies, to good to those that hate you, bless those that curse you... contrary to what human logic would teach.

Even to leave the portals of glory and to condescend to our dying planet goes beyond rational explanation and logic in that He would come and be born of man. The cross is our 3D glasses which helps us SEE all this undeserving love and irrational compassion which, on His merits alone, you and I can RECEIVE such radical salvation by faith in Him who knew no sin.

As CREATOR he is more than able to create a new heart and renew a right spirit within us and empower us to walk victoriously as over-comers in newness of life and accept US as His children - the creatures of His hand. This salvation He offers freely to all just as he has given us all His creation to enjoy. To deny His authority as Creator by proposing evolution as an alternative 'rational' explanation for our origins is what is really an irrational and illogical attempt to defy Him in terms of ALL that He has done and IS doing for us. I would choose the GOSPEL OF CHRIST any day over the gospel of fossil. The Holy Bible over some journal on evolution philosophy...

The Church I belong to should represent this rationale even if ridiculed or belittled by some arrogant faction of intellectuals scheme they know better.

♥T

Seminary Student 3 weeks ago  Reply

Ella M, good points. I agree with you. I use those labels only because Elaine, Ervin etc would say they are progressives and they would label others as "traditionalists" I consider myself also progressive in some areas. I am against the perfectionist view last generation theology, I am against the view of Jesus having a "sinful nature" and all that Nonsense. I am for Women Ordination. I changed my view in those areas. In 1844 I have read both sides, I have all the books of Dr. Ford and also the Daniel and Revelation committee 7 volumes. As one of my Professors
used to say in my country, If I get to heaven and I don't see a sanctuary, am I going to be disappointed? Of course not. I think we have missed more important issues by debating on trivial issues. There are many in this world who are suffering from hunger and need our help and we are so busy debating and publishing books on these issues that we don't have time to bring the good news of giving something to eat to those who need our help. We think that Adra is enough, it is not enough. On the issues of creation, I believe Theistic evolution gives us a picture of God who creates through death and I cannot worship a god like that.

Elaine Nelson

When doctrine becomes more important than action, such an organization has evidence of dying. One cannot be attracted to doctrine, but one always admires those who are compassionate, aiding in the many who need help in multiple ways. Even for those of us who may not be physically able to offer this help, our donations enable others to be our "hands and feet." Those helped are usually not interested in one's religious beliefs, as they have been its partakers.

Ervin Taylor

Elaine is, of course, correct re what happens to churches when doctrine becomes more important than social action. However, the death of established religious organizations, at least in the modern world, is a very slow process measured in multiple centuries of slow decline. Rapid declines are the exception, but they do occur.

The most recent example is the Worldwide Church of God which came apart when the leadership made changes in theology much too rapidly. Unless the establishment that dominates the Adventist Church does something very, very stupid, and the cash flow to the bureaucracies are cut off, institutional Adventism will continue for hundreds of years still proclaiming that the end is very, very near.

For someone who knows the history of Adventism and asks how the church can continue decade after decade to say the end is near and wonder how it maintains any credibility, the answer is that it must keep the percentage of converts relatively high. New converts don't know the history and thus have no problem with such claims.

Elaine Nelson

It's like filling a bucket with water with a small hole in the bottom, the flow in is less than the flow out, but the flows must be constant to obtain equilibrium. Once either flow changes, it will be noticed and it may be too late to stem the flow. As the church ages, and the average age is now 52, unless new blood is constantly added (and it is largely overseas where this occurs), the small numbers who supply the largest funds, may eventually dry up. What then?
Ervin Taylor 3 weeks ago Reply

Elaine again has it right. When North American Division (NAD) Adventists figure out that they are paying 80% of the funds to maintain a "world church" but that world church ignores the needs of North America, one wonders how long it will be before the NAD will stop being the funding source for the "world church."

Horace Butler 3 weeks ago Reply

The "needs" of North America? The richest place on the planet? In spite of recent economic woes, we are much better off than most of the rest of the world, and it is in North America and western Europe where the gospel is being dumbed down the most and the Laodicean condition is most prominent. In the so-called third world they recognize their need of Christ and realize that they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Only when we in the affluent parts of the world learn that lesson will our true needs be met.

Doctorf 2 weeks ago Reply

Horace,

Your comment is exactly why I stopped paying tithe. The tithe money now goes my local SDA church where it can't be siphoned away by the GC.

Horace Butler 2 weeks ago Reply

I see the spirit of Christianity is alive and well in your mind. The SDA Church would have fractured years ago if we had a typical congregational system, which is what you seem to favor. Sounds very selfish to me. We, who are well off, have an obligation to those less fortunate. You apparently do not believe in spreading the gospel to the whole world. Tithe is for that very purpose, to be used for ministers, gospel workers, and missionaries, so they can get the message out. Keeping it in the local church prevents that to great extent. But that's between you and God.

Trevor Hammond 2 weeks ago Reply

Those who argue against, or excuse 'returning' a tithe, as well as those who chose to donate to a cause of their choice, see things very narrow mindedly. It does sound very selfish and congregationalist to me too. Perhaps I should mention that most Tradventists as opposed to Badventists refer to RETURNING tithe rather than 'paying'. I gues that those driven by consumerism will be more inclined to 'pay' tithe in order to receive 'their money's worth' of religion. Others just return tithe because they have more than their money's worth in Christ and 10% or more is an investment for eternity which they willingly return to the storehouse and do so WITHOUT reservation.

♥ T
Doctorf

Trevor,

The congregationalist system is being more openly discussed within our churches. Keeping money local allows for more responsible stewardship in my view. Elaine comments below with the legion of examples of misuse of tithe money by the GC to enrich a few individuals as opposed to "spreading the gospel." The gospel is spread through local efforts. So if I am a Badventist for such a proposal, so be it.

Trevor Hammond

Doctorf, I use 'badventists' tongue in cheek: not as in 'bad' for not returning tithes but rather those who 'bad mouth' Traditional Adventist belief, of which many will fit this category.

Regarding the congregationalist approach: I would be cautious, as many Sunday Churches have opted for this with disastrous results. Usually, from what I have seen, a power struggle eventually ensues (that's if someone isn't caught for sexual immorality of some sort), and the church splits. The 'golden rule' is strictly adhered to in these circumstances: that is, he who has the gold... rules.

The Seventh-day Adventist organisational structure is based on a worldwide competency model rather than just looking at it from the 'shades' of cultural American Adventism (the limited government approach).

I have to concede though, with regards to tithes, that it is your earnings after all and what you decide to do based on your belief is your prerogative. Somehow the thought of 'money makes people funny' did cross my mind for some reason but who am I to judge...

♥ T

Trevor Hammond

oh, and just one more thing: what will the local churches use the tithes for? New cushions for their splendid varnished pews to keep them more comfortable - 5-star church - hmm. I would dread to think how the Pastor or leader who gets paid in such a scenario will be pushed around by the resident congregational 'office bullies'. The extra cash he or she makes will probably go to pay for a shrink or a one way plane ticket as far away as one can get ☹ ...

♥ T

Kevin Riley
I have for a long time been curious why we picked up on the tithe for the Levites as an enduring command, but not the other two tithes. The Bible seems to treat them as a package. As originally set out, the first tithe went to the Levites, and then they paid a tithe of that to the priests. It was only much later that the decision was taken to have the tithe returned to the priests as the Levites proved to be corrupt. I am not arguing against tithing, just musing that it is interesting that we pick up on some aspects of it and make it obligatory, yet other aspects we completely ignore.

Elaine Nelson

2 weeks ago

Kevin,

There was never a command for Christians to tithe. That was a Jewish custom to maintain their Levitical priests. The Christian church was a "priesthood of all believers," and Paul wrote: "As long a the readines is there, a man is acceptable with whatever he cn afford; never mind what is beyond his means. This does not mean that to give relief to others you ought to make things difficult for yourselves; it is a question of balancing what happens to be your surplus now against their present need, and one day they may have something to spare that will supply your need."

How many times has it been heard from the pulpit that not paying an "honest" tithe was robbing God and that first the tithe should be paid and then the Lord would bless the remainder. This is NOT what Paul was instructing the new church.

Even in the OT if one could not journey to the place where the tithe was to be taken, he was told to use the money to buy strong drink and rejoice!

Elaine Nelson

3 weeks ago

Horace, most people are willing to aid in the "needs of the world" but when that part of the world has the largest voting power, sans less financial power, why should the NAD be subjected to their discriminatory ideology that is anathema to the NAD? That is why the NAD may be inclined to withhold some of their funding which is used to oppose equality. Why should I pay to have my ideas overpoweringly rejected?

Horace Butler

2 weeks ago

What discriminatory ideology are you talking about? The rest of the world has rejected the NAD's proclivity for adopting some of the practices found in the churches of Babylon. If that's what you mean by oppositon to equality, then hoorah!

You don't give money to the church so that your ideas can be incorporated. You give the money because, A--the tithe isn't yours anyway; it belongs to God; B--the offerings are a reflection of how much God has blessed you, and are given in a spirit of thanksgiving, not so that the church will implement your favorite policies.
Elaine Nelson

On women's ordination, the majority of the NAD is for that; the much larger part of Adventism in the other countries has continued to oppose that. They have the overpowering voting ability to negate anything the NAD wishes for its members. Why should they dictate such policies?

If you give money because it belongs to God, where is God's work limited? Is feeding the poor in your home town not God's work? Where is it found in the Bible that the organized church of SDA is the only storehouse?

Horace Butler

Why should the NAD be able to do its own thing, regardless of the will of the worldwide church? The assumption by the NAD that they have a better and more enlightened understanding of Scripture is highly arrogant. It's no different than what happened in Acts 15. The church made a decision and it was implemented, even though the malcontents continued to create division among the churches.

If everyone gave their tithes and offerings to their pet projects there would be no organized church. The organized church has always been understood to be the storehouse. The money deposited there then becomes the responsibility of those ordained to the task of distributing the funds. If it is misused, they have an account to render to God, but it's out your hands.

The problem is not lack of funds to help the poor or other worthy recipients, it's stinginess and selfishness on the part of professed believers. But too many Christians have other priorities:--from fancy cars to expensive entertainment devices.

Elaine Nelson

"The organized church has always been understood to be the storehouse."

That is the oldest argument in the books: "It's always been this way, ergo, it should continue."

When no questions are asked about the tithes and offerings and the church says "Trust us" there have been many abuses since the church began. One should not have to be reminded of the many times their tithe money has been used to file lawsuits, fund independent non-church entities to line the pockets of the church's hierarchy and more.

Was Reagan right whe he said "Trust but verify"? Has anyone ever read the treasurer's report where such payments were listed? There are whole books written on the many misuses of such church funds and will continue unless the members demand more transparency.

Elaine Nelson
Have you ever read or heard of Folkenberg's misuse of SDA monies?

Or the secret donations made to support the wives of two G.C. executives?

Or the current millions of dollars the SDA church in Australia is involved in?

Or the monies lost in poor management of SDA hospitals while the administrators were being paid exorbitant salaries?

Simply Google "SDA financial debacles" for an abundance of information of how your tithe monies have been used and misused. It's gone to "the work" but how and to whom?

Horace Butler

As I recall, the Jewish leaders at the time of Christ weren't exactly the most honest when it came to finances. And yet Jesus commended the poor widow who threw in her 2 coins. And the thief and traitor, Judas, handled the finances for the disciples. Jesus knew it, but did not take that responsibility away from him. God is still in control. Those who misuse funds will have to answer to God. Their corruption does not absolve me of my responsibility to return my tithes and offerings.

David

Seminary Student: I just read the paper of Jon Paulien "The End of Historicism? Reflections on the Adventist Approach to Biblical Apocalyptic here is the summary

"Historicism as a method for interpreting Revelation has been marginalized and, at times, even ridiculed in the scholarly process. Nevertheless, a careful examination of Revelation 12 in light of Daniel 2 and 7 suggests that a historicist reading of Revelation 12 is defensible from an exegetical perspective"

Ervin Taylor

You might wish to read the quotation you cite very, very carefully, because it was written very, very carefully: "A historicist reading of Revelation 12 is defensible from an exegetical perspective." You certainly can defend it. You can also defend the institution of human slavery from an exegetical perspective using the Bible and mass killing of entire populations, and human sacrifice, and all kinds of other actions on the part of the Hebrews. Whether what traditional Adventism has understood Revelation 12 to say and whoever wrote Revelation 12 meant it to say is almost certainly very different understandings.
here is the article

Erv if you are referring to the seminary student I guess he has enough background to read the paper. You may read as you wish. Dr Paulien is writing this paper for scholars, he puts clear his objective (*The End of Historicism?*) and his conclusion is also clear. “Historicism reading of Revelation 12 *is defensible from an exegetical perspective*”. Actually to my surprise he comes very strong (*is defensible*). You know for this kind of work words usually are used very carefully. He could used “suggests that a historicist reading of Revelation 12 *may be* defensible from an exegetical perspective. Which in the academic world is a strong word.

You may obviously interpret his words any way you wish and I will do likewise as will every other reader.