OPINION

**An Intelligently Designed Statement of Adventist Belief:**
Jack Hoehn suggests that understanding of origins is an ongoing process, aided and abetted by both science and theology, including Intelligent Design. He wishes denominational leaders would work more intelligently in designing the text of our sixth Fundamental Belief....

**Wrong. Mistaken. Wicked. Synonyms?:**
How interesting that in today's world, behavior that used to be "sinful" and "wrong" is now often referred to as simply a "mistake." Will humans who err factually on matters of faith be eternally lost? Will all who believe the "Truth" in a factual sense be saved? Join the lively conversation led by opinion writer Mark Gutman....

**Sh’ma by the River 5—Loving the Great Spirit with All My Little Soul:** In this final devotional piece in her series on the Sh’ma, Debonnaire Kovacs makes use of imagery provided by the blizzard-force winds now shaking her sabbatical cabin to its foundations....

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*(available to logged-in subscribers; for free 30-day online subscription, click here)*

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An Intelligently Designed Statement of Adventist Belief

By Jack Hoehn, December 5, 2013

I met two other Adventists during the Seattle-based Discovery Institute’s 9th Annual Briefing on Intelligent Design. One was a female attorney living near to Seattle (who told me she was a recent convert to Adventism) interested in Stephen C. Meyer’s new blockbuster book on ID called Darwin’s Doubt. She believes in Young Earth Creationism and values the simplicity of 7s. She sees a numerology in 7 days of creation, 7 days of a week, and 7,000 years of earth history. She doesn’t like the idea of “God presenting creation as 7 recent days, when it was millions of years.”

But she was open to listening to Stephen Meyers explain how the fossil record cannot be explained by standard undirected evolutionary mechanisms. By standard geological reckoning, the 5-10 million years it took to lay down the 541 million year old Cambrian layer close to the bottom of the geologic column, is but a blink in geologic time. This layer containing the sudden appearance of so many phyla of animal fossils, will be called an “explosion” of life, not only if you think it happened on the 5th 24-hour day of Creation, or during the 5th stage of the much longer scientific chronology of the appearance of life.

The sudden appearance of multiple different animal phyla in the ancient oceans with no discernible fossil predecessors in a geologic instant is a refutation of neo-Darwinian evolution. Darwinian mutations and stepwise natural selection is falsified as a possible mechanism for the creation of multiple complex novel forms of life in such a short geologic period of time. So even if this Adventist didn’t agree with the chronology, she did recognize that the Intelligent Design scientists falsifying undirected Darwinism are our allies in our Adventist belief that life was created by the God of the Bible.

ID Supporters

The other Adventist I met, also a lawyer who lives closer to Portland, Oregon, is a long-time supporter of Intelligent Design. He believes that Creation is best explained by some synthesis of Bible inspiration and study of the natural world by non-materialistic science, which is what ID is all about. He had previously arranged for Discovery Institute spokesman Casey Luskin to give presentations of the science behind ID at Portland Adventist Academy and later to the Adventist Forum/Spectrum Chicago conference on Creation in 2012.

The rest of the attendees were mostly wealthy Christians and Jewish supporters of the Discovery Institute who reject godless materialism in both science and economics. They include radio personality Michael Medved, who with his wife, Dianne, opened the Sabbath for the group with Jewish traditional blessings Friday night, and for Sabbath lunch. The Sabbath recognition was novel for much of the group, and appreciated by us Adventists.

Darwin’s Doubt featured at the conference is a book I think many serious Adventist creationists would want to own. Along with his previous book, Signature in the Cell, Stephen Meyers has produced two pivotal works showing how recent scientific discoveries make traditional Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism scientifically inadequate to the facts. This does not make evolutionists into creationists. And it would not make any scientist I can think of agree that the world was created in 144 hours, about 6,000-7,000 years ago.

But it does show that Darwin’s theory of how life might have started at a cellular level, or how it has been diversified into the different phyla of living animals tiny step by tiny step, is just wrong.

Post Darwinian Evolution

That things change or evolve over time within limited boundaries cannot be denied. This is clearly recognized by Intelligent Design advocates such as Michael J. Behe in his seminal book, Darwin’s Black Box, and the more recent The Edge of Evolution. But Darwinian stepwise mutations acted on by survival due to fitness cannot create the massive changes in biologic complexity in the geologic time and space available. The multiple new body plans of creatures recorded in the Cambrian fossils require the infusion of massive amounts of data,
of information, of genetic code.

That 20 of the 27 animal phyla recorded in the entire fossil record could suddenly appear in the 5-10 million years of the Cambrian layer found from China to Canada without engineering, without planning, without an unnamed source of intelligence, a Designer, is not a "god of the gaps" argument, it is the most plausible and rational conclusion from the data.

Darwin’s theories of how diversity and complexity could suddenly appear were perhaps plausible in the 1800’s due to large gaps in knowledge. They no longer are scientifically sustainable. And evolutionists search for alternative naturalistic mechanisms. Even when critical of Darwin’s mechanisms, most evolutionists remain materialists. The doctrinaire evolutionists continue to demand before the fact, that they exclude Intelligent Design as a possible explanation of the data.

“Evolution is a fact,” they assert, “and even if Darwin was wrong in explaining how evolution happens, it still has happened.” There is a lot of scramble in the post DNA profiling of life’s codes to find another mechanism that works. Darwin’s Doubt in chapters 15 and 16 explore the post-Darwinian evolutionary landscape.

Here are four of the books on the Science of Intelligent Design that I think any serious creationist with a scientific bent would want to own. Evolutionists often attack the Theology of creationism, but so far they have not seriously answered the Science of Intelligent Design except by hand waving attempts to dismiss it.

(These books are scientific arguments, not theology. ID attempts to discuss the science of life without philosophical bias. I have previously listed books on the theology of Old Earth Creationism that I would highly recommend to Adventist creationists looking for a more adequate theology of creation.

John C. Lennox,

Seven Days that Divide the World

Zondervan, 2011. – A Christian Oxford don in the C.S. Lewis tradition ends his short and readable book on understanding the Bible creation days with this wonderful sentence,

“It is high time for a Sabbath!”

David Snoke,

A Biblical Case for an Old Earth

Baker Books, 2006 – A Christian physicist and astronomer gives both things you will agree with and things you may disagree with, but he is giving Biblical evidence supporting Old Age Creationism.

Hugh Ross, A Matter of Days

NavPress Publishing, 2004 – Astronomer and president of Reasons to Believe, directly addresses how creation-days can be understood in a fashion both true to the Bible and the facts of science.

Hugh Ross,

Why the Universe is the Way it Is

Baker Books, 2008-Why God used long ages to create life on earth.

Brian Bull & Fritz Guy, God Sky and Land

Adventist Forum, 2011. A Seventh-day Adventist effort to understand the literal meaning of Genesis 1 for Moses’ audience, not what we read into it with our 19th or 21st century science.

Adventists and Intelligent Design

There is no viable replacement for Darwin’s discredited mechanisms yet visible on the materialistic horizon. Adventists know of one, but
so far no one listens to us because of our refusal to re-evaluate our historic chronology of creation as a recent and instantaneous event.

Perhaps this is why, since God’s church has lost our credibility in the scientific community, God has had to work on seminal thinkers with no visible religious sentiments like Thomas Nagel to publish a book called

_Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False?_ This book debunking materialism as an adequate explanation of life should be welcomed by creationists, but I wish our Adventist scientists and philosophers could be unshackled from the narrow Young Earth Chronology of creation to begin participation in the debate.

So where does Intelligent Design leave historic Seventh-day Adventists?

Darwinian and neo-Darwinian evolution can’t have happened—_Hooray!_

Animal life is intelligently designed—_Hip, Hip, Hooray!_

Animal sea life appeared suddenly (on the 5th Creation Day) about 530,000,000 years ago—_Huh?_

Modern Humans like us appear to have been created (DNA shows an Adam and Eve) between 70,000 and 150,000 years ago—_Really? No way!_

But actually there is a “way.” Do we have a God and a Trust in that God big enough to handle the science of Intelligent Design? Is our present Doctrine of Creation adequate to handle this? Would a new Fundamental Belief specifying Young Earth Creationism as the only acceptable option, make it better or worse?

Another new Adventist (John Evans whose letter appeared in a blog earlier this year) recently asked me in an e-mail if I favored rewriting our Fundamental Belief #6 on creation. I said, no, I preferred to just leave the present one quoting Biblical texts, and let each Creationist decide on the timing and chronology of Creation on their own understanding of the evidence. But when pressed, I said if it were to be rewritten, I would hope it might say something like this:

Adventists believe that in the beginning God through Christ created all that is and continues to direct and sustain life to this very day. We believe that the Genesis story is the true introduction to God’s creative actions in a simplified or outline form, and establishes the pattern for our weekly worship on the Sabbath day. We believe that the record of nature is also true as discovered by careful science. We look to Scripture to inform us what and why God created, and why there is evil as well as good on this earth. We look to science to suggest when and how God might have acted. Our understanding of both science and Scripture are subject to correction and reinterpretation as God reveals new information and insights through further discoveries and the ongoing revelations of the Holy Spirit.

How would you like it to read? We welcome positive signed comments from readers suggesting a better way of wording the Adventist Statement of Belief on Creation. Help our church craft one that could be of use to the larger world we live in—a statement that could serve as a guide to understanding God’s purposes for our Intelligently Designed world. Send us your Intelligently Designed statement.

 COMMENTS: Although the mechanism for allowing edited comments is still not ideal, for now e-mail them to the editors at editor@atoday.org, and they will all be read with interest. Include your real name and comments that correct, advance, or improve the topic of this article. They may be published whole or in part within _Adventist Today_ guidelines.

__________________________ Join in the discussion:
Wrong. Mistaken. Wicked. Synonyms?

By Mark Gutman, December 3, 2013

A few months ago, I drove 90 miles to a church to preach Sabbath morning, only to learn that I was a week early. I checked my Day-Timer
and discovered that I had misread it. I had squeezed my writing of the correct date under a different date and been thrown off by the
positioning of the writing. Ouch! I missed the Sabbath School class I so much enjoy, and I drove 175 extra miles to get to church that day.
All because I made a mistake. I thought I was supposed to preach in that church that day, and I was wrong. But did I jeopardize my chances
of getting to heaven?

Heaven? What does that have to do with believing something that is wrong? A whole lot, going by what I’ve read in many online
comments and books and magazine articles. If I choose the wrong side of the women’s ordination debate or the Sabbath-Sunday debate or
the evolution-creation debate, I have chosen hell instead of heaven. There may still be hope for me, though, if I repent and start believing
the way the other side does.

Am I wicked because I believe something incorrect? In school, I was disappointed about getting answers wrong (or not being able to
answer), but I learned from my mistakes. I learned that I needed to study better. Or that I needed to read the question more carefully. Or that
I had confused Magellan with Drake. Or that 9 x 9 did not equal 78. Sometimes I only made a certain mistake once, but I also repeated
some mistakes many times. My teachers might have been disappointed in me when I didn’t learn the material well, or they might have
thought I was lazy or just not interested in that particular subject. But I never got the idea that a teacher thought I was bad because I put the
wrong answer on a homework or test paper. Wrong answers showed that I still had something to learn.1 But do mistakes mean I’m wicked?

When I make a math mistake, my mistake is not over a matter of opinion. No matter how much I want 2 + 2 to make 6, it makes 4, and
everybody would wonder how I came up with 6. If I think that Las Vegas is the capital of Nevada, the evidence is simply indisputable that I
am wrong. And while people might tell me to check my facts, nobody is likely to tell me that I need to spend more time on my knees
because I can’t remember the actual capital of Nevada. But if I make a mistake over something that is hard to prove, such as how Jesus’
death affects humanity, or whether or not women should be ordained, some people believe that I should end up in hell.

In effect, some people believe that it’s all right for me to be mistaken about undisputed facts, but they do not grant me that same freedom to
be mistaken in matters that a minority of people worldwide believes. Devout people of all faiths will agree that Carson City is the capital of
Nevada (although most may need to look it up); devout people of all faiths do not agree on the Trinity, eschatology, or the use of alcohol as
a beverage. Must we conclude that the reason those people don’t agree with our view is that they are wicked?

Most people can view my preferences for sports teams, vacations, art, and colors kindly, or even humorously, even though their preferences
are different. They may sometimes be less charitable in overlooking political differences, especially if they equate their party’s (or
candidate’s) view with the voice of God. But religious differences, or preferences, are in a new camp altogether, the one place that can
allow me to threaten you with God's wrath.

I can tell you that your views are mixed up, wrong, or hurtful. But in the religious world, I guess the best way to get across the fact that I don't like what you believe is to tell you that God is going to get you because you don't believe the way I want you to. The law doesn't allow me to beat you up, and it might not look too good if I tried, but I can look perfectly righteous if I threaten you with the wrath of God.²

But that brings up a question: What is the wrath of God? I grew up with the idea that it was God's “retributive justice,” which sounded like a fancy term for payback. Eventually I ran across the explanation that it was God's letting people reap the natural consequences of their rebellious choices, which makes more sense to me. If God treats the good and the bad alike,³ it seems out of character for him to have a time when he will set up his friends in luxury while he tortures his enemies.

We know that we have to let our children learn some things the hard way. But we don’t kill our disobedient children. I take insulin for diabetes, but I have nothing to fear from my doctor if I decide to quit taking insulin; my fear is of natural consequences. My doctor describes the consequences of my not taking insulin, but he doesn’t inflict any punishment on me if I ignore his explanations.

If I believe that God “gets” those who believe or act the wrong way, I probably will feel justified in treating those who disagree with me the wrong way. Call my feelings “righteous indignation”; that doesn’t sound as bad as “intolerant” or “dogmatic” or even “hateful.” But it still seems to have the flavor of revenge.

Seventh-day Adventist Believe . . . describes the final death of the wicked in language that could be termed “natural consequences.” The book says that lost sinners “reap what they sown not only during this life but in the final destruction. In God’s presence, the guilt they feel because of the sins they have committed will cause them to suffer an indescribable agony. And the greater the guilt, the greater the agony.”⁴

When I make a mistake in math, it may cost me now. My bank account may get overdrawn, or I may discover that I don’t have enough to pay for all the items in my shopping cart. A mistake in nutrition may cause me to be less healthy or less able to deal with everyday challenges. A mistake in theology can also result in affecting how I regard the future or how I treat others. Life is full of adjusting our beliefs and actions because of the natural consequences we experience.

Since I’m still learning, and I believe differently from years ago, I will grant you the freedom to keep learning at the pace that your heredity and your circumstances have led you to use. If you drive 175 miles because you wrote something down the wrong way, you’ll learn from your mistake. (I hope.) Sometimes it takes longer for us to recognize the negative results of our choices. That’s especially true for religious beliefs. So let’s not be judgmental toward others who aren’t as informed as we are or have chosen to believe differently. Work to keep others from picking up those same erroneous (in our opinion) and damaging beliefs. But work kindly, as kindly as you want others to treat you when they think you are just as wrong. Or when you have just realized that you are wrong.

¹ Ellen White, Selected Messages, book 1, page 37. “We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.” Ellen White does not indicate at what age this condition stops being true.
See, for example, the words of the judge at the trial of Frank Schaefer, on trial by his denomination for performing a same-sex wedding. The judge "told jurors they were duty-bound to convict. ‘You'll give an account for that at the last day, as we all will,’ he told the jury, to audible gasps from spectators."


Seventh-day Adventist Believe . . . (copyright 1988), page 372.
Sh’ma by the River 5—Loving the Great Spirit with All My Little Soul

by Debbonaire Kovacs
submitted Dec 4, 2013

Hear, O Israel,
the Lord your God, the Lord is One.
You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and with all your mind
and with all your soul
and with all your strength.*

Many people separate soul from spirit and think of them as two different things, or as two different aspects of selfhood. I don’t do that. As Adventists, we believe a human being is a soul, rather than possessing a soul. We believe we are one being, that mind and body cannot be separated (except for consideration, such as in this series). What we do with our thoughts affects our physical health. What we do with our bodies affects our spiritual health. It’s all one.

If I were to draw a diagram of the self, it would look something like this:

The three smaller circles would be the body, mind, and heart, or emotions. The little spot in the center is where we are our full, true selves—all elements and aspects of us living and functioning as one whole being—a human soul. The large circle represents the Holy Spirit—the soul or spirit of God, “in whom we live and move and have our being.”

During this series, we have considered how to learn better to love God, others, and ourselves from our whole physical selves, our whole minds, and our whole hearts. To learn what it means to love God, others, and ourselves with our whole souls, just put it all together. Simple. Hard! Almost impossible! But simple. When all of our little circles are centered inside God’s big circle, then the peace God brings seeps into the center. It comes into our stomachs, and calms them. It comes into our emotions and lives with us in and through them. It comes into our heads and gives us a new outlook on life.

Simple, it may be, but it can also be scary. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is often likened to wind. (The Hebrew and Greek words are the same—so is the English, but we’ve kind of lost it inside other words: inspire, respire, and perspire all share the same base as spirit, and they’re all about breath. So, for that matter, is expire.) Today, here in the last week of my Cape Breton Sabbatical by the river, the wind is so powerful it reminds me of that text in Acts, about “the sound of a mighty, rushing wind.” The cabin is shaking. When I went outside, I experienced something I’ve often said, but it’s never been actually true before—the wind really did nearly knock me down. When I would pick up a foot to take a step, that leg would be blown out from under me. The wind blew away my ice chest and all its contents, and took a large wooden picnic table off the porch and dumped it in the yard in two pieces.

Today, beside the river (from a safe distance, inside) I’m thinking about what it might really mean to throw my whole, puny, little spirit, my whole broken self, all my body, all my mind, all my heart, all my love, into the whirlwind that is the Holy Spirit of God, and go wherever that Spirit chooses to take me.
Do I have the nerve?

Do you?

*These words combine the Sh’mah, found in Deut 6:4, 5, with Jesus’ words in Luke10:27, to give all four: heart, mind, soul, and strength.

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On Thursday, November 7, 2013, The Harris Home for Children in Huntsville, AL, held a gala “Masquerade Ball” to raise funds for the home. Intrigued, I called Director Tony McGinnis to ask him about it.

“Every year we have a ball, but we usually do it around Christmas time. We haven’t seen the results we wanted because people are so busy with other events. So this year we decided to hold
it earlier. I’ve always wanted a dress-up event, so since it was near Halloween, we kind of married a ball with a masquerade.”

It was cold that night, and the event was “up here on the mountain,” so McGinnis says some people might have been kept away by the weather. Still, they had 250 people, which is significantly more than they’ve seen at their past Christmas events. Women wore formal gowns, men wore formal suits or tuxedos, and most people wore masks. “We had a band called Unknown Lyrics, and it was just a real nice social event with dinner,” McGinnis said.

There were doctors, locals, and some who were curious about what Harris Home is and what its mission is. “It gave us an opportunity to cater to an audience that we hadn’t be fore,” he said. “Some people didn’t know anything about us, or what Harris Home for Children is all about, so when they came to the gala they learned about us.”

Some of the thirty children who live at the home also helped with fundraising, selling tickets or soliciting for funds through local churches. McGinnis says the checks are still coming and they won’t know totals until early in the year, but he estimates the money received will be in the $25,000 range, while in-kind donations may bring that closer to $50,000.

McGinnis says the Home operates on state funds, and when those funds are cut, they need the help of interested people who can donate and “support the direct vision of Harris Home.”

The money will be used for overall operations, but the Home also has a special project they’re working on. When, in 2007, they moved to their new campus, they no longer had an activity center for the children. However, there was a 6500-square-foot building on the property, which they have been using for storage. “The storage was nice, but we really needed a place the children could just go and be kids!”

So they are nearing completion on turning the storage building into an activity center with a gym, basketball court (McGinnis is also basketball coach at Oakwood University), and a lounge area with television, board games, and video games. “This will be a place they can really call their own, and we’re all excited about that.”

To learn more about Harris Home for Children, and to donate to their cause, go to www.harrishomeforchildren.org

Adventist Today also ran an earlier story about McGinnis and the Home. You may access that here.
Stonethrowers

by S M Chen
copyright 1984

See her stagger
as they drag her
through the city street.
Hear them twitter,
watch them stare
as they set her,
without care,
at the Master’s feet.

See her cower as they query
what to do with her.
Watch Him, weary
of their evil games,
stick in hand,
write in sand
secret sins and names.

Now all are gone
save two alone.
He wipes her tears,
dispels her fears;
does not condemn
her more than them.

*

Many a stone
I have thrown;
yet, had I thought
(as well I ought)
a bit more love,
I should have known
glass is what
my house is made of.