Re-Creator, and Judge was and is an integral part of the gospel.

The message of the Old Testament people was about love, faith, and hope! A relationship of love was always the most essential constituent of the true religion because God is a God of love and of relationships. Their message was the gospel; it was good news about God, Creator, Redeemer, Judge, King, and Lord, and His purposes for this world and beyond. This message started with the gospel according to Moses, was developed throughout the whole Old Testament, was centered on the Promised Seed (the coming of the Messiah), and culminated with the message about the resurrection and the kingdom of God that would be established by God through His intervention in our history. This kingdom would be an everlasting kingdom. The Old Testament community of faith was a witnessing community with a worldwide mission.

“God is love”; “God with us”; “God cares”; and “God rules” are the capstones of the message of the Old Testament people. In order to summarize in a few words the purpose of their message and mission, I want to paraphrase the prayer of Richard of Chichester: “To know God more clearly, to love Him more dearly, and to follow Him more nearly.”

NOTES AND REFERENCES
1 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references in this article are quoted from The New King James Version of the Bible.
7 See Philip Yancey, The Bible Jesus Read (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

Chapter 3: Scripture case studies provide some clear guidelines with regard to the role of a Christian in politics and government.

While biblical principles provide relevant guidelines for the Christian’s relationship with politics, orientation can also be gained from the lives of Bible characters. In fact, throughout Scripture, principles are repeatedly illustrated in the actions and priorities of individuals.

Joseph
When called to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams, Joseph makes clear reference to Jehovah as the One who is in control of history (Gen. 41:25, 28, 32). Joseph, however, does not stop at mere interpretation. He also proposes a plan of political action, including political appointments and taxation (vss. 33-38). Recognizing the value of a spiritual perspective within government, Pharaoh asks, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of...”

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God? (vs. 38, NIV).

Some years later, in the midst of the famine, Joseph tells his brothers that it was God who “has made me lord of all Egypt” (Gen. 45:9) and that this occurred in order “to save lives” (vs. 5, NIV). Joseph, in essence, considered his position in government to be a direct result of God’s intervention, in order that he might assist others through times of hardship.

Moses

As a political activist, Moses may be without peer in Scripture. Spotting the abuse of a Hebrew by an Egyptian taskmaster, for example, he took immediate action and killed the Egyptian (Ex. 2:11-15). This act aborted his early political career and led to 40 years of exile.

By God’s direct invitation, however, Moses initiated a second attempt to help his oppressed people, confronting Pharaoh and freeing the Hebrew nation from slavery (Ex. 2:23–14:31). He then instituted a well-developed system of government for the Hebrew nation. As recorded in Hebrews 11:24-27, his work as an advocate of a down-trodden, marginalized people places Moses in the select group of heroes of faith.

During the years in which Israel journeyed through the wilderness, an insurrection arose, spearheaded by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. These individuals criticized the leadership of Moses and Aaron and defied their authority. Moses replied, “If the Lord creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord” (Num. 16:30). In essence, this rebellion against an established government was viewed as an insurrection against God Himself and was quelled by God’s direct intervention.

Saul

Although not in His preferred plan of a direct theocracy, God nevertheless instructed the prophet Samuel to anoint Saul as a political “commander over my people Israel” (1 Sam. 9:16). Some years later, however, when Saul had rejected God, Samuel informed him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you” (15:28). In both instances, it is evident that God becomes directly involved in setting up and deposing civil rulers.

In the story of Saul, we also find an intriguing incident regarding civil protest. One day, in a fit of rage, King Saul vowed to kill his son, Jonathan. The king’s soldiers, however, protested, “Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day” (1 Sam. 14:45). Their political intervention was effective, and Jonathan was spared, illustrating that political activism can alter a course of affairs and result in favorable outcomes for citizens.

David

Samuel had secretly anointed David as the next king of Israel. King Saul, well aware of David’s popularity, pursued him tenaciously, determined to kill him. By a strange turn of events, however, Saul was found in David’s power and his men urged him to kill Saul. David replied, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord” (1 Sam. 24:6).

On yet another occasion, Abishai requested David’s permission to slay Saul. Again, David refused: “But David said to Abishai, ‘Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless? . . . As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the Lord’s anointed’” (1 Sam. 26:9-11). In both situations, David seemed content to leave in God’s hands the removal of corrupt leadership, at least in terms of a situation in which it would serve his own political career.

Years later, one of David’s sons, Absalom, began engineering for the throne. “He would get up early and stand by the side of the road leading to the city gate. Whenever anyone came with a complaint to be placed before the king for a decision, Absalom would . . . say to him, ‘Look, your claims are valid and proper, but there is no representative of the king to hear you. . . . If only I were appointed judge in the land! Then everyone who has a complaint or case could come to me and I would see that he gets justice.’ Also, whenever anyone ap-
proached him to bow down before him, Absalom would reach out his hand, take hold of him and kiss him. . . So he stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Sam. 15:2-6, NIV). The result of this political ambition and underhanded campaigning was an ill-fated rebellion.

Fleeing the rebellion, David left Jerusalem. Zadok and Abiathar brought out the ark of God, determined to follow the king loyally. When David realized what was happening, he said, “Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace” (2 Sam. 15:27). From his reaction, David apparently assumed that religious leaders should not engage in partisan politics.

At a later date, Adonijah proclaimed himself king without David’s knowledge. Nathan the prophet, aware of David’s promise to Bathsheba that her son, Solomon, would be the next king, notified Bathsheba of the development and urged her to petition David. Furthermore, Nathan offered to come before the king and intercede in her favor (1 Kings 1:11-30). In this case, we find Nathan, a religious leader, endeavoring to guide the political process within ethical and moral parameters.

Ahab

As recorded in 1 Kings 21:5-13, Ahab and Jezebel conspired to take possession of Naboth’s vineyard. They sent a secret communication to local officials, “Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, “You have blasphemed God and the king.” Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die” (vss. 9, 10). As might be expected, Elijah, a religious leader, reproved Ahab for this base crime.

The most tragic part of the story, however, is that “the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them” (1 Kings 21:11). If they had taken a position of integrity, in opposition to the immoral political directive, the tragic course of the nation might have been altered. It seems evident that both citizens and community leaders have a moral responsibility to resist the devastating impact of a corrupt government on innocent lives.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar

Finding himself unexpectedly in an alien land, Daniel soon distinguished himself as an individual of ability, conviction, and integrity. Shortly thereafter, furious with his wise men’s inability to resolve a dream, Nebuchadnezzar ordered his guards to round up the magi for execution. Daniel requested Arioch, commander of the guard, for a brief stay in order to enable him to interpret the dream. Meeting Arioch the next morning, Daniel’s first concern was for the well-being of the magi, who served as political advisors to the king.

Delighted that his dream had been interpreted, Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler over the entire province of Babylon, a political position that Daniel accepted. Furthermore, at Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as provincial administrators. Daniel, a prophet of God, did not view as inappropriate that believers should occupy positions of civil responsibility in a pagan government.

Daniel 3 records that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were present at the dedication of the golden image, as Nebuchadnezzar had directed, but refused to bow down to the image. In essence, they submitted to civil authority—presenting themselves and not resisting punishment, but refused to compromise moral principle by worshiping a false god. God approved of their stance by joining them in the fiery furnace.

As is tempting for powerful political figures, Nebuchadnezzar came to believe that the success of his empire was the result of his own acumen, and this resulted in a period of personal insanity. Three times in Daniel 4, which records Nebuchadnezzar’s reflection on the experience, the principle is repeated that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, [and] gives it to whom ever He will” (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32). It seems clear that God is ultimately in control, even of secular government.

Under the Medo-Persian empire, Daniel was again appointed to a high government position. Because of political intrigue, a law was passed that no one should worship any god but the king for 30 days. “When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his
God, as was his custom since early days” (6:10). When confronted with an edict contrary to his commitment to God, Daniel did not hesitate to engage in civil disobedience, but at the same time, he did not resist the consequences of his convictions.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah held a position of responsibility in the court of Artaxerxes. Although a contingent of Jews had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild, news reached Nehemiah that little progress had been made. His face mirroring his despondency, Nehemiah was asked by the king what the problem might be. When Nehemiah explained, Artaxerxes asked, “What do you request?” (Neh. 2:4).

Nehemiah writes, “I said to the king, ‘If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it’” (Neh. 2:5).

When the king agreed, Nehemiah courageously presented a further request: “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy” (Neh. 2:7, 8). Artaxerxes not only granted this second request, but provided an escort of army officers and cavalry. With divine blessing, Nehemiah used his position in the court of a civil ruler to extend the work of God.

Esther and Mordecai

Although God is never directly referred to, the Book of Esther presents a vivid portrayal of the great controversy between good and evil, played out in the domain of politics. The story begins with Esther, a young Jewish girl, selected from obscurity to be the queen of Xerxes, and her cousin, Mordecai, a civil servant, refusing to pay homage to Haman, a high official in the court.

Enraged, Haman sought revenge, intending not only to annihilate Mordecai, but to exterminate his entire race. When news of the intended genocide reached Mordecai, he asked Esther for assistance. When Esther demurred, Mordecai responded, “If you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

Esther replied, “Gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” (vs. 16).

Cleverly, Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet, but left the king in suspense as to her motive. Unable to sleep that night, Xerxes requested that the royal records be read. Providentially, a portion was selected that recorded “that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes” (Esther 6:2, NIV).

As Mordecai had not been rewarded for this act of loyalty, the following morning Xerxes instructed Haman to honor Mordecai publicly. That evening, at the king’s urging, Esther presented her request, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated” (Esther 7:3, 4). She then identified Haman as the perpetrator of the sinister plot. After Haman’s death, Xerxes instructed Mordecai to write a new decree to neutralize the original law. Mordecai wrote an edict granting the Jews “the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children; and to plunder the property of their enemies” (Esther 8:11, NIV). An ethnic cleansing was thus averted.

This extended narrative describes: (1) civil disobedience—Mordecai refusing to bow to Haman and Esther entering the king’s presence uninvited; (2) a plan to lobby civil authority and avert genocide—inviting the king and Haman to a series of banquets; (3) a report to authorities of criminal activity—Mordecai revealing the assassination plot; (4) the enacting of new legislation to counteract the effects of a damaging law;
and (5) the granting to a threatened people group the right to defend themselves.

Deborah, the Prophetess
After the death of Joshua, the Israelites were oppressed by Jabin, king of Canaan. Deborah, a prophetess, summoned Barak, instructed him to lead a revolt against Jabin, and personally joined the military campaign. Some Israelites, however, declined to become involved. “‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the Lord, ‘Curse its inhabitants bitterly, because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty’” (Judg. 5:23). Based on this incident, it seems apparent that there are situations in which passivity is an inappropriate response.

Baasha
As noted in the experiences of Saul and Nebuchadnezzar, the case of Baasha confirms that God installs and removes civil rulers. In this instance, however, it is clarified that this intervention is not an arbitrary act, but rather a response to that ruler’s leadership. “The word of the Lord came to Jehu the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying: ‘Inasmuch as I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made My people Israel sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins, surely I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat’” (1 Kings 16:1-3).

Jehoshaphat
In his government, Jehoshaphat appointed judges in each of the major cities of Judah. He reminded these men that they were to judge according to the divine standard—justly and without partiality or corruption (2 Chron. 19:5-10). The implication is that politicians should be held to ethical norms of leadership and conduct.

Elisha
Appreciative of the kindness shown to him by the woman of Shunam, the prophet Elisha offered do something for her—perhaps to speak on her behalf to the king or commander of the army (2 Kings 4:11-13). As illustrated in this incident, it seems appropriate, even for religious leaders, to intercede before government on behalf of those who may find themselves without voice.

Jeremiah
In commissioning the prophet Jeremiah, God gave him a political function: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant’” (Jer. 1:9, 10). Again we see God actively involved in the realm of human government; this time, however, by means of a specially appointed messenger.

Cyrus
In Isaiah 45:1-4, God refers to Cyrus as His “‘anointed,’” even though Cyrus was not aware of God’s direct involvement in his life. Furthermore, Cyrus’ political role was prophesied some 170 years before he was born, indicating God’s foreknowledge of political personages and events. We might note that God’s involvement was “‘for Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect’” (Isa. 45:4)—in order to assure the survival and well-being of His people.

John the Baptist
“Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Because John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her’” (Matt. 14:3, 4). Luke 3:19 adds that in addition to the adulterous relationship with Herodias, John had rebuked Herod for “all the evils which Herod had done.” From John’s experience, it seems apparent that there is an obligation to speak out against corruption and immorality. In essence, respect for authority does not include a glossing over of sin. Christians cannot simply excuse what rulers do simply because of who they are.
alty to a Higher Authority than civil government, (2) civil disobedience can be an appropriate response, and (3) when in a position of civil authority, as was Gamaliel, one is able to exert an influence on the side of good.

Paul

Prior to his conversion, Saul of Tarsus was deeply involved in politics. As a Pharisee and roving representative of the Sanhedrin, he was an energetic member of one of the most active political parties in Jewish society. He also saw good opportunity to advance his career by persecuting the followers of Jesus.

On the road to Damascus, however, he encountered Christ, and the direction of his life changed. As this early incident in Paul’s experience illustrates, it is possible that involvement in politics may run contrary to God’s plan for a Christian’s life.

Throughout his ministry, Paul used his rights as a Roman citizen on various occasions to further the gospel and to work for his own protection. In Philippi, for example, Paul and Silas were publicly beaten and thrown into prison. During the night, freed by the jolt of an earthquake, they did not try to escape, but used the opportunity to witness to the jailer. In the morning, the magistrates sent their officers to release Paul and Silas. Paul, however, stated, “They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out” (Acts 16:37). In essence, Paul requested a public admission that the government position was wrong and that the fledgling Christian community in Philippi posed no threat to Roman law.

On a subsequent occasion, a Roman commander decided that Paul should be examined by flogging. “As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, ‘Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t even been found guilty?’ . . . Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains” (Acts 22:25, 29, NIV).

A few days later, apprised of a sinister plot against his life, Paul notified the Roman authorities of the conspiracy and accepted the protection of two centurions and 470 soldiers to deliver him into the custody of Felix, the governor (Acts 23–25). Once in Caesarea, however, Paul declined to bribe Felix for his release. Finally, appearing before Festus, Paul maintained his innocence and claimed his right as a Roman citizen to appeal for a hearing before Caesar. We might note, however, that Paul’s appeal for trial in Rome was

been prepared by my Father’” (vs. 23, NIV).

When the other disciples heard of what had transpired, they were indignant. Jesus then called the disciples together and said, “‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many?’” (Matt. 20:25-28). The principle emerges that seeking political office for the sake of position and prestige is contrary to the spirit of Jesus.

Pilate

There is an inherent danger in politics of valuing position over principle. This is evident in the case of Pilate. He knew that Jesus was innocent; even his wife, warned in a dream, cautioned him to have “nothing to do with that just Man” (Matt. 27:19). Afraid, however, of the possible consequences to his political career, Pilate washed his hands of the matter and condemned Jesus to death.
not primarily to save his life, but in order to enable him to carry the gospel directly to the imperial court.

These experiences in Paul’s life illustrate several key concepts: (1) When knowledgeable of its laws, the believer may appeal to the state for justice and for protection of the well-being of its citizens. (2) Christians may use their legal rights as citizens to maintain freedom and to further the gospel. (3) A Christian must be submissive to civil authority (e.g., Paul’s remaining in the Philippian jail when he had ample opportunity to escape) but refrain from participation in its corruption (e.g., refusing to bribe Felix for release).

Christ

In each facet of our lives, we are to follow the example and teaching of Jesus. Consequently, it is particularly important for us to ask: How did Jesus respond when faced with the political issues of His day? What did He expect of His disciples, and, by extension, of His followers today? It is in considering the life and ministry of Jesus that we may best clarify the relationship of the Christian and politics.

Christ was to exercise the power of government. Centuries prior to Christ’s birth, Isaiah wrote: “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever” (Isa. 9:6, 7).

Shortly after His birth, Jesus was, in fact, targeted by Herod as a potential political rival, who tried unsuccessfully to destroy Him.

After His baptism, Christ was tempted by the devil. The final temptation involved a political dimension: “The devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And He said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me’” (Matt. 4:8, 9).

Jesus successfully resisted the allure of worldly power with the response, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (Matt 4:10).

When Jesus announced in Nazareth the beginning of His ministry, He outlined far-reaching political principles, suggesting that fundamental changes would be needed in the basic structures of society: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

Christ’s daily life was, in fact, a grassroots effort—associating with castaways, eating with the rejected of society, bringing hope to the marginalized and exploited. He spoke out against societal wrongs, such as neglect of aged parents and devouring “widows’ houses” (20:47). He declined, however, to become installed as a civil authority, stating, in response to a dispute over inheritance, “Who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” (12:14).

Christ clearly dealt, nonetheless, with sociopolitical issues—so much so that people wanted to crown Him king. How did Jesus, a leader with personal charisma and gifts of oratory, respond to this groundswell? Did He seize it as an opportunity to enunciate a political platform, to clean up an immoral and corrupt government, or to free His nation from the yoke of Rome? If He had decided to set up His kingdom on earth, there is ample evidence that He would have been successful (Luke 19:38; John 12:13-15).

It appears, however, that Christ was not interested in holding political office or in revolutionizing the political order. Rather, He made it clear that His kingdom was “not of this world” (John 18:36). His goal was to change society one heart at a time.

Christ’s teachings are also instructive. He promoted, for example, the principle of nonviolence. “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either” (Luke 6:29). He focused on service, rather than on position. When a contention erupted among His disciples as to which of them was the greatest, Jesus advised, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors’. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest
among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. . . . I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22:25-27).

Christ also advocated the concept of submission to civil authority within the framework of allegiance to God. When the unlikely alliance of the Pharisees and the Herodians tried to entrap Him with a question of taxation, Jesus replied, “‘Show Me the tax money.’ So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s’” (Matt. 22:19-21).

In particular, the final hours of Christ’s life speak persuasively regarding the Christian’s relation to government and politics. In Gethsemane, Christ prayed that His followers, although in the world, might not become “of the world” (John 17:16). When confronted by a mob sent by the civil-religious authorities to arrest Him, He did not attempt to resist or escape, although He did request that His disciples might not be apprehended.

In an act of loyalty and perhaps desperation, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priest’s servant. Jesus responded, “‘Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword’” (Matt. 26:52).

Although Jesus would not defend Himself against the false accusations, when the high priest charged Him: “‘Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God’” (Matt. 26:63), Jesus replied, “It is as you say” (vs. 64, NIV). Later, when Pilate asked, “Then Pilate said to Him, ‘Do You not know that I have power to crucify You?’” (John 19:10), Jesus answered, “‘You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above’” (vs. 11).

Although Jesus was accused of being politically subversive, Pilate declared Him to be innocent of political resistance to Roman power, stating, “‘I find no fault in this Man’” (Luke 23:4). Falsey condemned on political charges as “King of the Jews,” Christ died on the cross, a sign of political execution.

As disciples of Christ, Christians are to live the life of Christ. They are to practice the “politics of Jesus.” In Christ’s own words: “‘As the Father has sent Me, I also send you’” (John 20:21).

A Reasoned Stance on the Christian and Politics

With a consideration of biblical principles and cases, as well as a backdrop of historical antecedents, the fundamental question is: How then should a Christian relate to politics? While each of the five positions earlier noted can help in understanding particular facets of this relationship, and could perhaps become an appropriate response in a given situation, it would seem that there should also be an overarching perspective to guide the Christian in his or her relation to politics.

This response might be described as a position of Lordship—the recognition that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and that human society in each of its dimensions must be cognizant of His sovereignty.

In this perspective, the Christian acknowledges that the sovereignty of Christ extends to all facets of life, including the political arena. This approach is biblical. Paul, for example, writes, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Believers then see themselves not as possessing dual citizenship, but as a citizen of the encompassing kingdom of God.

In this perspective, politics is not viewed as a demonic domain (Rejection), nor as a necessary evil (Paradox). On the other hand, it is not seen as basically neutral, but deficient (Critical Collaboration), nor as essentially good (Synthesis). Neither is politics viewed as an arena on which the will of God must be imposed by human agents (Domination).

Rather, the Christian recognizes that humankind is embroiled in the cosmic conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Satan. This Great Controversy perspective acknowledges manifestations of both good and evil in each aspect of society, including politics. Thus, in the Christian worldview, evil is opposed, yet human culture is affirmed and elevated, by the grace of God.

This position of Lordship may call for involvement in social causes—caring for the suffering and anguish of others, speaking out for social justice. It may include nonviolent activism, particularly where moral issues are involved.
created from animals: the moral implications of darwinism. in this work, rachels sets out to demonstrate how darwinism (or any other materialist view of origins) undermines traditional judeo-christian morality. rachels sees traditional morality as centered on the protection of human rights at the expense of the rest of the natural world. his significance is that he seeks to establish the moral implications of darwin’s theory by directly attacking traditional judeo-christian ethics and morality.

as part of this attack on christian morality, rachels identifies two ways that darwinism undermines forms of theology compatible with classic judeo-christian theology. the first way is through the problem of natural evil. the second is to argue that
political activism that could fit particularly well within this perspective include roles of advocacy, mediation, and conciliation.

The Lordship perspective may involve casting one’s vote in favor of specific issues or platforms, rather than merely as a reflection of partisan alignment. Provided that one does not compromise biblical principle, it may lead a Christian to hold political office in order to better address injustices or enhance the well-being of others. Finally, while the Christian is to respect earthly government, there may be occasion for civil disobedience when the requirements of the state conflict with those of the kingdom of God.

The position of Lordship thus recognizes that there are perils as well as opportunities for the Christian. There are dangers of compromise of principle and of a corruption of values, as well allowing an involvement with politics to become all-absorbing. At the same time, there are key opportunities for fulfilling the divine mandate to be the “salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13) and the “light of the world” (vs. 14), serving as an effective witness for God. This perspective may consequently involve a radical reorientation of thinking—from seeing Christian engagement primarily in terms of political action, to viewing political involvement as the faithful response of witness.

While degree and form of political participation may vary for the institutional church, its leaders and individual members, the mission of the gospel must always include both the proclamation, as well as the tangible revelation of who God is. This commission involves standing with voice and vote against immorality and in favor of all that is just and compassionate. It includes caring for God’s creation in all of its diversity—even “the least of these My brethren” (Matt. 25:40). It involves furthering the kingdom of God through our witness and through our service. In essence, it is a commitment to live a life like Christ, of Christ, and for Christ in every way.

NOTES AND REFERENCES
1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references in this article are quoted from the New King James Version.

As scholars seek to bring Darwin and theology together, they encounter significant challenges.

In 1991, James Rachels wrote Created From Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism. In this work, Rachels sets out to demonstrate how Darwinism (or any other materialist view of origins) undermines traditional Judeo-Christian morality. Rachels sees traditional morality as centered on the protection of human rights at the expense of the rest of the natural world. His significance is that he seeks to establish the moral implications of Darwin’s theory by directly attacking traditional Judeo-Christian ethics and morality.

As part of this attack on Christian morality, Rachels identifies two ways that Darwinism undermines forms of theism compatible with classic Judeo-Christian theology. The first way is through the problem of natural evil. The second is to argue that

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Darwin’s theory centers on the rejection of teleology, i.e., design, and that any form of theism based on divine will and design is incompatible with Darwinism.

To get to the implications of Darwin’s theory for the mission of the church, one should investigate Rachels’ claims concerning the impact of a non-teleological view of God on morality and theology. This entails examining views expounded by the new discipline of evolutionary theology because its theologians do not maintain biblical interpretations that discourage taking the implications of a theology based on Darwin to its logical conclusions. This is unlike many Seventh-day Adventist scientists and theologians, who have such traditions to bring to bear on their intellectual explorations. Hence, evolutionary theologians provide evidence independent of our presuppositions regarding the implications of evolution for theology.

This exploration of the moral and theological implications of Darwinism is necessary to set up key moral and theological concepts in the exploration of the possible impact of Darwin’s theory on the mission of the church. The unifying question, then, is this: Can an interpretation of God devoid of design adequately support the current identity and mission of the church?

**Overview of Rachels’ Position**

Rachels uses the problem of evil to undermine Christian morality and theology. “The existence of evil has always been a chief obstacle to belief in an all-good, all-powerful God. How can God and evil co-exist? If God is perfectly good, he would not want evil to exist; and if he is all-powerful, he is able to eliminate it. Yet evil exists. Therefore, the argument goes, God must not exist.”

He lists five traditional answers offered by theologians and then argues that the excessive amount of evil in the world and the distinction between moral and natural evil combine to undermine these traditional answers. However, he admits that “All these arguments are available to reconcile God’s existence with evil. Certainly, then, the simple version of the argument from evil does not force the theist to abandon belief.”

In reference to the theism issue, Rachels asserts that Darwin’s theory would expect natural evil, suffering, and unhappiness to be widespread as it is, while the divine hypothesis view would not. “Thus,” asserts Rachels, “Darwin believed, natural selection accounts for the facts regarding happiness and unhappiness in the world, whereas the rival hypothesis of divine creation did not.”

This last point is especially crucial for Rachels. He notes that Darwin sought an account of origins and life that most easily fits the facts of suffering with the least amount of explanatory contortions. Rachels claims that “Divine creation is a poor hypothesis because it fits the facts badly.” In the meantime, the current patterns of suffering are said to be just what Darwin and his theory would expect with natural selection in process. Rachels thus argues that the biblical doctrine of creation is less parsimonious than Darwinian evolution, particularly in explaining the presence of natural evil. Since Darwin has, in Rachels’ view, presented an alternative to divine creation that is viable and exhibits greater economy, the divine creation hypothesis is now undermined by good reasons. Feeling he has established this point, Rachels now turns to the issue of teleology.

**Teleology: The Central Issue**

Rachels credits Marx with pinpointing the “philosophical nerve” of Darwin’s theory. According to Rachels, Marx declared the theory of evolution to be “the death blow . . . to ‘Teleology’ in the natural sciences.” Thus, it may be that the most significant aspect of Darwin’s theory is his overall rejection of teleology in nature. Rachels reminds us that “a teleological explanation is an explanation of something in terms of its function and purpose: the heart is for pumping blood, the lungs are for breathing, and so on.”

Teleology thus implies a purpose or design, which must have been determined by the intentions of a maker. But there can be no designer in Darwinian evolution, and as Rachels notes, “If there is no maker—if the object in question is not an artifact—does it make sense to speak of a ‘purpose’?” The answer is, “No,” says Rachels. Any purposes attributed are merely those we assign. Thus, “the connection between function and conscious intention is, in Darwin’s theory, completely severed.”

Rachels has thus highlighted the debate over the design argument
(offered by Paley), which is considered by many to be definitively refuted by Hume. The problem is, notes Rachels, that Hume and other critics of the design argument only pointed out logical deficiencies in the design argument, but “they could not supply a better way of understanding the apparent design of nature. . . . Darwin did what Hume could not do: he provided an alternative, giving people something else they could believe. Only then was the design hypothesis dead.” For Rachels, then, it is the fact that Darwin’s theory provided a rational alternative to teleology that makes Darwin’s theory so capable of undermining any form of theism necessary to sustain traditional Christian morality.

The issue here, however, is not the efficacy of the design versus materialism argument. It is, rather, that to accept Darwin’s theory is to accept that there is no purpose or design in nature at all. This completely opposes classic Judeo-Christian theism, in which there is a cosmic design and purpose, often articulated by Adventists in terms of the Great Controversy motif. Rachels asks his clinching question: “Can theism be separated from belief in design? It would be a heroic step, because the design hypothesis is not an insubstantial shadow and no longer the mighty personality of religious doctrine.” All that is left is the concept of God as the original cause. But, says Rachels, Darwin has asserted that to say the original cause is God is mere speculation. It can be asserted, but no good reasons can be given to substantiate it. And, in fact, Rachels asserts that if we can accept that God is uncaused, then there is no good reason to reject the assertion that the universe is uncaused. Thus, for Rachels, Darwinism clearly undermines biblical theism so severely that “the atheistical conclusion can be resisted, but only at great cost.” He further asserts that a theism compatible with Darwin’s theory is too weak to support traditional Christian morality.

Darwinian Theism

Rachels has asserted that if teleism is maintained with belief in Darwinism, then the type of theism permitted cannot support traditional ethics, especially in the matter of human preference. But how efficacious is this claim?

Two issues are embedded in Rachels’ conclusion. First, all the argumentation concerning God, from Darwin to Rachels, presupposes a particular doctrine of God. What doctrine of God is thus depicted? Second, are there any theologians who have attempted to build a theological view of God based on the principles of Darwinism? If so, what are some of the implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its mission?

Alvin Plantinga offers an initial answer to the first question. He notes that the only arguments for incompatibility between God and evolution “have turned from deductive to probabilistic arguments from evil.” Thus, “the typical atheological claim at present is not that the existence of God is incompatible with that of evil, but rather, that the latter offers the resources for a strong probabilistic argument against the former.” However, the probabilistic argument itself assumes a particular doctrine of God.

This issue is superbly developed by Cornelius Hunter, who cites numerous claims by evolutionists who gave various reasons that God would not have created the present natural order in this way. He calls this approach “negative theology” because it is offering proof by negative instead of positive evidence. But in so doing, argues Hunter, “they are beholden to a specific notion of God, and notions of God, no matter how carefully considered, are outside the realm of science.” Thus, a major assumption of the evolutionary position is not scientific at all! And this point is foundational to why Hunter
calls Darwin’s theory the “evolution theodicy.”

But why does Hunter see Darwin as so theological? He argues that a seminal influence on Darwin was Milton’s Paradis Lost. In Hunter’s view, Milton was addressing the problem of evil, and solved it by distancing God from the creation. “Both men were dealing with the problem of evil—Milton with moral evil and Darwin with natural evil—and both found solutions by distancing God from evil. And most important, the two held similar conceptions of God.”

However, “Darwin’s solution distanced God from creation to the point that God was unnecessary. One could still believe in God, but not in God’s providence. Separating God from creation and its evils meant that God could have no direct influence or control over the world. God may have created the world, but ever since that point it has run according to impersonal natural laws that may now and then produce natural evil.”

Therefore, “Darwin was now increasing this separation to the point that the link between creation and God was severed.” According to Hunter, the result is that “God, on the one hand, is seen as all-good but not necessarily all-powerful, or at least does not exercise all his power. God is virtuous, not dictatorial.”

But notice, then, that elimination of God is no longer necessary. “The end result of Darwin’s theory is not that there is no God, but rather, that God is disjoint from the material world. . . . In evolution theodicy, the Creator must be disjoint from creation, but no more than this is required.”

Thus, Hunter disagrees with Rachels that Darwinism makes atheism difficult to resist, but agrees that the theory of evolution does entail a view of God not compatible with traditional Christian theism. Is Hunter on the right track in arguing that Darwinism offers deliverance from the problem of evil through a reinterpretation of God that saves God’s goodness by limiting His power?

A Theology of Evolution

From the late 20th century until the present, we find movement in the direction of promoting such a theology. First, authors such as Michael Ruse and Kenneth Miller deny that Darwinism is incompatible with belief in God. Both seem to leave the door open for a variety of theological options. But how wide is a wide array of options? Ruse recognizes that for those who read Genesis literally, “the Darwinian reading of Genesis is going to give you major problems—insoluble problems, I suspect.” Thus, the portal to religious Darwinism may not be as wide as is touted. Not all may enter, though some have, and the results are fascinating.

John F. Haught, possibly the leading scholar in the recently formed movement of evolutionary theology, laments that it is not just the discipline of theology that has failed to grapple with the implications of Darwin’s theory; neither have the philosophers. “If theology has fallen short of the reality of evolution, however, so also has the world of thought in general. . . . Philosophy also has yet to produce an understanding of reality—an ontology—adequate of evolution.” Thus he charges that, “to a great extent, theologians still think and write almost as if Darwin had never lived.”

Haught responds to this problem by proposing the possibilities of a theology informed by evolution. “Darwin has gifted us with an account of life whose depth, beauty, and pathos—when seen in the context of the larger cosmic epic of evolution—expose[s] us afresh to the raw reality of the sacred and to a resoundingly meaningful universe.”

Haught expresses high hopes about the prospects of a Darwinian theology: “I cannot here emphasize enough, therefore, the gift evolution can be to our theology. For us to turn our backs on it, as so many Christians continue to do, is to lose a great opportunity to deepen our understanding of the wisdom and self-effacing love of God.”

But what would such a theology be like? First, it is not the same as natural theology. Haught declares: “Evolutionary theology, unlike natural theology, does not search for definitive footprints of the divine in nature. . . . Instead of trying to prove God’s existence from nature, evolutionary theology seeks to show how our new awareness of cosmic and biological evolution can enhance and enrich traditional teachings about God and God’s way of acting in the world.”

Diarmaid O’Murchu further asserts that: “Evolutionary theology wishes to keep open the possibility
that all forms of creaturehood (plant and animal alike) are dimensions of divine disclosure and can enlighten us in our desire to understand God more deeply and respond in faith more fully. Evolutionary theology is committed to a radically open-ended understanding of how the divine reveals itself in and to the world. This means that in evolutionary theology, nature is not used as evidence to prove classical attributes of God. Rather, both Darwinian evolution and God’s creatorship are assumed to be true. Thus, evolution shows us how God created, and this method of creating, in turn, deepens our understanding of who God is and how He operates.

Haught cautions, however: “trying to locate God’s activity within or at the level of natural biological causation really amounts to a shrinkage of God. This approach is known as ‘god-of-the-gaps’ theology. . . . A god-of-the-gaps approach is a science stopper. . . . But, even worse, it is theologically idolatrous. It makes divine action one link in the world’s chain of finite causes rather than the ultimate ground of all natural causes.”

This, in turn, means that we cannot ascribe specific activity to God, just as Rachels predicted. The result, as O’Murchu observes, is that “evolutionary theology borrows liberally from process thought.” O’Murchu further asserts that “the process position challenges the assumption that our God must always be a ruling, governing power above and beyond God’s own creation.” Why is the tendency to favor process theology significant? O’Murchu explains, “What conventional believers find unacceptable about the process position is the notion of a vulnerable God, allegedly at the mercy of capricious forces as are all other creatures of the universe.” Thus, the first significant theological impact of Darwin that we shall examine is the limiting of God’s power in order to save His goodness.

Limiting God’s Power to Save His Goodness

The limiting of divine power is one of the early issues that Haught examines in his book, *God After Darwin*. Early in the book, Haught examines David Hull’s argument that the present order is incompatible with the concept of God. Hull asks, “What kind of God can one infer from the sort of phenomenon epitomized by the species on Darwin’s Galapagos Islands?” He eventually answers, “The God of the Galapagos is careless, wasteful, indifferent, almost diabolical. This is not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray.” But would this not impeach the goodness of God, as Hull has charged?

A number of theologians and philosophers would answer this question, No. They argue that natural evil is unavoidable for God because His power is limited. Bertocci argues that “the evidence indicates God is not omnipotent,” and goes on to argue that only by having limited power can God’s moral goodness be preserved.

C. Don Keyes states that through the work of Julian Casserley, he has come to the conclusion that “God ought not to be defined primarily in terms of sovereignty and power. The implications of this statement liberated me from interpreting God’s omnipotence as the kind of coercive power capable of always preventing evil. Instead, I now firmly believe with Plato that the goodness of God is his most essential quality and that he is the author only of the good things that happen. Ultimately ‘power’ and ‘good’ are different kinds of reality, but of the two, good is more absolutely attributable to God. The power of the good is almost always indirect.”

Keys gives no good reasons for ascribing goodness as an absolute quality while treating omnipotence as a symbolic or relative quality, other than the ability to explain evil, and possibly the support of Plato. It is also significant that goodness becomes the supreme, untouchable attribute of God to which all other attributes, including power, seem to be subjugated.

Korsmeyer echoes the refrain in which God’s power is limited in order to preserve His goodness. “The painfully slow evolution of life, spreading in great diversity into all available niches, trying out all possible avenues of advance, the huge role of chance, the stumbling advances to greater complexity, all these things suggest a divine nature at odds with the omnipotent God of classical theism. The universe, as we know it, was not created in an instant of absolute coercive power. . . . The universe’s story is suggesting that divine power is different from what we have imagined. It is like the power of love, persuasive, patient, and persistent.”
All of these authors speak as if their position on limiting God’s power is so self-evident that there can be no criticism of it.

Kraemer offers three rebuttals to the limited power view of God. First, is God only limited in power as claimed? If He is limited in power, why not in knowledge and goodness as well? Why limit God’s power only? Second, he picks up Hume’s argument that if God were this limited in power, He should have created fewer animals with better faculties for happiness. Third, Kramer questions if such a limited, imprudent God is worthy of respect and worship. He reminds us that “other great but limited beings, saints and heroes, clearly merit respect, but not worship. Once God is similarly limited, the problem of justifying the worship-worthiness of God needs to be addressed.”

The Hidden, Humble God of Evolution

Haught proposes that his non-omnipotent view of God depicts Him as actually being more deeply involved in the world than a deity who controls things by external power. This depth of involvement is based on a panentheistic doctrine of God. Thus, His work is “interior to the process of creation.” But why should we believe such a God inhabits nature? Is there any evidence for this conclusion?

Ironically, the answer is no. Three times in as many pages, Haught asserts that the concept of divine humility better explains the evolutionary data than does traditional theology or materialism. In another work, he argues that “nothing less than a transcendent force, radically distinct from, but also intimately incarnate in matter could ultimately explain evolution.”

Haught describes this immanent presence as God’s “self-withdrawal,” “self-absenting,” and “self-concealment,” so as to not have any external influence or exercise of “coercive power” over the universe. “God is present in the mode of ‘hiddenness.’” Twice more he asserts that God is present in the form of “ultimate goodness.” Thus, Haught associates the limited power of God, represented by His hiddenness, as being ultimate goodness.

It seems ironic, with Haught’s dedication to modern science, that he claims this hidden God can be detected only by faith. Says Haught, “The world is embraced constantly by God’s presence. But this presence does not show up as an object to be grasped by ordinary awareness or scientific method. It is empirically unavailable, in other words. . . . Only those attuned to religious experience will be aware or appreciative of it.”

This is amazing! Here and elsewhere in his writing, Haught appeals to subjective experience for a major pillar of his theology. Haught further claims to base this subjective discovery of God in nature from Tillich’s concept of God as infinite depth, which is self-authenticating.

The panentheistic hiddenness of God has been argued by Haught to be an expression of divine humility to protect the absolute freedom of the universe. This concept of divine humility is significant, for Haught treats it as a metaphysics for grounding his theology.

The theological basis of this metaphysics of divine hiddenness and humility is the emptying of self (kenosis) of Philippians 2:7. For Haught, this quality, especially as seen in the crucifixion, is the primary method by which God relates to creation, from and throughout eternity. God hid himself through the incarnation in the humble servant-form of the man Jesus Christ. Thus, for Haught, “It is to this image that Christian theology must always repair whenever it thinks about God’s relationship to the world and its evolution.”

The Non-Coercive Nature of Love’s Power

For evolutionary theology, a key implication of this panentheism is that a truly loving God must be non-coercive. Haught makes this fundamental connection by stating: “The
doctrine of grace proclaims that God loves the world and all of its various elements fully and unconditionally. By definition, however, love does not absorb, annihilate, or force itself upon the beloved. Instead it longs for the beloved to become more and more ‘other’ or differentiated. . . . To compel, after all would be contrary to the very nature of love.”

Miller argues in a similar fashion that the divine love is not a controlling power in the universe. “A world without meaning would be one in which a Deity pulled the string of every human puppet, and every material particle as well. . . . By being always in control, the Creator would deny His creatures any real opportunity to know and worship Him. Authentic love requires freedom, not manipulation.”

Haught uses emotive and almost pejorative language to describe the traditional view of God in contrast to his humble, vulnerable God. “The God of Jesus is utterly unlike . . . our traditional images of God understood as divine potentiator or ‘designer.’ Theology is offended by evolution only when it assumes a rather imperious concept of divine omnipotence. . . . Evolutionary science, however, demands that we give up once and for all the tyrannical images we may have sometimes projected onto God.”

By contrast, evolution invites us to “recapture the often obscured portrait of a self-humbling, suffering God who is anything but a divine controller or designer of the cosmos.” The evolutionary God “refrains from wielding the domineering power that both skeptics and believers often project onto their ideal of the absolute.” Yet God is not “a weak or powerless God incapable of redeeming this flawed universe, but one whose salvific and creative effectiveness is all the more prevailing because it is rooted in a divine humility.” Thus Haught asserts that, “in the final analysis, persuasive power is more influential, more ‘powerful,’ than coercion.”

This rejection of any kind of hands-on rulership and intervention by God has some important implications for soteriology and eschatology. Korsmeyer expresses the ultimate destiny of the world in terms of apotheosis. “The divine life is constantly receiving the lives of everyone in the world, and adding each moment to the collected moments of their past. All these moments are experienced by God with no loss of intensity or immediacy. The past of the world enters the everlasting present of the divine immediacy. The world is transformed in God, who weaves everything that is worthwhile into greater harmony, a greater whole.”

For Korsmeyer, “Perhaps we have been called into existence to assist the great divine evolutionary plan to move the whole universe toward divinity, to be co-workers, co-creators in bringing about the Kingdom of God among us. Perhaps eschatology has to be rethought.”

Evolution, Soteriology, and Eschatology

Korsmeyer asserts that “the idea of God bringing the universe to an end in the near future through Christ’s second coming is not compatible with the evidence of the divine efforts in the universe for fifteen billion years.” O’Murchu likewise affirms, “I no longer believe in the anthropocentric myth of the end of the world. There is every likelihood that we humans will destroy ourselves, but not creation. Creation has an infinite capacity to co-create.”

Haught likewise denies, based on an evolutionary perspective of our world’s history, that there was an original, perfect world that lost its perfection and will once again be restored. “Thus, a scientifically informed understanding of redemption may no longer plausibly make themes of restoration or recovery dominant. . . . It would be absurd, therefore, to seek the restoration of a chronologically primordial state of material dispersal.”

Not only does evolutionary theology overturn our concept of God, but it also seems unable to support the hope of a restored, sinless perfect world. The second coming of Christ disappears from the theological radar screen. And it is in the context of this concept of eschatology that our evolutionary theologians see fit to raise the issue of human preference.

For Haught, “It would be callous indeed on the part of theologians to perpetuate the one-sidedly anthropocentric and retributive notions of pain and redemption that used to fit so comfortably into pre-evolutionary pictures of the world.”

Korsmeyer holds a similar position: “Any ‘exclusive’ theology, which
in effect suggests that God is only concerned with one group of people on one planet of one small star, is not credible. It is the product of a theology that considers Scripture in a literalist manner, convinced it provides a comprehensive scientific worldview, and has not considered the scientific evidence of who we are, where we are, and how we got here.”

Evolutionary theology clearly has catastrophic implications for biblical eschatology. If God does not relate to the material universe through designs and purposes, the key elements of the biblical views of the plan of salvation, end-time judgment, and eschatology all crumble with the loss of teleology. A non-coercive, evolving God of limited power who is found in panentheistic hiddenness, a ground of being instead of a personal being, is what is offered instead. Rachels seems fundamentally correct in asserting that traditional Christian morality and theology cannot survive the implications of Darwin’s theory.

**Implications for the Mission and Identity of the Adventist Church**

Rachels alludes to the Ten Commandments as part of the biblical picture of God’s regard for humanity. But if Darwinism is accepted as factual, then the lack of teleology means there can be no divine design for morality, just as there was none for creation. Why would God avoid design in creation only to have design in morals?

The designless theism that Rachels rightly demands of Darwinism would have to eliminate the Ten Commandments and all other direct moral guidance by God, as shown in the Bible. In such a scenario, sin is eliminated since there can be no divine law or design to violate (Rom. 4:15; 5:13; 7:7). Thus, Darwinism clearly undermines the foundations of biblical morality, yet our identity as Adventists lies heavily in the imperative to call people to obedience to God’s commandments. How can we do so if our scientific paradigm eliminates the veracity of the Ten Commandments? It seems likely that Darwinism is quite toxic to this dimension of our mission as a church.

The elimination of the Ten Commandments (since there is no more divine design) means one would eliminate the ability to sin, since there is no design to rebel against. Furthermore, judgment becomes impossible, since there can be no moral design as a standard to which one can be held accountable. For Seventh-day Adventist theology, this is especially devastating because of the great emphasis on the investigative judgment. Such a judgment is incompatible with Darwinism or deism, leaving humanity with no real accountability to God. Neither Deism nor Darwinism can sustain such a doctrine. Our mission of announcing the judgment and calling people to acknowledge their accountability to God is incompatible with the implications of Darwin’s theory.

This undermining of the doctrines of sin and judgment, in turn, removes the need for salvation from sin and its penalty, for there can be no sin or penalty without divine design and sovereignty. This would mean, therefore, that there would be no need for an incarnation and sacrificial death by Christ. Furthermore, the incarnation event was a designed, planned, unnatural act incompatible with Darwinism or a deistic god who uses no design. Removing teleology thus undermines several key pillars of Christian faith that are crucial to the salvific mission of the church.

Additionally, if there is no divine design, how can such a theism have any meaningful eschatology? If suffering and death are tools of evolutionary progress, then death and suffering are natural. Death is no longer an enemy, as the Scriptures declare (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:26). If Darwin is right, then why should we hope for a world to come in which death and suffering will be no more (Revelation 21–22)? Humanity’s importance in the plan of salvation and divine future is replaced by an uncertain future of natural selection, personal insignificance, and death. There can be no special destiny since there is no divine design that calls for it.

Our core identity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been forged in the Great Controversy motif in which there is a battle of rival governing powers—something impossible if there is no teleology. Our mission is to prepare people to give account of themselves to a sovereign, yet loving, almighty moral governor and to prepare them for the eschatological restoration of all
things, which begins at the second coming of Christ in glory. It seems clear that the expulsion of teleology required by Darwinism will be catastrophic to the mission praxis of the Adventist Church.

To attempt to mix Scripture with materialism is to mix teleology with anti-teleology. This may appear to be successfully performed for a season because the pioneers of such a shift usually cling to enough tradition that they are unable, or unwilling, to pursue the new interpretation to its logical conclusions. Haught and his cohorts have no such tradition to restrain them. Thus, they are free to pursue the full implications of Darwin for theology.

The Adventist Church cannot maintain its mission and current identity while affirming materialism. Sooner or later, a generation will arise whose sense of tradition is weak enough that they will take Darwinism to its full conclusions, and in so doing, will radically alter the mission and purpose of our church.

By contrast, those who hold to a biblical protology should have a robust theism capable of supporting the biblically defined mission of the church. God is sovereign. He rules and lays claims on us. A divine imperative impels us to labor for the salvation of souls and to call people to obedience to God’s commandments as an expression of their faith and submission. The biblical God designs, decides, and reveals His will to humanity. We have the privilege of calling people to renounce rebellion against God’s express will and surrender to God’s divine designs in morals and lifestyle.

Our mission, like that which Paul expressed to the Corinthians, is thus something that can reveal God’s power in ways that mere arguments cannot. Adherence to the Genesis doctrine of salvation provides not only the moral and theological foundations needed for mission, but also a framework for God to empower that mission. Belief in non-teleological theories of origins inerently divert the mission of the church from the biblical concepts needed to make it effective.

REFERENCES


2 Ibid., p. 103.

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4 Ibid., p. 106.

5 Ibid., pp. 110, 111.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., pp. 111, 112.

8 Ibid., p. 120, italics in original.

9 Ibid., p. 125.

10 Ibid., italics supplied.


15 Ibid., p. 13.

16 Ibid., p. 12.

17 Ibid., p. 16.

18 Ibid., p. 17.

19 Ibid., p. 146.

20 Ibid., p. 165.


23 Ibid., p. 2.

24 Ibid.


26 ________, *God After Darwin*, p. 36.


29 Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Evolutionary Faith*, op cit., p. 79.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.


37 ________, *Answers to 101 Questions*, op cit., p. 119.

38 ________, *God After Darwin*, pp. 53-55.


41 Ibid., p. 195.

42 Ibid., pp. 197, 203.

43 ________, *Answers to 101 Questions*, op cit., p. 119.

44 Ibid., p. 111, italics supplied.

45 ________, *Answers to 101 Questions*, op cit., p. 115.

46 Ibid., p. 117, italics supplied.


48 Ibid., p. 289, italics supplied.

49 ________, *Answers to 101 Questions*, op cit., p. 127, italics supplied.


51 ________, *Deeper Than Darwin*, p. 81.

52 Ibid., p. 82.

53 Ibid., p. 138.


55 Ibid., p. 88.

56 Ibid.


59 Ibid., p. 169, italics supplied.

“Some evangelists, whose chief weapon is the production of a sense of sin, would find themselves extraordinarily short of ammunition if they were obliged to use nothing but the recorded words of Christ” (J. B. Phillips).

“One need not make Darwin an enemy, for the natural theologians had already sealed their fate when the opted for apologetics, the attempt to prove Christianity to modern skeptics, over witness, the attempt to live in such a way that God’s true story becomes visible and attractive to the world. Seeking to make belief in God universally acceptable, indeed universally unassailable, the natural theologians overstepped their bounds, and, like Icarus, with his wings of wax, eventually came crashing to the ground” (Scott Bader-Saye).

“Paradox as a habit of mind preserves us from simplistic linearity and literalism and keeps us attentive to the complex ways in which, so often, the opposite is true. This habit of mind is deeply biblical; indeed, to listen for the uses of paradox in Jesus’ recorded teachings is to recognize how it always points us to a higher plane of understanding” (Marilyn Chandler McEntyre).

“I used to think that the angels in the Bible began their messages with ‘Do not be afraid’ because their appearance was so frightening. But I have come to think differently. I suspect that they begin this way because the quieting of fear is required in order to hear and do what God asks of us” (Scott Bader-Saye).

Any more stuff available for this?
tact and can be “recognized” by antibodies. She is able also to sequence these proteins by mass spectrometry and has identified eight collagen polypeptide sequences in the Hadrosaur fossil. About the amazing preservation of the bone matrix, Schweitzer writes, “The matrix was virtually indistinguishable from recent demineralized ostrich bone imaged under the same parameters.” It is truly remarkable that an 80 million-year-old Hadrosaur’s bone matrix and the bone matrix of an ostrich look almost identical under the microscope.

The evidence may be suggesting that either the soft tissue somehow can survive 80 million years of background radiation (biologists doubt that soft issue can survive for 10,000 years), or the dinosaur fossil is not 80 million years old, but rather thousands of years old. While on the one hand the raw radiometric readings exist, on the other hand, the amazing preservation of soft tissue in the fossilized bones cannot be denied.

Scientists will no doubt go back to their laboratories to attempt to find a theory explaining how soft tissue may be preserved for 80 million years, across geological time. In light, however, of Bada’s claim that the great amount of uranium and thorium that fossil bones naturally absorb will wipe out biomolecules over a period of millions of years, it seems more probable that the answer to this puzzle maybe found in revisiting the theory and assumptions of radiometric dating. In this instance, it is particularly necessary to distinguish between the radiometric readings and the interpretation of the readings.

What is clear is that the theory of macro-evolution needs millions of years in order to function. The implications of Schweitzer’s research are significant. Because the validity of her initial claim of discovering soft tissue containing biomolecules in dinosaur bones has now been confirmed, her latest research strongly suggests that there may not be enough time for macro-evolution to be real. This conclusion is deeply encouraging to creationists who by faith accept that life on earth is recent. Again, the truth of the unfailling reliability of the Word of God is being supported by the records of nature, God’s second book.

Correction: In the previous “Faith and Science Update” entitled “A Mountain of Evidence” (PD, 12:4, p. 50), the sentence beginning “Only the Cambrian granite of Steamboat Rock . . . ” should read “Only the basalt material of Steamboat Rock . . . .”

REFERENCES
i D. B. DeYoung, Thousands, Not Billions: Challenging an Icon of Evolution: Questioning the Age of the Earth (Green Forest, Ark.: Master Books, 2005).
v Mary H. Schweitzer, et al., ibid.

Deuteronomy 28:1 promises: “Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.”

It is a signal honor to be “high above all the nations of the earth.” Many feel this way about their home country. My family and I felt proud of our country when we visited the Kennedy Space Center and gazed in awe on a colossal Saturn V rocket. Such mind-bogglingly complex and powerful machines produced millions of pounds of thrust to propel Apollo astronauts literally high above all the nations of the Earth—a quarter of a million miles to the Moon. Teamwork, vast resources, and awesome brain power accomplished something that no other country has done.

We were also proud on the morning of January 16, 2003, as we sat by the water at Port Canaveral, Florida, looking intently at a bulbous object a few miles away. All at once, a cloud of smoke arose, and space shuttle Columbia majestically rode a fiery plume into space one more time—one last time.

Is this what Deuteronomy is talking about—human achievement by human strength and expertise, such as winning the space race or the arms race, or Switzerland shutting out New Zealand 5-0 in an America’s Cup yacht race? No. In Deuteronomy 28:1, it is the Lord who achieves the lofty placement of His people.

The next verse says: “All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God.” This is a radical paradigm shift: Rather than human beings pursuing success and then achieving their goal, it is success that pursues them. David expresses the same idea at the end of his Shepherd’s Psalm: “Surely your goodness and unfailling love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever” (Ps 23:6; NLT).
tact and can be “recognized” by antibodies. She is able also to sequence these proteins by mass spectrometry and has identified eight collagen polypeptide sequences in the Hadrosaur fossil. About the amazing preservation of the bone matrix, Schweitzer writes, “The matrix was virtually indistinguishable from recent demineralized ostrich bone imaged under the same parameters.” It is truly remarkable that an 80 million-year-old Hadrosaur’s bone matrix and the bone matrix of an ostrich look almost identical under the microscope.

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5 Mary H. Schweitzer, et al., ibid.
How do you like that! Americans may be proud of the United States Declaration of Independence, which recognizes a person’s right to “the pursuit of Happiness,” but God guarantees to His faithful people that happiness will pursue them! If you don’t want happiness, whatever you do, don’t seek first the Lord and His righteousness, or you’ll have happiness and success breathing down your neck!

Why would God want to bless His people so that they are higher than everyone else? Deuteronomy 28:10 explains: “So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will be afraid of you.” Other people would make the connection between the blessings of the Israelites and their omnipotent God and would leave them in peace.

Isaiah provides an additional perspective: “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (2:2, 3; NKJV).

By blessing His people, God draws all nations to Himself, thereby fulfilling His goal of making the spiritual descendants of Abraham a channel to reveal Himself to the world. All through the Bible, God expresses His desire to bless and elevate His people not merely for their comfort and enjoyment of status, but in order to teach others the magnificence of His character.

There is always a condition attached. For example, Deuteronomy 28:13 promises: “The Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully.”

This isn’t salvation by works. God had already saved His people from bondage when He gave them His commandments. The reason for obedience was to be in harmony with Him in order to rightly represent His character. If the Lord blessed the Israelites even when they misrepresented Him, He would have defeated His purpose. So if they did not live and work according to His principles, He could not allow them to prosper, no matter how much effort and ingenuity they expended. Careful thought and effort were important, but they could be successful only if they were cooperating with Him. If they were not cooperating, they were beating their heads against a wall.

Other peoples, who lacked the covenant connection, were not bound by the constraints that went with Israel’s privileged status. When the Israelites focused on success rather than on God, they were confused because other nations were achieving success. “So let’s do what they do so we too can be successful. Let’s have a king, build a great army and castles, worship their gods, and live off our endowments. Then we can be happy as they appear to be.”

No matter how many times God’s people have tried this approach over the millennia up to the present, they have always ultimately failed. It was only when they sought first the Lord and His righteousness that all other things were added unto them. It was only when they realized that the government was upon His shoulder (Isa. 9:6) and allowed Him to take the burden of giving them success that they have found true peace, prosperity, and contentment.

When God’s people turn to Him with all their hearts and humbly rely upon Him, Judges 10:16 says that “He could bear the misery of Israel no longer.” He can’t stand it. He must save His covenant people.

When challenges occur, they often happen together in a distressingly dizzying array of compounding and accelerating factors that seem to spiral inexorably to certain doom. “When it rains, it pours,” and when it pains, it roars.

When Apollo 13 was 200,000 miles away from Earth, most of the way to the Moon, an oxygen tank exploded. As a result, not only did Jim Lovell and his crew struggle with lack of oxygen; they also lost crucial electrical power and encountered lethal danger from carbon dioxide. Only by closely cooperating with the experts at Mission Control, for whom failure was not an option, did the astronauts make it home safely. Backup systems were exhausted. There was no leeway for error, freelancing, or disobedience.

Our Mission Control is described in Revelation 4 and 5—the throne room of God in His sanctuary in heaven, which pulsates with infinite power and mercy to help in time of need. Our task is not to bear the burdens of government and administration upon our feeble shoulders, but to allow Him to bring us home to safety and success according to His superior wisdom.

At Kadesh-barnea, Moses, Caleb, and Joshua on one hand and the rest of the people on the other approached the same practical data in opposite ways. The former learned about challenges in order to cooperate with the Lord, believing that the obstacles were about to crumble before divine power in order to reveal God’s glory. The bigger the obstacles, the more magnificent the glory! The remaining Israelites cringed,
choosing to have greater faith in obstacles than in God’s ability to overcome them (Numbers 13–14). As the German statesman Konrad Adenauer observed, “We all live under the same sky, but we don’t all have the same horizon.”

What makes the difference between the two attitudes? Both agree that obstacles are real. “For the person of faith, obstacles are temporary because God is real. For the disbeliever, obstacles are permanent because God is not real enough. Thus, the key to exegesis of exigencies is an existential question: Is God real to me? Do I believe, act, and live as if he is alive?”

As God’s people—living, working, and planning within the frame-work of His “new covenant”—our challenge is not primarily to obtain and deploy adequate financial and human resources. Rather, our first task is to allow the reality of God to enter and transform us individually and corporately. Then His people and institutions will be the head and not the tail. “Failure is not an option.”

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Unless otherwise noted, Scripture texts in this article are quoted from The New American Standard Bible.


On his odyssey, he drove only the back roads and byways—the “blue highways” in his travel atlas—and avoided as best he could the broad superhighways and large cities of the United States. “Life doesn’t happen along the interstates,” he wrote. “It’s against the law.”

The book depicts Trogdon’s serendipitous encounters with various interesting people—real people—in the cafes and diners, gas stations, and country stores of rural America. The characters he met along the way are colorful: a cowboy, a maple syrup farmer, a prostitute, a boat builder, and many more—inc luding a Seventh-day Adventist hitchhiker.

One day, he picked up this representative of the Adventist faith a few miles north of Moscow, Idaho, describing him in stark terms: “The crosswind pulled his gray beard at a right angle to his face so that he looked like Curry’s painting of John Brown standing before the Kansas tornado.”

Trogdon’s chance encounter with the itinerant Adventist makes up only two chapters of his book. During that short time, the hitchhiker described with luminous passion his intention to go to serve as a missionary in Central America. He was on his way there, by as circuitous a route as Trogdon’s, sharing God’s love with anyone who would listen along the way. By the time their paths diverge and the hitchhiker gets out of the van near Kalispell, Montana, the author has heard the man’s life story and expresses admiration for his “simplicity, sparesness, courage, directness, trust, and ‘charity’ in Paul’s sense.”

MERE BENEFICENCE?

Gary B. Swanson

WORKSTATION TWO
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Box, comment, etc. here?
It’s interesting that in his own unique list of fruits of the spirit, Trogdon settled on the apostle Paul’s usage of the word charity to describe our brother in the faith, the hitchhiker. Though it appears in a book that is otherwise devoid of explicit scriptural allusion, it suggests a somewhat unexpected familiarity with Scripture in someone who, on the surface, shows no apparent espousal of Christianity. But his awareness of the connotations of Paul’s use of charity calls for a re-examination of that particular word for those who call themselves Christians.

Most obvious, of course, is the recognition that charity, like so many other words in everyday discourse, has become bloated into a caricature of its earlier meanings. Today it is used most frequently to denote some kind of benevolent organization or practice in which is emphasized the support of worthy causes of many kinds. It brings to mind the work of the American Lung Association, the National Endowment for the Arts, the United Fund, and others.

This definition of charity is one valid—and positive—expression of human response to the needs of others. But charity—benevolence—can be reduced to nothing more than a perfunctory tax that is paid to fulfill some kind of fuzzy desire to “do something good.”

It’s tempting, sometimes, to suspect that this is what is going on when celebrities become spokespersons for certain causes. Thinking cynically, we can almost hear their promoters saying something like, “You need to select a charity to promote. This will be good for your image!”

But, to be fair, this kind of thinking can be a temptation for anyone. Just write and send a check or slip a couple of extra dollar bills into the mittens of the homeless person for the warm, fuzzy sense of well-being that it can bring to the donor. Sometimes testimonies are shared in which someone says, “helping the unfortunate makes me feel good inside.”

As Trogdon implies, however, “charity” in Paul’s sense suggests much more than mere beneficence. The word appears nine times in the King James Version of 1 Corinthians 13, each instance building on the previous reference to a final summary in verse 13: “[T]he greatest of these is charity.”

In most other versions and paraphrases of 1 Corinthians 13, the word charity, however, is translated into the word love.

It has been observed many times over that love is the central theme for many—too many—of the songs that have ever been written. It has been at the heart of the best, and the worst, poetry. But the writing of 1 Corinthians 13, inspired by the ultimate authority on love Himself, is widely recognized as the very essence of the subject.

And, in the short while they spent together on the road across part of Montana, Trogdon clearly sensed an unmistakable quality in the hitchhiker’s life, a deep caring for the salvation of others.

“We have an abundance of sermonizing,” Ellen White has written. “What is most needed . . . is love for perishing souls, that love which comes in rich currents from the throne of God. True Christianity diffuses love through the whole being. It touches every vital part, the brain, the heart, the helping hand, the feet, enabling men to stand firmly where God requires them to stand, so that they will not make crooked paths for their feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way. The burning, consuming love of Christ for perishing souls is the life of the whole system of Christianity.”

So, recognizing this kind of love for perishing souls in the hitchhiker’s life, why didn’t Trogdon simply say he admired his “simplicity, spareness, courage, directness, trust, and [love]”?

The most immediate explanation is probably that the traveling author may have been most familiar with the King James Version of the Bible. This is, after all, the traditional source from which, until very recently, the English-reading culture has drawn most of its understanding of Scripture.

Maybe it is also because he recognized that in everyday street language, the word love has become an even more exaggerated caricature of its earlier meaning than has the word charity. Maybe it is because his use of certain words is an intentional choice to travel the blue highways of language as well as geography, to avoid the smooth, multilane, interstate highways of superficial usage and the way they separate us with cyclone fences and noise-reducing walls from the land in which we travel.

REFERENCES
2 Ibid., p. 253.
3 Ibid., p. 262.