THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND SCIENCE

By Leonard Brand *

Despite what much of the popular media today claim, faith and science are not mutually exclusive.

Faith and science—can they live in the same house? Many say that scholars, especially scientists, must leave all religious influences out of their scholarly pursuits because to do otherwise would compromise the search for truth. Even many Christians are nervous about attempts to find a harmony between Scripture and science. Is this concern justified? This depends partly on how we understand the nature of inspiration and partly on our understanding of the scientific data.

There is great diversity of views on the nature of inspiration and the origins of life as described in the Book of Genesis. Even in some seemingly conservative Christian circles, the conviction occurs that worthy scholars must move away from acceptance of Bible history as describing literal events, such as the six-day creation and perhaps even a literal Second Coming.

An understanding of inspiration, however, is well summarized by Ellen White: “The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed.” The Bible “was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus.” “A sense of the power and wisdom of God, and of our inability to comprehend His greatness, should inspire us with humility, and we should open His word, as we would enter His presence, with holy awe. When we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM.”

This approach accepts the events described in the Bible as actual historical happenings, including creation in seven literal days, a global flood, Jesus’ miracles, and God’s literal communication of ideas and facts to at least some Bible writers, such as Moses, Daniel, Paul, and John (not through verbal inspiration, but communication of thoughts). This approach must be used with wisdom, prayer, and careful thought, or it can lead to such simplistic ideas as the common fundamentalist belief in verbal inspiration of Scripture.

The God of the Bible is the greatest scholar of all time, and Scripture deals in the highest levels of scholarship, not just in comforting inspirational themes. (When God arranged to have Genesis written, He knew vastly more about radiometric dating than we will ever know.)

The application of this concept can be valuable not only in biology but even in what may seem like the most unlikely disciplines—palaeontology and geology. Scholarly thinking based on confidence in a high view of Scripture does not need to be inferior to more liberal scholarship, and in fact can have advantages. We benefit from insights from the Creator of the universe—in-sights that others ignore.

Challenges to Be Overcome

The attempt to integrate faith and scholarship introduces a tension. Can religion interject a bias into the scholarly search for truth? The answer, clearly, is yes. Some conservative Christians believe dinosaurs never existed, even though numerous dinosaur skeletons have been found, and they think their opinion is based on the Bible.

One suggested solution is to leave the Bible out of our scholarly pursuits, so religious biases will not trouble objectivity. An episode in the history of geology illustrates the shallowness of this solution.

The pioneering geologist Charles Lyell wrote a book that defined the field of geology for more than a hundred years. Lyell rejected all the catastrophist geological interpretations common in his day and replaced
them with the theory that all geological processes occurred very slowly and gradually over eons of time (gradualism). Though analysts do not agree with the biblical views of some of the early geologists, they have concluded that they were more careful observers than Lyell, and their catastrophist views were reasonable interpretations of the data.

Lyell’s strictly gradualistic theory was bad for geology because it closed geologists’ minds to any interpretations that suggested rapid, catastrophic geologic processes. Though analysts prefer to explain geology in a “millions of years” scenario, they recognize the evidence that many sedimentary deposits are catastrophic in nature. Now that Lyell’s serious bias has been recognized and at least partially abandoned, the minds of geologists have been opened to recognize more evidence for catastrophic processes. That evidence was there in the rocks before, but was not recognized because of Lyell’s bias. If the prevailing paradigm says it isn’t true, it will probably not be noticed.

Bias is not a solely religious problem. It must be contended with, no matter what philosophy one adopts. It can persist because of the inadequacy of information on complex topics, and a continued search for new evidence can help to reveal it. It is naive to assert that religion introduces bias but that scholarship is totally objective. It is true that some people read pet ideas into the Bible and misunderstand how to relate Scripture to nature. But those who do not take Scripture seriously have their own problems with other biases, and these are no less significant than the biases that can result from religion.

Testing a theory is easier in some fields than in others. Questions about whether faith and science can productively interact may seem almost irrelevant to those in biochemistry or physiology or engineering, because no conflict arises between their faith and their science. Those disciplines work with currently active biological, chemical, and physical processes. But paleontology, geology, and parts of evolutionary biology study historical events that cannot be observed but must be reconstructed from meager evidence. These disciplines, as practiced by most professionals, are heavily dependent on certain assumptions, especially the worldview of millions of years of evolutionary history without divine intervention. This naturalistic worldview can introduce extremely pervasive biases into scientific inquiry.

Nevertheless, the nervousness of Christian thought leaders about seeking a relationship between science and religion cannot be lightly brushed aside. It could arise for several reasons, and any method of integrating faith and science must have an answer for these. In addition to the possibility of bias, the issues most relevant here are: (1) the possibility that if we try to integrate science and faith, science may disprove a belief system; and (2) religious explanations (e.g., “God did it”) may discourage scientific investigation.

When Relating Faith and Science Doesn’t Work

One response to this challenge is simply to keep science and faith separate. This method can work in many disciplines that do not deal with the history of life or of the Earth, because Scripture may not speak to the issues those disciplines address. The result of this approach is that in the study of Earth history, when the Bible and science say opposite things, an alternative approach is adopted. Either Scripture is viewed as more reliable than historical science, or it is concluded that science reports facts, and Scripture provides only the spiritual meaning of those facts. This latter approach leaves one nagging question: If God can’t keep His facts straight, or at least doesn’t know how or doesn’t bother to communicate them, why should what He says about spiritual meanings have any importance? Why should He be trusted? This can be expressed as a strictly scholarly question: If a book claims to speak for someone, and much of what the book says is mythical or just not true, is there reason to believe the rest of the book or to trust the person behind the book? There must be a better answer to the problem of relating faith and science.

Perhaps then the problem could be solved by keeping an open mind in scholarly study. That is a worthy goal, but as the example of Lyell’s theory suggests, the facts are too limited to know what a truly open mind would be thinking. This is truer in geology, paleontology, and evolutionary science than commonly recognized.

A Productive Approach to Relating Faith and Science

Another solution is to know God
Progress in the integration of faith and science often begins with a new scientific finding that challenges the understanding of Scripture. At that point, it may be tempting to bar the doors against all new ideas and defend personal beliefs against all challenges. A more constructive answer is to use methods of science to pursue the challenging area, while using the methods in religion to dig deeper in Scripture to determine if it actually says what was previously thought.

As a personal friend, learn to trust His Word, and use it to assist in scholarly thinking. Meanwhile, interaction with other scholars of varying views can help prevent simplistic attempts to relate Scripture to the natural world. Many creationists write books or pamphlets on evolution or geology that are embarrassing even to a conservative Christian who is informed on these subjects. It may be that the problem isn’t the use of biblical concepts, but a lack of scientific knowledge, combined with a lack of peer review.

Rather, a tried and proven approach utilizes the following steps: (1) Allow new scientific findings to challenge interpretation of Scripture, and vice versa; (2) actively search for and utilize insights from Scripture pertinent to the discipline, allowing them to help devise hypotheses that can be tested with the methods of science, especially in areas of seeming conflict between science and Scripture; (3) be aware of the work and thinking of those who have a different worldview; (4) whenever feasible, submit work for publication and peer review; and (5) become friends with those with a different worldview and perhaps even do collaborative work with them. This requires the confidence and independence of thought not to accept everything collaborators think, while maintaining a constructive dialogue that can reduce the likelihood of superficial thinking.

Scientific Challenges to Scripture

Progress in the integration of faith and science often begins with a new scientific finding that challenges the understanding of Scripture. At that point, it may be tempting to bar the doors against all new ideas and defend personal beliefs against all challenges. A more constructive answer is to use methods of science to pursue the challenging area, while using the methods in religion to dig deeper in Scripture to determine if it actually says what was previously thought.

As this develops, it may become evident that Scripture surely does disagree with accepted scientific interpretations, thus challenging thought for new hypotheses that can explain the scientific data. This maintains a continuous mental interaction between religion and science, as each challenges the other to more careful thought. Further, Scripture contributes not just pleasant pastoral counsel, but also truths about events of Earth history.

This approach does not discourage research, but can stimulate more careful research in both science and religion. Scripture can suggest hypotheses to be tested by the methods of science. For example, the biblical framework predicts that the fossil-rich portion of the geological record formed in a much shorter time frame than most geologists think. This can be translated into specific testable scientific hypotheses about individual rock formations.

This may sound good on paper, but is there evidence that it can truly work?

Biblical Anchor Points

Application of the process described above leads to the following list of Earth history concepts (biblical anchor points) that are supported by Scripture:

1. In a literal week of six consecutive, 24-hour days, God prepared the Earth's surface and created living things (Genesis 1, 2).

2. At the end of that creation week, a complete ecosystem was in place, including invertebrates (creeping things), birds, aquatic animals, mammals (cattle), and plants (Genesis 1). Not much detail is given as to exactly what animals and plants were present, but the list includes some that do not appear until fairly late in the fossil record, like fruit trees (angiosperms) and humans. Thus the list of organisms present at creation week includes both invertebrates and higher forms of life, which indicates that the major life forms were created and did not result from evolution.

3. At some time since creation week there was a catastrophic flood of global proportions.

4. The creation week occurred only a few thousand years ago. There are uncertainties about the completeness of genealogical lists and differences among ancient biblical manuscripts, but although we don't know the exact time span, Scripture clearly portrays a short history of life on this Earth, measured in thousands—not millions—of years. It is
evident that many Bible writers accepted the Creation, the Flood, and the early biblical record of human history as accurate. Many biblical passages make no sense whatever if the fossil record represents millions of years of time.

5. Jesus demonstrated in His miracles that God is eminently capable of instantaneously creating animal or plant tissue, or in restarting biochemical processes in tissue that is no longer living, e.g., turning water to wine (John 2:1-10), creating food to feed thousands from a handful of fish and bread (Mark 6:30-44, 8:1-9), raising someone dead for several days (John 11:38-44), restoring sight to blind eyes (John 9:1-11), restoring tissue destroyed by leprosy (Luke 17:11-17), restoring a withered hand (Mark 3:1-6), etc. God is very capable of creating life as described in Genesis.

6. After sin, the biological world began to change (Gen. 3:14-19). Thorns and thistles began to appear, and apparently some large mammals became carnivorous that were not carnivorous before (Isa. 11:6-9).

From a careful reading of Ellen White's writings, the following concepts could be added:

7. A strong reaffirmation of the literal creation week, a few thousand years ago.

8. In connection with the Flood, mountains disappeared, new mountains appeared, coal and oil were formed, and, in fact, the entire crust of the Earth was changed.

Examples of Research Resulting From Biblical Insights

The following are a few examples—and more could be given—of successful scientific research that used scriptural insights to suggest new questions to be asked or hypotheses to be tested.

1. Grand Canyon Geology. Arthur Chadwick of Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, has been studying the Tapeats Sandstone near the bottom of the Grand Canyon. He and his collaborators found a geological deposit that clearly changes the interpretation of the Tapeats Sandstone in the Grand Canyon area. Others have interpreted the Tapeats Sandstone as an accumulation of sand in shallow water along an ocean shore, with the water level and sand deposit gradually rising along an existing cliff face over eons of time.

The findings of Chadwick and Elaine Kennedy require accumulation of sand in deep water by processes different from those in shallow water. They presented their data and conclusions to a professional meeting of geologists, including some who had conducted much previous research on that formation, and they concurred with Chadwick and Kennedy's conclusions.

When asked afterward why he had seen these things that other geologists have missed, Chadwick answered that the creationist's worldview prompts questions that others are not asking, questioning conclusions that others take for granted, and seeing things that are likely to be overlooked by someone working within conventional naturalistic scientific theory. The questions scholars ask have a strong controlling influence on what features of rocks or fossils will catch their attention, for example, and what data they will collect.

Careful scientists who allow Bible history to inform their science will not use a different scientific method from that of other scientists. At a rock outcrop all use the same scientific method, the types of data potentially available are the same, and all use the same scientific instruments and logical processes to analyze data. To the creationist, the differences are in (1) the questions asked, (2) the range of hypotheses considered, and (3) which of the potential types of data are likely to arrest attention.

If research begins from what creationists believe to be a more correct beginning point (such as starting with divinely revealed history), that starting point does not guarantee that the hypotheses developed will be correct, since God has not given that much detail. It just initiates a search in a particular direction, and a number of course corrections (based on scientific data) may be needed before the correct answer is found. The advantage in beginning from a more correct starting point is that it can greatly speed up the process by eliminating gross errors in interpretation. A God who has witnessed all of Earth history can give insights about history that would be difficult or impossible to discover by science alone, at least in a time frame consistent with the human lifespan. If researchers trust divine insights, this viewpoint can expedite progress in some areas of science by suggesting things that would otherwise be less likely perceived.

2. Fossil Whales of the Miocene/Pliocene Fisco Formation of Peru.
The best scientists in the field have opportunity to evaluate this work and will be eager to point out its mistakes. That is a powerful incentive against carelessness.

Of course, we do not discuss biblical insights at the geology meetings or in our publications, as that would not be appropriate. We discuss scientific work only, and if the data support our conclusions, our work will stand up to the criticisms of scientific reviewers.

The Pisco Formation is a diatomite deposit containing numerous well-preserved fossilized whales. Microscopic diatoms are organisms that float near the surface of lakes and oceans. Upon death, their silica skeletons sink, and in modern oceans they form accumulations of diatomite a few centimeters thick in a thousand years. It is assumed that fossil diatomite deposits formed at the same slow rate—a few centimeters per thousand years.

Among publications in scientific research journals on the geology of the Pisco Formation and on the systematics and evolution of the whales, apparently no one has previously asked how it can be that sediment accumulating at the slow rate of a few centimeters per thousand years can contain complete, well-preserved whales, which would seem to require rapid burial for their preservation.

This was another case in which a creationist worldview opened eyes to see things that others have not noticed. It was an opportunity to test whether a working hypothesis (derived initially from Scripture) of a shortened geological time scale could be applied to the Pisco Formation. Such slow diatomite accumulation does not seem compatible with well-preserved whales, and further research could evaluate this.

Research there during three summers, with graduate student Raul Esperante-Caamaño and other geologists and paleontologists, has indicated that the whale carcasses were not in any type of special situation that would favor preservation of animals over extended time periods before burial. Evidence points to rapid burial, probably within a few weeks or months for any given whale, or a few years at an extreme maximum, and suggests some processes that can help to explain how ancient diatomites may have accumulated much more rapidly than usually assumed. Other scientists are studying decay of modern whale carcasses on the ocean floor, and their data provide information on the timing of decay of modern whales.

In this research, we presented papers at the annual meetings of the Geological Society of America and other scientific meetings, interacting with other scientists who deal with these phenomena, and have published one article, and more manuscripts are in preparation. The best scientists in the field have opportunity to evaluate this work and will be eager to point out its mistakes. That is a powerful incentive against carelessness. Of course, we do not discuss biblical insights at the geology meetings or in our publications, as that would not be appropriate. We discuss scientific work only, and if the data support our conclusions, our work will stand up to the criticisms of scientific reviewers.

In this research and other similar research projects, I have spent time in the field with—and even collaborated with—other paleontologists and geologists who have a non-creationist worldview. There is value in working with someone from a different point of view. I discover things they would probably never even consider, and they notice things I would likely overlook. This can help each of us to not be misled by our inherent biases. The Loma Linda University researchers found data that raise serious questions about applying the radiometric time scale to these geologic formations, and these questions exist in regard to other formations as well. There are geological reasons to think that something is wrong with the radiometric time scale. On the other hand, our findings indicate that the sediment in these formations apparently could not have accumulated in a few weeks or months, and thus it could not have formed in a one-year global flood—it was deposited rapidly, but the sedimentary data are consistent with a timeframe of perhaps tens to hundreds of years, not a few weeks or months.

3. Fossil Vertebrate Trackways in the Permian Coconino Sandstone, Northern Arizona. The Coconino Sandstone is generally interpreted as a deposit of windblown desert sand, and its only fossils, vertebrate trackways, have been considered supporting evidence of this interpretation. Because I wondered how this desert interpretation could fit into a biblical Earth history model, and because of superficialities in previous research on the fossil trackways, I have been doing research on these tracks for some years.

At present, it is not clear what the ultimate conclusion from this research will be. The trackways have features that seem virtually impossible to explain unless they were made with the animals completely under-
water, while the sedimentary evidence, as interpreted by sedimentologists, seems to point to wind-blown sand. This seeming contradiction indicates that some unknown pieces of the puzzle remain to be discovered. When these pieces are found, they may provide new insights into processes of sand deposition or into how trackways are made under unique conditions. Whatever the outcome will be, understanding of the Coconino Sandstone and its fossil tracks will be on a stronger footing (no pun intended) because of the questioning of the accepted interpretation of these tracks. We will then know what course corrections are needed in sedimentological interpretations of cross-bedded sand deposits or in understanding of some extrabiblical details of Earth history.

4. Biological Origins and Intelligent Design. The application of naturalism to the origin of life and of the diversity of organisms is being challenged by scholars in the Intelligent Design movement. There is much opportunity for significant scholarly work in this area. Darwinian theory is very successful in explaining biological change in species or subspecies of organisms, but quite unsuccessful in accounting for the origin of larger novelties like the origin of life or new classes or phyla of plants or animals.

It is time for a different approach to have a hearing. If science is going to be an open-minded search for truth, it cannot arbitrarily exclude some hypotheses. Advances in molecular biology make it increasingly difficult to justify excluding the hypothesis that life requires an intelligent inventor—that idea at least must be open for candid discussion. The primary task is to get the philosophy of naturalism onto the table for open discussion. If naturalism can be openly discussed and challenged, its weaknesses and arbitrariness will become evident.

Michael Behe has been applying the hypothesis of Intelligent Design in his study of molecular biology. He finds biomolecular structures (biomolecular machines) that seem to require construction and assembly of several complex parts before they can work at all (irreducible complexity), just like a mousetrap must have all its parts before it will work. He presents this as evidence requiring a designer, since natural selection will work in evolving complex structures only if it can gradually “invent” one part at a time. Others attempt to challenge Behe’s conclusions, but his work is like other scientific research programs. His initial attempt is unlikely to disprove the opposing view once and for all. Everyone can now all watch the interaction among viewpoints as they pursue research to support or disprove the implications of biomolecular complexity for intelligent design.

How scientists get their ideas cannot be analyzed objectively and is irrelevant to the scientific process. No matter where their ideas come from (even from the Bible), those ideas and hypotheses are valid science if they can be tested against data. Science, of course, has nothing to contribute to evaluating much of the content of Scripture.

Implications for Science and Faith

These are just a few examples of what must certainly be a wide field of opportunities for constructive integration of religious insights and scholarly work. Alan Wolfe concluded an article on intellectual contributions by Christians by stating, “There are not, and in all likelihood there never will be, similar developments [a serious intellectual contribution by conservative Christians] in the natural sciences.” If that prediction can be proved wrong, science as well as religion will benefit.

How scientists get their ideas cannot be analyzed objectively and is irrelevant to the scientific process. No matter where their ideas come from (even from the Bible), those ideas and hypotheses are valid science if they can be tested against data. Science, of course, has nothing to contribute to evaluating much of the content of Scripture. Whether Jesus actually changed water to wine or bodily raised Lazarus from the dead is beyond scientific scrutiny. Many scholars will claim it is unscientific to believe such things, but that conclusion is based on untested and untestable philosophical assumptions (biases), and in reality has nothing to do with science. What experiment would you do to test biblical miracles? Unless science can conduct such a test, it cannot properly claim to have anything to say about such matters.

When a biblical worldview can suggest testable hypotheses, those are valid contributions to science. This claim is supported by the examples from geology and paleontology cited earlier. Others could be given. It is also interesting to see certain general trends in the geological sciences and in biology that are going in the direction predicted by a conservative reading of Scripture. Examples would be the trend of increasing recognition of catastrophic processes in geology and the growing number of voices who doubt that Darwinian processes can produce life from non-living material
Awareness of the thinking of those who disagree with us and collaboration with such can us help notice things that would otherwise likely be overlooked in religion as well as in science. Geological study has raised awareness of conflicts on both ends of the spectrum of geological interpretations. In many situations it is difficult to reconcile the actual data in the rocks and fossils with millions of years of geological time.

or can produce major new life forms. The latter example still involves a minority of individuals. (A well-entrenched theory like abiogenesis or Darwinian macroevolution dies hard.) But growing knowledge of the intricacies of molecular mechanisms in living cells makes belief in a naturalistic origin of life forms increasingly difficult, and the usual lack of fossil intermediates between phyla and classes of organisms compounds the difficulty.

A point made earlier needs to be emphasized: The research cited above does not use a different process from that used by other scientists. We have access to the same types of data; we use the same observation techniques and laboratory instruments for analyzing rock or fossil samples. Everyone uses X-ray diffraction to identify minerals and scanning electron microscopy or polarized light microscopy for close examination of rocks and small fossils. We use the same type of logic in deriving conclusions from data.

So what is different? The differences are in (1) the questions that we tend to ask, (2) the types of hypotheses we are willing to consider, and (3) which of the potential types of data are likely to catch our attention. Biblical insights indicate there are important scientific discoveries to be made if we ask questions about, for example, how much time it truly took to form various rock formations with their fossil deposits, instead of assuming that the standard geological time scale is correct.

All the research examples described above resulted in new scientific insights because biblical insights opened minds to see things that had previously not been noticed. This gives reason to believe many more such discoveries are awaiting the biology or Earth science researcher who uses this approach. It also gives reason to be skeptical about judging the Book of Genesis on the basis of current scientific interpretations.

The Other Side of the Coin

Awareness of the thinking of those who disagree with us and collaboration with such can help us notice things that would otherwise likely be overlooked in religion as well as in science. Geological study has raised awareness of conflicts on both ends of the spectrum of geological interpretations. In many situations it is difficult to reconcile the actual data in the rocks and fossils with millions of years of geological time. That theory fits well in a general way, but problems arise when careful attention is focused on detail. The devil is in the details.

On the other hand, it is equally difficult to see how the details of many deposits can be reconciled with the theory that most of the geological record was produced in a one-year flood. (The devil is still in the details.) Over the past hundred years, most theories of “flood geology” that attempt to explain how the Flood formed the rocks and fossils have made one big assumption not supported by the Bible (or the Spirit of Prophecy). This assumption is that most of the geological record was produced in the one-year Genesis flood (perhaps with some forming after the Flood, as catastrophic conditions gradually settled down to the more stable conditions of today), with no geological processes forming rocks and fossils between Creation and the Flood. Genesis reports a Flood that heavily impacted life on Earth, but it does not describe what parts of the geological record formed during that event—speaking only of the fossil-rich part of the geological record. The origin of the Earth and of the universe is a different question altogether. All explanations of such things are extra-biblical theories.

Perhaps the Phanerozoic portion of the geological record began forming in ocean basins or lowland areas after sin and continued before, during, and after the Flood. If the geological record, from Cambrian to the present, took several thousand years to form instead of much of it forming in one year, it is a very different kind of geological challenge. The rocks and fossils seem to indicate a genuine series of consecutive events that took some time, but there is also evidence of much catastrophe and rapid sedimentary processes. The choice is not only between (1) the geological record forming in one year, or (2) 540 million years for the geological column with its fossil record of complex organisms. Other options need to be considered, and allowing Scripture as well as science to introduce things that others overlook will continue to lead to produc-
tive science as the search continues for answers to the big questions about origins. This type of interaction between science and Scripture can yield insights in other fields as well.

Living With Unanswered Questions
As research is aimed at answering the give and take of challenges between science and religion, many unanswered questions will persist, even for those who do not accept Scripture, if they honestly face the conflicts between data and theory. It is unrealistic to think that science will prove or disprove either Creation or the Flood. Christians have trusted too much in science to prove these events from the distant past. Lacking direct observation, science can investigate hypotheses about such ancient historical events but not provide proof. God has also given evidence on which to base faith but not proof.

Faith cannot be based on science, but must be founded on knowing Jesus and learning to trust Him, even when there are questions without answers. He knows much more than we do about Earth history, and if we know Him and trust His Word, we can benefit from scriptural insights. All will at some point decide (consciously or unconsciously) which worldview they will accept and live by. They can't be continuously evaluating all beliefs, but if they maintain a constructive interaction between science and faith, they can test whether their faith is based on Scripture or on personal biases.

Those who depend on faith must not ignore science. Even though there may be conflicts between interpretations of Scripture and interpretations of science, the two sources will not ultimately contradict each other. Willingness to learn from science, understanding its limits, and a commitment to its highest quality are important complements to faith.

Elton Trueblood set an inspiring example when he stated that "the religious scientist has more reason to be careful of his evidence than has the nonreligious scientist, because he is handling what is intrinsically sacred. Shoddiness, for him, is something to shun because it is a form of blasphemy."

One who accepts the Bible as a reliable record of events is not hampered by that worldview, as many would claim, but actually has an advantage. Most scientists are familiar with only one basic understanding of Earth history and do not actively ask critical questions of their paradigm. That is not true of scientists who accept Bible history and are also active in the biological or earth sciences. They cannot escape becoming knowledgeable about the prevailing theories of Earth history, as well as their own, and thus are constantly evaluating the options.

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They want to know truth. They don't need to be afraid of data, but there is also no virtue in naively accepting whatever interpretations of the data conventional science offers, including a liberal interpretation of Scripture that is ultimately dependent on the prevailing scientific theory of the history of life in contrast to the Genesis account.

Answers to Challenges
Three concerns about efforts to integrate faith and science must be answered by any valid integration method.

First is the concern that trying to integrate faith and science will expose one's belief system to the possibility of being disproved by science. But if we believe something that is false, wouldn't we want to know that? And are we so unsure of our Christian beliefs that we are afraid they will be disproved? We may believe some things that are not truly biblical, such as the assumption that all geological formations must be explained by the one-year Flood. If we hold such non-biblical beliefs, it is better to find out. On the other hand, truly God-given truths will not be disproved.

It is important to understand that science is a human activity, all scientific interpretations are subject to correction and change, and a willingness to readily abandon basic religious beliefs because of science will not be constructive. At times, commitment to spiritual truth must be firm in spite of unresolved conflicts to wait for more evidence. Non-religious scientists must do that frequently: trust that data yet to be discovered will provide better answers. A balanced approach would be a willingness to learn from science, but not be over-awed by it.

Second is a concern that religious answers (God did it) will discourage research. But the method for integrating faith and science outlined earlier does not discourage research. In fact, it stimulates more careful research in both science and in reli-
igion, yielding insights and hypotheses that can benefit research in both domains.

Third is the concern that the effort to integrate faith and science may introduce bias into science. Yet any philosophical approach can introduce biases. Avoiding integration is not an answer and just introduces its own serious biases. The integration method described here encourages both science and religion constantly to challenge each other, raising awareness of possible biases. The other important antidote to superficial thinking and biases is awareness of the thinking of others and working with those who disagree. This encourages the ability to see things that others are likely to miss, and this acts as an important quality control process.

The effort to integrate faith and science will work best if we: (1) allow new scientific findings to challenge our interpretation of Scripture, and vice versa; (2) develop and carefully evaluate our biblical anchor points; (3) utilize insights from Scripture to open our minds to ask new questions, open our eyes to see things that others don't see, and devise hypotheses that can be scientifically tested, especially in areas of seeming conflict between science and Scripture; (4) be aware of the work and thinking of those who have a different worldview; (5) use the scholarly methods of quality control whenever feasible—publication in scholarly journals and working with friends whose worldview differs from ours; and (6) above all, remember that none of this is important unless we maintain our personal friendship and trust in the greatest and most knowledgeable biologist and geologist of all time—Jesus Christ.

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God's Eternal Covenant and the Sabbath

Covenant and Sabbath are two words that have been eternally linked in God's economy.

Traditionally, the word covenant has been defined as a formal agreement between God and His people consisting of God's promises to them of blessings and salvation. The people were then required to perform some actions that in the Old Testament mostly related to rituals in connection with the sanctuary. The covenant was ratified or confirmed through an oath and/or sacrifice. Failure to perform these rituals was seen as a breach of the covenant. Unfortunately, little by little, the popular emphasis became focused on the actions: If you performed them, you were right and acceptable; if you didn't, you had failed. Ultimately, in the eyes of the people, perfect performance came to mean acceptance or salvation; failure meant rejection or being lost.

The problem with that understanding is that salvation by works has never been a part of God's plan, neither in the Old nor the New Testament. No human being has ever been saved by works. "In [God's] sight no one living is righteous" (Ps.

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IS LYING EVER MORAL?

What does the story of Rahab say—or not say—about lying?

Imagine yourself a Christian in Nazi Germany in the 1940s. Against the law, you've decided to give asylum in your home to an innocent Jewish family fleeing death. Without warning gestapo agents arrive at your door and confront you with a direct question: ‘Are there any Jews on your premises?’ What would you say? What would you do?

Thus begins a captivating but controversial editorial. “In Defense of Rahab” stirred up a passionate debate on the virtues and vices of lying to save life. Though some may feel that these issues have no relevance for life in the “real world,” the magazine article rightly reminds us that they aren’t merely theoretical.

Critical Biblical Principles

In 1997, one-third of adults in the United States believed that in contemporary society “lying is sometimes necessary.” As a result of a nationwide survey, a well-respected researcher concluded that, “America appears to be drowning in a sea of relativistic, nonbiblical theology. We are living amid the dilution of traditional, Bible-based Christian faith.” It is against this backdrop of living in a non-absolutist culture

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that the Scriptures portray a community of believers “who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12, NKJV). Therefore, if we are to ascertain accurately whether it is ever appropriate to lie to save life, it is absolutely imperative that a hermeneutically reliable investigation be done of this issue in the Bible.

Furthermore, though all doctrinal truths are to be found in Scripture, its central focus is Jesus Christ; for as He Himself noted, the Scriptures “testify of my behalf?” (John 5:39, NRSV). Indeed, John the Beloved reminds us that the very reason he recorded the story of Jesus was so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:31, NKJV). This is ultimately the central purpose of the entire Bible, including the narrative portions: to point to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world and Lord of all life. Thus, only when all of Scripture is seen as focusing on the Savior can it be appropriately understood and correctly applied.

In almost every discussion of ethical issues the question of “legalism” is raised. In his theological treatise to the Christians in Rome, Paul categorically declares that human beings are “justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28, NKJV). Then, he asks: “Does this mean that we can forget about the law?” (vs. 31, NLT). Compellingly, Paul states, “Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law” (vs. 31, NLT).

This concept can be recognized from the way in which the Ten Commandments are articulated in Exodus. First, and foremost, God reminded His people: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (Ex. 20:2, NIV). Only then, after God had established that it was He who had freed them from bondage, did He lay down His ethical expectations. Thus, God first redeems, then He requires; He saves people, then tells them how to serve Him and others. Clearly, this is not legalism. The one who has been delivered from sin will live in conformity with God’s moral principles. As Jesus noted, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15, NIV). This precise sequence of love preceding obedience is already evident in the Decalogue itself, where God promises to show mercy to those “who love me and keep my commandments” (Ex. 20:6, NIV).

Before addressing truth-telling in exceptional situations, the issue of Scripture stories must be highlighted. Even a casual review of the Old and New Testaments reveals that the Bible does not in any way minimize human frailty. “Literary scholars have long noted the amazing transparency of biblical portraits. Samson’s carnality, David’s...
lust, Solomon’s political and religious compromise or Elijah’s cowardice in running from Jezebel are all presented with remarkable forthrightness... There was no attempt to hide the human frailty of biblical heroes.”

Though it’s true that characters such as Elisha and Daniel model perseverance and faithfulness in the face of tremendous pressure, it is God’s righteousness—not the humans—that is highlighted. Rightly understood, Bible stories are to bring praise and honor to the God of the universe. In the reading and interpretation of the chronicles of the Word of God, it is God who is glorified, not faulty human beings. Thus, all deliberations on moral matters must be thoroughly Christ-centered, solidly Bible-based, and appropriately applied.

**Analysis of Truth: The Spirit and the Specifics**

Pontius Pilate asked the question: “What is truth?” (John 18:38, KJV). The tragic irony of this question was that Jesus Christ, “the truth” according to John 14:6, stood right in front of him, yet Pilate failed to recognize that. Moreover, the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth” (14:17, KJV), was sent to this world to bear witness about Jesus Christ, the essence of all truth.

For God to lie would be against His very nature. To speak of the sanctity of truth, therefore, means to recognize the sanctity of the being of the Creator of the universe. Scripture describes the God of the universe as absolutely honest, totally trustworthy, and One in whom His created beings can have complete confidence.

But the Bible goes beyond that, teaching that God made humankind in His own image (Gen. 1:26-28), to reflect His character of truth and integrity (Matt. 5:16). Making this summons to veracity more specific, the Old Testament commands: “‘Do not lie. Do not deceive one another’ (Lev. 19:11, NIV), and “Do not tell lies about others” (Ex. 20:16, CEV), for “The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful” (Prov. 12:22, NIV).

Correspondingly, the New Testament charges: “Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25, NIV), “speaking the truth in love” (vs. 15, NKJV). It proclaims: “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him” (Col. 3:9, 10, NASB). Plainly, this is the pivotal point: becoming trustworthy and truthful is possible only as we become more and more like Jesus Christ, One in whom there was no deceit (1 Peter 2:22).

Based on the principle “that we [should] serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6, NASB), some have suggested that at times the literal interpretation of the ninth commandment contradicts the broad principle of honesty, at which point the letter should be ignored while the spirit is to be kept. Careful study of this text indicates that it has been taken out of context, as the immediately following passage reveals: “What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet’” (vs. 7, NASB).

The context shows that though Paul is rejecting a merely external obedience, he is calling for a genuine Spirit-empowered allegiance to God’s eternal law. This is similar to Jesus’ condemnation of the proud religious leaders of His day: “’This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me’” (Mark 7:6, NKJV). Rather than nullifying obedience to God’s specific moral requirements, Paul affirms that “The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12, NKJV). Scripture does not pose an either/or choice between the principle and the particular; instead, it calls for “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6, NKJV), “For the love of Christ compels us” (2 Cor. 5:14, NKJV).

“Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one.”

Diligent investigation of the scriptural passages on lying and truth telling demonstrates that God has made truthful communication a binding moral obligation—so much so that “all liars [will meet their end] in the second death” (Rev. 21:8, 25).
No Bible narrative should be followed uncritically. The actions of these characters must be checked against the prescriptive propositional statements made in other parts of Scripture. Only if and when their actions coincide with God’s clearly revealed moral requirements, as in the Ten Commandments, and as exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus, should they be emulated.

KJV). This is not simply an arbitrary decision of the God of truth and verity, but is the only reasonable solution, since “everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (Rev. 22:15, NIV) is in reality choosing to emulate Satan, “the father of lies” (John 8:44, NIV), while those who elect to follow Jesus, “the Truth,” will inherit eternal life (John 3:16).

Yet, in human discourse, the question persists: What is the morally right thing to do, according to the Bible, when it seems that only falsehood will avert a fatality?

Deception or Death: A Challenging Choice

Some have asserted that unless the Bible expressly condemns a human behavior in a scriptural narrative, that behavior provides an example to follow under similar circumstances. They cite such passages as 1 Corinthians 10:11: “All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11, NKJV).

Thus, it is concluded that stories such as those of Rahab, and of the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, have been included in the Bible so that believers will know what to do in comparable situations, that lying to save life is legitimate—actually the morally right thing to do.

Are all the actions of Bible characters to be emulated? If not all, then should some actions be imitated? If so, which actions should be considered as models of morality? And, more importantly, how is a student of the Bible to know which actions to emulate and which to avoid?

What does 1 Corinthians 10:11 truly say about human behavior? This verse is in effect a summary of the preceding passage, in which Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians, “These things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted” (vs. 6, NKJV): idolatry and sexual immorality (vs. 7, 8).

Thus, the immediate and broader contexts need to be taken into account to distinguish between what the Bible actually teaches and what it merely reports. Plainly, Scripture contains examples that should not be followed. Far from suggesting that the actions of Bible characters should be uncritically emulated, 1 Corinthians 10:11 is a summons to all believers to “avoid the evils recorded and imitate only the righteousness of those who served the Lord.”

Each scriptural narrative needs to be analyzed with regard to literary progression, dramatic structure, and stylistic features. Because narratives usually communicate ideas implicitly rather than explicitly, they are more needful of proper and careful interpretation.

Consider the tale of Tamar, widowed by a wicked husband (Gen. 38:7), abused by her second spouse (vs. 8-10), and defrauded by Judah, her father-in-law, out of marrying his third son (vss. 11-14). Taking matters into her own hands, she dresses like a prostitute to lure Judah into sex without recognizing her. She becomes pregnant. When it is revealed that the pregnancy was due to prostitution, Judah summarily sentences her to death. But just before the execution she exposes the father-to-be is Judah himself. Chagrined, Judah responds: “She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son” (vs. 26, NKJV). One of the twins born is named Perez, who becomes a direct ancestor of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

What ethical implications are to be gleaned from this story, especially when it is recognized that not a single word of direct condemnation against Tamar can be found throughout the entire Bible? Does this narrative teach that incest is morally acceptable, since through this kind of action Tamar became one of Jesus’ ancestors? Or is prostitution permissible at times, to bring about justice? Or does this narrative promote deceiving those who mistreat us, as Tamar did?

No Bible narrative should be followed uncritically. The actions of these characters must be checked against the prescriptive propositional statements made in other parts of Scripture. Only if and when their actions coincide with God’s clearly revealed moral requirements as in the Ten Commandments, and as exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus, should they be emulated. This is why Paul could say: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1, NKJV).

Put plainly, Tamar’s actions are explicitly condemned in Scripture because they violate specific divine moral laws that prohibit incest (Lev. 18:6-17; 20:11-21), prostitution (Lev. 19:29; 21:7; Deut. 23:17, 18),
Examination of the ninth commandment, in its original setting in Exodus as well as in its multiple occurrences throughout Scripture, reveals that this ethical obligation is always stated without exceptions, exemptions, or reservation: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16, NKJV); “Do not lie to one another” (Col. 3:9, NKJV).

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Under divine inspiration, Bible writers of both Testaments understood the ninth commandment as forbidding all forms of falsehood, under all possible conditions, irrespective of projected consequences, and regardless of purportedly pure motives.

“False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the
Instead of adopting a fallacious, humanly formulated view of falsehood, it would be prudent and the only safe course for the committed Christian to embrace the divinely designed definition of deception, for only in so doing will there be opportunity for an accurate understanding and an appropriate application of God’s royal law of liberty.

Eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor’s reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.

And, according to Ellen White, this principle includes lying to save life: “Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood.” Hence, instead of adopting a fallacious, humanly formulated view of falsehood, it would be prudent and the only safe course for the committed Christian to embrace the divinely designed definition of deception, for only in so doing will there be opportunity for an accurate understanding and an appropriate application of God’s royal law of liberty.

2. The novel concept that a lie is a false statement with evil or selfish intent does not correspond with the conventional, standard understanding of the word. Investigation of three major English dictionaries covering the last century reveals unanimity on this. Whether it be “deceit,” “deceive,” “falsehood,” “lie,” or “prevaricate,” the same basic idea emerges: It is a deliberate distortion of the truth, by word or deed, with the objective of misleading.

Thus, there are two—and only two—essential elements in dictionary definitions pertaining to deception: (1) an action perverting the truth; and (2) an intentional aim to misinform. For at least the past century, there has never been even the remotest hint that a lie must be an intentional attempt to mislead with evil intentions. From a human perspective, Christian behavior cannot be judged by intentions or by motive or consequence, but only by following principles that derive from God. Thus, it is best and most honest to utilize the conventional definition, which accords well with the true biblical meaning of these terms.

3. The idea of wicked or malicious or selfish intent implies, by contrast, that a false statement told with benevolent, altruistic, or compassionate motives is not a lie, even though its purpose is to deceive or mislead. If any of the other Ten Commandments is modified in this way, the results would be ludicrous and morally catastrophic.

For example, the eighth commandment would then read: “Stealing is to take another person’s possessions with wicked or malicious or selfish intent, without his or her permission”; meaning, by contrast, that you may swipe someone’s goods as long as it is done with noble motives! Or consider a similarly revised seventh commandment: “Adultery is when one is motivated by wicked or malicious or selfish desires to have sex outside of marriage”; meaning that extramarital sex is justifiable, if done lovingly, kindly, or magnanimously. Obviously, since the Decalogue simply calls for loving, loyal obedience to its absolute imperatives, irrespective of so-called virtuous motives, we need to observe them faithfully even “unto death” (Rev. 2:10, KJV).

Other subtly ambiguous descriptions are used to obscure the meaning of lying, for example, “diversionary tactic,” “imaginative strategy,” “playful trick,” or “practical solution.” Ellen White charges: “Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying. Sabbath-breaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil.” Indeed, though there may be a tendency to euphemize expressions, “This is a time for Christians to stand tall for truth—in the midst of a forest of lies.”

Paul cautions: “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Col. 2:8, NKJV). This is the choice: “human tradition” or “Christ.” In Colossians 3:9, 10, Paul further stresses the vital necessity of a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ as the key to the issue of truth-telling in any Christian’s life. Similarly, recognizing that “it is not a light or an easy thing to speak the exact truth,” Ellen White adds that “we cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth.” All must make a pivotal decision: Either we will choose to follow Satan, “the father of lies” (John 8:44, NASB), or we will elect to emulate Jesus Christ who declares of Himself: “I am . . . the truth”! (14:6, NIV).
Opposing Obligations or Compatible Commandments?

It appears that, up to the time of the Protestant Reformation, major Roman Catholic thought-leaders held that absolute moral commands sometimes come into unavoidable conflict. If there were no opportunity for avoiding one of two sins, the lesser evil should always be chosen. Until the beginning of the 20th century, most well-known Christian thinkers, in basic accord with the early Catholic perspective, believed that tragic circumstances of life at times force one into the position of having to choose between two moral evils.

Some have felt that this emphasis on ethical conflicts is misplaced. Yet they, too, must deal with the less-than-desirable borderline situations. Other thinkers have concluded that conflicting moral norms are impossible. Still others are firmly convinced of the reality of these situations of clashing ethical responsibilities. Over the years, this issue of the apparently inescapable choice between two or more moral evils has given rise to various methodologies for decision making.

Since the Bible does not explicitly address this matter, basic principles and relevant passages need to be carefully considered.

1. Comparing the Decalogue with the divine Lawgiver reveals that “the law of God, being a revelation of His will, is a transcript of His character.” Just as God is described as “holy” (Lev. 19:2; Josh. 24:19; Ps. 99:9, KJV), so the law is “holy” (Rom. 7:12, KJV). His character is “perfect” (Deut. 32:4, KJV), as is His moral law (Ps. 19:7, KJV). Just as He is “good” (25:8, KJV), so are His commandments (Rom. 7:12, KJV).

Those who believe that divine moral absolutes conflict would in reality be pitting one aspect of God’s nature against another. And if God’s moral absolutes may at times conflict, then God’s mind—and will—are conflicted. Since Scripture declares, however, that God’s character is perfect and flawless, His moral laws will contain no conflicts or contradictions.

2. If genuine conflicts exist, in which one must choose a “lesser” moral evil, and if Christ “was in all points tempted as we are” (Heb. 4:15, NKJV), then He had to have sinned. Yet the rest of the passage just quoted categorically states that He was “without sin” (NKJV). Jesus’ sinlessness is repeatedly noted (1 Peter 2:22; John 15:10), together with a summons to follow His example (1 Peter 2:21), which would be pointless if real moral dilemmas caused us to commit moral evil. Christ “came to demonstrate the fact that humanity, allied by living faith to divinity, can keep God’s commandments.”

3. God created humans in the beginning as free moral beings (Gen. 2:15-17). One is never forced to obey or disobey God’s moral law. Scripture teaches that individuals are always afforded a genuinely free moral choice (Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; Matt. 11:28-30; 2 Cor. 6:2). “Man was created a free moral agent. . . . [H]e must be subjected to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity.” The notion that occasions arise in which the choices are only between one moral evil and another contradicts Scripture and supports Satan in his enmity against God’s law.

4. Throughout the Scriptures, God is described as both able and willing to protect and provide for those who face tests (Ps. 46:1; 91:1-8; Dan. 3:16-18; Rom. 7:24, 25; Jude 24). The apostle Paul tells us that “God is faithful,” and that He “will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able” (1 Cor. 10:13, NKJV). Concurring that “He lays on them no burden greater than they are able to bear,” Ellen White says: “God has made ample provision for His people; and if they rely upon His strength, they will never become the sport of circumstances.” Moreover, “God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him” (Phil. 2:13, NLT). In other words: “Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His bids are enablings.” The fact that a trustworthy God has promised to keep His followers from falling and to provide a morally right way of escape when trials come confirms that they will never be forced to choose between two evils.

5. The New Testament frequently mentions the final judgment that takes place before Christ’s second coming (Matt. 12:36, 37; Acts 24:25). Accentuating the importance of God’s moral norms, the writer of Ecclesiastes concludes: “Fear God and
Scripture records that, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NKJV). This offer of forgiveness, however, does not negate that such action is classified as sin. On the contrary, the fact that it must be confessed proves that it is a moral evil.

keep His commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecc. 12:13, 14, NRSV). After enumerating specific Decalogue commandments, so that it’s clear what “law” James is referring to, he says: “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12, NKJV). “In order to be prepared for the judgment, it is necessary that man should keep the law of God. The law will be the standard of character in the Judgment.” Obviously a fair final judgment is possible only if there is a clear moral standard that human beings can always obey through the power of God.

6. James emphasizes the wholistic nature of the divine moral law as follows: “Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10, NKJV). From God’s perspective, there is no such thing as a lesser moral evil that He will merely disregard, for the transgression of any of His commandments is sin (1 John 3:4). “In order to be a commandment breaker it is not necessary that we should trample upon the whole moral code. If one precept is disregarded, we are transgressors of the sacred law.”

But Scripture records that, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9, NKJV). This offer of forgiveness, however, does not negate that such action is classified as sin. On the contrary, the fact that it must be confessed proves that it is a moral evil. Recognizing that the Bible discounts the concept of a so-called permissible lesser evil, it becomes clear that “God requires of all His subjects obedience, entire obedience to all His commandments.”

7. Last, yet most critically, the theme of the cosmic controversy between good and evil needs to be thoughtfully considered. The first three chapters of Genesis indicate that the Tempter set out to lure Eve into doubting, questioning, and eventually challenging God’s veracity as well as the justice and fairness of His moral requirements (Gen. 3:1-6). “From the first, the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, and that His law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed.”

Further light on this cosmic battle emerges from the first two chapters of the Book of Job. Satan set out to prove that if God removed His protective care from Job, loyalty to God and obedience to His law would collapse (Job 1:7-12). “Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God’s commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God’s precepts.”

This corresponds with God’s injunction regarding the Decalogue: “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (Deut. 5:29, NKJV). Since God requires people always to obey all His moral laws, and since God gave no commandments that cannot be obeyed by all, there is never a time when one is compelled to choose between two moral evils. It is Satan who claims that on occasion God’s moral law cannot be obeyed.

Fear of the Future or Faith in the Father?

It has been suggested that Rahab’s deception was justifiable, for without it the spies would certainly have been captured or killed, resulting in disaster for the Israelites. This type of logic contradicts Romans 3:8, which warns against doing evil “that good may result” (NIV). It was at God’s direct command that the Israelites were to cross the Jordan River, “to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel” (Josh. 1:2, NKJV). Thus, adopting an atheistic approach of totally ignoring God’s pivotal role in the lives of His people, the Rahab incident has been approached from a thoroughly humanistic perspective.

It seems that the natural human reaction, when confronted with perplexing ethical difficulties or life-or-death dilemmas, is to attempt to project the future, and then to make decisions based on these consequential speculations. The person who has become “a new creation” in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17, NKJV), however, is called upon to no longer “be conformed to this world” but to have a “transformed” way of thinking (Rom. 12:2, NKJV), and to “walk in the newness of life” (6:4, NKJV), “according to the Spirit” (8:4, NKJV). What this means in concrete situa-
tions is spelled out explicitly in instructions given by Jesus Christ: “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer . . . . Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10, NKJV). The challenge is: Do not operate out of fear of the future, but by faith in the Father!

This conspicuous contrast between fear and faith surfaces in the account of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. After Jesus had miraculously silenced the turbulent ocean, He asked His disciples: “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” (Mark 4:40, NKJV).

The reaction of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when faced with either the fiery furnace or forsaking their heavenly Father, exhibits precisely the opposite reaction. Though they believed that God was able to deliver them from death, they said to Nebuchadnezzar: “But even if he does not, . . . we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Dan. 3:18, NIV). “True Christian principle will not stop to weigh consequences.”

How, then, should moral decisions be made? “In deciding upon any course of action we are not to ask whether we can see that harm will result from it, but whether it is in keeping with the will of God.” Admittedly, statements such as these run counter to a culturally conditioned, results-oriented, rationalistic mind. As one scholar astutely noted: “We want to be like the most High, subject to none. But can we calculate the eternal results or the rightness of our actions? We cannot predict even the next five minutes, much less the future.” When the biblical truth is acknowledged that only the Creator can “tell . . . the future before it even happens” (Isa. 46:10 NLT), people will begin to spurn speculating about possible consequences and embrace the challenge of living for God’s glory, in complete conformity to His commandments.

Since consequential reasoning proves to be a “hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Col. 2:8, NIV), it needs to be roundly rejected. Instead, just as Jesus was “obedient to the point of death” (Phil. 2:8, NASB), regardless of consequences, the dedicated believer is challenged to “have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.”

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1 Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 68.
1 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 12.
1 Ibid.
1 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 309.
1 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 336.
1 The Desire of Ages, p. 806.
1 The Great Controversy, p. 434.
1 Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 331, 332.
1 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 274.
1 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 421.
1 The Great Controversy, p. 436.
1 Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 235.
1 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 69.
1 Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 314.
1 The Sanctified Life, p. 39.
1 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 634.
Considered through the eyes of faith, a recent and currently unfolding discovery in the Grand Canyon carries deep, encouraging theological and spiritual significance.

Steven A. Austin, a Christian geologist, has been privileged to be the principal investigator in a remarkable find of a two-state-wide bed of Nautiloids buried in, of all places, the Redwall Limestone within the Grand Canyon. Austin reports his discovery in scholarly detail with charts, diagrams, and pictures. The fossil Nautiloids he has found show an average length of about 12 to 18 inches and look like long ice cream cones whose large circular ends are about 2 or 3 inches in diameter. These fossils are characterized as orthocone Nautiloids.

It is helpful to understand the profound potential problem the discovery helps to solve and to hear the story of how Austin was led to this discovery. In studying the Grand Canyon for his entire professional career, he has felt the sting for many years from colleague geologists, who are not believers, and who invoke the massive Redwall Limestone (more than 600 feet in height) of the Grand Canyon in support of their claim that life forms must have existed on Earth for millions of years.

For example, they cite the Redwall Limestone as empirical corroboration of the conventional geological claim that hundreds or millions of years were required to form this huge limestone configuration by slow accumulation, and thus, the biblical claim that a global flood formed part of Earth history cannot be trusted. Therefore, Austin has been intensely interested in the geological study of the Redwall Limestone. In fact, he has personally brought this specific challenge before the Lord in prayer, asking for divine guidance in researching this problem. He entreated the Creator to guide him in making, if possible, a genuine paleontological and geological discovery in the Grand Canyon—following the principles of good scientific research—that would be consistent with what one would expect in a global flood and thus constituting empirical support of the historical truth of God’s claims in Scripture. In a powerful way God has rewarded his prayer and continuing, hard, honest work.

The story behind Austin's find is fascinating. He was already acquainted with the few known fossil Nautiloids—around 17 in quantity—that he personally had seen while stopping at Nautiloid Canyon on several raft trips down the Colorado River. While he was talking about his interest in Nautiloids in the Grand Canyon with a knowledgeable boatman on one of these raft trips, however, the boatman informed him that many more were exposed along the Colorado River, but that no scientists had studied them because the raft trips were permitted to stop only at designated places that did not include these other Nautiloid locations.

This inspired Austin to propose a creative research strategy to the officials of the Grand Canyon that would give him the formal authority to study the other Nautiloids. He applied for a permit to inventory scientifically the number of Nautiloids existing in the Grand Canyon. Thankfully, he received formal permission to undertake the project. This gave him the official authority to hire a motorized boat to make his way up the Colorado River and to stop at the places indicated by the boatman. To his sheer amaze-
recorded within the Redwall Limestone itself.

The inventory figures of the total number of Nautiloids in the Grand Canyon run high. Austin estimates that on average one Nautiloid can be found per square yard along a flat bed (about 7 feet by 8 feet thick) that he has named the Whitmore Nautiloid Bed, which extends from Arizona into Nevada. The Nautiloids themselves are found within the Whitmore Nautiloid Bed in an upper layer with an average thickness of only about 13 inches. This bed can be traced throughout the entire Grand Canyon and also into its many side canyons. Thus the number of Nautiloids present in the Grand Canyon can be placed conservatively at hundreds of thousands.

What is the potential significance of this discovery? Scientifically, Austin's research indicates that "a large population of living Nautiloids was swept up, smothered within, and buried by the flow." As indicated by the average burial orientation of the Nautiloids, the aquatic debris flow hydroplaned westward, at speeds of about 12 to 15 miles per hour, probably out of southwestern Colorado, and moved toward southern Nevada through northern Arizona.

Theologically, the existence of such a large aquatic catastrophic transport and rapid deposition of Nautiloids within the Redwall Limestone over hundreds of square miles is consistent with the numerous kinds of aquatic catastrophic phenomena that might be expected to occur during a global catastrophic disaster on the scale described as the Genesis flood. The closer and longer we study the geological record through good scientific field work and through the eyes of faith, the more it reveals a consistency with biblical history, thus indicating that these biblical claims can be trusted. The history of the Earth, and of our lives, are both in our Creator's hands.

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WHAT'S NEW IN ARCHAEOLOGY?

Michael Hasel

The long search for Herod the Great's tomb has ended with the exposure of the remains of his grave, sarcophagus and mausoleum on Mount Herodium's northeastern slope" hailed the recent Hebrew University of Jerusalem bulletin. The incredible news came from the Institute of Archaeology's Ehud Netzer, who has been conducting excavations just a few miles south at Herod's fortress of Herodium. This is the third largest fortress of its kind anywhere in the Roman Empire.

The public and the media thrive on this kind of news. Not only does it once again remind us that Herod the Great lived and died, just as the New Testament and other ancient historians like Josephus inform us, but that one of the most prolific builders in ancient history succumbed to the fragility of life and a dismal end. Wanting to be remembered in posterity, Herod built more than a dozen palaces or fortresses around Judea, founded the new port city of Caesarea, and reconstructed the temple in Jerusalem. Like many ancient builders, he built for eternity.

Professor Netzer first began his excavations in the lower city of Herodium in 1972. Last year, he began to search the side of the cone-shaped structure. He describes the approach to the burial site as "one of the most striking finds in Israel in recent years—via a monumental flight of stairs (6.5 meters wide) leading to the hillside...especially constructed for the funeral procession."

The tomb itself was almost totally dismantled in ancient times. According to official reports, there were few remains "only part of its well built podium, or base, built of large white ashlars [dressed stone] in a manner and size not previously revealed at Herodium."

The architectural elements of the tomb, including a group of decorated urns, indicate elaborate ornamentation. Similar ones are to be
One of the most incredible images found in Scripture is that of the shining face of Moses. According to Exodus 34, the skin of his face glowed with a radiant light because he had been speaking with God and beheld the glory of His wonderful character.

Can you imagine? The glory of God's holy presence radiating from a human face? It was unmistakable! One couldn't miss it. Whenever Moses would come back from these personal encounters with God, the children of Israel could read it all in his face. But it frightened them. They kept their distance. They felt better when he placed a veil over his face so they could not see the glow of the innocent glory of God. For some reason, they were satisfied to let Moses have the experience alone. No one stepped forward asking how they, too, could find such close communion with God. They lacked either the interest or the boldness to seek a similar deep and personal encounter with God. We are told that their minds were hardened (2 Cor. 3:14). A veil lay over their hearts so that they couldn't see or understand the deeper spiritual things God would have them experience.

Paul boldly asserts that every Christian, like Moses, can come with unveiled face and behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). Like Moses, one's face (presence, life) can radiate God's holy glory.

Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3:18 are complex. They follow an unusual discussion about the shining face of Moses. First, the subject "we all" has two qualifying phrases: (1) with unveiled face, and (2) beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. The predicate of "we all" is "are being transformed" for which there is (1) an end, the same image from glory to glory, and (2) a source, from the Holy Spirit. The point is that there is inner spiritual transformation when one beholds the face of God. There is a progressive transformation into the same image of what one beholds "from glory to glory" through the Spirit. This transformation comes because one beholds with unveiled face, as in a mirror the glory of the Lord. As we behold, so we are transformed. It is a moral spiritual principle. The goal of our transformation is "the same image." It has to do with being and character. Holiness. God's holiness.

Scripture assumes that we can apprehend the face of Jesus! We can encounter Him with the inward eye. And like Moses, there can be a radiating glory. There can be an ever-increasing experience from glory to glory that will show in a transformed life. Our face can shine with the innocent reality of a personal encounter with God (Acts 6:16). Here is promised free unlimited access to behold the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Yet so few of us have this kind of
experience. Most of us are like the Israelites who were satisfied to let their spiritual leader alone experience such energizing pursuit of the face of God. What keeps us from ever deepening personal encounters with God in Jesus? Why do we fail to draw near? Why do we let the years pass and grow old and tired of spiritual things? What hinders us?

The secret of holiness is found in what Bruce Wilkinson has termed "habits of holiness," one’s devotional life. “Intimacy with God is the essence of holy living. . . . Intimacy speaks of personal fellowship, of secrets shared.”

Beholding. Becoming. Becoming like what we behold. These involve significant personal time with God. The single most strategic change we can make is to cultivate such habits. Half of the word devotional is the word devote, which means to set apart for a special and often higher end. The focus of daily devotions is not the procedures we follow, but our relationship with God. Because we are devoted to the Lord, we choose to dedicate priority time each day to Him alone. And because He is the most important person in the world to us, we don’t allow anyone or anything to take precedence.

In Paul’s time there were no clear mirrors such as we have today. To make out your own image you had to look intently at a mirror and focus your vision. The concept of a mirror is a good one—for the idea of Christ conveyed by a mirror is better than a painting, or a picture—for He is truly there and alive—and moving. The Scriptures are the glass in which we behold the glory of the living Christ. And it is the Spirit who unlocks Scripture’s meaning so that Christ in all His glory moves within its pages. Jesus said the Scriptures testified of Him (John 5:39). He also linked His Word with holiness: “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (17:17-19, NKJV).

“When we try to learn more about our Heavenly Father through the Bible, angels come near, our minds are strengthened, and our character is lifted up. We become more like our Savior.” Hiding God’s Word in our hearts helps keep us from sin (Ps. 119:9); it gives us guidance (vs. 105); it gives us wisdom (vss. 97-100); it equips us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Scripture is important to the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives as He brings to our remembrance the things we have learned (John 14:26). Scripture can change our lives and disposition (Col. 3:16; James 1:21). It converts us and makes us holy (Ps. 19:7; 1 Peter 1:22, 23).

Read Scripture. Read it thoughtfully. Listen to what your lips say and ask God to make what you hear come alive in your life. Block out everything else. Pray it. Personalize it. Sing it. Make it a part of your conscious thought, and forget about everything else as you give that time to Him. This is an essential aspect of the habits of holiness, and it must take top priority. We are to find a devotional place, schedule devotional time, structure a personal devotional plan for each day or month or year. We must read Scripture, meditate on its meaning, memorize it, pray over it, yield ourselves to it.

“The Lord bids you to come up higher, to reach a holier standard. You must have an experience much deeper than you have yet even thought of having. Many who are already members of God’s great family know little of what it means to behold His glory and to be changed from glory to glory. Many of you have a twilight perception of Christ’s excellence, and your souls thrill with joy. You long for a fuller, deeper sense of the Saviour’s love. You are unsatisfied. But do not despair. Give to Jesus the heart’s best and holiest affections. Treasure every ray of light. Cherish every desire of the soul after God. Give yourselves the culture of spiritual thoughts and holy communings. You have seen but the first rays of the early dawn of His glory. As you follow on to know the Lord, you will know that His going forth is prepared as the morn-

ing. ‘The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ Proverbs 4:18, R.V., margin. Having repented of our sins, confessed them, and found pardon, we are to continue to learn of Christ until we come into the full noontide of a perfect gospel faith.”

In his Confessions, St. Augustine wrote, “You set me in front of my own face.” Before we can see the face of Jesus, we need to stand in front of our own face and admit to ourselves that if we are not seeing His face we are looking only at our own.

Paul implies that a veil can lay not merely over our minds, but, literally, over our hearts—where our attitudes, interests, motives lie (2 Cor. 3:14, 15). A. W. Tozer says the veil is “woven of the fine threads of the self-life, the hyphenated sins of the human spirit. They are not something we do, they are something we are, and therein lies both their subtlety and their power. To be specific, these self-sins are self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, and a host of others like them.”

So self is the opaque veil that hides the face of Jesus. It can be removed only in spiritual experience. Removing the veil implies conversion. There must be the work of God. We must invite the cross to do its deadly work within us. “Let us remember: when we talk of rending
the veil we are speaking in a figure, and the thought of it is poetical, almost pleasant; but in actuality there is nothing pleasant about it. In human experience that veil is made of living spiritual tissue; it is composed of the sentient, quivering stuff of which our whole beings consist, and to touch it is to touch us where we feel pain. To tear it away is to injure us, to hurt us and make us bleed. To say otherwise is to make the cross no cross ... it is never fun to die. To rip through the dear and tender stuff of which life is made can never be anything but deeply painful. Yet that is what the cross did to Jesus and it is what the cross would do to every man to set him free."

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, 'Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.' This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ."

Frederick Buechner says, "It would take no less than God ... to enable men to see God's glory in that shambles of a face." He's referring to Jesus. The human face of Jesus. The dying Jesus. The face so many looked past and walked by. The face we too can miss. "Like the faces of the people we love, it [the face of Jesus] has become so familiar that unless we take pains we hardly see it at all. Take pains. See it for what it is."

"We see the glory of God indirectly, mirrored as it were, in the face of Jesus Christ, the image of God. Something precious happens when we spend time with Jesus; we become more and more like Him. We are transformed into His image from glory to glory. It is a continuous process. A passive one. Progressive. And with purpose. That our face will reflect the face of Jesus.

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9 Steps to Christ, p. 70.

"THROW YOURSELF DOWN"

Thor Axel Kappfjell was at the top of his sport, literally. As a premier member of the worldwide BASE organization, he liked to jump off tall things: BASE stands for buildings, antennas, spans (bridges), and earth (cliffs). BASE jumping is parachuting from fixed objects. Fun, huh?

Kappfjell had gained quite a bit of notoriety around the world by jumping off things without permission. The writers of laws, policies, and ordinances tend to frown on unauthorized use of their properties in the pursuit of extreme sports. After all, there's this nasty issue of litigation.

He leaped off the 86th-floor observation deck of the Empire State Building in New York City and, three days later, the eagle heads on the Chrysler Building. In both cases, authorities, caught off guard, cried, "Hey, you can't do that!" but both times the adventurer melted into the crowds of the teeming city before anyone could nab him. When he had the temerity to jump from one of the World Trade towers, however, they were ready for him. He was arrested and sentenced to seven days of community service.

Then in July 1999, Kappfjell was the third of 12 jumpers planning to leap from the 3,300-foot Kjerag, a cliff near Stavanger, Norway. It was Kappfjell's last jump: he hit the rock face and fell into a fjord.

When Jesus was on Earth, He was faced at one time with the possibility of becoming human history's first known BASE jumper. Rather than getting His name in this way into the pages of the Guinness Book of World Records, however, the account is reported in Scripture.

When you think about it, the New Testament is far more amazing than Guinness anyway. How can such things as the world's longest mustard or the most jumps recorded on a pogo stick or the largest tomato ever grown compare to the miracle of Jesus Christ?
the veil we are speaking in a figure, and the thought of it is poetical, almost pleasant; but in actuality there is nothing pleasant about it. In human experience that veil is made of living spiritual tissue; it is composed of the sentient, quivering stuff of which our whole beings consist, and to touch it is to touch us where we feel pain. To tear it away is to injure us, to hurt us and make us bleed. To say otherwise is to make the cross no cross . . . it is never fun to die. To rip through the dear and tender stuff of which life is made can never be anything but deeply painful. Yet that is what the cross did to Jesus and it is what the cross would do to every man to set him free."

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world's first successful BASE jumper occurred shortly after His baptism by John. "It seems to be the law of life that just after our resistance power has been highest it nose-dives until it is at its lowest." From the sublime moment of His baptism, Jesus was directed by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tested. There, in the loneliness and desolation of the place, He was confronted by Satan, who threw three pitches at Him, hoping that these fast balls would be enough to strike Him out even before His official ministry began.

In the second temptation, while Jesus was at the top of the temple, Satan suggested, "'Throw yourself down'" (Matt. 4:6, NIV). To some that may sound like fun, but, of course, doing something simply for the thrill of it wasn't the point. Jesus saw clearly what was implied.

In the cultural environment of Jesus' time, such a temptation would have been only natural. "It was a part of the popular belief that the Messiah should appear suddenly, and in some marvelous way; as, for instance, by a leap from the temple roof into the midst of the crowds assembled below." In fact, it is said that Simon Magus, the same sorcerer who tried to purchase from Peter and John the marvelous technique of bestowing the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, met his untimely end in an attempt in the Roman Forum to demonstrate his ability to fly.

We're assured elsewhere that Jesus "has been tempted in every way, just as we are" (Heb. 4:15, NIV). Not too many of us, however, have been tempted in this specific way to become literal BASE jumpers. So how does Jesus' dilemma at the top of the Temple conform to the idea that He was "tempted in every way, just as we are"? How did that experience present a problem that is universal to the rest of humankind?

Jesus Himself provided the answer: the point wasn't adventuring, but presumption. Most dictionary definitions of presumption include such synonyms as "arrogance," "audacity," "temerity," or "effrontery." Though presumption seldom appears as such in various translations of Scripture, it describes a form of sin that recurs rather regularly. We see it in an arrogant idea that a tower would protect humankind from a future flood, in Jonah's audacity to question God's mercy in sparing the people of Nineveh; in the temerity of Jesus' brothers counseling Him that "no one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret" (John 7:4, NIV). Presumption simply means putting oneself in God's place, forgetting one's dependence on God.

In Jesus' temptation experience, Satan actually quoted from Scripture. Daring Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the Temple, Satan reminded Him with wicked cunning, "It is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone'" (Matt. 4:6, NIV).

When Satan quoted Scripture, however, he chose not to include a crucially important part of the passage: "to guard you in all your ways" (Ps. 91:11, NIV). If Jesus had followed this suggestion, He would have been venturing into Satan's ways, not the ways that God intended for Him.

Every temptation that comes our way is rooted in the idea that we don't have to take God at His word. It shows a distrust in God and in His revelation in Scripture. "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice" (Prov. 12:15, NIV).

God's power is not something that we can experiment with. It isn't a mere weapon in our arsenal against temptation. It is a force that we're expected to trust quietly in our everyday lives. This is why Jesus answered Satan's second pitch by referring to the Book of Deuteronomy: "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matt. 6:16, NIV).

In Jesus' answer we can begin to see how universal this temptation is. Who among us can say we've never stretched God's protection for us a bit too far? Who can assert that we have never made an important decision that was based more on our own inclinations than on what we knew to be God's will for us? Who can claim that we are always totally dependent on God in everything we do?

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