

Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 15/1 (Spring 2004): 1–5.
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The President's Page: The New Constitution and Bylaws of the Adventist Theological Society, and Other Issues

Jiří Moskala
ATS President

During its November 2003 meeting, the ATS Executive Committee voted that the editor of *JATS* should be a trained theologian. Unfortunately, finding trained theologians with the time to devote to *JATS* is difficult, but Dr. Randall W. Younker, Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Archaeology at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University, fills this criteria and has kindly agreed to serve as interim Executive Editor of *JATS*. Professor Younker has done graduate work in theology at Andrews University and in 1997 received his doctorate in Near Eastern Studies and Anthropology from the University of Arizona. We warmly welcome him to this new responsibility. Yet, this type of work is not new for him, because for many years he has been and still is the ATS Vice President for Publications.

Meanwhile, Ed Christian, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English and Biblical Literature at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, who has served faithfully for six years as the editor of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, will shift into new areas of responsibility. Dr. Christian has enthusiastically and tirelessly given to *JATS* his professional skills and has placed the journal back on a timely publication schedule. Ed, we really appreciate your tremendous and excellent editorial work and a million thanks for what you have accomplished, for your dedication, time, and expertise! We look forward to further cooperation with you.

In this issue of *JATS* we introduce an updated layout for our journal. The new ATS logo visually summarizes our mission. As a society we want to be centered in Jesus Christ, and our theology must always be cross-focused. We are also a society with an international scope, because the good news of the Gospel needs to be proclaimed to the whole world. Thus, we include in the logo the symbol of the world. In that symbol, the biblical texts expressed in Hebrew and

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Greek (Isa 66:2 and 2 Tim 3:16) point to our resolution to engage in a serious encounter with the Word of God and—in joyful apprehension of God’s revelation, with humility and trembling—our willingness to learn and be corrected. We need the constant help of the Holy Spirit, because we are totally dependent on God’s guidance in interpreting the Scriptures. My special thanks for the work of designing the new ATS logo and *JATS* layout goes to Larry Lichtenwalter (the prime initiator for this change), Randall Younker, and Brenda Mendez, a graphic designer, who together, with great effort, made sure that this project succeeded.

It is my privilege and great joy to announce that we, the Adventist Theological Society, have now a new Constitution and Bylaws which was, after a lengthy discussion and some editorial changes, accepted by unanimous vote on Saturday evening, November 22, 2003, at the ATS Annual Business Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. It means that from that date on this new ATS Constitution and Bylaws is in effect (published now in this current issue of the *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*).

This is a very important step forward for the Society. The updating has occurred after fifteen years of ATS existence—an excellent sign of an energetic organization. Two years ago at the ATS Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, November 23, 2001, it was voted to reformulate the Constitution and Bylaws, including the Mission Statement, Goals, and Membership Form of the Adventist Theological Society, in order to be sensitive to the current needs and contemporary situation. We felt that some changes were necessary because we wanted to express the truth better in a rapidly changing world in order to clearly state what we stand for. The ATS Executive Committee devoted many days to discussing the new ATS Constitution and Bylaws and unanimously recommended on April 20, 2003, that the new Constitution and Bylaws be accepted.

We desire to be an open Society, but still firm on principles; on one side confirming faith and on the other enhancing truth by being a positive voice in our Church and beyond. I am convinced that our mission statement, core values, and goals speak for themselves. The beginning of the 21st century is the right time to rethink, reshape, and reformulate our attitude and position in order to make our objectives and goals clearer and more transparent to others. We understand that to a certain degree, we are responsible for the image others perceive of us.

Our position is crystal clear—we stand for the 27 Fundamental Beliefs and the Rio de Janeiro “Methods of the Bible Study” document on hermeneutics (see Section 1 in Article III: Core Values). Our basic philosophy and approach in formulating the new Constitution and Bylaws can be summarized in the following way:

1. To be faithful to the original intent of the ATS Constitution and Bylaws;
2. To be clear in what we stand for;

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3. To have essential agreement on our core values without trying to express all details of what we believe; and
4. Not to go beyond the intention of the "27 Fundamental Beliefs" of our Church or the "Methods of Bible Study" document on biblical hermeneutics.

We can now move forward to be a society with better-formulated statements in order to serve others more efficiently with well-balanced biblical theology. Our deep desire is to live to the glory of God. Our mission is to be "a resource for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to foster biblical, theological, and historical studies supportive of the Church's message and mission" (see our Mission Statement). Study also for yourself our eight "Core Values" and eight specific "Goals" which speak unambiguously and distinctly to where we put emphasis and for what we really strive.

As ATS, in our theological orientation, we deliberately avoid liberal views on Creation, the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, ethics, diet, etc. At the same time we stand against the right-wing positions concerning legalism, perfectionism, or the literalistic interpretation of the Bible. As a society, we deny making issues such as the human nature of Christ or the ordination of women a test of orthodoxy. We thus refuse all kinds of destructive criticism, extremism, right or left theology, and rather aim for biblically centered, exegetically and theologically balanced views. We stand for the straightforward, intended meaning of Scripture. We as members of that society want to actively promote sound theology for the benefit of the church in close cooperation with the leadership of our church. Therefore, all changes are in line with the original spirit and intent of the mission and theological/hermeneutic convictions of the society. They are made with a great passion for God's truth. Our main task is to present to both the scholarly world and the general audience the value and beauty of Seventh-day Adventist biblical truth. Our goal is that our members will be active supporters and proclaimers of this mission of the ATS.

It is my conviction that theology can be done only within the church and for the church—otherwise it's only an intellectual enterprise. Christian and particularly Adventist theology cannot be done in a vacuum. In that sense theology and theologians are in the service of the church. At the same time, I want to stress that theology has to also be a critical voice within the church, because to serve well does not mean to conserve the status quo. Both elements are crucial and important. We need to advance in the understanding of God's truth, never to stop. After the Reformation, our forefathers proclaimed with the deep and true slogan: "Church reformed and always reforming by the Word of God." May God help us put into practice this crucial motto.

Let me stress also that in my view our Society should not be only a forum or a discussion club, where different views are presented, discussed, and it's finished! For me the ATS is a group of people devoted to a specific mission and

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activities, people who want to be a resource for the church. Deep convictions, concerns, and service draw us together.

We are not a “missionary” society in the sense that we need to get as many members as possible. We do not need to try to gain all our scholars and theologians, but let’s do our work thoroughly and in such a way that they can really see the value in what we are doing and be attracted to becoming part of the ATS. I am glad that we have many respected scholars as our members, as well as top leadership in our church. Praise the Lord for that!

We are open with membership because our members can be any educated Church member and not just trained theologians, even though we have now introduced two kinds of membership—“professional” and “associate.” This was done primarily in regard to those who are not Bible scholars or theologians but are profoundly interested in solid biblical and theological studies—thus they can be members without feeling ill at ease (see Article V, Sections 1 and 2). The stress is on membership and not on its kind; this is only a technical matter. From the very beginning, one of the characteristic features of our Society was to be open to all educated Church members, because of our strong conviction that theology is not owned by a few trained experts, does not belong only to them, and is not a matter which is in the hands of an elite group. We believe in the priesthood of all believers.

We need to embrace all by love! Our love or fellowship circle must be much larger than our theological circle (including not only Adventists, but other Christians and non-Christians). Right doctrine teaches us to love all, even our enemies. Love is the highest quality of life and extremely important, but love without truth ceases to be love! We need to remind ourselves that it is impossible to please everybody.

I pray that this newly formulated ATS Constitution and Bylaws will help us focus on the most essential: on uplifting Christ, proclaiming the three angels’ messages with urgency and deep convictions, living God’s truth, and serving others. May this new Constitution and Bylaws unite us even more and help us to avoid the temptation to give priority to peripheral issues not crucial to the Gospel ministry.

It is my deep conviction that we as a society can look with full confidence to the future because our Creator, Redeemer, Lord, and Master encourages us with following promises: “I am the Lord, your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you: ‘Do not fear, I will help you’” (Isa 41:13)! “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know” (Jer 33:3). May our gracious, loving, holy, and just God lead us and give full assurance of His Presence. May we serve Him and His Church faithfully with passion for His truth and with joy under the leadership of His Word and Spirit. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

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campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Moskala received his Th.D. in 1990 from the Comenius Faculty of Protestant Theology, which is now renamed the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University, Czech Republic. His dissertation was entitled: "The Book of Daniel and the Maccabean Thesis: The Problem of Authorship, Unity, Structure, and Seventy Weeks in the Book of Daniel (A Contribution to the Discussion on Canonical Apocalypics)" and was published in the Czech language. In 1998 he completed his Ph.D. from Andrews University. His dissertation was entitled: "The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals of Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale (An Intertextual Study)" and has been published under the same title. Moskala has authored several books and articles in the Czech and English languages. He is married to Eva, and they have five children: Andrea, Marcela, Petra, Daniel, and David. moskala@andrews.edu

Constitution and Bylaws of the Adventist Theological Society

CONSTITUTION

Article I: Name

This organization shall be known as the Adventist Theological Society, hereinafter referred to as the Society or ATS.

Article II: Mission Statement

The Adventist Theological Society is an international, professional, nonprofit organization established as a resource for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to foster biblical, theological, and historical studies supportive of the Church's message and mission.

Article III: Core Values

Sec. 1. The Adventist Theological Society accepts the Bible as the foundational authority in matters of faith and life and upholds Christ as the only Savior of the world. It affirms the "Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" as its theological position and adheres to the "Methods of Bible Study" document as voted by the General Conference Executive Committee at the Annual Council Session in 1986 (first published in the *Adventist Review*, January 22, 1987, and later included in *Statements, Guidelines, and Other Documents: A Compilation*, Communication Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000) as its hermeneutical position. The centrist focus of the Society places it against all forms of theological extremism, avoiding theological liberalism and legalistic or literalistic interpretations of the Scriptures.

Sec. 2. The Society seeks to accomplish its mission by emphasizing the following doctrinal points of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which have been challenged in recent discussions:

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- a. The Society affirms that Christ's substitutionary death on the cross was both the supreme revelation of God's love for humankind and an atoning sacrifice for sin and that His life provided a perfect example for His people to imitate. His substitutionary death pays the penalty for sin, provides forgiveness, and creates gratitude and saving faith in all who receive Him. The cross is central to every aspect of life and work, of witness and outreach, of research and doctrine.
- b. The Society affirms that the Bible is the Word of God—the inspired, infallible revelation of truth in written form. The Bible is its own interpreter, provides the foundation and context for scholarship and the totality of life, and is the unerring standard for doctrine and experience.
- c. The Society endorses a biblical hermeneutic that employs the historical-grammatical method in the study of Scripture, recognizing the necessity of the Holy Spirit's aid in so doing. It rejects the use of any method in biblical study “that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason” (Methods of Bible Study Committee Report, Preamble), tradition, or experience.
- d. The Society affirms the literal reading and meaning of Genesis 1-11 as an objective, factual account of earth's origin and early history; that the world was created in six literal, consecutive, contiguous 24-hour days (Exodus 20:8-11); that the earth was subsequently devastated by a literal global flood, and that the time elapsed since creation week is to be measured in terms of a short chronology of a few thousand years.
- e. The Society affirms a real sanctuary in heaven and the pre-advent judgment of believers beginning in 1844, based upon the historicist view of prophecy and the year-day principle as taught in Scripture.
- f. The Society believes that the writings of Ellen G. White possess more than pastoral authority and that in them God has spoken as He did through prophets and apostles of old to instruct His people concerning His will and the course He would have His people pursue. The Bible alone is the only foundation of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine; Ellen White's writings, while subject to and judged by the Scriptures, are an invaluable tool for illuminating Scripture and confirming church teaching.
- g. The Society affirms the identification of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the remnant movement called by God to proclaim the three angels'

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messages of Revelation 14, which prepare the world for the soon return of Christ.

- h. The Society affirms its faithfulness to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and each member pledges to continue supporting it through tithes, offerings, personal effort, and influence.

Article IV: Goals

Sec. 1. Specific goals of the Society are to:

- a. Promote sound biblical scholarship and interpretation among Seventh-day Adventist scholars, theologians, teachers, pastors, and students.
- b. Explore revealed truth in order to better comprehend it.
- c. Create a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere for fellowship and dialogue among members and offer them moral support and collegiality.
- d. Uphold the fundamental beliefs and piety of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in education, in church life, and in the completion of its mission.
- e. Sponsor Bible symposia and conventions in different parts of the world and provide opportunities for the reading, discussion, and dissemination of scholarly papers.
- f. Interact with Bible scholars and theologians beyond the Seventh-day Adventist community of faith.
- g. Publish theological literature.
- h. Be a positive voice in the Church and society at large.

Article V: Categories of Membership

Sec. 1. Professional membership in the Society is open to Seventh-day Adventist scholars, pastors, administrators, and educators with a master's or doctoral degree who by academic training or professional practice are, or have been, engaged in theological education or church leadership, and who uphold and promote the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sec. 2. Associate membership in the Society is open to anyone who has special interest in theological issues and upholds and promotes the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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Article VI: Executive Committee and Officers

- Sec. 1. All Officers, Editors, and Trustees of the Society must be members in good standing of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Society.
- Sec. 2. All Officers and the Editor of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS)* must hold professional membership.
- Sec. 3. The Executive Committee of the Society shall consist of the Officers, Editor of *JATS*, Editor of *Perspective Digest (PD)*, past-Presidents, and Trustees.
- Sec. 4. The Officers of the Society shall be the President, the President-elect, the Treasurer, the Executive Secretary, the Vice President for Publications, and the Vice President for Global Outreach.
- Sec. 5. The President shall serve for a two-year term. The President-elect shall serve for a two-year term, whereupon he/she shall serve as President. The Treasurer shall serve for a five-year term. The Executive Secretary, the Vice Presidents, the Editors, and each Trustee shall serve for a four-year term. All terms commence in January and end in December. All Officers, Editors, and Trustees can be re-elected, but the President only after at least one term out of office.
- Sec. 6. Honorary Trustees may be appointed by the Executive Committee, which shall determine their number and term of service.

Article VII: Chapters of the Society

- Sec. 1. All chapters of the Society are organized under the guidance of the Executive Committee and are responsible to it.
- Sec. 2. The Collegiate Adventist Theological Society (CATS) chapters and other ATS youth events are part of the Society's resource for the Church to foster sound biblical and theological studies and revival among the Seventh-day Adventist youth.

BYLAWS

Article I: Membership

- Sec. 1. Candidacy for membership shall be based upon receipt by the Society office of:
- a. The signed Society Membership Form, indicating acceptance of the Society's Constitution and Bylaws, unreserved commitment to the mission of

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the Society, and active support of the core values and goals of the Society; and

b. The membership fee.

The Executive Committee reserves the right to deny membership to candidates when deemed advisable.

Sec. 2. Under currency exchange difficulties, the Executive Committee may waive membership fee requirements.

Sec. 3. Membership is reconfirmed annually upon the signing of the Annual Reaffirmation form and the payment of the membership fee. If reaffirmation forms are not received for two consecutive years, membership will be considered terminated.

Sec. 4. A member may be disaffiliated for not upholding the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society or for misrepresenting ATS. Such action requires a two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Committee. A disaffiliated person may appeal to the Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee, after review, upholds its previous action, the disaffiliated person may request that the Executive Committee bring the matter to a duly called business meeting. A two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting at the business meeting is necessary for reinstatement to membership.

Sec. 5. As the work of the Society is a church-related function with voluntary membership and in no sense has to do with civil or legal procedure, any disaffiliation appeal to the Executive Committee will involve only the disaffiliated person and the Executive Committee. If an appeal goes to a business meeting, it will be considered only by members of the Society in their capacity as members.

Article II: Business Meetings

Sec. 1. Business meetings shall be called by the Executive Committee and announced by the President no later than one month in advance of the meeting date and are open to members in regular standing.

Sec. 2. Fifteen members shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of business, three of whom must be Society Officers, including either the President or the President-elect.

Sec. 3. Officers, Editors, and Trustees of the Society shall be elected by vote of the members at the general annual business meeting of the Society.

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Article III: Executive Committee

Sec. 1. The Executive Committee of the Society shall establish policies and carry out actions on behalf of the Society. It shall appoint committees and fix the time, place, and programs of all business meetings, including the general annual business meeting. It shall constitute the Nominating Committee and shall nominate all Officers, Editors, and Trustees. It shall set the amount of membership fees, subscription rates, and like matters and receive an accounting by the Treasurer of the financial activities and status of the Society.

Sec. 2. If the need arises to replace an Officer, Editor, or Trustee as the result of resignation, illness, or death, or to terminate the services of such for not upholding the Society's Constitution and Bylaws, or for misrepresenting the Society, this shall be expedited by a two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Committee. Such an appointment shall be for the interim period until the next general annual business meeting, at which time the serving individual may be a candidate, along with others, for election to fill the vacancy for a full term.

Sec. 3. A quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of seven, including either the President or the President-elect.

Article IV: Amendments

Proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society may be submitted to the Executive Committee for study and, if approved by the Executive Committee, distributed to the membership for study at least two months before the next general annual business meeting. Adoption of any such amendments shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting.

Article V: Dissolution

If ever deemed necessary, dissolution of the Society shall be according to the Tennessee Code Annotated Sections 48-64-101 et. seq., that govern non-profit organizations.

Intelligent Design: The Argument from Beauty

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For more than a decade those tuned to the science-faith debate have heard the voice of the movement known as Intelligent Design. This is the new kid on the anti-evolution block, spearheaded by academics from a variety of disciplines including astronomy, physics, biology, biochemistry, genetics, philosophy, mathematics, and jurisprudence.

Proponents of intelligent design draw upon solid current science and declare that our planet's intricate systems and the wondrous forms of life within it could not have arisen solely by chance. The required mechanisms, they say, are simply not there in nature. Yet today's mainstream science, with its edifice of Darwinian evolution, has to have mechanisms; and it rests its origins story wholly on purposeless chance events backed by natural selection. Spokesmen for science propose various creative mechanisms in nature and tell beguiling "just so" stories. But skeptics declare they are ruled out by recent advances in science and by the laws of probability. And if you rule out chance, you must have intelligence, a designer.

I will refer to just two specific examples. Biochemist Michael Behe (in *Darwin's Black Box*) has pleaded the principle of *irreducible complexity*. Not only macro structures like the eye, but even the simplest living cells are now known to be unimaginably complex. And these structures contain mutually dependent parts that could not have appeared by any conceivable series of chance molecular events. On a different note, William Dembski has applied rigorous laws of probability to prove (in *Intelligent Design and No Free Lunch*) that random chance could not birth the *specified complexity* we see in nature. Both of these are robust arguments that rest upon the observed data, whose essential character is a vast *complexity*.

But there is more to design than complexity. I am proposing that it is time to advance beyond an analysis of complexity, fruitful though that has been. We are able to expand the scope of design arguments to include the existence of

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beauty, which points to design of a different kind. And I will suggest that this expansion of our focus brings with it some provocative consequences.

Design arguments found their classic formulation in 1802, when William Paley, Archdeacon of Carlisle, published his book “Natural Theology.” Paley did not originate this argument, but his book gave it its definitive form. It is useful to quote its first words:

In crossing a heath . . . suppose I found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place . . . For this reason, and for no other, viz. that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive . . . that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose.

Note that Paley’s emphasis here was not on complexity but on purpose, on intention. He did dwell significantly on complexity, but did not develop an argument from beauty as an additional evidence of purpose and design.

In their current form, intelligent design arguments have been well received by devotees who come from a traditional monotheism—Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. But in other circles their reception has been mixed, at best. Outside North America intelligent design has been widely ignored, and the rank and file of mainstream scientists have rejected it. What has intrigued me is the hostility to intelligent design from many persons who profess a sturdy religious faith.

Recently I met an example of this. A letter came from a scientist friend in England who had just attended a conference of a group called “Christians in Science,” an assemblage of a hundred or more intellectuals. Their conference theme was divine action in nature, which offered plenty of room for lively discussion. Yet one might expect them to be sympathetic towards the presentation of a God who is engaged in nature, who may sometimes intervene. This is a God to whom they pray, who is accessible, who cares for His world.

But it was not so. These scientists of undoubted faith, who in principle should not have a quarrel with the concept of a designer, nevertheless gave little or no support to intelligent design. While scientists of faith declare belief in God, it seems they are not happy with Him meddling in their universe. They look for answers in the natural realm, where they have always looked—under a microscope, in a test tube, in software code, or wherever they can rely on known predictable laws. But while this habitual naturalism works well in the laboratory or in the kitchen, it has nothing helpful to say about occurrences that transcend known laws. So conferees were wary of intelligent design, which rests much of its case on phenomena that have no natural explanations.

Methodologic naturalism, the over-arching paradigm in the practice of today’s science, is an entrenched worldview that has a tenacious grip on the minds and hearts of most scientists. This is hardly surprising: their careers and their writings rest squarely upon it. Yet one wonders what it will take for them to see the inadequacy of the creative mechanisms identifiable in nature, as well as the

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far-reaching implications of hard-nosed naturalism for the practice of science and education. To be effective, the case for intelligent design needs to be reinforced and extended.

A consideration of beauty may be a step in that direction. One strength of Paley's pocket watch metaphor was that its truth was so obvious. Even a child could see the need for a watch designer, without mathematics and without syllogisms. Much the same can be claimed for beauty. It, too, is self-evident, even to a child. In his book *Climbing Mount Improbable*, Richard Dawkins relates how he asked his own daughter what she thought wildflowers were for. And to this she replied: "To make the world pretty, and to help the bees make honey for us," which implied they were intended for beauty and for our enjoyment.

Even if beauty is self-evident, where does it fit in our discussion of design and purpose? Let us recall the three requirements that are recognized hallmarks of design:

Contingency: the object/event was not obliged to happen by natural law.

Specification: its details are defined by some outside/independent criteria.

Complexity: consisting of many inter-related mutually dependent parts.

Of these three, complexity has already been well explored by Behe, Dembski, and others. Design theorists can argue that unaided, nature cannot account for the origin of complex biotic structures. They can apply mathematical tools to the specific arrangement of nucleotides in a strand of DNA and show that laws of probability rule out their chance appearance. Furthermore, they can assert there is no natural information source that can provide the enormous mass of precise coding required to produce living things.

But when they address beauty, the order and the aesthetic virtues we see in nature, a different treatment is needed. Theorists cannot tease apart its ingredients and subject them to a probability analysis. Beauty is in a different category. It is a distinctive outcome of design, but it is not quantifiable, and you cannot insert it into an equation. It does not consist of nucleotides.

In my early cogitations, trying to analyze beauty, I stumbled at first. I was looking for new support for the argument from design. But most paths I explored led nowhere. One morning I found courage to broach the subject in a breakfast conversation I shared with jurist Phillip Johnson and John Mark Reynolds, philosopher at Biola University. My question was straightforward, along these lines: "This talk of irreducible complexity is fine. But where does beauty come in? To produce beauty by chance in the first place is an unsolved mystery. But its survival is an equally huge obstacle. Beauty in itself is not a factor for survival. There is no reason that a fragile, exquisitely delicate orchid should survive in a harsh jungle environment. If Darwinian natural selection is a valid

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story, it should present us today with a biosphere populated by tough, rugged, even ugly surviving-type things. Delicacy and beauty should have vanished long ago.”

Reynolds took my question in stride. “Oh, you’re talking about the argument from aesthetics.” And silence followed. Well, of course I was. He had simply used different wording to restate my enquiry. But to me it sounded like a dismissal. I got the impression this matter of beauty was old hat, thoroughly dealt with already by a galaxy of scholars, from the Greeks to Augustine, from Plotinus to Aquinas, to Kant, Karl Barth, and the rest of them. Chastened, I let the matter drop until I could do some library work.

After considerable searching, the truth came out: It is not so! I found that beauty is surprisingly ignored in the classics. It is noted as a phenomenon to be observed and enjoyed, but not in connection with a divine author. I read Plato’s *Symposium*, a series of orations on the subject of love, given at a drinking party, including a brilliant one by Socrates, who reported his dialogue with Diotima. I dabbled in *Timaeus*, in which Plato explores the origins of the cosmos. (This Greek word includes the meaning of order and beauty; to the Greeks, existence itself was beautiful.) But neither in the Greeks, nor later in Augustine, did I find any treatment of beauty as a proof of the existence of a divinity. Come down to Aquinas, and you find his five classic arguments for the existence of God. I found them difficult to digest, and they do not deal with beauty. I could go on, to David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Theologian Karl Barth I did not tackle, but I did choose a contemporary Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, who wrote an extensive theology of aesthetics. I struggled, almost drowned, in his dense prose, but found little help for intelligent design. I read Dorothy Sayers’ *The Mind of the Maker*, an exhilarating book. But it did not give answers to my question.

I describe this search only to show that I did explore in likely places, and I concluded that the question raised appears to have been neglected, that is, an analysis of beauty in relation to the existence of God.¹ So I judge that the subject deserves more extensive exploration. Here is an aspect of design theory that invites further development.

Even without the Greeks and without Aquinas, there is a lot to be said about beauty to help us on our way, to give us a glimpse of where this journey might take us.

First, beauty is widely defined as being solely subjective. Its content may reside in material objects, or in mind, or in experience. But does it exist if it is not perceived? It dwells, we commonly say, in the eye of the beholder. It is a judgment made by an observer. But can there be beauty independent of an ob-

¹ Recently I have been directed to two contemporary books that do address the subject of beauty: Thomas Dubay’s *The Evidential Power of Beauty* and Peter Barrett’s *Science and Theology Since Copernicus*.

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server?² If a tree falls in the forest when there is no one to hear, does it make a noise? In philosophy, and also in the Copenhagen version of quantum physics, observers have a vital role to play. They give reality to what was only an idea. Some would say the same goes for beauty: its material basis may remain, but there is no reality unless it is perceived. We may be reminded of Berkeley, in an earlier time, who taught that material objects do not exist unless they are observed.

Because beauty cannot be independently objectified and measured, it cannot be inserted into an equation and given the same probability analysis that has been given to complexity. But that does not diminish its force as an argument for design, based either on its unexplained origin or on its problematic survival.

Second, we must recognize several distinctive kinds of beauty, coming to our attention through a variety of pathways. They deserve a closer consideration.

Visual beauty is the one that most readily comes to mind. But its subjectiveness keeps cropping up. Is a rainbow beautiful to those who are color blind? Why do we perceive that some colors blend well, while others clash? There is more involved than the wavelengths of light. Why is an orchid in the jungle not merely fragile and marvelous in its delicacy and complexity, but extravagantly so? Whence this excess? Why are the tail feathers of a peacock not just bright enough with color to attract a mate, but plain flat-out gorgeous, to an extent far beyond any requirement in the mating season? And why are you and I endowed with a capacity not only to see these wavelengths of light, but to integrate them and find delight in them? It is evident that our response to those feathers gives no survival advantage to us or to the peacock. Naturalism, fitness for survival, cannot explain them.

Auditory beauty has a comparable story attached to it. It is astonishing that oscillations in the air molecules surrounding us can be so combined as to contain an intricate, sometimes majestic, message. And also that you and I, though oblivious to the laws of physics, find ourselves equipped with an extraordinary mechanism to perceive these oscillations, and beyond perceiving them, to find them beautiful, or soothing, or jarring, as the case may be.

Once again, naturalism gives no explanation. To hear the footsteps of a predator in the jungle may have survival value. But to enjoy the difference between a Rachmaninoff concerto and Chopin's "Polichinelle" and to find delight in these subtleties gives no survival advantage. Our capacity for enjoying music has, in fact, perplexed naturalists recently. In *Nature*, in March of 2002, researchers asked: What is music for? What is its usefulness? After all, an appreciation of music confers "no glaringly obvious advantage in the Darwinian struggle for survival." It seems to be, as Steven Pinker [then] of M.I.T. put it, "auditory cheesecake." [full source?]

² Dubay finds no need for an observer, asserting that beauty has its own independent existence.

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Once again the observer's participation is important. Does a progression of chords have beauty for a deaf man? I think the answer is yes—if that man is already endowed, from his memory, with the ability to hear those chords in his mind. Beethoven could “hear” his music, and write it out as manuscript, after he became deaf. When I sit at my piano and improvise, I hear in anticipation and enjoy the torrent of sound I am about to make, even before I touch the keys.

Taste and smell provide for us shades of pleasure and subtle delight that are far richer, more delicately modulated, than can be accounted for by any criteria of survival advantage in a world where natural selection is alleged to rule supreme. We may understand the intricate neural sense organs that mediate these modes of sensation. But selection theory cannot account for our pleasure, for example, in the shades of different flavor in a dozen varieties of apple or our insistence on choosing one from an array of perfumes in milady's parlor.

Touch sensation may not be so obviously an endowment of beauty. But it spoke volumes to the blind Helen Keller. Consider the huge variety of textures and temperatures that our fingers communicate every moment. And it takes little reflection on the rich experience of sexual gratification to be awed by the subtlety and delicacy and tactile ecstasy that far transcends any reflex-driven mating in lower animal forms.

Further, we must marvel at the beauty seen in the *mind and its functions*. Ideas can be beautiful. Men who are my betters declare there is beauty in a finely drafted theorem or in a mathematical derivation. If they ever find it, the Grand Unified Theory will be a thing of great beauty. A noble beauty in logic and rhetoric, a product of our minds revered by the Greeks, has long been recognized. And words, in the hands of a true artist, can be fashioned into awesomely beautiful poetry.

I remember vividly from years ago the poetry extravaganzas held at the American University of Beirut Alumni Club, when two hundred men, all of them academics and professionals, clapped and shouted and wept in response to the recitation of poetry in Classical Arabic. My friends explained that the language was far richer, more expressive, more heart-moving than poetry in English—provided, of course, you had a full grasp of the vehicle. Even in English words can be powerful agents of beauty. Gray's *Elegy* reminds us that the material ground of beauty may indeed be there, though unperceived:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

And like other beauties that depend upon a recipient's perceptual ability, finding delight in poetry is a mysteriously complex process that fulfils none of the criteria for survival fitness. Where did it come from? What is its usefulness in the survival contest?

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Leaving the sensory modalities that serve our perception, we turn to a third attribute of beauty: it expands when shared with another perceiver. It is possible, of course, to enjoy beauty all alone. But if our quest, like Paley's, is for an ultimate purpose, we can understand beauty most persuasively as a gift that enriches the receiver and also gives pleasure to the giver. When thus shared it grows in depth and intensity. For me, reflection yields no satisfying way to contemplate beauty other than as a generous gift that, in all of nature, is offered uniquely to us humans who have the capacity to perceive it and to celebrate. Furthermore, we can discern no convincing source for beauty in chance events or through natural selection. So at the end of the day we are left in wonder of a wise and generous Designer, one who shares His own consummate sense of artistry.

Now let us review the course of our enquiry. Beauty is subjective, though it resides in observable realities. Also, beauty is diverse in its material sources and defies the rules of natural selection. It does not augment an organism's fitness to survive. It does not have a discernible cause for its existence in the physical cosmos or in living things. It has no power within itself to survive, to exist. It does not help the Selfish Gene, whose sole goal is to achieve efficiency in reproduction. Beauty is a special instance of intelligent design that does not lend itself to analysis by natural laws or by our computers.

So once again comes the question: How do we bring beauty into the intelligent design debates? Not easily and not simply, because its subjective nature leads us to depend on a childlike intuition rather than on a Euclidean *quod erat demonstrandum*.

To push the argument further, I confess coming to a discomfiting conclusion. To argue from beauty requires that those who are committed to intelligent design should be willing to take a further radical step. They must proceed to characterize the designer. If you have design you must have a designer, and a criticism of the intelligent design movement is that it is creationism in a thinly disguised form. Yet in order to preserve a united front, design theorists have resisted being drawn into discussions about the nature of the designer. It has been more useful to view the movement as a large umbrella that can shelter a diverse company of persons, all of whom reject philosophic naturalism. Phillip Johnson's vision was of an inclusive movement that could accommodate widely divergent views on the designer.

But naturalism, the common adversary, remains far from being defeated. In my view an argument from beauty can be developed as a powerful additional weapon. But not everyone under the umbrella will be comfortable using it, for it points to a particular kind of designer. When you bring this weapon to bear, you narrow the range of attributes you attach to this designer. And each of us will have a different, personal *animus* towards using the argument.

When I regard complexity my tendency is to conceive of an engineer-craftsman kind of God, left-brained (to descend into human categories), with an

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unthinkable capacity for details of function. His world holds together; its parts work well. But when I consider beauty I look for an artist God, thoroughly right-brained, a personable, relational God who takes pleasure in the beauty He devises and shares.

Here I speak for myself, as well as for others who are bold enough to confess belief in a Creator. Confronted by both the complexity and the beauty all around me, I am a believer out of necessity, compelled to bow before a Transcendent Being who is personal, who is intelligent beyond imagining and imponderably artistic and generous. In discussing beauty in today's confrontation with entrenched naturalism, a bold creationist who upholds a designer/creator of beauty wins hands down. Though it is outside the laws of a naturalist worldview, his model works.

The model reveals a designer, a Demiurge, a God whom we can glimpse, though indistinctly, because the data we observe in nature require that He exist and that He be active in the cosmos. And His attributes come into clearest focus when we not only consider complexity, which is essential for life, but also see beauty, which is essential for spirit, as His gift to us. He is not only a designer and a fabricator, but also an artist who fashioned the physical vehicles that carry the colors of a rainbow and the sounds of great music. Further, He gave us eyes and ears to perceive them, plus a mind to enjoy these life-enhancing delights. He is an artist who likes company, who wants to share His own pleasure, His joy in the work of His hands.

The words still ring in my ears that I heard most memorably once in Washington, at the opening of the Mormon Temple: "He created us that we might have joy." And though I treated the words offhandedly then, I am moved today when I consider how much truth they contain. My naturalist friends will cry "Foul!" I am leaping, without doubt, between Gould's "non-overlapping magisteria," science and religion. But they do overlap necessarily, and I do not apologize. I am seeking, and science is seeking, a satisfying accounting for many unexplained attributes in the cosmos, in living things around us and within us. But materialist science has come up with only putative models that do not satisfy me. At too many points naturalism fails. It makes beauty an unexplained anomaly and requires us to place faith in unlikely natural mechanisms that are described in full seriousness, but have scant supporting evidence and are beyond my believing.

It is not an abandonment of intellect, but rather an awed humility that leads me to open my mind to embrace super-naturalism, to acknowledge a Creator. For then I can say: I have a model that works, that does give answers. It is a Judeo-Christian model, mirrored in Islam, that recognizes the Creator God of the Bible. This is a God who, like any true artist, could complete His day's creative activity, look upon His handiwork, and declare that it was good.

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Word Made Flesh: The Inspiration of Scripture

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The primary “textbook” of the Christian faith, the biblical canon, is at the crux of any Science and Faith discussion. Considerations of scriptural authority and veracity ever continue to engage both scientists and theologians.

Of course, the Bible isn’t a “textbook” in the modern definition of the word, but it is a book, nevertheless. Its materials need to be studied fairly and attentively, making sure one is heedful of the wide variety of ways in which different parts of Scripture relate and interact with each other. In such a study, its sweeping claims of divine inspiration will be detected. These cannot be easily dismissed. One must honestly deal with the fundamental assumptions and parameters within which the many Bible writers consistently work. Thankfully, these are fairly obvious.

For example, none of the Bible writers ever attempts to prove the existence of God. Without exception, they all assume He exists. Biblical writers claim to have real knowledge of an infinite God, a knowledge God disclosed. It was not a spiritual insight they devised. They were absolutely certain God was speaking through them when they thundered, “Thus says the Lord!” Fleming Rutledge is correct:

“The witness of the Bible is that every other god under the sun is a product of human consciousness except only the God of the Old and New Testaments. Whether we believe this or not, we must admit that it is an awesome claim. I am more convinced than ever that the Scriptures set before us something, or rather some One, who is far beyond anything the unassisted human imagination could dream up.”¹

Moreover, all the Bible writers affirm that God can do what He declares Himself capable of doing. For example, God insists that He can foretell the future and that doing so is a mark of His divinity:

¹ Fleming Rutledge, *Help My Unbelief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 25.

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“‘Present your case,’ says the LORD. ‘Bring forth your strong reasons,’ says the King of Jacob. ‘Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods . . . I am the LORD, that is My name. . . . Behold the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them. . . . Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?’” (Isa 41:21–23; 42:8–9; 43:12b–13)

At various times in the ancient past God announced prophecies concerning the history and even rulers of nations and also the coming of the Messiah. Some modern minds assume God could not be so precise, and thus predetermine that the prophecies were written as after-the-fact “predictions.” However, this contemporary attitude of denying God’s ability to know and predict the future is never found in any of the Bible writers.

Furthermore, they all are absolutely certain that, though infinite, God can and does communicate with human beings. Biblical writers never concede that human language is any kind of a barrier to direct communication from God. They would denounce modernist contentions denying any correlation between language and reality. In fact, Bible writers record numerous incidents of God speaking directly to human beings in the Old Testament. These include conversations with Adam and Eve after the Fall (Gen 1:28–30; 3:9–19) and with Job (Job 38–41). There is the divine call of Abram (Gen 12:1–3), which was the first of several conversations with him (including the lengthy dialogue in Gen 18:1–23). The burning bush conversation between God and Moses is followed by other direct exchanges between them. The civil code in the Pentateuch is recorded as words spoken directly by God to Moses. God’s interchange with Elijah at Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:9–18) is another of many direct divine dialogues with the prophets.

With great frequency God is referred to as speaking through the prophets. For example, Elijah’s words in 1 Kgs 21:19 are referred to in 2 Kgs 9:25–26 as the oracle that “the LORD uttered . . . against him,” and Elijah is not even mentioned. The message of a prophet was always considered equivalent to direct speech from God. This identification of a prophet’s words with God’s words is so pronounced in the OT that to disobey a prophet’s words was to disobey God. In Deut 18:19, the LORD speaks of the coming prophet, through Moses: “Whoever will not give heed to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.” And when Saul disobeyed Samuel’s command at Gilgal, Samuel rebuked him: “You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He Commanded you . . . now your kingdom shall not continue . . . because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you” (1 Sam 13:13–14).

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New Testament writers also knew it was possible for God to speak directly to people in human language: at the baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22); the Transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17–18); the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4); instructions to Ananias including street address (Acts 9:11–16); Peter’s vision (Acts 10:13); Paul on his missionary journeys (Acts 18:9–10; 23:11); and the NT apocalypse (Rev 1:11–3:22) are a few examples. Jesus Himself insists numerous times that He speaks the words of God. For example: “The Father who sent Me has Himself given Me commandment what to say and what to speak” (John 14:10). Paul claims to have received revelation from God: “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord (1 Cor 14:37–38).

We are not taught in Scripture that a prophet speaks about God. Rather, God speaks for Himself through His prophets. And human language is assumed to be capable of conveying divine communication. In the OT, the formula “Thus says the Lord” or its equivalent is used thousands of times. It proclaims the source and authority of the prophetic messages. With it, the Bible writers insist that what they said was to be received not as their pious pronouncements but as the very words of God.

The NT apostles claim the same absolute authority as the OT prophets, insisting that they speak by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 1:10–12), to whom they credit the content of their teaching (1 Cor 2:12–13). Notably, the same Paul who urges that believers seek to work together peacefully often employs harsh language to defend the absolute truths he has preached (Gal 1:6–9).² In fact, apostolic teaching is very “directive,” issuing commands with the strongest authority (1 Thes 4:1–2; 2 Thes 3:6, 12—“we command you”). The writer to the Hebrews expressed his sense of the absolute authority of the words of Ps 95:7–11 and Jer 31:33f by using the present tense when speaking of their divine origin, writing: “The Holy Ghost says” (not “said,” in the past tense), and again, “the Holy Ghost bears witness to us” (not “bore,” in the past tense). And Heb 12:25 insists, “See you refuse not Him that speaks.”

Biblical writers are invariably seen as messengers sent by God to speak His words. The extravagantly repeated formula “Thus says the LORD”—or its equivalent—clenches the full authority of the prophetic words. In fact, a distinguishing characteristic of true prophets is that they do not speak their own words. Throughout the OT, the point is repeatedly underscored that prophetic speech comes from God. God said to Moses: “I will be with your mouth and

² For example, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed [*anathema*]! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary [other than, more than] to what you have received, he is to be accursed [*anathema*]!”

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teach you what you shall speak” (Exod 4:12; cf. 24:3); to Jeremiah and Ezekiel—“I have put My words in your mouth” (Jer 1:9); “You shall speak My words to them” (Ezek 2:7; cf. 3:27). People who refused to listen to a prophet were held accountable for refusing to listen to “the words of the LORD which He spoke through Jeremiah the prophet” (Jer 37:2). Beginning in the opening chapters of the Bible, one is confronted with a God who communicates to human beings, and He then continues to speak throughout the entire canon.

The Bible never allows the impression that divine inspiration is a residue of what spiritual people have reasoned out themselves. Nor is special revelation ever speculative. Bible writers include matters of cosmology when God acts in human history.

Extensive scriptural evidence strongly suggests that biblical prophets experienced something far more than a contentless “divine encounter” which merely implanted mystical conviction for God in their hearts. For example, consider how Jeremiah was instructed by God to buy the field of Hanamel. He had been prophesying that the Babylonians would be attacking Jerusalem. When this prophecy was fulfilled, any Israelite rights to the land would be void. Owning property back in Judea would be of no value to a person in exile in Babylon. But the command to buy the field had come from God (Jer 32:6–8). So Jeremiah bought the field, though it made no sense to him. The text states that he paid the full price and had the deed properly signed, sealed, witnessed, and deposited, complying with all the legal requirements as God had directed him.

Jeremiah wasn’t acting under some personal inner obsession that he described as a command of God. He admits to being perplexed. In his prayer he acknowledges not understanding what God is telling him to do. God seems to be contradicting himself, Jeremiah boldly points out. He begins by reminding God of His constant love for his people, and of the way He has worked in the history of the nation. Jeremiah then tells God—

“. . . but they did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have made all this calamity come upon them. Behold, the siege ramps have reached the city to take it; and the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the sword, famine, and pestilence; and what You spoke has come to pass; and behold, You see it. You have said to me, O Lord God, ‘Buy for yourself the field with money and call in witnesses’—although the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.” (Jer 32:23–25, NASB)

Clearly this “word of the Lord” was not something that Jeremiah himself had calculated on his own. He obeyed, but he did not pretend to understand God’s reasoning. After God had told Jeremiah that the people would be given into the hands of the Babylonians, he could not see why God told him to buy land. That made no sense to him. It was not as though the Babylonian threat was still remote and might possibly be averted. Hostile armies were at that very time

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attacking the city. “Behold, You see it,” is a poignant part of the prophet’s prayer.

Jeremiah does not tell us how he recognized the “word of God” when it came to him, but clearly it was something plainly obvious and unequivocal to him. He was certain that God had spoken. It does not seem to have occurred to him that he had any right to deny the veracity of God’s instructions, even though he objected to them.

Another instructive incident in the life of this same prophet is the occasion when Johanan, with the army leaders, asked Jeremiah to intercede with the Lord. They felt the need of divine guidance and came to Jeremiah. The prophet listened, agreed to intercede with God on their behalf, and then promised, “I will tell you the whole message which the LORD will answer you. I will not keep back a word from you” (Jer 42:4, NASB). Jeremiah waited for ten days. He was not able to command the reply from God. Again, this was not a case of a prophet devising a response through spiritual reflection. The text is clear—“Now at the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah” (Jer 42:7). These are but two instructive examples within the extensive canonical records that God does not just encounter human beings with glorious feelings, but with actual information (Deut 29:29).

Closely connected with God’s direct speech are numerous accounts of a prophet writing down the words of God which are then taken as fully authoritative. A few examples can sensitize us to this crucial point: “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this as a memorial in a book.’” Subsequently the text records—“And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord” (Exod 17:14; 24:4); and also, “When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book, to the very end . . .” (Deut 31:24); “Joshua wrote these words [statutes, ordinances, and the words of the covenant renewal, v. 25] in the book of the law of God” (Josh 24:26; on Joshua as a prophet, cf. 1 Kgs 16:34; Josh. 1:5, 16–18); “Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord” (1 Sam 10:25). Even the recording process is divinely controlled, with the penman being “moved” or “impelled” (2 Pet 1:21). The writer is not merely deciding to create literary masterpieces, but is writing under God’s directive. This written communication thereby has divine authority, as Moses testified:

“You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you.” (Deut 4:2, NRSV)

The final chapter of the NT speaks similarly—

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person’s share in the tree of

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life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” (Rev 22:18–19, NRSV)

Divine inspiration is never controlled by human beings. It is not a human achievement, but above all a divine activity. Scripture claims that God testifies through His prophets (2 Kgs 17:13, 14). God also insists that He revealed Himself, made His acts known (Ps 103:7), and spoke through Jesus (Matt 11:27; 16:17; Heb 1:1–2). Moreover, He has commanded that His words be recorded and heeded. What we find in Scripture is not a collection of penetrating human intuitions of divinity. Both Testaments consistently bear witness that the truth of God is not the end product of diligent human searching for the divine, nor somebody’s best thoughts about lofty matters. It comes exclusively through God’s initiative in disclosing Himself to humanity.

Again, the prophets and apostles do not describe how they recognized the “word of God” when it came, but it is clear they were certain that God had spoken. Sometimes He spoke in ways they not did not always understand and on occasion even objected to, as we saw with Jeremiah, yet they never questioned the divine origin of the words. However, the Bible was not verbally dictated by God. When the human messengers were instructed to record the words of God, they were divinely guided in the selection of apt words to express the revelation, and thus the prophetic writings are called the Word of God. The individuality of each writer is evident, yet the human and divine elements are virtually inseparable. Ellen White makes a striking comparison:

The Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ John 1:14.³

God declares that He has manifested Himself through human language and ultimately in the incarnation of Jesus Christ Himself. Indeed, it is striking that one Person of the triune God is known as the Word. The inspiration of Scripture is the genuine work of the sovereign God, whose operation cannot be subjected to human control or repudiation.

A close reading of the biblical texts also reveals a basic continuity and unity of both Testaments, as might be expected. For example, Acts 17:11 does not say that the Bereans searched the Scriptures (the OT materials at that time) in order to disprove Paul or to find ground to accuse him of heresy. They turned to the Word as the means of determining the truth. The extensive citations of the OT in the NT also indicate that the OT writings were considered divinely inspired. Isaiah’s words in Isa 7:14 are cited as “what the Lord had spoken by the prophet” (Matt 1:22). Jesus quotes Gen 2:24 as words that God said (Matt 19:5).

³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 88.

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He also speaks of “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4). Words of Scripture are said to be spoken by the Holy Spirit: in quoting “what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Joel 2:28–32), Peter inserts, “says God,” attributing to God the words of Joel (Acts 2:16–17). Isaiah 49:6 is quoted by Paul and Barnabas as something that “the Lord commanded us,” claiming that an OT prophecy placed obligation on them also, declaring that the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah (Acts 28:25). Paul also quotes God’s speech in Exod 9:16 as what “Scripture says to Pharaoh,” indicating an equivalence between what OT Scripture says and what God says.

In fact, the minds of the NT writers are saturated with the Old Testament. They refer to it regularly and quote it extensively to undergird their theological discussion. Furthermore, the four Gospels make it strikingly obvious that Jesus accepted the full authority of the OT. OT prophecy was the pattern for His life, as He declared often: “it must be fulfilled” / “as it is written.” He never rebuked the Jewish theologians of His time for studying the OT, but rather for devising incorrect interpretations to cloud and even falsify God’s written word (Mark 7:1–13).

As one reads the four Gospels, one cannot deny that Jesus Christ claimed divine authority for all He did and taught. “These things I have spoken to you,” repeated numerous times by Christ, was His emphatic way of drawing attention to the actual words He used in teaching. And Jesus urges, regarding the OT, “Whosoever reads, let him understand.” (Matt 24:15). The fact cannot be evaded that Christ confirmed the absolute authority of the Old Testament. If one accepts the NT portrait of Jesus, one cannot cavalierly dismiss His high view of Scripture.⁴

And He expected others to have the same. Often He would inquire: “Have you not read what David did . . . Or have you not read in the law . . .” (Matt 12:3–5). When questioned on the issue of divorce, He answered, “Have you not read . . .” (Matt 19:4). His response to those upset by children praising loudly in the temple was “Have you never read . . .” (Matt 21:16). Once when He told a parable, He concluded with these words: “And have you not read this scripture . . .” (Mark 12:10). In response to a lawyer’s question about salvation, Jesus asked: “What is written in the law? What is your reading?” (Luke 10:26). The lawyer answered with a direct quote from the Ten Commandments, and Jesus declared: “You have answered right . . .” Responding to the Sadducees’ inquiry

⁴ “In our day, as of old, the vital truths of God’s word are set aside for human theories and speculations. . . . One wise man rejects one portion; another questions another part. They set up their judgment as superior to the Word; and the Scripture which they do teach rests upon their own authority. Its divine authenticity is destroyed. Thus the seeds of infidelity are sown broadcast . . . Christ rebuked these practices in His day. . . . He pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith.” Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 39, 40.

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about marriage in heaven, He said: ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures . . . have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God saying . . .’ (Matt 22:29–31). The prominent Pharisee Nicodemus sought Jesus one night. After discussing His mission, Jesus questioned Nicodemus, “Are you the teacher of Israel and do not know these things?” When asked about last-day events on the Mount of Olives, Jesus urged His questioners to read Daniel in order to understand (Matt 24:15). Jesus expected that the OT prophecies of Scripture would be fulfilled. He declared that Elijah had come, pointing to John the Baptist, and that he had been treated “just as it has been written of him” (Mark 9:13). When captured in Gethsemane, Jesus didn’t flee capture, but said, “I was daily with you in the Temple teaching, and you did not take Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled” (Mark 14:49).

After His resurrection, Jesus gave what is now called the “Great Commission:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:18–20)

This divine imperative requires the proclamation of all that Jesus had taught to the whole world, specifically implying a cross-cultural communication of the words of God. Nor is this a command that merely secures nominal adherence to some group. Baptism was not the final goal. The new disciple is also to be taught all things Christ commanded.

The apostle Paul’s ministry exhibits just such a cross-cultural preaching of the words of God. He also intensifies the consistent biblical procedure of later canonical writers referring to earlier materials in the Old Testament, thus insisting on its authority. For example, in the book of Romans Paul builds a powerful argument of the gospel built upon the OT, and in the process demonstrates the paramount principle of listening to what Scripture says about itself.

While it is sometimes argued today that the truthfulness of the Bible does not necessarily include the historical details, we find Jesus and the NT writers accepting the historicity of the Old Testament. In fact, all biblical writers rely on the very certainty of OT historical events (such as Creation, Noah’s Flood, and the Exodus—three events regularly referred to and always presented as actual history) to validate the certainty of future actions of God.

Wayne Grudem is insightful:

Perhaps it has not been stated emphatically enough that *nowhere* in the Old Testament or in the New Testament does any writer give *any*

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hint of a tendency to distrust or consider slightly unreliable any other part of Scripture.”⁵

The aesthetic quality inherent in the inspiration of Scripture should not go unnoticed. The exquisite nature of the ancient Hebrew poetry has long been extolled. Hans Urs von Balthasar, Roman Catholic scholar, has written of this striking, evocative speech: “God needs prophets in order to make Himself known, and all the prophets are necessarily artistic. What a prophet has to say can never be said in prose.”⁶ Indeed, the prophetic messages are regularly couched in poetry. Up to forty percent of the Old Testament materials are poetic.

In the last quarter-century, the literary quality of the biblical narratives has finally been recognized. It is now acknowledged that these stories were not written primarily for children, but are sophisticated theological writing voiced within a distinctive literary expression. God utilizes aesthetic values to intensify His revelation. Under inspiration, Bible writers masterfully record God’s orderly action in human history.⁷ Within the canon we are consistently reminded that the argument suggesting that literary writing precludes historical accuracy is false. In this regard, it is significant that the biblical narratives often include specific external referents that could be checked. It is as if the writers were urging the reader to verify the facts for themselves. For example, Luke couches Christ’s birth narrative in public historical details:

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zecharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron . . . now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division . . . (Luke 1:5, 8).

Luke had already argued for the veracity of his historical narratives—

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1–3)

⁵ Wayne A. Grudem, “Scripture’s Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture” in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D.A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 31 [emphasis Grudem’s].

⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “The Glory of the Lord,” *A Theological Aesthetics I* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 43.

⁷ Ellen White comments: “The lives recorded in the Bible are authentic histories of actual individuals. From Adam down through successive generations to the times of the apostles we have a plain, unvarnished account of what actually occurred and the genuine experience of real characters.” *Testimonies to the Church*, 4:9.

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It must be repeated that it is a false assumption that literary writing precludes historical accuracy. As George Ladd cogently notes, “The uniqueness and the scandal of the Christian religion rests in the mediation of revelation through historical events.”⁸ There is no bifurcation of history and theology. The Word has become flesh. The Scripture record is rooted in real events of history.

It is striking to note how critical scholars such as Julius Wellhausen, Herman Gunkel, and James Barr acknowledge the historical content of the OT narratives. This should remind us that what one might surmise is the correct interpretation of a text should not override what the original writers had in mind.

Wellhausen, foremost champion of the “documentary hypothesis,” when speaking of the author of Genesis, writes:

He undoubtedly wants to depict faithfully the factual course of events in the coming-to-be of the world; he wants to give a cosmogonic theory. Anyone who denies that is confusing the value of the story for us with the intention of the author.⁹

Herman Gunkel, father of OT form criticism, concurs: “People should never have denied that *Genesis* 1 wants to recount how the coming-to-be of the world actually happened.”¹⁰

Premier British philologist of the OT James Barr asserts:

. . . most conservative evangelical opinion today does not pursue a literal interpretation of the creation story in *Genesis*. A literal interpretation would hold that the world was created in six days, these days being the first of the series which we still experience as days and nights.¹¹

After underscoring this claim that most evangelicals (which he also calls “fundamentalists”) indeed do not pursue a literal interpretation, he continues: “In fact the only natural exegesis is a literal one, in the sense that this is what the author meant.”

Elsewhere he goes even further:

⁸ Cited by William Lane Craig in *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 157.

⁹ *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin & Leipzig, 6th ed., 1927), 296. Cited in *Intelligent Design, Creationism, and its Critics*, ed. Robert T. Pennock (Cambridge: MIT P, 2001), 235. There is an abundant literature on this topic. See, for example, Robert Clifford S.J., “Creation in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, ed. R. J. Russell, W. R. Stoeger, and G. V. Coyne, S.J. (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1988, 151–170; Dianne Bergant and Carroll Stuhlmueller, “Creation According to the Old Testament,” in *Evolution and Creation*, ed. E. McMullin, Notre Dame: U. Of Notre Dame P, 1985, 153–175; Bernhard W. Anderson, “The Earth is the Lord’s”: An Essay on the Biblical Doctrine of Creation,” in *Is God a Creationist?*, ed. R. M. Frye, New York: Scribner, 1983, 176–196.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Fundamentalism*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1981), 40.

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. . . so far as I know there is no professor of Hebrew or OT in any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of *Genesis* 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that: (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience; (b) the figures contained in the *genesis* genealogies provide by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to the later stages of the Biblical story, and (c) Noah's flood was understood to be worldwide, and to have extinguished all human and land animal life except for those in the ark.¹²

But no one speaks to this issue stronger than Ellen White:

The assumption that the events of the first week required thousands upon thousands of years, strikes directly at the foundation of the fourth commandment. It represents the Creator as commanding men to observe the week of literal days in commemoration of vast, indefinite periods. This is unlike His method of dealing with His creatures. It makes indefinite and obscure that which He has made very plain. It is infidelity in its most insidious and hence more dangerous form; its real character is so disguised that it is held and taught by many who profess to believe the Bible . . . There is a constant effort made to explain the work of creation as the result of natural causes; and human reasoning is accepted even by professed Christian, in opposition to plain Scripture facts.¹³

The “textbook” Christians hold with the highest authority is self-authenticated in an impressively extensive manner. The Christian canon testifies that God does not exist in unbroken silence. He has communicated. He has expressed Himself. As the many biblical writers insist, along with Martin Luther and the various reformers, the Christian experience of God is acoustical. God has spoken. Indeed, in all the Bible there is not a single example of God appearing without saying something. If there is a vision without spoken words, it is not from God. Moreover, God orders the written transcript of His words. As the prophet Habakkuk recounts, “Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.” (Hab 2:2).

And yet, to some readers, the Bible appears as an enigmatic collection of seemingly unrelated materials: narratives, poetry, legal codes, sermons, letters,

¹² Personal letter to David C. K. Watson (April 23, 1984), published in the *Newsletter of the Creation Science Association of Ontario*, 3/4 (1990-1991). Cited in Pennock, 217.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 111, 113. Also: “I was then carried back to the creation and was shown that the first week, in which GOD performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week. The great GOD in His days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time. . . . The weekly cycle of seven literal days, six for labor, and the seventh for rest, which has been preserved and brought down through Bible history, originated in the great facts of the first seven days.” Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 3:90.

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prophecies, parables, royal annals, and genealogies. The nature of God's revelation is diverse.

In addition to speaking directly with human beings and commanding those words to be recorded, God employed other supernatural methods of communication, such as with angels (Daniel); theophanies (Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Moses, Paul, John); dreams (Joseph, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar); divine writing (of the Decalogue on stone two times, Exod 31:18; and at a feast in Babylon, Dan 5:5); a voice from heaven (Exod 19:9; Matt 3:17; 2 Pet 1:17). All these manifestations were then recorded and brought together under one cover. But how does one make sense of it all? The issue of interpretation (hermeneutics) is a continuing topic in theological studies. Canonic writers are helpful in this regard as they exegete earlier biblical materials. They also regularly warn that it is possible to misread and misinterpret Scripture. Even Christ Himself warns against false teachers and false teaching. The use of earlier OT materials by later OT writers and then subsequently by the NT writers presents a working hermeneutic, undergirded with the presupposition of the complete veracity of the words of God.

Today some suggest that different portions of Scripture are of unequal value. No modern writer addresses this issue more forth-rightly than Ellen White. She states emphatically:

What man is there that dares to take that Bible and say this part is inspired and that part is not inspired? I would have both my arms taken off at my shoulders before I would ever make the statement or set my judgment upon the Word of God as to what is inspired and what is not inspired. . . . Never let mortal man sit in judgment upon the Word of God or pass sentence as to how much of this is inspired and how much is not inspired, and that this is more inspired than some other portions. God warns him off that ground. God has not given him any such work to do. . . . We call on you to take your Bible, but do not put a sacrilegious hand upon it, and say, "That is not inspired," simply because somebody else has said so. Not a jot or tittle is ever to be taken from that Word. Hands off, brethren! Do not touch the ark. . . . when men begin to meddle with God's Word, I want to tell them to take their hands off, for they do not know what they are doing.¹⁴

God Himself expresses the same sentiment:

Thus says the LORD: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,' says the LORD. 'But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *who trembles at My word.* (Isa 66:1–2, emphasis added)

¹⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:920 (Ms 13, 1888).

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The God of Heaven has ordained that His Word be contained in a Book. But truly, it is more than a Book. Through its many writers we are confronted with an omnipotent God who is in earnest to communicate His will and His ways in human history and who loves human beings more than He loved His own life. Fleming Rutledge expresses my sentiments eloquently:

Every time I think I am losing my faith, the Biblical story seizes me yet again with a life all its own. No other religious document has this power. I remain convinced in spite of all the arguments that God really does inhabit this text. With Job, I say yet again, “I had heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise my words, I melt away in dust and ashes” (42:5–6).¹⁵

The assumptions of the biblical writers about God and the historical grounding of divine revelation are clear. Seventh-day Adventists even affirm two critical acts of God in history—one past and one future—in our very name. Ellen White urges—

God will have a people upon earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority, not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith.¹⁶

Yes, God will have such a people . . . will Seventh-day Adventists be among that people?

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¹⁵ Rutledge, *ibid.*

¹⁶ White, *The Great Controversy*, 595.

The Faith Factor: New Testament Cosmology in its Historical Context

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Thinkers have been struggling with issues of scientific empiricism and mysterious beginnings for millennia. The so-called “myths” of creation found in every culture under the sun did not evolve vacuously, but are the direct results of humans seeking an answer to the question of origins. Not all cultures have been as fortunate as the western philosophical tradition in recording and preserving their trajectory of thought.¹ History bears witness that the quest to know the unknowable continues to haunt scientists and philosophers of the western hemisphere who forever believe that the elusive answers are within empirical grasp.

The main purpose of this essay is to investigate the New Testament writers’ treatment of the Genesis account of creation. Taking into account that the New Testament world was part of a larger socio-cultural environment, the essay commences with a brief overview of Greco-Roman discussions about beginnings. It will be seen that many of the Hellenistic philosophers took a scientific approach in their quest to discover the truth about the beginnings. However, despite the various scientific theories that circulated during the early Christian period, the New Testament writers chose to ground their cosmology in the propositional statements recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. They fully understood that the rejection of a seemingly simplistic declaration of a literal six-day creation would simply mean shifting faith from the Bible to Aristotle, Philo, Lucretius, Galenus, or any number of cosmologists. When it comes to questions on the origins of the universe, it is impossible to escape the faith factor.

Cosmological Theories in the New Testament World

By the time of the New Testament, philosophical discussions about the beginnings of reality had been well underway for several centuries. According to

¹ Cf. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1961).

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Aristotle, Anaximander was first among philosophers to struggle with issues of beginnings as he came to grips with the limits of physical science as a tool for understanding the empirical world.² The Pythagorean school felt that the answer lay in mathematics and proposed that the beginning of all things must be found in “number”—the foundation of all things.³ Anaximander and Pythagoras are grouped among the “noetics,” a term used to describe those who understood the world “on the basis of a logical principal, a ‘beginning’.”⁴ These were opposed by certain natural philosophers who took seriously the constant change in the empirical world and questioned the validity of the notion of a “beginning.”

Later thinkers did not view the situation in terms of “either-or.” For instance, Anaxagoras recognized the reality of motion and change while reasoning that there must be a beginning to motion. His observations led him to conclude that there must be two worlds: an *empirical* one in which observation was possible and a *noetic* world that was beyond observation. Nonetheless, reflection on the noetic world had to start with the empirical one. Socrates built on Anaxagoras’ work and proposed that the problem of linking the empirical world with the noetic one could be bridged when it is recognized that *life* is the real force behind motion and change. Hence, the beginning of the empirical world can be directly attributed to *soul*, which serves as the intermediary between the two worlds. Socrates’ teacher, Plato, also toyed with the idea of a universal soul and developed a theology of beginnings in his work *Timaeus*. The conversation continued with Aristotle, who pointed to deficiencies in Plato’s religious approach (in *Timaeus*)⁵ and called for a return to scientific observation.⁶ He was particularly drawn to Anaxagoras’ principle of causality, upon which he posited that the beginning of everything in the empirical world must be attributed to the “unmoved mover.” Aristotle arrived at this conclusion by reasoning that the empirical world was based on objective truth, hence there must be a source of infinite truth which could not be moved but was the cause of all movement.⁷

Ehrhardt notices that after Aristotle, contemplative philosophy gave way to pragmatic philosophy, which led to the subordination of the preoccupation with

² For a full discussion see Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Beginning: A Study in the Greek Philosophical Approach to the Concept of Creation from Anaximander to St. John* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968).

³ See discussion on Pythagorean cosmology in J. A. Philip, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* (Toronto: U of Toronto, 1966), 60-75.

⁴ Ehrhardt, 144

⁵ Plato has *Timaeus* start his discussion with the following words: “We who are now to discourse about the universe . . . must, if our senses be not altogether astray, invoke gods and goddesses with a prayer that our discourse throughout may be above all pleasing to them and in consequence satisfactory to us.” Quoted from F. M. Cornford’s translation in Milton K Munitz, ed., *Theories of the Universe* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1957), 67.

⁶ Ehrhardt, 149.

⁷ Truth in the sense that subjective observations about nature can find universal endorsement, hence the empirical world must be built on objective truth. See discussion in Ehrhardt, 152.

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origins.⁸ Notwithstanding, by the time of the New Testament there were still several cosmological options. Stoic philosophers from Zeno to Epictetus taught that the god of the universe was the creator of the cosmos.⁹ For the Stoics, everything in the universe was a direct result of the interaction between an active cause (God) and a passive cause (matter). Given the preoccupation with the necessity of matter in the process of creation, the notion of a *creatio ex nihilo* was not an option for many. In his treatise, *The Nature of the Universe*, Lucretius boldly states his thesis: “nothing can ever be created by divine power out of nothing” (*nullam rem e nilo gigni divinitus umquam*).¹⁰ However, there were some who dared to stretch logic to its limits and champion the cause of a *creatio ex nihilo*. For example, the physician Galenus purported, “There was nothing earlier from which any ‘beginning’ could have come, but it so happened that prior to the elements there was some invisible, shapeless substance, which the ones call qualityless matter. . . .”¹¹

Jewish thinkers did not absent themselves from philosophical discussions on the beginnings of the universe. Immersed in the Greek world and domiciled in the great centers of learning, some Jewish scholars rejected the biblical account of creation for others they deemed more scientific. Philo of Alexandria set the stage for the later gnostic assertion that a demiurge and not God created the world. In the spirit of Anaxagoras, he proposed two creations: an intellectual and an empirical.¹² Pseudo-Philo also challenged that the world could not be the result of creation, since it is too developed. A created world, he reasoned, “would have been infantile not only physically, but also intellectually.”¹³

With all of these items on the cosmological menu of antiquity, there was still no move towards a consensus about the real beginnings of the universe. In fact, so distraught was the populace on the futility of the philosophers in their search for answers that by the time of Christ many had replaced their theories with religious myths of creation.¹⁴ No philosophic school had been able to advance a scientific argument so compelling that other schools were willing to burn their books and join ranks. The reason for a lack of general consensus is very simple: “. . . there could not be any observed facts when the creation of the universe was enquired into. . . .”¹⁵ As Plato recognized when he penned *Ti-maeus*, at some point in the discussion of origins, the faith factor must take over.

⁸ Ehrhardt, 154.

⁹ Stoics delineated between the universe and the cosmos. Humans were confined to the latter. See Ehrhardt, 156.

¹⁰ Lucretius, *The Nature of the Universe*, 1.150. Trans. from Munitz, 43.

¹¹ Galenus, *Historia Philosophica*, 21. See comment in Ehrhardt, 164f.

¹² For further discussion see Ehrhardt, 188.

¹³ Ehrhardt, 187.

¹⁴ For full discussion see Ehrhardt, 172-89.

¹⁵ Ehrhardt, 172.

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While Plato desired his readers to find answers in the *Timaeus* myth, the New Testament writers had their own source.

The Scriptural Basis of New Testament Cosmology

Christians today ascribe some level of authority to the New Testament and view it as the second volume of God's revelation to humanity. Many of the distinctive Christian doctrines that differentiate the faith from its Jewish parent are derived from the New Testament. However, these doctrines are often philosophical in nature. For instance, the various Christian doctrines of salvation try to make sense of those texts that refer to salvation as a free gift with the apparently contrary ones that withhold salvation from the person who displays a rebellious spirit. The doctrine of the trinity tries to harmonize the concepts of Jewish monotheism, Jesus' pre-existence, and the Holy Spirit. The New Testament itself is more concerned about interpreting the present and future in relation to the Christ-event than it is about issues of origins and the existential questions of life.

It must not be forgotten that the letters of the New Testament were associated with communities whose only scripture was the First Testament. When Paul wrote, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim 3:16), he was referring exclusively to the First Testament. The New Testament writers were not attempting to rewrite biblical history (as Mohammed apparently attempts in the Koran), but to incite faith in the First Testament as the word of God. The gospel writers are quick to point out how certain events in Jesus' life fulfilled prophecy. In the book of Acts Peter equates the miracle at Pentecost to the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:16-21); Paul understands the inclusion of the Gentiles into the community and the reluctance of some Jews to join as the contemporary realization of various prophecies (Rom 9-11), and even the final book of Scripture is replete with First Testament imagery. Since it was not the intention of the New Testament writers to develop a new religion with a unique cosmology, they accepted the creation account of the First Testament at face value.

It is also obvious that the New Testament authors accepted the First Testament as a book of history. The stories of the New Testament were not seen as etiologies, grandiose myths, or soap opera novels. They were nuggets of reliable information upon which the writers could trace the genealogy of Jesus, anchor the personages of Moses and Elijah, or even muse over the movements of the mystical monarch, Melchizedek. Distanced from the skepticism of the future European "enlightenment" and unscathed by the relativistic uncertainty of historical-critical ideology, the New Testament authors were not hindered by the consensus-setting influence of Julius Wellhausen or Norman Gottwald.¹⁶

The historical veracity of the First Testament comprised both persons and events. Peter refers to the universal flood (1 Pet 3:20); Paul mentions the parting

¹⁶ For a brief but thorough introduction to historical-critical and historical-critical influenced interpretations of the First Testament, see Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 10-34.

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of the Red Sea and the drinking from the spiritual rock (1 Cor 10:1-4); several texts talk about the writing of the law at Sinai. Having experienced the supernatural first hand, it was not difficult to conceive of a God who intervenes in human affairs. Troelstch's principle of correlation, which denies the possibility of Divine intervention in history, would have been as absurd to the New Testament authors as their insistence on the literalness of God's supernatural actions was to Troelstch.¹⁷ Hence, the New Testament references to the Genesis account of creation in the New Testament are not made with explanatory comments or allegorical applications but with *a priori* consensus. With this in mind, the remainder of this section is developed as a New Testament commentary on the Genesis account of creation. Only those sections from which there are direct quotations from or allusions to the creation account will be commented upon.

"In the beginning . . ." (Genesis 1:1). The Bible starts with an unqualified declaration, "In the beginning . . ." The passage that follows makes it clear that what is being described is the beginning of existence in the realm of the cosmos. The New Testament writers accept this as fact. In his discussion about the pre-existent Logos, John declares that the Logos, which would be the instrument through which the worlds were created, was already in existence "in the beginning" (John 1:1). Further, Peter recounts the argument of the skeptics who derided the early Christians for their expectation of an imminent *parousia*: ". . . everything has remained the same from the beginning of creation" (1 Pet 3:4). The fact that there was a beginning is not subject to discussion. In the New Testament, there is no philosophical debate about the nature of empirical reality or metaphysical catalysts. The world began "In the beginning."

"God created/made . . ." (Genesis 1:1). These two words succinctly summarize the "who" and the "how" of things in the physical realm of human experience. The "who" of creation is described in the Hebrew text as *Elohim*, a plural form of the Divine name that many define as a "plural of majesty." Avoiding the difficulties brought on by the plural morphology of *elohim*, the Septuagint translators simply refer to *ho theos* (God) as the creator. Throughout the New Testament, God is heralded as the undisputed agent of creation. In preaching to the Stoics and Epicureans on the Aeropagus, Paul matter-of-factly states that their unknown god was the "God who made the world and everything in it" (Acts 17:24). When predicting the eschatological time of trouble in his apocalyptic speech to the disciples, Jesus warns that it would be the worse seen since "the creation which *God* created" (Mark 13:19). Paul also credits God with the creation of "all things" (Eph 3:9), a thought likewise echoed by John (Rev 4:11).

¹⁷ For a firsthand discussion of the principles of historical criticism, see E. Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in die Theologie," *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), 729-53. English discussions are available in Gerhard Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 73-78; and the essay on Troelstch by Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Theology and Historical Critical Methodology from Spinoza to Kasemann* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 165.

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In fact, so accepted is the belief that God is creator that not all find it necessary to mention His name when talking about things created. Speaking primarily in the context of idolatry, Paul prophesies judgment on those who worship the creature rather than the “one who created” (Rom 1:25), and Peter provides the sole voice who utilizes the noun *ktistes* (Creator) as a synonym for the Almighty (1 Pet 4:19).

A slight problem arises with those New Testament texts that appear to deviate from the First Testament passages and attribute creation to the pre-existent Christ, who is a separate entity from God the Father (John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). The problem is bridged when it is recognized that nowhere is Christ referred to as the Creator. John, Paul, and Hebrews all state that the world was made “through” (*dia*) the Logos/Son. This highlights the pre-existent Son as a sort of middle-man in the process. Hebrews is irrefutably clear that God is the chief actor in creation (Heb 1:1f). The pre-human Son appears to be a part of a Divine creation team that God repeatedly addresses with the hortatory command, “Let us . . .” This is the same team God addresses in Genesis 3:22 when He implies that Adam would gain Divine status if he were to eat from the tree of life. In some mysterious way, the pre-existent Divine Son had an intermediary role in the creation process, but God is the ultimate Creator.

The “how” of the beginning is described as the simple act of God doing it. When understood with reference to any type of creation, the Hebrew *bara'* is reserved for divine activity. The method of creating is not defined in the word itself; however, when viewed in the context of Genesis 1 and 2, *bara'* can involve the simple act of God speaking things into existence, or it may involve the actual construction of a creature from already existing material.¹⁸ Although the term *ktizō*, the Greek equivalent of *bara'*, was obviously known to the Septuagint translators,¹⁹ they chose to translate *bara'* in Genesis 1:1 with the verb *poieō*. *Poieō* conveys the standard meaning of “do” or “make” and is not as specific as *ktizō*. Apart from Paul in his discourse on the Aeropagus and the first angel of Revelation 14, who apparently allude to Genesis 1:1 when referring to the God who made (*poieō*) the world (Acts 17:24; Rev 14:7), most of the New Testament writers tend to substitute the *poieō* of the Septuagint’s rendering of Genesis 1:1 for the seemingly more appropriate *ktizō*. Mark speaks pointedly of the creation God created (Mark 13:19). Paul speaks of God as “the one who creates” (Rom 1:25) and “the one who creates all things” (Eph 3:9). Peter calls him the “faithful creator” (1 Pet 4:19), and John pens the words of a hymn to the one “who created all things through His will” (Rev 4:11). In addition to *poieō* and *ktizō*, the verb *ginomai* (to become) is sometimes used to describe the creation process. John proclaims, “All things came into existence (*egeneto*) through (*dia*)

¹⁸ This is definitely the impression given in Gen 1:20 and 24: “Let the earth/water bring forth.” And Gen 2:7ff irrefutably states that Adam was made from dirt.

¹⁹ See Gen 14:19 and 22, which both refer to the God who “created the heaven and the earth” (*ektisen tou ouranon kai tōn gēn*).

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the Word” (John 1:3), and Jesus in Mark states, “The Sabbath came into existence (*egeto*) for (*dia*) humans” (Mark 2:27).

“Heaven(s) and earth” (Genesis 1:1; 2:1). If the phrase “God made” describes the “who” and “how” of creation, the expression “heaven and earth” describes the “what” of creation. This serves as an all-encompassing term for everything contained in the realm of the cosmos.²⁰ While both the Hebrew Bible and the LXX agree that there is only one earth (*'ereṣ, gē*), the Hebrew suggests a plurality of heavens (*šamayim*), in contrast to the lone heaven of the LXX. Later Jewish thinkers took the reference to plural heavens seriously and often spoke of seven heavens.²¹ Even Paul speaks about a man he knew who was caught up into the “third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2) and refers to the creation of all things in the “heavens” (*ouranois*) and the earth (Col 1:16). In spite of these arguments, it does appear that since both accounts in Genesis 1:1 are referring to the physical structure of the observable universe, heaven(s) is an obvious reference to the atmosphere.

The two-fold division of the universe is echoed in some parts of the New Testament. It has just been noted that Paul refers to the creation of “everything that is in the heavens and on the earth.”²² In Acts, Luke also reports Paul’s reference to the one who is Lord of “heaven and earth.”²³ Other statements relating to the division of the universe have been influenced by the reference to creation that appears in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, where the universe is said to consist of “heaven,” “earth,” and “sea” (Exod 20:8-11). This tripartite division is also utilized in the New Testament. In Revelation 10:6, John describes God as the one “who created the heaven and the things in it, the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it.” Some may even argue for a four-part division in the first angel’s call for the worship of the one who made “the heaven and the earth, the sea and the fountains of water” (Rev 14:7). Notwithstanding, all of these references aim to incorporate the totality of God’s creation during the six days of creative activity.²⁴

Creation did not only result in the appearance of physical objects, but also involved the establishment of invisible phenomena. The principle of “rulership” (*archē*) was first established on the fourth day of creation week when the “lesser light” was granted jurisdiction over the night and the “greater light” was assigned to the day (Gen 1:16ff). Again, on the sixth day, God invested humans with rulership (*archē*) over all animal and plant life (Gen 1:26ff). While Genesis mentions only “rulership” as a part of the created order, Paul, in Colossians

²⁰ See Lawrence A. Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 2000), 21, and Claus Westerman, *Genesis: A Practical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 8.

²¹ E.g. *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, 7:1-11:33.

²² Col 1:16. The plural *ouranois* suggests influence from the Hebrew.

²³ Acts 17:24. The singular *ouranou* suggests influence from the LXX.

²⁴ See Jon Paulien, “Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation,” *JATS* 9 (1998), 179-186.

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1:16, reasons that the “invisible” creation also includes “thrones, lords, and authorities” (*thronoi, kuriotētes, exousia*).

“The earth was without form and empty” / “The earth was invisible and not yet prepared” (Gen 1:2). Genesis 1:2 is the sole text that describes the earth immediately before creation. The Hebrew Bible and LXX provide apparently contrasting accounts of the pre-creation world. The Hebrew states that the earth was “formless and empty” (*tōhū wa bōhū*), possibly giving the false impression that it was a gigantic misshaped blob, but in any case indicating its existence. The LXX depicts it as “invisible and not yet prepared” (*aoratos kai akataskeuatos*), which might suggest that absolutely nothing existed before God started creating on day one. It is highly probable that the LXX translators were aware of the philosophical discussion on beginnings and knew that virtually all cosmogonies to that point supported creation from matter. Nonetheless, they appear to have reversed the Hebrew expression *tōhū wa bōhū* and translated *bōhū* with *aoratos*, setting the stage for the concept of a *creatio ex nihilo*. Some may argue that this concept is inherent in the successive verses, where the divine formula “let there be” appears to be sufficient for the creation of earthly entities.

The New Testament does not shed much light on how this verse was understood by the early Christians. The only linguistic support for a *creatio ex nihilo* from the Genesis account of creation comes from the Septuagint’s use of *aorata* (invisible). The term itself only appears five times in the New Testament: twice with reference to God (Heb 11:27, 1 Tim 1:17), and three times in the context of creation, but never to describe the pre-creation state of the earth. In Romans 1:20, Paul declares that God’s invisible nature can be discerned through the material things He created. In Colossians 1:15, Jesus is described as “the image [*eikon*] of the invisible God, the first born of all creation.” In fact, as was discussed above, Col 1:16 gives the impression that invisible “things” themselves can be created.

Probably, the closest one comes to a text supporting a *creatio ex nihilo* is Hebrews 11:3, where the author states, “By faith we perceive that the world was prepared by the word of God, so that out of things that are not apparent came the things that we currently see.”²⁵ However, the things that are not apparent (*to mē ek phainomenon*) do not necessarily refer to invisible things. They could easily be things that had not yet been shaped into their final form. Given the probability that the author of Hebrews had access to the LXX,²⁶ he could have used *aorata* had he desired to express his belief in a *creatio ex nihilo*. Based on the absence of any direct quotation from the LXX, it appears that Hebrews 11:3 offers an interpretation of the ambiguous *tōhū wa bōhū* of the Hebrew text. As

²⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 279, writes, “. . . the writer to the Hebrews is more biblical in his reasoning and affirms the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, a doctrine uncongenial to Greek thought.”

²⁶ The probability is heightened by the fact that Heb 2:6-8 mirrors the LXX rendering of Ps 8:4-6 with the use of *angeloi* instead of *elohim*, as is found in the Hebrew text.

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such, it does not preclude the possibility of creation from pre-existing substance.²⁷

“Let there be light” (Gen 1:3). After the two verse introduction, details are provided about the specific items that were created on each day of creation. The New Testament does not discuss every particular about creation, so the commentary will be rather brief and sketchy until day six.

The first phenomenon to be created is light. This light contrasts with the darkness that covered the face of the deep in 1:2. It is a light independent of the elemental lights found in the sun and the stars (1:14-19). There are two references to this event in the New Testament. Paul’s analogical use of this event to demonstrate how God shines in the life of the believer reveals his understanding that this part of the creation was solely effected by God’s command (2 Cor 4:6). A further allusion is made in John 1:5, where the antithetical relationship between light and darkness is highlighted, and light is portrayed as the stronger of the two.

“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered into one” (Gen 1:9). The New Testament contains no explicit mention of the second day of creation, but has several references to the third. It was on the third day that dry land and sea were separated. The impression is given in Gen 1:9 that before day three, the earth was nothing but water. Indeed, Gen 1:2 describes the pre-creation cosmos as one in which “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” When referring to this event, Peter states, “the earth was formed out of water and by means of water” (1 Pet 3:5). Other references to the third day have been covered under the commentary on the phrase “heaven and earth,” where it was shown that some Bible writers transform the two compartment world into a tripartite division by adding “sea” as the third essential domicile for living entities.

“Let us make *man* in our image . . . (and) likeness . . .” (Gen 1:26-27). On the sixth day of creation, God led the creation team in the creation of humans who were to be made in the divine image. It is commonly accepted that image and likeness refer more to the spiritual image of the Divine council than to any physical manifestation. Paul appears to be the only New Testament writer to allude to this text. In Rom 1:23 he uses the LXX terms *homoïemati ekeinos* to describe the idolatrous practice of those who exchanged the glory of God for the likeness of perishable humans. Further, in 2 Cor 4:4, Christ is heralded as the image (*eikōn*) of God. That image is not understood in terms of physicality is demonstrated in Colossians 1:15, where Christ is called the image of the *invisible* God. Elsewhere, when establishing a hierarchy between man and woman,

²⁷ See Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 315f. Less debatable in the discussion over the use of pre-existent matter in creation is the record of the creation of the first humans. Genesis 1:27 simply states that God created humans in His image and provides no further details about the method. However, verse 24 begins with the command, “let the earth bring forth zoological life.” The role of the earth in the creation of humans is further discussed in Gen 2:7, where it is recorded that the first man was created from a mound of dirt.

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Paul states that the male is “the image and glory of God” (1 Cor 11:7). Interestingly, in this text Paul does not consider woman to be the “image of God” but rather the “glory of man.” This evidences a strict reading of Genesis 1:27, which states, “God created *man* in his own image, in the image of God he created *him*, male and female he created them.”²⁸ There is no reference to both of *them* being created in his image.²⁹ While James does not address the issue of the *imago Dei*, if he uses *anthrōpoi* generically, he appears to suggest that all humans share the “likeness” of God when he writes, “with [the tongue] we bless the Lord and Father and with it we curse humans/men (*anthrōpous*) who were made in the likeness (*homoīēsin*) of God” (James 3:9).

“[The LORD] God formed a dust man from the earth” (Gen 2:7). Details about the creation of the man are given in Gen 2, where the events of the sixth day are covered with greater specificity. Whereas the report on the sixth day in Genesis 1 begins with the command, “Let the earth [*gē*] bring forth zoological life according to its kind,” Gen 2 provides the specifics about the events of the day. The task of making the man actually involved piling up dirt (*choun*) from the earth (*gē*) and shaping it into a torso before applying the breath necessary for the man to become alive (2:7). Paul cites this account of Adam’s creation in 1 Cor 15 when discussing the effects of the two prototypical “men” (*anthrōpoi*) on the human race (1 Cor 15:42-49). The first man is described as “dirt from the earth” (*ek gēs choikos*), as opposed to the second man from heaven. According to Paul, all humans have been constantly wearing the “image of the dirt man” (1 Cor 15:49).

“The man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7). This phrase serves to link the creation of humans to the hortatory command that commenced the sixth day of creation in Gen 1:24, where the original reads, “Let the earth bring forth *psuchēn zōsan / nepheš hāyyāh*.” In a previous note, *psuchēn zōsan / nepheš hāyyāh* was translated “zoological life.” In keeping with traditional interpretations it is translated here as “living soul,” but the meaning is the same. In the New Testament, Paul contrasts the “first man, Adam, [who] became a living soul” with “the last Adam [who became] a life giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45).

“Male and female, He created them” (Gen 1:27). Although only the man is credited with possessing the image of God at creation, both male and female were created by Him. The LXX uses the generic adjectives *arsen kai thēlu* (male and female) to describe the first humans to be created. These adjectives relate strictly to sexual distinctions and apply to animals as well as humans.³⁰ In his

²⁸ See also Gen 5:1-2: “. . . the day God made Adam, after the image of God he made him; male and female he made them and blessed them.”

²⁹ For a discussion on Paul’s use of the First Testament in 1 Cor 11, see Keith A. Burton, “1 Corinthians 11 and 14: How Does a Woman Prophecy and Keep Silence at the Same Time?” *JATS* 10 (1999): 268-284.

³⁰ For examples of animals described with the adjectives *arsen* and/or *thēlu*, see Gen 6:20; 7:2-3, 9, 16; Exod 12:5; Lev 1:3, 10; and Mal 1:14.

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discussion with the Pharisees on divorce, Jesus asks, “Have you not read that the one who created from the beginning made them male and female?” (Matt 19:4). This is an obvious reference to the Tanak scroll which was “read aloud” (*anegnōte*) in public worship.³¹ Although the scroll would more than likely have been in Hebrew, both Matthew and Mark (10:6) use the phrase from the LXX when referring to the creation of the first humans. Paul also uses the adjectives in Gal 3:28 in his discussion of soteriological unity in Christ Jesus. It is interesting to note that he appears to lift the phrase directly from the LXX and does not even amend the conjunction *kai* with *oude* to balance the opposites with the others in the sequence. It appears that Paul understood the sexual differences to be for the purpose of heterosexual copulation. Utilizing forms of the adjectives from Gen 1:27, he speaks of “[homosexual] women [*thēleias*] exchanging natural intercourse for unnatural, and [homosexual] men [*arsenes*] leaving natural intercourse with women [*thēleias*] burning with desire for one another . . .” (Rom 1:26-27). As far as the New Testament witness is concerned, God created sexual opposites for a purpose, and any other union is against the created order.³²

“I will make a helper for him” (Gen 2:18). The creation of the woman is described in Gen 2:18-22, where Eve is built around the frame of one of Adam’s sides. This account makes it plain that woman and man were made at different times, albeit on the same day. Like their First Testament predecessors, the New Testament writers took literally the understanding of woman being made as the *boēthos* (helper) for man. As a rationale for a hierarchy in the Divine and created order, Paul appeals to the sequence of creation: “For man is not from woman, but woman from man; for man was not created because of woman, but woman because of man” (1 Cor 11:8-9).³³ And when he tackles the issue of female subordination in the ecclesiastical context, he reminds his readers that “Adam was formed (*eplasthē*) first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13).

“The two shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). When Eve is brought to Adam, he affirms, “This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23). The statement is not to be taken overly literally, since while it is true that God removed a part of Adam’s anatomy, the woman was “built up” around it, suggesting that she too was molded from the dirt. From the context of the passage, Adam’s statement is probably intended to differentiate the woman from the other zoological forms that were created that day.³⁴ The passage concludes, “Because of this a man shall leave behind his father and his mother and be glued (*proskollēthēsetai*) to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This includes the ideas of independence, marriage (interdependence), and procreation

³¹ On Jesus’ use of the creation story, see Keith A. Burton, “A Christian Theology of Divorce and Remarriage,” *Ministry* 74/4 (2001): 20-22.

³² See James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 64-66.

³³ For commentary, see Burton, “1 Corinthians 14.”

³⁴ Turner (*Genesis*, 29) implies that this is inherent in Adam’s statement, “This at last . . . !”

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and is directly quoted in two contexts in the New Testament. The first is by Jesus, who when arguing against divorce with the Pharisees uses the concept of “one flesh” to establish the insolubility of the marriage (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7). The verse is also quoted by Paul, who uses the passage to explain the marital roles of husband and wife and the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph 5:31).

“And [God] rested on the seventh day from all His works” (Gen 2:2).

God’s creation of the universe was completed in six days. It was mentioned earlier that “heaven(s) and earth” in Gen 1:1 is intended to be an all-inclusive phrase to introduce the details of the six days of creation. Now, as the activity is terminated, the same phrase is echoed in Gen 2:1 to serve as an *inclusio* to the section. The cessation of God’s activity was marked by the “blessing” and “sanctifying” of the first ever evening and morning period in which no work was conducted (Gen 2:3). In Heb 4:4, the author quotes from Genesis 2:2 to establish a rationale for his pronouncement that “a Sabbath keeping (*sabbatismos*) remains for the people of God” (Heb 4:9).³⁵ Given the uniqueness of this universe, the Sabbath appears to be a phenomenon that may be limited to the sphere of human/earthly reality. This is inherent in Jesus’ declaration that the “Sabbath came into existence (*egeneto*) for humans” (Mark 2:27).

Conclusion

Having examined the New Testament references to Gen 1 and 2, we can have no doubt that the early Christian writers accepted the creation account of the First Testament at face value. They quote from it authoritatively and have no problem in building doctrine and conducting heuristic exegesis from the creation story. Although surrounded by a vast array of philosophical and religious options upon which to build a cosmology, they chose to embrace the biblical record. They did not even appear to be tempted to follow in the path of Philo or his pseudonymous admirer who felt the need to present a cosmology that would be more palatable to the philosophical minds of the dominant culture.

What stopped the New Testament writers from embracing some of the scientific theories that were circulating in their day? It was their *faith*. This was not a blind faith that rejected indisputable scientific evidence. It was a reasoned faith. Even a casual perusal of the writings of Paul, the author of Hebrews, and James illuminates the fact that many of the New Testament writers were intelligent and skilled in logical reasoning. However, they were also wise enough to know that nobody can scientifically determine the origin of reality as we know it. Hence, the author of Hebrews, when contemplating the reality of the universe

³⁵ This is a much debated passage. However, many downplay the significance of the sole use of *sabbatismos* in the Bible and its etymological relationship to *sabbatizo*. It is also likely that Heb 4:10 intends to show that those who are serious about entering into *katapausis* are in the habit of resting from works in the same manner as God did in the first week—implying a keeping of the Sabbath.

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and the numerous entities therein, admits that it is only “by *faith* that we believe the worlds were created by the Word of God” (Heb 11:3). Although there were a number of cosmological documents in which he could have placed his faith, he chose to exercise faith in the cosmological account of the First Testament.

It is almost two thousand years since the New Testament writers commented on the biblical account of creation. Many advances have been made in the field of science. With the Copernican revolution we moved from a geocentric to a heliocentric view of the universe. Marconi, Edison, McCoy, and a host of others have fueled technological strides that seem to be limitless. Rapid progress in genetics and the vast possibilities opened up with DNA research has provided a boost for proponents of scientific certainty. However, none of the scientific discoveries have ended the quest to settle the troubling questions of origin.

In their desperate bid to find conclusive answers, many modern philosophers have deluded themselves into thinking that certain scientific theories are probable enough to be considered fact. So certain are they about evolutionary hypotheses that governments and private foundations have devoted billions of dollars to further research in this area. They fail to realize that the research focuses on testing hypotheses that can *never* be empirically verified. In spite of the complicated formulas and compelling theories used to “prove” a hypothesis, the fact that it cannot be empirically verified means that at the end of the experiment it still remains a hypothesis. At the end of empiricism one is forced to enter the realm of faith. The inquiring Christian in the twenty-first century is forced to come to terms with this. There will always be questions about observable phenomena that have no answer in scripture. There will always be multi-volume dissertations that make convincing (tautological?) arguments in support of previously held evolutionary hypotheses. However, when all is said and done we are forced to answer the question that Yahweh posed to Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4). We are forced to admit our ignorance. We are forced to admit that when it comes to origins, the entire human race is ignorant. The only way to pacify our ignorance is by exercising faith. The question is, “In what will you place your faith?”

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Creation in the New Testament

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Scripture deals with the most important questions humans are asking: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where will we be going? Why are we here? Although the NT preaches the good news about salvation and points to a wonderful future for those who choose to follow Christ, it also addresses the issue of creation.

In this paper we will take a look at the NT references to creation, discuss the contribution of Jesus and his disciples to the theology of creation, and draw some conclusions for our present situation.

I. New Testament References to Creation

1. The Distribution of the Creation Theme in the NT

The NT refers to creation quite frequently. There are only a few NT books that do not contain a quotation from or a direct allusion to the Genesis 1 and 2 creation account. Typically, these are the shorter letters of the NT.¹ All the larger NT books, namely the Gospels, Acts, Romans, the Corinthian letters, Hebrews, and Revelation, in addition to a number of the smaller epistles, contain quotations or allusions to creation. The strongest emphasis on creation is found in the letters to the Romans and to the Hebrews, as well as in the Book of Revelation.

In some cases creation and the fall are connected. At other times the fall is referred to alone, yet the creation context cannot be denied. This is so because Genesis 1–2 and Genesis 3 are very closely linked. Furthermore, references to Cain's murder, the mention of several names listed in the genealogy of Genesis 5, and events found in Genesis 4–11 occur in the NT. The following list does not claim to be comprehensive, but points to a number of important creation texts in

¹ They are Galatians, Philippians, the Thessalonian correspondence, 2Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and the Johannine letters.

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the NT. It also contains references to Genesis 3–11 found in various NT passages.

NT Book	References to Genesis 1–2 and to Creation in General	References to Genesis 3–11
Matthew	13:35; 19:4, 5; 25:34	4:1–11; 10:16; 23:35; 24:37–39
Mark	2:27; 10:6, 7–8; 13:19; 16:15	—
Luke	3:38; 11:50	3:36–38; 17:26–27
John	1:1–3; 17:24	—
Acts	4:24; 10:12; 11:6; 14:15; 17:24, 26	—
Romans	1:20, 23, 25–27; 4:17; 5:12, 14; 8:19–22, 39; 11:36	5:17–19
1 Corinthians	6:16; 8:6; 11:8–9; 15:45	15:22
2 Corinthians	5:17	11:3
Galatians	—	—
Ephesians	1:4; 5:31	—
Philippians	—	—
Colossians	1:15, 16, 23	—
1 Thessalonians	—	—
2 Thessalonians	—	—
1 Timothy	2:13; 4:4	2:12, 14
2 Timothy	—	—
Titus	—	—
Philemon	—	—
Hebrews	1:2, 10; 4:4, 10, 13; 6:7–8; 9:26; 11:3; 12:27	11:4, 5, 7; 12:24
James	1:18; 3:19	—
1 Peter	1:20; 4:19	3:20
2 Peter	3:4, 5	2:5; 3:6
1 John	—	3:12
2 John	—	—
3 John	—	—
Jude	1:14	1:11, 14
Revelation	2:7; 3:14; 4:11; 5:13; 8–9; 10:6; 13:8; 14:7; 16; 17:8; 20:1, 3, 11; 21–22	12:9, 17; 20:2

2. Quotations from Genesis 1–2

Genesis 1 and 2 are not the only creation texts in the OT. Other important passages on creation are found in Job 38–42; Ps 8, 19, and 104; Isa 40:26–28, 65–66; Jer 10:11–13; 27:5; 32:17; 51:15–16; Amos 4:13, 5:8–9; 9:5–6; etc.² However, they refer back to Genesis 1 and 2. Therefore, OT quotations in the

² Cf. William Shea, “Creation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 419–436.

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NT dealing with creation are basically taken from Genesis 1 and 2. In addition to numerous allusions we find about eight such quotations included in the list above, two each in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark and four in the Pauline writings.³ The quotations used in the Gospels are all part of Jesus' response to the Pharisees when being questioned on the problem of divorce.

The texts or parts thereof that are quoted are Gen 1:27: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them;" Gen 2:2: "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done;" Gen 2:7: "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being;" and Gen 2:24: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

Interestingly enough, these quotations refer to the creation of humankind and to the two divine institutions established at creation, namely the Sabbath and marriage.

3. The Word Family *ktisis*, *ktisma*, *ktizō*

Among the NT texts dealing with creation, we find a number that use formulas such as "from the foundation of the world." In addition, the word family *ktisis*, *ktisma*, *ktizō* is used frequently. The noun *ktisis* "creation," "what is created," or "creature," is used nineteen times in the NT,⁴ the noun *ktisma* "what is created," "creature," four times,⁵ and the verb *ktizō* "to create," "to make," fifteen times.⁶ In other words, this word family is used 38 times in the NT and stresses the importance of the concept of creation in the NT.

The noun *ktisma* refers to "creatures" and "everything created." The word describes what God has created in the beginning (1Tim 4:4). God's creatures include also humans and animals throughout the past, the present, and the future (Jam 1:18; Rev 8:9).⁷ Furthermore, creation surpasses our world and is not limited to this earth or solar system. There are created beings in heaven whose creator God is (Rev 5:13). Consequently, the NT teaches that God created the earth, its atmosphere, and life on this earth, but also extraterrestrial life forms that are not part of the creation we encounter and to which we belong.

³ Gen 1:27 is quoted in Matt 19:4 and Mark 10:6; Gen 2:2 is used in Heb 4:4; Gen 2:7 is found in 1Cor 15:45; and Gen 2:24 is quoted in Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7; 1Cor 6:16; and Eph 5:31.

⁴ Mark 10:6; 13:19; 16:15; Rom 1:20, 25; 8:19, 20, 21, 22, 39; 2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Col 1:15, 23; Heb 4:13; 9:11; 1Pet 2:13; 2Pet 3:4; Rev 3:14.

⁵ 1Tim 4:4; Jam 1:8; Rev 5:13; 8:9.

⁶ Matt 19:4; Mark 13:19; Rom 1:25; 1Cor 11:9; Eph 2:10,15; 3:9; 4:24; Col 1:16, 16; 3:10; 1Tim 4:3; Rev 4:11; 10:6.

⁷ Although God does not create today in the way he did in Genesis 1–2, humans are still and will remain God's creatures.

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The term *ktisis*, “creation,” refers to “every human institution/creation” once (1Pet 2:13). Usually, however, it describes God’s work and initiative.⁸ The addition of the adjective “human” indicates that the normal understanding of the term, namely as God’s action and its results, is abandoned in this case, but this does not affect any of the other usages of the term in the NT. *Ktisis* is found in the phrase “the beginning of creation” (Mark 10:6; 13:19; 2Pet 3:4), which takes us back to Genesis 1 and 2. Creation here is God’s creative act at the beginning of this world’s and humankind’s history. In Romans 8, not only the children of God wait for the future, but the “whole creation groans” and wants to be “set free from its slavery to corruption” (Rom 8:18–22). In this passage “creation” probably refers to all created beings and is not limited to humankind. In Mark 16:15 and Col 1:23, however, when the gospel is preached to “all creation,” the term describes humanity only, throughout the centuries of the Christian era. In Rom 8:39 the context seems to suggest that the created beings again include extraterrestrial beings, that is, beings who are not part of our creation. God has also established the heavenly sanctuary, which “is not of this creation” (Heb 9:11). “The firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15) and “the beginning/beginner of the creation of God” (Rev 3:14) is Jesus. Yet, in Christ, people, although creatures of God, can become “a new creature” (2Cor 5:17; cf., Gal 6:15). In this case, a spiritual meaning is added to the literal and physical understanding. Both correspond. Because Jesus is the creator, he can bring about a new creation, that is, people who are reconciled with God through him and proclaim the message of reconciliation.

The verb *ktizō* describes God’s creative activity when he brought about creation, including humanity (Mark 13:19; cf., Matt 19:4; 1Cor 11:9; Rev 10:6). He is the creator who has created all things (Col 1:16; Rom 1:25; Eph 3:9; Rev 4:11). Again there is a spiritual dimension, because “we are . . . created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph 2:10). Jesus has also broken down the barrier between Israel and the Gentiles. Since then those who believe in him are one church. He has made (*ktizō*) “the two into one new man.” Christians are called to “put on the new self,” which “has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph 4:24; cf., Col 3:10). Thus, in addition to its original meaning, the term “to create” has an ecclesiological dimension. It not only refers to the creation of this earth and life upon it, but also to the creation of Christ’s church, consisting of individuals who together form one body. This “spiritual creation” forms a smaller segment of the whole picture and cannot be used to reinterpret physical creation as known from Genesis 1 and 2 and other texts.

4. Summary

The NT contains numerous references to creation. Among them are eight direct quotations from Genesis 1 and 2. The specific creation language of the

⁸ Eighteen out of the nineteen times when it is used in the NT, it describes God’s creation.

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word family *ktiz-* describes God's activity in all cases but one. Other vocabulary needs to be studied.⁹ Obviously, the NT texts assume that creation has to be understood literally. God created the heavens and the earth and various plants and beings. The concept of creation is not limited to the creation described in Genesis 1 and 2. It encompasses much more, although in a different sense. Jesus has created his church. People have become and even today are becoming a new creation in Jesus Christ. But this ongoing creative activity of God does not question the specific creation of heavens and earth and life upon it at a specific point of time in the past. Rather, because God was able to do the first, he is able to do the other also.

II. Jesus Christ and Creation

1. Jesus and Scripture

The issue of creation is closely linked to the issue of Scripture as the Word of God. This is also the crux in the current debate. If we were not Christians, it probably would be much easier to vote for either creation or evolution or for other approaches such as theistic evolution or progressive creation. But we have Scripture, which plays an important role in the life of our faith community as well as in our private lives. Therefore, we must ask: Does Scripture have the final say in the creation/evolution debate, even if in some cases it seems to contradict the interpretation of data produced by science, or does it not constitute a final authority? Should Scripture be reinterpreted in order to fit these scientific models of origins, or should it not?

As we now turn to Jesus and his understanding of the creation issue, we will briefly summarize his position on the OT, the Scripture of his time, in order to have a starting point for a discussion of his view of creation. What we know about Jesus is basically what the Gospels and some other parts of Scripture tell us about him. This information can be taken at face value or can be questioned. But even if we would choose a critical approach and would claim that many texts of the NT ascribed to Jesus were not authentic but were productions of the early church, probably the outcome would still remain quite similar.

Some scholars have suggested that Jesus favored traditionalism and was not ready to challenge wrong ideas. But the Jesus of the Gospels was willing to handle hot potatoes and address delicate and controversial issues. Wenham states: "He [Jesus] is prepared to face the cross for defying current misconceptions. Surely he would have been prepared to explain clearly the mingling of divine truth and human error in the Bible, if he had known such to exist."¹⁰

So, what did Jesus think and teach about Scripture?

⁹ E.g., *poieō*, "to make," is also used to describe the creation process. In this case, the context must determine whether or not it is referring to creation.

¹⁰ John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, third rev. ed. (Grand Rapids; Baker, 1994), 27.

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(1) Jesus believed in the inspiration of the human authors of the Bible of his time (OT). All of Scripture is the Word of God through which God has spoken. He considered the prophets reliable mediators of God's Word (Matt 15:4; 22:31–32; Mark 12:36).¹¹

(2) He accepted the historical reliability of Scripture, including all important events of Israel's and humankind's history.¹² Scripture is interpreted literally and typologically (John 10:34–36; Matt 12:42).

(3) Divine interventions in human history, for instance, in the form of miracles, were no problem for Jesus (Matt 12:39–41).

(4) He used Scripture as authority and as weapon against temptations (Matt 4:4, 7, 10).

(5) God's will and his work can be recognized through Scripture. Biblical doctrines are derived from Scripture, which is the standard by which all behavior and all Christian doctrines must be checked (Matt 9:13; 19:4–6; 22:31–32).

(6) Jesus believed that Scripture contains genuine prophecy that has been or will be fulfilled. Many of the predictions Jesus regarded as fulfilled in himself and in his ministry (Matt 11:10; 24:15; Luke 18:31).

(7) Jesus was persuaded that Scripture was directed not only to the original hearers and readers, but also to his generation centuries later (Matt 13:14; 15:3–8; 19:18–19).

(8) Jesus expects his followers to know, believe, and obey God's Word (Matt 22:29; Luke 8:21; 11:28). When he interpreted Scripture, his disciples' hearts were burning, and a change occurred in their lives (Luke 24:25–27, 32–35).

2. Jesus and Creation

The words of Jesus, as recorded in the four canonical Gospels, contain ten references to creation.¹³ Matthew, Luke, and John have added explanations that contain additional creation statements. But this is not our concern here.

Jesus has not only pointed back to Genesis 1 and 2. In his speeches we also find persons—Abel (Matt 23:35) and Noah (Matt 24:37–39; Luke 17:26–27)—and events—the Flood (Matt 24:39)—that occur in Genesis 3–11.

¹¹ Cf., E. Earle Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 126: "Jesus' use of the Old Testament rest on his conviction that these writings were the revelation of God through faithful prophets . . ." Peter van Bemmelen, "The Authority of Scripture" (unpub. MS), 12, writes: "The Gospel narratives give evidence that Jesus not only had an unparalleled knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, but that He accepted all of Scripture as the authoritative Word of God. Following the resurrection He gently chided two of His disciples for their slowness of heart to believe in 'all that the prophets have spoken' (Luke 24:25)."

¹² For instance, he referred to Abraham (Matt 8:11), Lot and his wife (Luke 17:28–29, 32), Isaac (Luke 13:28), Moses (Matt 19, 8), David (Matt 22:43, 45), Isaiah (Matt 13:14), Jonah (Matt 12:39–41), and Daniel (Matt 24:15) and regarded them as historical persons.

¹³ Matt 19:4, 5; 25:34; Mark 2:27; 10:6, 7–8; 13:19; 16:15; Luke 11:50, and John 17:24.

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When we read these short passages we get the clear impression that according to Jesus, Noah and Abel were not mythological figures but real human persons, that Genesis 3–11 is historical narrative which should not be understood symbolically, and that a global flood actually happened (Gen 6–8).¹⁴ We should expect that Jesus would use the same approach to biblical interpretation when it comes to the creation account. This is precisely what we find in the Gospels. Jesus' statements about creation can be grouped as follows: (1) references to creation in passing, (2) direct references to creation, (3) the use of quotations from Genesis 1 and 2.

a. References to Creation in Passing

(1) *The Foundation of the World.*

Matt 25:34: "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"

Luke 11:50: "so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation."

John 17:24: "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

The phrase "from the foundation [*katabolē*] of the world" (Matt 25:34; Luke 11:50) and the related phrase "before the foundation [*katabolē*] of the world" (John 17:24) used by Jesus occur also in other places in the NT.¹⁵ The word *katabolē* can be translated as "foundation," "beginning," and to some extent as "creation." The phrase "from the foundation of the world," focuses on events which have taken place since creation. With the phrase "before the foundation of the world" events are described prior to the creation of the world.

Ten texts in the NT use "foundation of the world" terminology to identify the starting point for this world's history. Thus, the NT writers knew Creation week as a finite point in time that divided the time and events before it from those that took place after it. As Bible writers referred to creation, it was not vague or nebulous, but historically specific.¹⁶

The phrases do not allow us to talk about creation of humanity only and thereby separate it from the rest of creation, but rather the phrases "from/before

¹⁴ The comparison between the flood and Christ's worldwide Second Coming as well as the statement that the unbelievers were destroyed seems to indicate that the flood was a global event (Matt 24:39).

¹⁵ "From the beginning of the world" is found six times in the NT (Matt 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; Heb 4:3; 9:26; Rev 17:8) and "before the beginning of the world" four times (John 17:24; Eph 1:4; 1Pet 1:20; Rev 13:8).

¹⁶ Shea, 437.

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the foundation of the world” “refer to the beginning of the whole creation as described in Genesis 1.”¹⁷

(2) *Preaching the Gospel to all Creation.*

Mark 16:15: “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation/every creature.’”

The proclamation of the Gospel is directed to all human beings. The parallel text in Matt 28:19 talks about “all nations.” The Book of Acts shows how that commission was carried out. “Creation” or “creature” is used in a restricted sense, referring to humans only. By calling people “creatures” or “creation,” Jesus may have reminded his audience that all human beings are created by God, have an intrinsic value, and are God’s property. As such they deserve to hear the Gospel and be saved.

b. Direct References to Creation

(1) *The Sabbath Made for Man.*

Mark 2:27–28: “Jesus said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’”

This text refers back to the fourth commandment in Exod 20:8–11, where the Sabbath is linked with creation. However, creation is also visible in Mark 2 itself. According to Jesus, the Sabbath is a creation by God, as is humanity. The purpose of the Sabbath is to be a blessing to humankind. It is one of the great gifts of Paradise that has reached us. This text also assumes humanity was created by God. It was not created for the sake of the Sabbath, but it was created.

Just as the Sabbath and the original creation were linked in the OT, so also these two elements are connected in the NT. Human beings were made on the sixth day, the Sabbath on the seventh. Humans were already in existence when the Sabbath was made; therefore, the day evidently was made for their use and benefit. Surprisingly, however, Adam was not made lord of the Sabbath. The “Son of man,” Jesus Christ, holds that title.¹⁸

¹⁷ Terry Mortenson, “Jesus, Evangelical Scholars and the Age of the Earth,” (unpublished paper, presented Nov 19, 2003, at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta), 5. He also states: “In the absence of any contextual clues before or after *apo katabolēs kosmou* in Matt. 13:35; Matt. 25:34; Rev. 13:8; and Rev 17:8, which might restrict the meaning of the phrase to “foundation or beginning of the human race,” we must assume that the phrase in these verses also is referring to the very beginning of creation . . . In Jn 17:24 Jesus clearly meant by this phrase the beginning of all creation, for the Father surely loved the Son eternally before the creation (not merely before the creation of man).”

¹⁸ Shea, 438. Francis D. Nichol (ed.), *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1978), 5:588, notes: “God did not create man because He had a Sabbath and needed someone to keep it. Rather, an Allwise Creator knew that man, the creature of His hand, needed opportunity for moral and spiritual growth, for character development. He needed time in which his own interests and pursuits should be subordinated to a study of the character and will of God as revealed in nature, and later, in revelation.”

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The shift from verse 27 to verse 28 is abrupt: “Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” The term “therefore/so” seems to make sense if the one who has created humankind and Sabbath is the Son of Man. If this conclusion is correct, Mark 2 is a remarkable text in which Jesus himself maintains a hidden claim of being the creator of humankind and of the Sabbath. The NT stresses again and again that Jesus is creator, but it seems that this claim is not found in Jesus’ own statements directly.

(2) *Since the beginning of the Creation which God Created.*

Mark 13:19: “For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never will.”

This text is part of the Synoptic Apocalypse. It is a strong statement connecting the verb “to create” with the noun “creation.” Although it is obvious that God is the creator, it is stressed anyway. The phrase “from the beginning of the creation” is shortened in a number of other statements by Jesus and his followers, but is still referring to creation.¹⁹ A similar phrase is “in the beginning.”²⁰ This beginning is not just the beginning of humanity, but comprises the entire creation process. Mortenson concludes:

Hebrews 1:10 says that “in the beginning” God laid the “foundation of the world,” and Heb. 4:3 says God’s creation works were finished from the foundation of the world. That unequivocally means that the seventh day (when God finished creating, Gen 2:1–3) was at the foundation. So, the foundation does not refer to simply the first moment or first day of creation. . . . neither “from the beginning of creation” nor “from the foundation of the earth (nor any related phrase) is referring to the beginning of the human race. Rather they refer to the beginning of the whole creation as described in Genesis 1. . . . Jesus believed that man was there at the beginning and therefore (along with his other statements affirming the literal truth of Gen 1–11) Jesus was a YEC [Young Earth Creationist].²¹

c. The Use of Quotations from Genesis 1 and 2

Matt 19:4–6: “And He answered and said, ‘Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female’, and said, ‘for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

Mark 10:6–8: “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. ‘What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.’”

¹⁹ E.g., Matt 19:4,8; 1John 1:1; 2:13–14.

²⁰ See, John 1:1–2 (*en arch_*) and Heb 1:10 (*kat’ archas*).

²¹ Mortenson, 5.

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Matt 19:1–12 and Mark 10:1–12 are parallel texts dealing with the problem of divorce with which Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees. Jesus is opposed to divorce, but whereas in Matthew an exception clause is mentioned, such a provision is not made in Mark. But in both cases Jesus supports his position by pointing back to creation and showing God's intention when he instituted marriage.

Whereas Mark 2 deals with Sabbath and creation, Mark 10 and Matt 19 deal with marriage and creation, the other institution left to us from Paradise. These texts are the clearest reference to the Genesis creation account found in Jesus' teachings. He quotes Gen 1:27 and 2:24.

By using these texts and applying them to marriage, Jesus declares that they are foundational to Christians. Creation has taken place in the beginning. God created. He created the first couple, Adam and Eve. The distinction between genders was set by God. By quoting from Genesis 1 and 2 Jesus affirms the creation account and the mode of creation as described there. He understands Genesis 1 and 2 literally and takes the two chapters at face value. Two human beings, male and female, were directly created by God and subsequently became one flesh in marriage, which he instituted. Unity is emphasized, but a unity consisting of one husband and one wife. In the Hebrew text the term "two" is missing. It is found in the LXX. By stressing that only two beings and beings of the opposite sex become one, Jesus rejects polygamy²² as well as homosexuality. Obviously, for Jesus the creation account was not only descriptive but prescriptive and determines ethical and moral behavior. Moloney suggests that the words "from the beginning of creation" "reflect both the beginning of creation and time, and the book of Genesis."²³

3. Summary

The NT stresses that Jesus accepted the Bible of his times as the Word of God, which is authoritative and can be trusted. Israel's history traced back to the creation account is reliable. All OT characters were real beings who lived in time and space. A real creation and a real flood happened. Jesus did not utter any doubts about Scripture, but stressed that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). He would rely on Scripture even in the most challenging times of his life.

Jesus held that creation took place. God created. Creation happened at a definite time. There was a beginning, and this is creation week, which includes all of God's creative activities described in Genesis 1 and 2 and the establishment of the Sabbath. Because Jesus mentioned major biblical characters, starting by name with Abel, although Adam and Eve are referred to indirectly, and in his

²² Cf., Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 183–184.

²³ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 194.

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speeches touches all periods of Israel's history, a short chronology is in view. The beginning of humanity is not separated from the other creative acts of God in the creation week.

Humans were created before the Sabbath was. They are worthy to attain salvation and must be able to hear the Gospel. In Mark 2 the Sabbath is a twenty-four-hour day. This Sabbath refers back to the creation Sabbath. Obviously, according to Jesus the creation days were literal twenty-four hour days. A literal and close reading of Genesis 1 and 2 seems to be the proper approach to Scripture.

III. Jesus Christ as the Creator

The NT affirms repeatedly that Jesus is God, that he exists forever, and that he was incarnated as human being "when the fullness of the time came" (Gal 4:4). As such he lived among us, died a shameful and painful death in our place, then was raised from the dead and taken to heaven. He now serves as our High Priest and will come back as King of kings in order to take home his people. But in addition to all these functions Jesus is described as the creator and the sustainer of the entire creation.

This is a unique contribution to the theology of creation by the NT. Although the OT points to Christ as the Creator in a somewhat hidden way,²⁴ it is the NT which clearly spells out that Jesus is the Creator. Although a number of texts emphasize that God has created all things,²⁵ crucial passages stress that Jesus is the Creator. Although Jesus provides some hints that he is the creator and does this by his proclamation and his deeds, for instance, the stilling of the storm, it is left to his disciples to plainly tell us who Jesus is, namely the Creator-God.

John 1:3: "All things came into being through Him [the *Logos* who is God], and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

Col 1:15–16: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him."

Heb 1:2, 10: "In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." "And, you, Lord [referring to Jesus], in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands."²⁶

²⁴ E.g., the plural in Gen 1:26 and wisdom in Prov 8.

²⁵ E.g., Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24, 26; Rom 1:25; 1Pet 4:19.

²⁶ See also Rev 3:14. "Beginning" (*archē*) must be understood in the active sense of originator. In Rev 21:6 the same term is applied to God the Father. He is "the beginning and the end." In Rev 22:13 Jesus is "the beginning and the end." *Archē* is also found in Col 1:18, referring to Christ.

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All of these passages and their contexts show that Jesus is God.²⁷ Since he is God, he is also Creator. Or vice versa: since he is Creator, “He is the image of the invisible God.” These texts exclude Jesus from the realm of created beings. In fact, all things and all beings have been created through him. The cosmic perspective which includes more than the creation, which we encounter, is spelled out most clearly in Colossians 1. In encountering Jesus, we encounter the Creator.

John 1:1–3 portrays Jesus as the Word, as God, the Creator, and life. Creation is expressed in several ways. (1) This Word existed already “in the beginning,” a reminder of Gen 1:1. (2) The OT background of the statement about the Word of God is at least partially found in Ps 33:6: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.” Three verses later one reads: “For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” Jesus is this creative Word of God. (3) John tells us explicitly that all things came into existence through him.

Hebrews 1:10 applies a quotation, namely Ps 102:25, to Jesus, although the OT context talks about Yahweh as the Creator. The phrase “in the beginning” takes us back to Gen 1:1.

- A (1) the image of the invisible God,
He is (2) **the firstborn** of all creation.
For in Him all things were created . . .
all things have been created through Him and for Him.
-
- B **And He** is before all things
C and in Him all things hold together
B' **And He** is the head of the body, the church;
-
- A' (1) the beginning
He is (2) **the firstborn** from the dead . . .
For in Him it was His Father's good pleasure for all the
fullness to dwell,
And through Him to reconcile all things to Himself . . .

Colossians 1:15–20 is an extensive christological hymn with an interesting structure. The first part, stressing Jesus as creator (verses 15–16), corresponds with the last part (verses 18b–20), in which Jesus is the reconciler, “who has made peace through the blood of his cross.” The very same person who has created all things is able to reconcile all things through his blood shed on the cross.

Therefore, to claim Jesus as Savior but question him as Creator does not make sense. To claim that he has saved us through his once and for all death on

²⁷ See, John 1:1–3; Col 2:9; Heb 1:5–12.

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the cross, a short event in history, but maintain that he has created us through an evolutionary process which takes millions of years, is inconsistent.

Furthermore, Jesus creative power is seen in the fact that his followers are spiritually re-created. Eph 2:10 talks about being “created in Christ Jesus for good works,” and 2Cor 5:17 about being a new creation or new creature in Christ. As seen above, Eph 2:15 points to Christ creating one church, the new person, out of two groups, Jews and Gentiles. None of these creative processes which depend on Christ’s sacrifice on the cross requires an evolutionary process taking billions of years.

On the other hand, if the biblical testimony is trustworthy, namely that Jesus is the Creator, he must know what creation is all about, and his words carry a weight that surpasses all human knowledge. If it is true that Jesus is the Creator, he should know by which process he has accomplished creation. To claim that it has happened as described in Genesis—which is the picture presented in the Gospels—while having used an evolutionary process, is deceptive to say the least. Why should we trust him with regard to our salvation, if we have to question the veracity of his statements on creation?

Since Jesus is the Creator, we cannot talk about the topic of creation and the problems related to faith and science without focusing on him. As crucial as Gen 1–11 is for the current debate, Jesus cannot be excluded from this discussion. Whatever we decide on protology, it has a direct impact on soteriology.

IV. Jesus’ Disciples and Creation

Jesus’ disciples have much more to say about creation. We will summarize some of their statements.

1. Paul and some Additional Statements on Creation

Paul proclaimed the “living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them” (Acts 14:15), which probably alludes to the Sabbath Commandment (Exod 20:11). This God has “made from one man every nation” (Acts 17:26). In Romans 5 he mentions Adam by name and discusses the consequences of his sin, but also the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. “In Adam all die,” but “in Christ all will be made alive” (1Cor 15:22). The creation groans and suffers and longs to be set free “from its slavery to corruption” while Christians eagerly wait for the final salvation (Rom 8:18–23). Paul knows that Eve was deceived (2Cor 11:3), and that Adam was formed first and then Eve (1Tim 2:13). The catalogue of vices in Romans 1 is presented in the context of creation.²⁸

²⁸ While Rom 1:20 is set in the context of creation and mentions creation explicitly, the list of animals, the mention of humans, and the concept of “likeness”/“image” suggest that Rom 1:23 echoes Gen 1:24–26. Rom 1:25 points out that the Gentiles worshiped created things instead of the creator. Furthermore, Rom 1:16–27 seems to echo Gen 1:27 by concentrating on the same terms, namely “male” (*arsēn*) and “female” (*thēlu*), instead of using the terms “man” and “woman.” Peter

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Twice Paul quotes Gen 2:24: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh,” once when he warns against sexual immorality (1Cor 6:16), and another time when he dwells on the relationship between husband and wife, which becomes a symbol for the relationship between Christ and his church (Eph 5:31). In the context of his discussion of the first resurrection Paul quotes part of Gen 2:7, slightly embellished: “The first man, Adam, became a living soul” (1Cor 15:45).

In Heb 4:4, when the issue of rest is discussed, Gen 2:2 is quoted: “. . . and He [God] rested on the seventh day from all His work.” The author knows Abel (Heb 11:4; 12:24); Enoch (Heb 11:5), and Noah (Heb 11:7). In Heb 11:3 he states: “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”

Paul bases his theology on a literal reading of the creation account and the story of the subsequent fall. When he uses typology he compares historical persons with other historical persons. He follows Christ’s approach to interpreting Gen 1–11.

2. John and Some Additional Statements on Creation

Like Paul, John is strong in pointing out that Jesus is the Creator. In the Book of Revelation allusions to creation abound. All things are created by God (Rev 4:11). God “created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it” (Rev 10:6). Humankind is called to “worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters” (Rev 14:7). Both texts not only point to creation, but may refer to the Fourth Commandment (Exod 20:11). The tree of life (Rev 2:7; 22:2, 19), the springs of the water of life (21:6), as well as the serpent (Rev 12:9, 17; 20:2) remind us of the original paradise (Gen 2:9–10; 3:1, 3, 14, 22, 24). The trumpets and the bowls seem to be an undoing and a reversal of creation, whereas the description of Rev 21–22 points to the new Jerusalem and the new heavens and earth, a new creation.

Again, the same understanding of creation is used which Jesus and Paul employed. If at the end of the Millennium God is able to create a new heaven and a new earth without time spans of millions or billions of years, but brings them about right after the Millennium, why should he not have used similar techniques right in the beginning? We may not be able to understand precisely how he has done that, and there may be conflicting data or interpretations that do not yet fit the great puzzle, but obviously the NT confirms a literal reading of the creation account, a creation week of 24-hour days, and a short chronology.

Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 37, states: “With every indication of his loathing, the apostle now pictures how the Gentiles profane themselves (in a sinful reversal of Gen. 1:27f.) in lesbian love and sodomy. . . . What the Gentiles do is contrary to creation and characteristic of their fallen state of guilt.”

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V. Implications for the Current Debate

What are some of the implications for us? We are neither afraid of science nor opposed to it. We could hardly do without it. We appreciate both, knowledge that can be gained through science and knowledge that comes through God's Word. That does not mean that we buy into all presuppositions, theories, and philosophical or scientific models that are on the market.

Thomas C. Oden suggests: "Classical Christian doctrines of creation do not necessarily deny an evolution, or the possibility of a natural evolutionary development of nature and history . . . One can posit a gradual evolutionary process that is not a denial of creation."²⁹ It seems that Jesus has not left us this choice.

Another author discusses antinomies in science and theology. "Antinomies are resorted to when one single model of reality does not do justice to all the data," and apparently contradictory statements or laws are both believed to be true. He mentions the nature of light, Christ being totally God and totally human, the doctrine of the Trinity, and others and suggests "that we now stand before two great antinomies: special creation and theistic evolution. Both models can legitimately appeal to supporting sets of data, both scriptural and scientific . . . Both models have serious problems . . . As a procedural strategy we must embrace both models."³⁰

This scholar may have overlooked that, for instance, in the case of the doctrine of the trinity, the Bible itself furnishes two sets of data. However, this is not true when it comes to the issue of creation. Jesus does not propose a literal reading of Genesis 1 and 2 and at the same time a symbolic reading. Secondly, although antinomies are found in Scripture, that does not mean that all biblical doctrines can be presented as antinomies. In some cases it is an either-or and not a both-and. This author would probably reject a position claiming that we are both justified by grace and saved by works, and so would we. In the end, one must allow Scripture to speak for itself. If it presents antinomies, fine. If not, then we do not construct them.

Van Bemmelen reminds us that

. . . Scripture not only focuses on Christ as Redeemer, but also as Creator, Lord of creation and of the whole history of the world since creation. Therefore, no area of knowledge is excluded from the authority of Christ and His Word, the Scriptures. Some claim that since the Bible is not a textbook of science or history, it should not be used as authoritative in these areas of knowledge. While this claim is true in a technical sense, it becomes a frontal attack on the authority of the Bible if the truthfulness of its clear record of the creation and its historical narratives is rejected or reinterpreted along lines of scientific theories or historical research. Neither Jesus nor any of the inspired prophets and apostles ever questioned the historical truth of the

²⁹ Thomas C. Oden, *The Living God*, Systematic Theology (Peabody: Prince, 1998), 1:265.

³⁰ Robert M. Johnston, "The Necessity and Utility of Antinomies," (unpub. paper, 2004), 1-2.

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Genesis record or of any other part of the Scriptures. Rather, they affirmed the truthfulness and divine authority of them all.”³¹

The authors of the NT, disciples of Jesus Christ, followed the footsteps of their master. They followed his method of interpreting Scripture. By accepting the name “Christian” we acknowledge that we too intend to follow Christ in his understanding and interpretation of Scripture. The NT testimony to creation is not only informative. It is normative for today’s followers of Christ. And the message of creation is part of God’s last message to this world: “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters” (Rev 14:7).

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³¹ Van Bemmelen, 12–13.

Faith–Science Issues: An Epistemological Perspective

E. Edward Zinke

I found myself standing before a large memorial boulder in a quiet section of the city of Constance, Germany. On one side was inscribed the name Huss, on the other, Jerome. I was deep in concentration for a number of minutes—what would it be like to surrender one’s life rather than compromise the authority of the Bible as the Word of God?

After moments of meditation, like any good tourist, I got out my camera to take a picture. It was not until then that I realized that an elderly woman was sitting on a park bench beside the boulder. The camera startled her. She immediately stood up, circled the boulder several times with her gaze constantly fixed back and forth between the camera and the stone and then took off down the street in bewilderment, wondering why any American would be interested in the rock. I imagined this woman growing up just a block from the boulder, yet never realizing its significance.

I then thought of our church. We grew up with the Rock, the Word of God. But did we understand its significance? We were the people of the book. Our mission was tied to its message. But did we comprehend what it meant to say that the Bible was the authority not only for our theology but also for our life?

For example, we acknowledge that secularism and materialism are fundamentally opposed to the Biblical message, for they are humanistic at their foundation. Yet we appear at times to argue for the relevance of other equally humanistic methods, such as empiricism and rationalism. We may see them as producing criteria for our acceptance of truth in the Bible and as providing a foundation for our lives. We make a clear distinction between the material world that God has given us to use and enjoy and the materialism that makes material goods the god of our lives. Yet we fail to make that same distinction between reason and rationalism and the five senses and empiricisms. We critique the world within which we live for its commercialism, immorality, and materialism, yet we accept its humanistic epistemology as providing the framework within which the world should be known, understood, and lived.

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We seek a rock-solid foundation upon which to build our faith—a foundation built upon the unmovable successes of reason, science, and mathematics, and in so doing, we fail to recognize that we have just made them the foundation of our life.

This essay does not argue against the use of reason and science. It does not deny the validity of understanding the structure of our existence. But it does speak against rationalism, empiricism, existentialism, and any other form of humanism that makes some aspect of mankind the foundation and measure of all things. That role should be reserved for God and His Word alone. The Bible provides the foundation and structure for our understanding of the natural world, rather than the other way around.

The fundamental issue in the debate between theistic evolution and special creation is the question of authority and knowledge. How do I know what I know, and upon what foundation is it possible for me to have an understanding of the world in which I live?

Epistemology is the path we take. Our destination is determined by our epistemology. This in turn has implications for our self understanding, the purpose of our existence, our knowledge of the world in which we live, our concept of what the universe is like, and finally, who God is. When our epistemology changes, our concept of the universe and of God changes as well.

We live in a world that is bombarded from all sides with humanistic ways of thinking. From the classroom, to the news media, to television programs, to everyday life in the work place, we are taught to think humanistically. This essay will call for a paradigm shift from humanism to Biblical thinking.

It is a bit presumptuous of me to attempt to present the topic of epistemology at this conference, since there are so many who are better qualified than I. Also, how can a topic so little studied in Adventist circles be covered in thirty minutes? We will only attempt a brief and somewhat simplified tour of history, the Bible, and E. G. White.

Historical Overview

Greek Thinking

Socrates—Knowledge is innate in the human mind. It is achieved by reminiscence.

Plato/Neo-Platonism—The truly real is the Form or the transcendent Idea. Knowledge emanates from this Form to the mind. The Form is perfect and eternal, whereas the concrete phenomena are transient and imperfect. The material world is something to be left behind on the way to absolute knowledge.

Aristotle—The empirical world is fully real—reason is employed to discover an order inherent within the empirical world itself. Yet, the mind is regarded not only as activated by sensory experience, but also by something eternally active, immortal, and divine, totally apart from the sensory world.

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Thus, in spite of his empiricism, it was his rationalism that dominated the history of Aristotelian thought. Aristotle posited an ideal Form, pure Mind, a Supreme Being towards which everything was drawn—the Unmoved Mover. This Prime Mover was the ultimate cause of all other celestial movement, the planets, moon, and finally movement on earth. Earth was at the center of the universe, not because of its grand importance, but because things moved according to their intrinsic nature—heavier elements, water, and earth moved to the center of the universe, and lighter elements, air, fire, and anything divine moved intrinsically upward. The sun and the planets moved in circles around the earth. Why? Partaking of divinity, they were perfect. A circle is obviously perfect. Therefore, the natural path of non-earthly things was circular rather than linear. Thus, the planets, by nature of their divinity, orbited the earth in a circle. A very complex mathematical formula was used to explain the observed elliptical orbit of the planets. Finally, the Hellenistic astronomer Ptolemy codified this earth-centered view by positing epicycles and eccentrics to explain what was observed. The theory was self-sustaining, because the discovery of new discrepancies could be explained by additional epicycles, etc.

Early church—Dominated by Neo-Platonic thinking. The universe was ordered by a hierarchy, from perfect eternal forms to earthly imperfect instances of these forms. Knowledge emanated from the eternal forms through the hierarchy, and the goal of earthly instances was to return to the eternal form. Thus, for example, the idea of the natural immortality of the soul was brought into the Christian church.

Scholasticism of the Middle Ages—Dominated by Aristotelian scholasticism. Thomas Aquinas represents the most developed theology of the middle ages. For him, the task of the theologian was to synthesize the truths of nature, i.e., the philosophy of Aristotle (who obviously described the nature of the natural world) with the spiritual insight of the Bible. His model was the *Bible and nature* (the philosophy of Aristotle). Thus he was within the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, where theology was of necessity based upon the *Bible and nature, tradition, the pope, and philosophy*. Aquinas's God began to take on the character of the Unmoved Mover instead of the active God of the Bible. The Bible, while considered the supreme authority, became encased within the philosophy of the age.

Reformation Era—The reformation responded with the Bible and the *Bible alone* as the foundation and guide to life. The slogan “the *Bible alone*” did not rule out other methods of knowing. It affirmed that the *Bible alone* was the foundation. This meant that the Bible was not to be interpreted by alien philosophies or methods. It was to be its own interpreter.

The principle of the *Bible alone* brought about new freedoms and responsibilities. The individual was no longer beholden to his place in the universe—subject to king, pope and church. He was now himself accountable to

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God, and God was directly accessible to him. The structures of existence were challenged by the Word of God, and human freedom was the result.

Aristotelian Scholasticism—At the time of the Counter Reformation, there was a resurgence of Aristotelian scholasticism. Tradition was *the* authority—not simple church tradition, but particularly the philosophical tradition stemming from Aristotle. The cosmology of Ptolemy reigned supreme. It was obviously true because it coincided best with the Aristotelian scholastic synthesis that so perceptively described the nature of reality. Scripture and nature were to be understood by the presumptive authority of the past, the traditions of the church, and particularly the intellectual traditions of the scholastics. Things were categorized by their degrees of perfections, which defined a great chain of being which allowed one to know contemplatively the value of all things. The scale of perfections placed God at the top. There was a divide between the mutable things of the earth and the immutable things of the heavens.

The earth was at the center of the universe. The heavenly bodies were higher on the scale of perfection and therefore operated by different laws than earthly objects, which were imperfect.

The Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment Philosophy

Cosmology—The era of the Enlightenment took place within the context of the freedoms opened up by the Reformation on the one hand, and as a reaction to the authority and rigidity of scholastic philosophy on the other. This new freedom opened the world to the development of modern science and new philosophical understandings.

A series of observations made by Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton brought an entirely new understanding of cosmology. The earth was not the center of the universe with all planetary bodies revolving around it. Rather, the earth was itself a planet in orbit with the other planets around the sun.

This new understanding brought into question the entire scholastic tradition. The planetary movements were discovered to be elliptical rather than the implied perfection of circular motion. Stars were discovered that had not been seen by Aristotle. The moon had mountains (and therefore was not perfectly circular), and the sun had spots. Thus, these bodies were not the incorruptible and immutable heavenly objects of Aristotelian-Ptolemaic philosophy. Objects fell to the ground because of gravity, not because they were trying to find their natural and rightful place in the universe. Therefore, circular motion was not natural to heavenly bodies, for they also would move in a straight line if it were not for the pull of gravity upon them. Thus planets remained in orbit by the same laws that caused rocks to fall to the ground. The dichotomy between the celestial and terrestrial realms was broken. The same laws that applied on earth also applied to the heavens. The heavens were also composed of material substances, and their movements were impelled by natural mechanical forces according to mathematical laws.

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The absolute authority of Aristotelian tradition was called into question. Scholasticism had sought a synthesis between nature and religion. When scholasticism fell, a schism developed between science and religion. The Bible had been so fully reinterpreted by Greek philosophy that it also was caught in the undertow. Science was now autonomous not only from human tradition but also from Biblical guidance.

Philosophy

Francis Bacon—Bacon rejected the stale orthodoxies inherited from Scholasticism as airy speculation in magic and alchemy. Experience and experimentation were the only legitimate methods for arriving at knowledge of the natural world. As Richard Tarnas writes,

The true basis of knowledge was the natural world and the information it provided through the human senses. To fill the world with assumed final causes, as did Aristotle, or with intelligible divine essences, as did Plato, was to obscure from man a genuine understanding of nature on its own terms, solidly based on direct experimental contact and inductive reasoning from particulars. No longer should the pursuer of knowledge start from abstract definitions and verbal distinctions and then reason deductively, forcing the phenomena into prearranged order. Instead, he must begin with the unbiased analysis of concrete data and only then reason inductively, and cautiously, to reach general, empirically supported conclusions.¹

The spiritual and the natural realms had their own laws and appropriate, distinct method. Science must not be hampered by irrelevant assumptions from the religious imagination of scholastic theology. Science and religion will both be better served if they are kept separate.

Descartes—The crumbling fortification of the scholastic synthesis produced a new skepticism about the possibility of certain knowledge. Descartes set about solving this problem of skepticism by systematically doubting everything, including the existence of the physical world and his own body. At the end of this exercise, there was one thing that could not be doubted—the certainty of his self-awareness—I think, therefore I am. From the certainty of his self-awareness he argued for the existence of God. From the existence of God he argued for the reality of the natural world, for a perfect God who lets humans discern self-evident truths through reason would not deceive man.

In contrast to mind, all physical phenomena are to be comprehended as machines. The laws of mechanics are identical to those of nature, nature can be measured, and therefore mathematics, available to the light of human reason, was the tool for understanding the universe. Analytic reason *alone* was the basis for understanding the natural world.

¹ *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Harmony, 1991), 273.

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Tarnas summarizes Descartes' philosophy as follows:

Thus human reason establishes first its own existence, out of experiential necessity, then God's existence, out of logical necessity, and thence the God-guaranteed reality of the objective world and its rational order. Descartes enthroned human reason as the supreme authority in matters of knowledge, capable of distinguishing certain metaphysical truth and of achieving certain scientific understanding of the material world. Infallibility, once ascribed only to Holy Scripture or the supreme pontiff, was now transferred to human reason itself. In effect, Descartes unintentionally began a theological Copernican revolution, for his mode of reasoning suggested that God's existence was established by human reason and not vice versa. Although the self-evident certainty of God's existence was guaranteed by God's benevolent veracity in creating a reliable human reason, that conclusion could be affirmed only on the basis of the clear-and-distinct-idea criterion, in which authority was fundamentally rooted in a judgment by the individual human intellect. In the ultimate religious question, not divine revelation but the natural light of human reason had the final say. Until Descartes, revealed truth had maintained an objective authority outside of human judgment, but now its validity began to be subject to affirmation by human reason. The metaphysical independence that Luther had demanded within the parameters of the Christian religion, Descartes now intimated more universally. For whereas Luther's foundational certainty was his faith in God's saving grace as revealed in the Bible, Descartes' foundational certainty was his faith in the procedural clarities of mathematical reasoning applied to the indubitability of the thinking self.

Moreover, by his assertion of the essential dichotomy between thinking substance and extended substance, Descartes helped emancipate the material world from its long association with religious belief, freeing science to develop its analysis of that world in terms uncontaminated by spiritual or human qualities and unconstrained by the theological dogma. Both the human mind and the natural world now stood autonomously as never before, separated from God and from each other.

Here, then, was the prototypical declaration of the modern self, established as a fully separate, self-defining entity, for whom its own rational self-awareness was absolutely primary—doubting everything except itself, setting itself in opposition not only to traditional authorities but to the world, as subject against object, as a thinking, observing, measuring, manipulating being, fully distinct from an objective God and an external nature. The fruit of the dualism between rational subject and material world was science, including science's capacity for rendering certain knowledge of that world and for making man "master possessor of nature." In Descartes's vision, science, progress, reason, epistemological certainty, and human identity were all inextricably connected with each other and with the conception of

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an objective, mechanistic universe; and upon this synthesis was founded the paradigmatic character of the modern world.²

Mankind was now free not only from the dictates of tradition, church, and king, but also from scripture.

Locke—Locke was the reigning epistemological authority in Europe during the seventeenth century. He provided the epistemological foundations for its scientific achievements. For Lock, ideas are not innate, as with Descartes, but rather our mind is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate to be written upon by our sense experience of the world. We know because our experience of the world is imprinted upon our own mind by the senses and reflection. We cannot know apart from our experience. The authority of *experience alone* over against intuition and reason is the source of our knowledge both of the external and internal world.

Deism—The new epistemology brought a new view of God. God was now the divine architect who set the universe in motion, but he was not the Man of Calvary who is active in history and who will return in a literal manner a second time. The universe was to be explained on mechanical and mathematical principles. These principles were to be sought through observation and analysis, not by scholastic ideas or divine revelation. Providence and God’s love was now reinterpreted to mean God’s action in the creation and design of the ordered universe, but not His action with particular individuals or specific historical events. God did not reveal Himself to a particular people at a particular time; His revelation of Himself is universal through nature. Faith is based upon evidence and reason, not the gift of God.

Effects of the Era of Enlightenment

1. The nature and source of knowledge of the natural world is not to be determined by special revelation. It is to be discovered by some aspect of humanity, primarily by science.

2. Doubt was crucial to the process of acquisition of knowledge. Everything was to be questioned until one arrived at an absolute starting point.

3. “Faith,” if it had any meaning at all, was founded upon and harmonious with the results of the scientific process.

4. In general, there was a radical separation of theology and natural inquiry. If there was a relationship between science and theology, the foundation was scientific. Special revelation could not be used as a starting point for the study of the natural world.

5. Science was king. Historian of science Bernard Cohen put it in almost religious terms:

² Ibid, 279–280.

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The greatest achievement of Newtonian science must ever be the first full explanation of the universe on mechanical principles. One set of axioms and laws of universal gravitation applied to matter everywhere on earth as it did in the heavens. Who, after studying the contribution to thought, could deny that *pure science* [italics supplied] exemplifies this creative accomplishment of the human spirit at its pinnacle? What an exalted view of science. What a transforming view Newton gave to all humans. In all different endeavors the optimistic view that humans could deduce the order of the natural world had a significant trickle down effect in other human endeavors.³

Science had become the way, the truth, and the life.

6. Freedom was absolute. Humanity was no longer under the bondage of Greek metaphysics, scholastic theology, the church, tradition, or the authority of the Bible. As Tarnas puts it,

While the classical Greek world view had emphasized the goal of human intellectual and spiritual activity as the essential unification (or reunification) of man with the cosmos and its divine intelligence, and while the Christian goal was to reunite man and the world with God, the modern goal was to create the greatest possible freedom for man—from nature; from oppressive political, social, or economic structures; from restrictive metaphysical or religious beliefs; from the Church; from the Judaeo-Christian God; from the static and finite Aristotelian-Christian cosmos; from medieval Scholasticism; from the ancient Greek authorities; from all primitive conceptions of the world. Leaving behind tradition generally for the power of the autonomous human intellect, modern man set out on his own, determined to discover the working principles of his new universe, to explore and further expand its new dimensions, and to realize his secular fulfillment.⁴

Humanity had come of age. There was no need for God to look over our shoulder telling us how to live or what to believe. The tutelage of God our Father was not necessary to understand the universe. That can be done on our own, for we are autonomous from God and His Word. Whoever or whatever God is, if he exists at all—we will decide that—He must conform to whatever we discover to be true in the natural world.

Possible Relations between Science and Scripture—This very brief history of the theory of knowledge as it relates to religion has pointed to several possible relations between human studies and the Bible. The following are not exhaustive. I would welcome additional suggestions.

1. Human studies—science, philosophy, history, psychology, etc.—are *alone* the absolute foundation for all knowledge, whether it comes from nature or from the Bible. In this view, whatever is truth in the Bible (if anything at all)

³ I. Bernard Cohen, transcribed from a lecture tape; further details not available.

⁴ Tarnas, 290.

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must be verified by and interpreted within the context of humanism. Nature can be understood *completely* on its own terms. There is no valid truth in the Bible apart from human verification. Human study *alone* provides the way, the truth, and the life.

2. Truth is truth wherever it may be found. Nature *and* the Bible both bring a valid approach to knowledge. It is the task of the theologian to integrate the truths of these two sources of knowledge. Both of these disciplines may be understood *completely* separate from each other; but since there is truth in both, there is value in synthesizing these truths. Human *and* religious studies provide the way, the truth, and the life.

3. The realms of nature and of the Bible are radically separate. Science deals with nature *alone*, and the Bible deals with religion *alone*. The two do not intersect. Both may be understood *completely* on their own. Since there is no connection between them, it is useless to try to synthesize them.

4. God has revealed himself both in nature and in the Bible. Nature by itself is misleading. Both may be legitimately studied from the standpoint of the Bible and the Bible *alone*. Christ *alone* as He is represented in His Word is the way, the truth, and the life.

The Bible and Epistemology
Biblical Examples of Epistemology

Eve—Eve was tempted on the point of allegiance to God’s Word. On what basis would she make her decision on how to relate to the tree in the center of the Garden? Satan started her out with doubt. “Has God not said?” She then questioned the validity of God’s Word. Next she tried science. She gathered the evidence—it looks good to eat. Furthermore, the Serpent has partaken of it and now has increased powers. If I partake, I can also expect increased powers. She also used philosophy. A God of love would not destroy a person whom He created, nor would He withhold such beautiful fruit from His creation.

Antediluvians—Science has determined that it will not rain. Furthermore, philosophy tells us that a God of love would not destroy his creatures.

Kadesh-barnea—The ten spies returned from Canaan doubting the command of God. No God in his right mind would take Israel into battle in Canaan. Fortified passes needed to be crossed, there were giants in the land, the armies were well equipped and trained, and there were great walls around the cities.

Noah—by faith Noah heeded the command of God (Hebrew 11:7). Ellen G. White writes,

The wise men of this world talked of science and the fixed laws of nature, and declared that there could be no variation in these laws, and that this message of Noah could not possibly be true. The talented men of Noah’s time set themselves in league against God’s will and purpose, and scorned the message and the messenger that he had sent. When they could not move Noah from his firm and implicit

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trust in the word of God, they pointed to him as a fanatic, as a ranting old man, full of superstition and madness. Thus they condemned him because he would not be turned from his purpose by reasonings and theories of men. It was true that Noah could not controvert their philosophies, or refute the claims of science so called; but he could proclaim the word of God; for he knew it contained the infinite wisdom of the creator, and, as he sounded it everywhere, it lost none of its force and reality because men of the world treated him with ridicule and contempt.⁵

Abraham—Ellen G. White writes,

‘By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.’ Hebrews 11:3. Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was ‘the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ Verse 1. Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. . . . He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred.⁶

Christ—Christ was tempted to doubt the Word of the Lord in the wilderness of temptation. He had the same tools of science and philosophy available to Him. He could have used science to prove His divinity by turning stones into bread. He was also tempted by philosophy to doubt God’s Word. Would God leave His son in the wilderness for forty days without food and companionship? Instead he answered, “It is written” (Matt 4:4, 7, 10).

Biblical Epistemology

When Pilot asked, “What is truth” (John 18:38), he did not realize that he was standing in the presence of the one who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:1).

God wants us to know Him, the only true God (John 17:3). This knowledge is available in Jesus Christ and His Word, the Bible. Paul warns that knowledge of God does not come through human means of achieving knowledge. In its wisdom the world does not know God (1 Cor 1:21). We will be cheated if we attempt to know God through philosophy, the traditions of men, or the basic principles of the world (Col 2:8–10). It is only in Christ that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid (Col 2:3 cf. 1 Cor 1:30, John 1:17, 1 John 5:20).

⁵ *Signs of the Times* (April 18, 1895): 243–44.

⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 126.

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Truth is not an intellectual concept. We know the doctrine when we will to do God’s will (John 7:17), and we know the truth when we walk in it (Ps 26:3).

Since we can be blinded by the gods of this age (2 Cor 4:4), we must cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:5). Empiricism is not the way to knowledge, for if we are not willing to listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will we be persuaded though one come back from the dead (Luke 16:31). The Jews seek empirical knowledge, and the Greeks philosophical knowledge, but God will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent, for knowledge of God does not come through human wisdom, but through Christ, who is the power and the wisdom of God. The cross of Christ is foolishness and a stumbling block to those who seek empirical and philosophical foundations apart from Christ (1 Cor 1:18–25).

Ellen White and Epistemology

A major theme of Ellen White’s writing was the authority of the Bible. She addressed this topic in many different contexts. For her, the Bible was the foundational framework and authority for every aspect of our lives. Ellen White specifically affirms the authority of the Bible in a number of areas. The statements quoted in the appendix will summarize the overarching role that Ellen White gave to the authority of the Bible.

Faith and Freedom

The principle of *sola scriptura* has implications for the nature of faith and freedom. The biblical concept is distinct from the humanistic concepts of the Enlightenment and beyond.

Faith—The humanistic concept of faith may be outlined as follows:

The process generally starts with doubt—attempting to prove the validity of an assertion in order to offer it as truth—as worthy of one’s faith.

It relies upon genius, creativity, initiative, freedom of exploration, and capabilities of mankind.

It relies upon the five senses as a basis for collecting the relevant data.

It looks for patterns and integrates the data and interprets it on the basis of a paradigm which interprets our common experience and understanding of the world.

A hypothesis is formed which leads to testable predictions which results in a new round of observations.

The result is a probability statement as to what things are like or as to how new pieces of data entering the system will relate to the old.

In summary, the data is brought together in such a way as to yield a conclusion, a faith statement as to how things probably are. The conclusion is in the hand of mankind. It is under human control, it is a human achievement, and it is created upon a human basis such as reason or some other faculty of mankind.

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The Biblical concept of faith is just the reverse:

Faith is not a human creation; it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8) in order that faith might not rest on the wisdom of man but in the power of God (1 Cor 2:4, 5). For Christ himself is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2).

The spirit and Word work together. “No man can create faith. The Spirit operating upon and enlightening the human mind creates faith in God. In the Scriptures faith is stated to be the gift of God, powerful unto salvation, enlightening the hearts of those who search for truth as for hidden treasure.”⁷

Faith is not built upon an external foundation, but is itself the assurance, the conviction, the evidence of things not seen (Heb 11:1).

Faith in the Word of God is not based upon humanistically-derived knowledge; rather faith itself is the foundation of knowledge. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.” (Heb 11:3). “Only in the light of revelation can it [nature] be read aright.”⁸ “Faith is the key of knowledge.”⁹ It is the basis for discerning between truth and error.¹⁰

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom 11:17). The assurance and evidence for faith is God’s Word.¹¹

To attempt to use the data of reason as criteria for determining whether Scripture is the Word of God is to doubt that which has already been declared by God. It is similar to Christ’s temptation in the wilderness, namely, to doubt that He was the Son of God after “it had already been affirmed by the Word of God. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures.”¹²

Freedom—The humanistic concept of freedom is also radically different from the Biblical concept.

The humanistic concept of epistemological freedom is that of autonomy. Not only are we free from every human institution, but we are also free from the authority of the Bible, the Word of God. The possibility of truth in the Bible must be determined on a humanistic basis rather than by its divine inspiration.

The enlightenment taught that we are absolutely free. We start from a position of complete neutrality and “objectivity” to decide for or against God. But Christ said, if you are not for me you are against me (Matt 12:30; Luke 11:23). We are either servants of Satan and sin, or of Christ; there is no neutral ground (John 8:34; Rom 6:15–23).

Humanistic methodology states that we are absolutely free to discover the truth. Christ turns this one hundred and eighty degrees. You shall know the

⁷ Ellen G. White, in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7:940.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 134.

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 24, *Desire of Ages*, 139.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:346, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 229.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2:243.

¹² Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 72; cf. *Gospel Workers*, 260; *Early Writings*, 72.

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truth, and the truth shall set you free (John 8:32; Rom 8:3; Gal 5:1; Rom 6:22). The truth is not some concept or “fact.” It is Jesus Christ—“I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Mission for the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The mission of our church stands upon a unique and specific epistemology. The call to give the totality of God’s message to the world at the end of time is not a call for an epistemological synthesis of what is available in the cafeteria line—a little empiricism here and a little rationalism there. It is a specific call for a people who are willing to take, as the basis for their message, the Bible and the *Bible only*, as opposed to all other epistemological systems.

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.¹³

The doctrines of *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia*—*sola fide*a are parallel doctrines. They were understood in tandem with each other at the time of the Reformation. If one is lost, the other will eventually be lost as well. For example, if one must go through a humanistic foundation to determine that salvation is by grace, salvation is no longer by grace, but by the system that founded that knowledge.

Sola Gratia

There is nothing I can do on my own to obtain righteousness

Righteousness is not to be manipulated by humans

Righteousness rests completely upon the gift of God.

Works follow naturally from the receipt of the gift of God’s salvation.

Works never form the basis of our salvation.

Sola Scriptura

There is nothing I can do on my own to obtain special revelation.

Revelation is not to be manipulated by humans.

Revelation rests completely upon the Gift of God.

Epistemological works follow naturally from the receipt of God’s foundation.

Humanistic epistemologies are not the true foundation of our knowledge.

The two doctrines are analogous and they are really one—God’s gift of Himself to us in order that we might know Him, the only true God (John 17:3).

¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 595.

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The precious understanding of righteousness by faith *alone* will stand only so long as we place beside it the twin doctrine of the foundational authority of the Bible *alone*. Just as in 1888 the church made a new commitment to the doctrine of righteousness by faith, so in 2003 let us reaffirm our commitment to the authority of the Bible.

God has given us reason, senses, emotions, aesthetic appreciation, material goods, talents, and much more. He has given them to us for our use and enjoyment to His glory. *Sola scriptura* does not take away from the important role that each of these plays in our lives. But it does mean that God has provided a foundation and structure within which each of these gifts may be properly used. When we use them apart from the foundation of God's Word, we act autonomously from Him.

The foundational authority of the Bible may be illustrated by my house. It has a foundation upon which it is built and a set of plans that guided its construction. It also has a front door, windows, a kitchen, bedrooms, a study, and a roof, etc. All of these features are important to my house, but they will never become the foundation. If my house were to be turned upside down so that it rested upon its roof, my house would collapse.

So also, God has given us reason, our five senses, emotions, talents, friendship, and many other things. He wants us to enjoy them and use them to their fullest to His glory (1 Cor 1:31). But if we make one or all of them the foundation of our life, our world will collapse.

It is tempting to found our understanding of the world upon a synthesis of two epistemologies, as did the scholastics. Some prefer to build their house on the rock *and* the sand rather than on the Rock *alone*. But we cannot serve two masters (Matt 6:24). Humanism and biblical authority do not mix. It is like asking the Redskins to play the White Sox. Whose field will be used? Whose ball will be in place? Who will umpire the game? Whose rules will we use? Imagine kicking a football to a baseball batter. There is no synthesis between the two games. Either we will invite the one to join the other or *visa versa*.

Paul warns us not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. The Greek verb translated "transformed" comes from the same verb used in Mark 9:2, when Jesus was "transfigured." It is through the truth that we are sanctified—not the "truth" that we generate ourselves, but the truth that comes from the Word of God (John 17:17–19). While we once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, we have been made alive together with Christ (Eph 2:1–8).

We tend to emphasize conversion of the heart. But conversion is also conversion of the mind. It is a change of direction of one's thinking: a direction that is no longer energized by the humanism of the world, but is directed by God's Word. God wants us to be converted in our mind, to make a change in direction, so that we see things from the perspective of His Word rather than from the perspective of this world.

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The Word of God can stand by itself. It does not need to be propped up by our own epistemologies. Both Ellen White and the reformers stated that when we read the Bible it is as if God were in the room speaking to us. The Word of God is powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12; cf. 1 Cor 1:24, 25; Eph 1:15–21). It is that Word which brought forth creation. It is that Word which brought hearing to the deaf, sight to the blind, life to the dead. And that Word can make its way into our own hearts and minds if we open our lives to it.

The epistemological path that we take will determine our concept of God, ourselves, nature, and history. Do we accept the Bible as the divinely revealed Word of God? Do we wish to worship the God Who spoke and there was light, Who lovingly bent over the clay to form the features of Adam, Who led Israel across the Red Sea into the land of Canaan, Who came to live among us and die for our sins, Who arose bodily to return to His heavenly Father, Who is now ministering for us in the heavenly sanctuary, and Who will soon literally, visibly return a second time for us? Or do we worship a god who either cannot or will not operate in history, a god who does not communicate with us directly and openly, but who is only known by innuendo through the speculations of our science and philosophy, and who is finally limited by our science and our philosophy—by the world as we perceive it? And how do we look at Jesus? Was He the product of His age, so that we cannot trust His testimony about the existence of Adam, Noah, and Moses? God has revealed Himself to us because He wants us to know Him, the *only* true God (John 17:3).

As a church we have a mission to look at the world from God’s perspective rather than at God from the perspective of the world. We have the challenge to teach our children how to think Biblically rather than humanistically. We can only do that when we have been converted in heart and mind.

Are we willing to yield our senses and reason to the authority of God’s Word? Are we willing to submit to God not only in heart, but also in mind, or do we desire to take the Word of God into our own control?

Lord, I give you my all. I give you my heart, my house, my car, my family, my emotions, but my mind—no Lord, my mind is the foundation of my life—I would loose my autonomy, Sir—I will not yield my mind, for my mind is mine and mine *alone*.

Appendix: Pertinent Ellen G. White Comments

General Statements about the Authority of the Bible:

“The Bible is God’s voice speaking to us just as surely as though we could hear Him with our ears. The word of the living God is not merely written, but spoken. Do we receive the Bible as the oracle of God? If we realized the importance of this Word, with what awe would we open it, and with what earnestness would we search its precepts. The reading and contemplating of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Most High” (HP 134).

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“All human teaching should be subordinate to the oracles of God” (GC 204)

“He [Christ] pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith” (COL 39, 40).

“Leave the impression upon the mind that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our rule of faith, and that the sayings and doings of men are not to be a criterion for our doctrines or actions” (CS 84).

“The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, and sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God’s Word is infallible” (1 SM 416).

Guide to Salvation

“In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience” (GC, vii).

“Let the Bible decide every question that is essential to man’s salvation” (MM 91).

“The Bible is an unerring guide” (4T 312).

Scriptures a Safeguard

“‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. . . . The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested . . . None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict” (GC 593, 594).

“Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly estab-

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lished upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only?” (GC 625).

“Jesus met Satan with the words, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ (Matt. 4:4). In every temptation the weapon of His warfare was the Word of God. Satan demanded of Christ a miracle as a sign of His divinity. But that which is greater than all miracles, a firm reliance upon a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ was a sign that could not be controverted. So long as Christ held to this position, the tempter could gain no advantage.

“A familiarity with the Word of God is our only hope. Those who diligently search the Scriptures will not accept Satan’s delusions as the truth of God” (GC 625).

Basis of faith

“Parents need to reform; ministers need to reform; they need God in their households. If they would see a different state of things, they must bring His word into their families and must make it their counselor. They must teach their children that it is the voice of God addressed to them, and is to be implicitly obeyed. They should patiently instruct their children, kindly and untiringly teach them how to live in order to please God. The children of such a household are prepared to meet the sophistries of infidelity. They have accepted the Bible as the basis of their faith, and they have a foundation that cannot be swept away by the incoming tide of skepticism” (PP 143).

“I am fully in harmony with you in your work when you present the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the foundation of our faith” (2SM 85).

“But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan’s counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God’s promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures” (DA 126).

“This book is the voice of God speaking to us. The Bible opens to us the words of life; for it makes us acquainted with Christ who is our life. In order to have true, abiding faith in Christ, we must know Him as He is represented in the word” (FE 433).

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Basis of Morality

“The Bible should be read every day. It is the correct standard of right and wrong and of moral principle” (SI, March 20, 1884, 177).

“It is, in all its precepts and requirements, as pure as the character of God and as elevated as His throne” (3T 314).

Test of Inspiration

“True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth and the test of all inspiration” (GC 193).

Test for the Operation of the Holy Spirit

“The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” (GC vii).

“Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures” (1SM 43).

Guide to Life

“The Christian evidence that we need, is found not in the experience of men, but in our Bibles. The Word of God is the man of our counsel; for it brings us down from age to age, bearing its testimony to the unchangeableness of the truth. . . . Give the Word its honored position as a guide in the home. Let it be regarded as the Counselor in every difficulty, the standard of every practice. . . . We have a Guidebook, the Word of God, and we are inexcusable if we miss the way to heaven, for plain directions have been given us. . . . The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of life” (ML 25).

“The Bible is an unerring guide” (4T 312).

“All who do not earnestly search the Scriptures and submit every desire and purpose of life to that unerring test, all who do not seek God in prayer for a knowledge of His will, will surely wander from the right path and fall under the deception of Satan” (ST 192).

“The Bible presents a perfect standard of character. This sacred book, inspired by God, and written by holy men, is a perfect guide under all circumstances of life” (FE 100).

Rule of Conscience

“This led him [John Huss] to adopt for his own guidance, and to preach to others for theirs, the maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are a rule of the conscience; In other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide” (GC 102).

Standard of Character

“The Bible is God’s will expressed to man. It is the only perfect standard of character, and marks out the duty of man in every circumstance of life” (4T 312).

Only Basis of Happiness

“He who is following the divine guidance has found the only true source of saving grace and real happiness, and has gained the power of imparting happiness to all around him. No man can really enjoy life without religion” (CT 53).

“Through the study of the Scriptures we obtain a correct knowledge of how to live so as to enjoy the greatest amount of unalloyed happiness” (3T 314).

Basis of Knowledge and Truth

“In the prevailing systems of education, human philosophy had taken the place of divine revelation. Instead of the heaven-given standard of truth, men had accepted a standard of their own devising” (Ed 74).

“‘Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.’ The word of God should be made the great educating power. How shall students know the truth, except by a close, earnest, persevering study of the word? Here is the grand stimulus, the hidden force which quickens the mental and physical powers, and directs the life into right channels. Here in the word is wisdom, poetry, history, biography, and the most profound philosophy. Here is a study that quickens the mind into a vigorous and healthy life, and awakens it to the highest exercise. It is impossible to study the Bible with a humble, teachable spirit, without developing and strengthening the intellect. Those who become best acquainted with the wisdom and purpose of God as revealed in His word, become men and women of mental strength; and they may become efficient workers with the great Educator, Jesus Christ. . . . Christ has given His people the words of truth, and all are called to act a part in making them known to the world. . . . There is no sanctification aside from the truth—the word. Then how essential that it should be understood by every one!” (FE 432).

“As professed teachers from God come to us declaring that they have a message from God, it is proper to inquire carefully, “How do we know that this

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is truth?” Jesus has told us that ‘false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many.’ But we need not be deceived; for the Word of God gives us a test whereby we may know what is truth. The prophet says, ‘To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them’” (E.G. White Comments, 7BC 952).

“We have a Bible full of the most precious truth. It contains the alpha and the omega of knowledge” (GW 308).

“Men of the greatest intellects, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered; they cannot comprehend the Creator or His works. But set the mind to grasp and measure eternal truth, summon it to effort by delving for the jewels of truth in the rich mine of the word of God, and it will never become dwarfed and enfeebled, as when left to dwell upon commonplace subjects” (FE 84).

“The Bible is our textbook” (CSW 56).

“The Bible must be made the foundation for all study” (FE 451).

“Without the Bible we should have been left to conjectures and fables in regard to the occurrences of past ages. Of all the books that have flooded the world, be they ever so valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, and is most deserving of the closest study and attention. It gives not only the history of the creation of this world, but a description of the world to come. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and it reveals to our understanding the Author of the heavens and the earth. It unfolds a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy” (FE 129).

“We must stand barricaded by the truths of the Bible. The canopy of truth is the only canopy under which we can stand safely” (MM 88).

“Cold, philosophical speculations and scientific research in which God is not acknowledged are a positive injury. And the evil is aggravated when, as is often the case, books placed in the hands of the young, accepted as authority and depended upon in their education, are from authors avowedly infidel. Through all the thoughts presented by these men their poisonous sentiments are interwoven. The study of such books is like handling black coals; a student cannot be undefiled in mind who thinks along the line of skepticism” (CT 423, 424).

Basis of Education

“In our training-schools the Bible is to be made the basis of all education” (FE 490).

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“The Bible should not be brought into our schools to be sandwiched in between infidelity. The Bible must be made the groundwork and subject matter of education. . . . It should be used as the word of the living God, and esteemed as first, and last, and best in everything. Then will be seen true spiritual growth” (FE 474).

“Bible study is especially needed in the schools. Students should be rooted and grounded in divine truth, Their attention should be called, not to the assertions of men, but to the word of God. Above all other books, the word of God must be our study, the great textbook, the basis of all education; and our children are to be educated in the truths found therein, irrespective of previous habits and customs” (6T 131, 132).

Authority over the Senses

“Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only?” (GC 625).

Basis of Knowledge of God and Christ

“Searching the Scriptures alone will bring the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent” (FE 415).

“The ancient philosophers prided themselves on their superior knowledge. Let us read the inspired apostle’s understanding of the matter. ‘Professing themselves to be wise,’ he says, ‘they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator’ (Rom. 1:22–25). In its human wisdom the world cannot know God. Its wise men gather an imperfect knowledge of God from His created works, and then in their foolishness they exalt nature and the laws of nature above nature’s God. Those who have not a knowledge of God through an acceptance of the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ, will obtain only an imperfect knowledge of Him in nature; and this knowledge, so far from giving elevated conceptions of God, and bringing the whole being into conformity to His will, will make men idolaters. Professing themselves to be wise, they will become fools” (1SM 295).

Foundation for the Study of Science

“Apart from Christ, science is misleading and philosophy is foolishness” (MM 91).

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“This is the treasure that is found in the Scriptures. The Bible is God’s great lesson book, His great educator. The foundation of all true science is contained in the Bible. Every branch of knowledge may be found by searching the word of God. And above all else it contains the science of all sciences, the science of salvation. The Bible is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ” (COL 101).

“The ancient philosophers prided themselves on their superior knowledge. Let us read the inspired apostle’s understanding of the matter. ‘Professing themselves to be wise,’ he says, ‘they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator’ (Rom. 1:22–25). In its human wisdom the world cannot know God. Its wise men gather an imperfect knowledge of God from His created works, and then in their foolishness they exalt nature and the laws of nature above nature’s God. Those who have not a knowledge of God through an acceptance of the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ, will obtain only an imperfect knowledge of Him in nature; and this knowledge, so far from giving elevated conceptions of God, and bringing the whole being into conformity to His will, will make men idolaters. Professing themselves to be wise, they will become fools. . . . Those who think they can obtain a knowledge of God aside from His Representative, whom the Word declares is ‘the express image of his person’ (Heb. 1:3), will need to become fools in their own estimation before they can be wise. It is impossible to gain a perfect knowledge of God from nature alone; for nature itself is imperfect. In its imperfection it cannot represent God, it cannot reveal the character of God in its moral perfection. But Christ came as a personal Savior to the world. He represented a personal Go” (ISM 295).

“Since God is the source of all true knowledge, it is, as we have seen, the first object of education to direct our minds to His own revelation of Himself. Adam and Eve received knowledge through direct communion with God; and they learned of Him through His works. All created things, in their original perfection, were an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve nature was teeming with divine wisdom. But by transgression man was cut off from learning of God through direct communion and, to a great degree, through His works. The earth, marred and defiled by sin, reflects but dimly the Creator’s glory. It is true that His object lessons are not obliterated. Upon every page of the great volume of His created works may still be traced His handwriting. Nature still speaks of her Creator. Yet these revelations are partial and imperfect. And in our fallen state, with weakened powers and restricted vision, we are incapable of interpreting aright. We need the fuller revelation of Himself that God has given

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in His written word. . . . The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth, and as such should be given the highest place in education” (Ed 16, 17).

“It is the entrance of God’s word that ‘ giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.’ Psalm 119:130. His word is given for our instruction; there is nothing in it that is defective or misleading. The Bible is not to be tested by men’s ideas of science, but science is to be brought to the test of the unerring standard. . . . Yet the study of the sciences is not to be neglected, Books must be used for this purpose; but they should be in harmony with the Bible, for that is the standard” (CT 425, 426).

“The opinions of great men, the theories of science, falsely so-called, are blended with the truths of Holy Writ” (FE 182).

“The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man’s unaided reason, nature’s teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright. ‘Through faith we understand.’ Hebrews 11:3.

“‘In the beginning God.’ Genesis 1:1. Here alone can the mind in its eager questioning, fleeing as the dove to the ark, find rest. Above, beneath, beyond, abides Infinite Love, working out all things to accomplish ‘the good pleasure of His goodness.’ 2 Thessalonians 1:11.

“‘The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are . . . perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity.’ Romans 1:20, R.V. But their testimony can be understood only through the aid of the divine Teacher. ‘What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.’ 1 Corinthians 2:11.

“‘When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.’ John 16:13. Only by the aid of that Spirit who in the beginning ‘was brooding upon the face of the waters;’ of that Word by whom ‘all things were made;’ of that ‘true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,’ can the testimony of science be rightly interpreted. Only by their guidance can its deepest truths be discerned.

“Only under the direction of the Omniscient One shall we, in the study of His works, be enabled to think His thoughts after Him” (Ed 134).

“Apart from Christ we are still incapable of interpreting rightly the language of nature. The most difficult and humiliating lesson that man has to learn is his own inefficiency in depending upon human wisdom, and the sure failure of his efforts to read nature correctly. Of himself he cannot interpret nature without placing it above God. . . .

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“God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in the discoveries of science and art; but when professedly scientific men reason upon these subjects from a merely human point of view, they are sure to err. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation. The Creator and His works are beyond their comprehension; and because these cannot be explained by natural laws, Bible history is pronounced unreliable.

“Those who question the reliability of the Scripture records have let go their anchor and are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity. When they find themselves incapable of measuring the Creator and His works by their own imperfect knowledge of science, they question the existence of God and attribute infinite power to nature.

“In true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word of God, for both have the same Author. A correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony. Truth, whether in nature or in revelation, is harmonious with itself in all its manifestations. But the mind not enlightened by God’s Spirit will ever be in darkness in regard to His power. This is why human ideas in regard to science so often contradict the teaching of God’s word” (8T 251, 258).

“In losing the garments of holiness, they lost the light that had illuminated nature. No longer could they read it aright. They could not discern the character of God in His works. So today man cannot of himself read aright the teaching of nature. Unless guided by divine wisdom, he exalts nature and the laws of nature above nature’s God. This is why mere human ideas in regard to science so often contradict the teaching of God’s word. But for those who receive the light of the life of Christ, nature is again illuminated. In the light shining from the cross, we can rightly interpret nature’s teaching.

“He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God’s word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself. He does not test the Bible by men’s ideas of science; he brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that in true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word; since both have the same Author, a correct understanding of both will prove them to be in harmony. Whatever in so-called scientific teaching contradicts the testimony of God’s word is mere human guesswork” (MH 462).

“God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in both science and art; but when professedly scientific men treat upon these subjects from a merely human point of view, they will assuredly come to wrong conclusions. It may be innocent to speculate beyond what God’s word has revealed, if our theories do not contradict facts found in the Scriptures; but those who leave

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the word of God, and seek to account for His created works upon scientific principles, are drifting without chart or compass upon an unknown ocean. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to trace the relations of science and revelation. Because the Creator and His works are so far beyond their comprehension that they are unable to explain them by natural laws, they regard Bible history as unreliable. Those who doubt the reliability of the records of the Old and New Testaments, will be led to go a step further, and doubt the existence of God; and then, having lost their anchor, they are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity” (PP 113).

“When man is reconciled to God, nature speaks to him in words of heavenly wisdom, bearing testimony to the eternal truth of God’s Word. As Christ tells us the meaning of the things in nature, the science of true religion flashes forth, explaining the relation of the law of God to the natural and spiritual world” (E. G. White Comments, 3 BC 1144).

“He who has a knowledge of God and His Word has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He does not test the Bible by man’s ideas of science. He brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that God’s word is truth, and truth can never contradict itself; whatever in the teaching of so-called science contradicts the truth of God’s revelation is mere human guesswork.

“To the really wise, scientific research opens vast fields of thought and information” (8T 325).

“Science and nature are exalted. Men consider themselves wiser than the Word of God, wiser even than God; and instead of planting their feet on the unmovable foundation, and bringing everything to the test of God’s word, they test that word by their own ideas of science and nature. And if it seems not to agree with their scientific ideas, it is discarded as unworthy of credence. Thus the great standard by which to test doctrines and character is set aside for human standards” (ST, March 27, 1844, 194).

“But apart from Bible history, geology can prove nothing” (PP 112).

Basis of An Understanding of History

“The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and throughout the ages a divine hand has preserved its purity. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research in vain seeks to penetrate. In God’s word only do we behold the power that laid the foundations of the earth and that stretched out the heavens.

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Here only do we find an authentic account of the origin of nations. Here only is given a history of our race unsullied by human pride or prejudice,

“In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsel of His own will” (Ed 173).

“The Bible, and the Bible only, gives a correct view of these things. Here are revealed the great final scenes in the history of our world, events that already are casting their shadows before, the sound of their approach causing the earth to tremble and men’s hearts to fail them for fear” (Ed 180).

“The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research seeks vainly to penetrate. In God’s word we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. Here are recorded the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the greatest men this world has ever known. Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted, and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; and all is but a revelation of the character of God” (PP 596).

Key to Philosophy

“The Christian believer possesses the key to true philosophy” (ST, Jan. 28, 1897, 4).

“Apart from Christ, science is misleading and philosophy is foolishness” (IMM 97).

“All the philosophies of human nature have led to confusion and shame when God has not been recognized as all in all” (8T 322).

“Christian knowledge bears its own stamp of unmeasured superiority in all that concerns the preparation for the future, immortal life. It distinguishes the Bible reader and believer, who has been receiving the precious treasures of truth, from the skeptic and the believer in pagan philosophy.

ZINKE: FAITH–SCIENCE ISSUES: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

“Cleave to the word, ‘It is written.’ Cast out of the mind the dangerous, obtrusive theories which, if entertained, will hold the mind in bondage so that the man shall not become a new creature in Christ” (MM 89).

Basis of Principles of True Psychology

“The true principles of psychology are found in the Holy Scriptures” (ML 176).

General Warnings about Placing Other Authorities Above the Bible

“The Word of the Lord is not to be judged by a human standard” (ST 301).

“Men consider themselves wiser than the Word of God, wiser even than God; and instead of planting their feet on the immovable foundation, and bringing everything to the test of God’s word, they test that word by their own ideas of science and nature, and if it seems not to agree with their scientific ideas, it is discarded as unworthy of credence” (ST, March 27, 1844, 1).

“Many attempt to judge of the Creator and His works by their own imperfect knowledge of science. They endeavor to determine the nature and attributes and prerogatives of God, and indulge in speculative theories concerning the Infinite One” (MH 427).

“Man’s inventions are not only unreliable, they are dangerous; for they place man where God should be. They place the sayings of men where a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ should be” (COL 110).

Men “set up their judgment as superior to the work; and the Scripture which they do teach rests upon their own authority. Its divine authenticity is destroyed” (COL 39).

Basis of the Great Controversy

The theme of the Great Controversy is the authority of the Bible. With each reformer Ellen White reiterates that the Bible and the Bible *alone* was the basis of authority. One example will be given:

“Fearlessly did Luther defend the gospel from the attacks which came from every quarter. The word of God proved itself a weapon mighty in every conflict. With that word he warred against the usurped authority of the pope, and the rationalistic philosophy of the schoolmen, while he stood firm as a rock against the fanaticism that sought to ally itself with the reformation. Each of these opposing elements was in its own way setting aside the Holy Scriptures and exalting human wisdom as the source of religious truth and knowledge. Rationalism

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idolizes reason and makes this the criterion for religion. Romanism, claiming for her sovereign pontiff an inspiration descended in unbroken line from the apostles, and unchangeable through all time, gives ample opportunity for every species of extravagance and corruption to be concealed under the sanctity of the apostolic commission. The inspiration claimed by Munzer and his associates proceeded from no higher source than the vagaries of the imagination, and its influence was subversive of all authority, human or divine. True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth and the test of inspiration” (GC 193).

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Creation: The Foundational Importance of Scripture as Revelation

Norman R. Gulley
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Did God create the world and its environs in six days or did He use a natural process through billions of years? Two studies help to answer this question: an examination of methodological naturalism in the light of recent contributions made by the Intelligent Design movement¹ and an examination of Scripture as revelation. The first is a consideration of scientific facts and logic, the second a consideration of scriptural facts and logic. The first is a scientific contribution to the issues before us, the second a biblical contribution to the issues before us. The first deals with inherent design² in nature, the second deals with inherent

¹ Some scholars in this movement who persuasively present the case for intelligent design in nature include Philip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Washington: Regnery, 1991); *Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law, and Education* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995); *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997); *The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000); William A. Dembski, *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance through Small Probabilities* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); ed., *Mere Creation: Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999); ed., with James M. Kushiner, *Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001); and Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 1996). The case for design has been made before in the Teleological argument for God's existence initiated by William Paley (1743-1805), who argued from design to an intelligent design Maker, from a watch to a Watchmaker (compare the five proofs for the existence of God by Thomas Aquinas [1225-1274], *Summa Theologica*, trans. English Dominican Fathers, 5 vols, Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981, vol. 1, 11-14), but the above books analyze the dismissal of design by evolutionary theorists on philosophical grounds and present a powerful case for its reinstatement on empirical and logical grounds.

² By inherent design I do not mean design found in natural laws, which would confine the focus to naturalism, but design empirically discerned in nature, seen as God's work from a biblical perspective (e.g., Psa 19:1; Rom 1:20).

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revelation³ in Scripture. Inherent design and inherent revelation indicate the unity between nature and Scripture as God's two books, one visual⁴ and one verbal. Both inherent design and inherent revelation are revelations of the Creator in the realm of fallen humankind. Both necessitate the illumination of God to be rightly understood in the context of a fallen environment. A fundamental problem before us is the exclusion of inherent design in evolution⁵ and inherent revelation in theology.⁶ These oust God from His world and from His Word.

One can use science (molecular biology and biochemistry) to argue for inherent design and Scripture to argue for inherent revelation (*sola scriptura*). Inherent design in nature and inherent revelation in Scripture contribute to our understanding of God as Creator. Both have their own contribution to make, and neither contribution should be disallowed by the other.⁷

Fixity of species was a general belief when Darwin entered Cambridge to study theology in 1828. Whether he already believed it or learned it from a professor doesn't matter, for the phrase "after its kind" in Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25 was interpreted as fixity of species and was Darwin's understanding when he

³ By inherent revelation I do not mean Scripture is revelation in a magical sense, but Scripture is God's revelation (Heb 1:1–2; 1 Thess 2:13) in human language, logic, and literature. It doesn't matter if information came from Chloe's household (1 Cor 1:11) or from research (Luke 1:1–3) and was written in the language of the writer—it was all Spirit-led and is the voice of God (Heb 1:1–2), and as such is inspired revelation (2 Pet 1:21). Thus Paul could say, "We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (1 Thess 2:13).

⁴ Through the electron microscope.

⁵ Since the late 19th century most biologists have rejected evidence for intelligent design in nature. Two examples toward the end of the 20th century are Nobel laureate Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity* (New York: Vintage, 1971) and Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence for Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* (New York: Norton, 1996). At best, some biologists speak of apparent design and attribute it to natural causes. But molecular biology has discovered (1) the complexity of cells, which are a veritable factory of machines processing information, and discovered (2) the comprehensive computer-like biochemical genetic information encoded on DNA molecules. See a thorough examination in Stephen C. Meyer, "Word Games: DNA, Design, and Intelligence," in *Signs of Intelligence: Understanding Intelligent Design*, eds. William A. Dembski and James M. Kushiner (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), 102–117.

⁶ See Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews P, 2003), vol. 1.

⁷ Interpretation by biblical/theological scholars and scientists can be wrong: e.g., Galileo was right, the Catholic theologians were wrong; and science has changed its worldviews from Ptolemaic, to Copernican, to Einsteinian. Because God is the author of nature and Scripture, there is an assumed coherence between the reality found in both, even though each has its own area of specialization. When advocates of either nature or Scripture present their view of reality as all there is to reality, with the other's contribution ruled out from the start, we end up with both presenting a truncated view of reality that does not do justice to total reality. Some biblical/theological scholars may still believe evolution teaches that humans descended directly from apes, but evolution teaches that humans and other primates have descended from different evolutionary branches, in which humans and apes go back to a common ancestor.

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set sail on the Beagle in 1836.⁸ During his five-year voyage, this fixity of species idea was called in question by his research in nature. So in 1844, in a letter to a close friend, Joseph Hooker, he wrote, “At last gleams of light have come, and I am almost convinced (quite contrary to the opinion I started with) that species are not (it is like confessing a murder) immutable.”⁹ He was right to debunk these “fixity” claims that failed to give empirical evidence in nature its proper place. But he was wrong to assume the Genesis account subscribes to “fixity of species” without giving the biblical record as careful a study as he gave to nature.¹⁰

On what basis did he accept the idea that God is irrelevant to the scientific study of nature? Behind this assumption lies philosophical positivism—a prevailing influence in his time.¹¹ Whereas natural theology included God in the nexus of cause and effect, philosophical positivism excluded God. Darwin empirically disproved a claim of natural theology (fixity of species), but took an

⁸ Darwin states, “that the view which most naturalists entertain, and which I formerly entertained—namely, that each species has been independently created—is erroneous.” *The Origin of Species*, 1859 (New York: Gramercy, 1979), 69, cf. 230. He calls it “the common view” (317), noting that “most eminent palaeontologists” (Cuvier, Owen, Agassiz, Barrande, Falconer, E Forbes) “and all our greatest geologists” (Lyell, Murchison, Sedgwick) “have unanimously, often vehemently, maintained the immutability of species” (315–316). Darwin argues that each species is not “immutable,” or “independently created” with varieties “produced by secondary laws” (443–455). He argues that “the theory of creation” is “inexplicable” in view of the variation of species (446), and how they came about through hereditary modification, or internal rather than merely external conditions (climate and food etc), and mainly through natural selection (66–68, cf. 342). Natural selection of species rather than divine fixity of species is Darwin’s thesis throughout his *Origin of Species*.

⁹ Charles Darwin letter, cited by Harold Coffin with Robert H. Brown, *Origin By Design* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1983), 447.

¹⁰ Darwin apparently believed that the Genesis creation account teaches the fixity of species, which it doesn’t. The Hebrew word *min*, meaning “after its kind,” occurs ten times in Genesis 1 (vs. 11–12, 21, 24–25). “After its kind” does not rule out variation *within* kinds, but it rules out that two dogs can give birth to a cat, for example (a variation *between* kinds). This boundary between kinds that Scripture teaches is precisely what evolutionary theory ignores in its alleged descent through the kinds, from the simplest to the most complex. This is why representatives of each kind, and not all the multiplicity of species within each kind, could be housed in the dimensions of the ark (Gen 6:15–16) in the global flood (Gen 7:4, 19–23) without any problem for the multiplicity of species continuing in the post-diluvian world. If Darwin had realized that the Hebrew word *min* does not teach fixity of species, he would have understood that his findings did not correct the Genesis creation account (he only corrected the misguided interpretation of Genesis). Neither would he have found evidence in geology for the extinction of species that supports evolution, but evidence for a global destruction of all things outside the ark in the flood account of Genesis 6–9. He would have been spared all his effort, and others spared the dismissal of Scripture by science that has ensued ever since. For a good recent article on *Min*, see A. Rahel Davidson Schafer, “The ‘Kinds’ of Genesis 1: What is the Meaning of *Min*?,” *JATS*, 14/1 (Spring 2003): 86–100.

¹¹ See William A. Dembski’s “The Demise of British Natural Theology,” *Intelligent Design*, 70–93. Compare Philosophical Positivism with the later movement called Logical Positivism; see footnote 40.

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empirical leap of faith in accepting the claim of philosophical positivism (rejection of God).¹² Methodological naturalism, which excludes God in Darwinian and neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory, is a philosophical and metaphysical assumption, not empirical science.

Naturalism has excluded the supernatural in revelation as well as in nature. I am convinced that inherent revelation in Scripture and inherent design in nature provide a biblical and scientific hermeneutic to answer evolutionary claims that call in question the creation account of Genesis 1–2. In fact, on empirical and logical grounds, the inherent design movement may yet prove the greatest intellectual threat to neo-Darwinian methodological naturalism.¹³

A study of the relation between science and faith with respect to creation includes a search for an agreement on the method of God's creation. But at a deeper, foundational level, our search must first include an agreement on the method of God's revelation. Until we have reached a conclusion regarding His method of revelation, we are not foundationally ready to reach a conclusion regarding His method of creation. Our focus in this article will be on the foundational importance of Scripture as revelation.

Scripture as Revelation: The Debate

Scripture as revelation is different from Scripture as only a witness to revelation. Scripture is the Word of God and not merely a witness to the Word of God. Unfortunately, J. S. Semler (1721–1791) distinguished between revelation and Scripture. He taught that “The root of evil (in theology) is the interchangeable use of the terms ‘Scripture’ and ‘Word of God.’”¹⁴ He continued, “Holy

¹² There may have been a remnant of God in his 1859 *Origin of Species* (“the laws impressed on matter by the Creator,” 458), but this passing comment had no determining influence on his theory throughout the book, which was *natural rather than God selection*.

¹³ William A. Dembski holds a Ph.D. in mathematics (University of Chicago) and in philosophy (University of Illinois at Chicago) and is one of the leaders of the Intelligent Design Movement. His book *The Design Inference* (Cambridge) is a complex and technical work on statistics, and the thesis of that book is given in popular form in his book *Intelligent Design*. In it he makes a compelling scientific case for intelligent design in nature by empirical and logical deduction. As such it offers a powerful replacement for naturalism. Dembski demonstrates that evolutionary biology needs to be reconceptualized in information-theoretic terms, so that common descent requires that certain informational pathways connect all organisms, for only information begets information. Michael Behe, in his book *Darwin's Black Box*, presents a compelling case for irreducible complexity at the molecular level, which challenges any pre-evolutionary development prior to these complex molecular machines, for they reveal intelligent design, rather than random natural causation. When Darwin said that “many and grave objections may be advanced against the theory of descent with modification through natural selection, I do not deny” (435), he had no idea what molecular biology and biochemistry would discover about the complexity of cells.

¹⁴ J. S. Semler, “*Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon*,” *Texte zur Kirchen-und Theologiegeschichte*, vol. 5 (Guetersloh: 1967), 43, 47, 55, 58ff; Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, trans. Edwin W. Leverenz and Rudolph F. Norden (St. Louis: Concordia, 1974), 15.

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Scripture and Word of God are very much to be distinguished, because we know the difference; just because someone has not previously seen that difference, that is no prohibition against us seeing it.” Semler believed that Scripture contains God’s Word, but also contains much else. He could even suggest that a condensation of the Bible is possible in order that it would then be God’s Word.¹⁵ For Semler, on balance Scripture was not too different from any other book. He claimed that it was full of contradictions,¹⁶ and many, since Semler, have taken similar positions.¹⁷

This new view is a product of the Enlightenment. It successfully severed revelation from Scripture, so that Scripture is, at best, only a witness to revelation, but never revelation. There is a difference. A witness to revelation means that the encounter of God with the biblical writer is written in Scripture as the prophet/apostle’s response to God’s revelation. Thus Scripture is not a divine record of revelation but a human response to revelation. This empties Scripture of divine revelation, and to this degree lowers it to a human work. Divine revelation is confined to the encounter of God with the writer and not recorded in Scripture as such, for it is the Living Word of God (Jesus Christ) who is revelation and not the written Word of God.

In our time it is important to stress that when God’s Word to humans is confined to Jesus Christ, this is not essentially different from God’s Word confined to personal experience, as in Friedrich Schleiermacher’s *The Christian Faith*¹⁸ and subsequent existential systems. It is true that the focus has moved away from a revelation made to an individual to a revelation made through an individual, and it is true that the focus has moved away from revelation to a human to revelation made through One also divine. But the foundation is still limited to the existential realm, albeit on different levels, because Scripture is emptied of revelation.¹⁹ Rather, revelation is found outside Scripture within the Christian or in Christ.

¹⁵ Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 298.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁷ Maier, 47.

¹⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 1830; ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999). Schleiermacher is the father of existentialism. Like the New Testament scholar Bultmann in the 20th century, Schleiermacher attempted to reach the thinkers of his day, but did so by rejecting Scripture as revelation. Many biblical and theological scholars do the same in attempting to reach the scientifically minded through dismissing the literal/historical propositional revelation of Genesis 1–2.

¹⁹ When I speak of Scripture being emptied of revelation, this does not deny that (to neo-Orthodox theologians like Barth and Brunner) Scripture repeatedly becomes revelation in an encounter of God with the reader, but it points out that Scripture is not revelation outside of these encounters. It is not inherently revelation. Encounter revelation places revelation within the encounter rather than within Scripture. The Holy Spirit Author of Scripture opens human understanding to the inherent revelation in Scripture.

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Hence, at best, Scripture is only a medium through which revelation comes. There is no “given” revelation in Scripture, it is merely a conduit for revelation and never revelation itself. On a practical level, this means that existentialists will look within themselves more than within Scripture to find God (Schleiermacher’s theology focuses on a feeling of absolute dependence upon God—within human experience, rather than within biblical revelation).

Many theologians reject Scripture as the Word of God, speaking of it merely as a witness to God (Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Thomas Torrance, Hans Frei, Paul Tillich, Georg Stroup, George Lindbeck, G. C. Berkouwer, Stanley Grenz, Avery Dulles, James Barr, David Tracy, David Kelsey, and Donald Bloesch). In fact Colin Gunton, of King’s College, London, likens Barth’s view, in many respects, to “mainstream Christian tradition including that of Roman Catholicism, in holding clearly to the view that Scripture is not revelation, but in some sense mediator of it.”²⁰

But is Scripture only a witness to God, or medium for God, rather than a Word from God? How would we know anything about Jesus Christ except in Scripture? Of necessity Scripture must be the written revelation of God in order for us to know anything about Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. To deny Scripture as revelation is to deny revelation about what and who it presents, including Jesus Christ. It is not possible for Jesus Christ to be God’s revelation to humanity if Scripture, which tells about this revelation, is not itself God’s revelation about Jesus Christ. We cannot accept one as revelation without the prior acceptance of the other.

Scripture as revelation separates it from God’s revelation in nature, for the difference lies in God’s speech in Scripture. The speaking God is first encountered in Scripture itself, and not in some noncognitive subjective experience. The limitations of general revelation are overcome only when Scripture is God’s revelation about Himself, His relationship with humans, the plan of salvation, and the final destiny of humankind—none of which is understood from nature alone. So one must move away from Barth’s encounter as revelation and Panenberg’s history as revelation to the biblical position of Scripture as revelation.

Propositional Nature of Scripture

In contrast to general revelation in nature and encountering “revelation” in theology, scriptural revelation is cognitive—it speaks to humans in propositions.²¹ By definition the Word of God is a word from God, a message composed of many words, sentences, and hence propositions. Hence “no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried

²⁰ Colin Gunton, “All Scripture is Inspired?” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 14/3, New Series (1993), 242 (240–253).

²¹ This is not to limit biblical revelation only to propositions, but it is to reflect on the propositional nature of revelation.

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along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20–21). “God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets . . . in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:1–2). In the same way Paul can say, “When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Thess 2:13). There was no more severance of the divine and human in Scripture than there was a severance of the divine and human in Christ. The written Word of God and the living Word of God are an indivisible union. Those who, like Barth, oppose propositional revelation do so by using propositions, which is self-defeating to their argument. John Montgomery put it well: “Like logic itself, both the subject-object distinction and propositional thinking must be presupposed in all sensible investigations. Why? Because to argue against their necessity is to employ them already! When one asserts ‘Personal encounters, not propositions, yield truth,’ one is in fact stating a proposition.”²²

Idealism was right in believing humans need an absolute Word, but it was wrong in thinking humans arrive at that Word through their own efforts. Existentialism was right in recognizing human inability in such a quest, but wrong in rejecting an absolute Word.²³ In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein (1889–1951) argues that “the sense of the world must lie outside the world,”²⁴ or beyond human experience. Only one who is God can take in the whole perspective, a view that calls into question the attempts to interpret history without revelation (as in Kant and Huxley).²⁵ This concept undercuts both philosophers who attempt to explain the empirical and scientists who attempt to explain the visible. None of them are God. God, who is omnipresent and omniscient, has spoken propositionally about some of these matters in Scripture (see Heb 1:1–2).

In commenting on Wittgenstein’s contribution, Montgomery stated, “This insight has revolutionized all branches of philosophy and has dealt a virtual deathblow to metaphysical idealism.”²⁶ “The analytical philosophy movement—Wittgenstein’s continuing legacy—has provided the tools by which early 20th-century existential skepticism toward objective biblical truth can be effectively countered, and the fact of ‘divine intervention’ through Scripture meaningfully proclaimed.”²⁷

²² John W. Montgomery, *The Suicide of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1970), 334.

²³ *Ibid.*, 364.

²⁴ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and Montgomery, *The Suicide of Christian Theology*, 365.

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within The Limits of Reason Alone*, 1934; trans. Theodore M. Green and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960). Julian Huxley, *Religion Without Revelation* (New York: Harper Brothers, Rev., 1957).

²⁶ Montgomery, 365.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 367.

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The work of Wittgenstein has exposed the fallacy of existential subjectivity. A wordless encounter or a meeting of God in the immediacy of one's own existence is seen to be without any objective norm. With the rejection of propositional truth, the subjective encounter is left without objective evaluation. Montgomery concludes, "Today, as never before, philosophical thought manifests a passion for objective, empirical truth, and the ordinary-language philosophers (whose work stems from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*) are stressing the importance of verbal expression in conveying truth. Idealistic castles-in-air have been deflated and existential wanderings in the labyrinth of subjectivity have been discredited. Evangelicals in the 21st century have an unparalleled opportunity to affirm the relevance of their high view of Scripture. The 'divine intervention' for which Wittgenstein longed can with confidence be offered to modern man in the totally veracious, inscripturated Word of God."²⁸

There is no good news for postmoderns in the 21st century unless truth is inscripturated in propositions. The silent god of the encountering experience is as absent as the god of Deism, for whether God meets one in the silence of the mind or does not meet one in the silence of space, there is no spoken Word. Scripture is the empirical evidence that God is not silent. He has spoken. If humankind would approach Scripture to listen to what it says and follow God as their God, it would revolutionize coming history. For too long humans have played god, even under the name of neoorthodoxy. To reject propositional revelation and end up with a dumb god is to be left with the cogitations of one's own mind. At least they are propositional. One then attributes more to one's own propositional ability than to God's, and in so doing, ousts God from His place as the speaking God.

Testimony of Scripture to its Revelation

Scripture presents itself as God's revelation. God asked Aaron to "teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses" (Lev 10:11).²⁹ King Josiah went to the temple with priests and prophets and others and "read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD," and he pledged "to follow the LORD and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book" (2 Kgs 23:2-3). King Josiah declared that God had been angry because the fathers "have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book" (2 Chron 34:21). Ezra and the Levites "read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and

²⁸ Ibid., 370.

²⁹ The fact that earlier decrees of God were later annulled (e.g., circumcision, Acts 15:1-11, 22-29) or made obsolete (e.g., the old covenant sacrifices, Heb 8:13; 9:15-28) does not refute their being God's decrees. They were divine revelation to those who lived prior to the coming of Christ, and their fulfillment in Christ does not negate them as revelation, but affirms their function to point to Him as their fulfillment.

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giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read” (Neh 8:8).

These leaders looked to the written Word of God and had complete confidence in it as God’s revelation in human words—words that are powerful to change and enlighten and have within them the evidence of the divine. It is vital that the words of Scripture be taken seriously. Throughout the history of Israel, Judah, and the Christian church, many have taken them seriously. God’s revelation in Scripture has brought conversions and inspired great lives, great preaching, the great international missionary outreach, and the international Bible societies’ translation work.

Nowhere in Scripture do we find Jesus speaking about a dynamic view of revelation. The preeminent example of His not speaking of a dynamic view of revelation is on the Emmaus road after His resurrection (Luke 24:13–35). Two disciples were discouraged, believing that Christ was dead. He joined them. If Christ is revelation, then His best way to overcome their discouragement was to manifest Himself to them. But He didn’t. He took a much longer route, for He wanted them to see the evidence for who He is from the propositional revelation of Scripture. He even rebuked them for not giving heed to propositional revelation in the Old Testament. “He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:25–26).

In His three crucial temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11), He overcame by quoting three verses from Deuteronomy (Matt 4:4–Deut. 8:3; Matt 4:7–Deut 6:16; Matt 4:10–Deut 6:13), showing His belief in divine power in God’s revealed Word. He did not answer Satan by saying, “I am the living Word” and defeat the tempter by His omnipotent power. He was tempted and overcame like all other humans (Heb 4:15). The fact that He used the written Word shows that He believed in its divine authority, in its inherent revelation.

Evidently Satan knew that, too, because he quoted Scripture in the second temptation (Matt 4:6), and Christ’s authoritative answers from Scripture caused Satan to leave defeated (Matt 4:11). Humans overcome by the written Word of God. King David, a type of Christ, declared, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11). Scripture confirms this power, “For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12). King David affirmed, “I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes” (Ps 119:99). “The entrance of your word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (Ps 119:130). No wonder he could say, “I have put my hope in your word” (Ps 119:147). The Word of God has godlike power because it is God’s

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Word. Jesus knew this, defeated the enemy through using the Word, and by doing this showed His respect for it as the cognitive revelation from God.

This doesn't make Scripture magical, as if it houses some power to be used on demand. There is no bibliolatry involved; Christ did not worship the writings. When invited to worship Satan He clearly stated, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (Matt 4:10). Christ didn't look to Scripture alone, but to the divine author and His Word together. Christ knew that God and His Word are to be united, as were His own divine-human reality on another level. It was the Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted (Matt 4:1). It was the Spirit and His Scriptures that helped Him overcome. The presence of the Revealer and His revelation must always be held together. The use of Scripture and the interpretation of Scripture is to be done in relationship with its divine author, and never without.

Throughout His ministry Jesus never called attention to Himself as God's revelation to humans. Although He did mention that He revealed the Father on one occasion (John 14:8, 9), He consistently directed His hearers to the written Word of God. He asked the lawyer, "What is written in the Law . . . How do you read it?" (Luke 10:26). The lawyer quoted Deut 6:5—"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"—and Lev 19:8—"Love your neighbor as yourself" (John 10:27). And Jesus replied "You have answered correctly. . . . Do this and live" (John 10:28). Repeatedly Jesus asked His hearers if they had read the Old Testament, calling them "Scriptures" (*graphe*, Matt 21:42). His reference to these Scriptures showed He believed in the historicity of David in the temple (Matt 12:3–4; Mark 2:25; Luke 6:3), of the priests in the temple (Matt 12:5–8), and of the creation of Adam and Eve (Matt 19:4). Christ referred to the Mosaic authorship of Exodus (Mark 12:26; Exod 3:6), and made reference to various psalms (Matt 21:16, Ps 8:2; Mark 12:10, Ps 118:22–23).

The validity of biblical propositions is found in Scripture. One example concerns the references to the Old Testament as "written for our instruction"—this includes we who live in the end-time. If what was written so long ago has instructive relevance for today, then it must be propositional revelation. George W. Knight III, wrote an insightful article on this point in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*.³⁰ Even an ad hoc situation turns out to have universal application. Thus the Ten Commandments, though given to an Israel recently liberated from Egypt (Exod 20:2), are proclaimed by Jesus to cause people to enter life in His day (Matt 19:17–19), are presented by Paul to be kept in his time (Rom 13:8–10), and promoted by James for those who read his letter (James 2:8–13).

³⁰ George W. Knight III, "The Scriptures Were Written for Our Instruction," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 39/1 (March 1996), 3–13. The paragraphs in this section contain his thinking (biblical texts), with additional insights added.

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Here are a few more examples. The first example concerns a law in the Old Testament. “For it is written in the Law of Moses: ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.’ Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest” (1 Cor. 9:9–10). The original truth-intent of the Old Testament instruction takes on a broader audience in the New Testament. The original truth-intent remains, but the audience is vastly expanded.

The second example refers to events that happened to Israel. Paul says, “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11). Note in each of these examples it is the written Scripture that acts as guidance years after the events given, as an example or guide to the Christian church. The cognitive revelation in Scripture has more than an original intent; it has an original truth-intent that has universal application. The guidance first given is equally valid to contemporary followers of Christ. No wonder Paul can say, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16–17).

The third example refers to the way events of the past, including Christ’s experience, were written in the Scriptures to help later readers. “Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:2–4). Clearly Christ’s example was written in the Scriptures to guide His followers. It was propositional revelation to that end.

The fourth example is Christ’s view of the Scriptures. Note His balance: (1) He “explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:25–27), and (2) He says, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are they which testify about me” (John 5:39). Christ showed His disciples from Scripture why they should not be discouraged, because His crucifixion and resurrection were prophesied. In the second passage, Christ speaks to unbelievers who rejected Him (John 5:37–38). They approached Scripture without a relationship with God (vs. 38, 40, 42), and thought that by so doing they merited eternal life, when they should have found in Scripture evidence (testimony) that they needed Christ as their only Savior. On both occasions Christ was saying Scripture testifies about Him.

Scripture Testifies to a Literal/Historical Creation

Scripture testifies to God as creator (Gen 6:7; Deut 4:32; Neh 9:6; Ps 95:3–6; 104: 2–5,10–24;115:15–16; 136:5–9; 146:6; Isa 40:26; 42:5; 45:12;

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Amos 4:13; Mal 2:10). The New Testament speaks of creation (Mark 10:6; 13:19; Rom 1:20; 8:22; 2 Pet 3:4; Rev 3:14). Beings worship at the throne of God, saying, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things” (Rev 4:11). Even the eternal gospel is linked to a call to “every nation” on earth to worship the one “who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev 14:6–7).

Just as God and Christ were together in the supernatural work of salvation (John 3:16), so they were together in the supernatural work of creation (Heb 1:1–2). Christ and the Holy Spirit work together in the supernatural work of re-creation (2 Cor 5:17; Col 1:27; John 17:17; Rom 15:16b). On the basis of the portrayal of God throughout Scripture it is logical to deduce that He was no more dependent on the natural process of evolution to create than He is dependent upon human works to save. There are works that only God can do—atonement sacrifice for humans, regeneration in humans, and a creation of a new heavens and a new world (Isa 65:17; cf. Rev 21:1) for the redeemed. Creation is something that only God can do (Neh 9:6). It is a sign of who He is (Ps 95:6).

Theistic evolutionists believe that God is the Creator, but differ with creationists on how He created. Scripture never suggests that Christ used the evolutionary process in creation. Given a cosmic controversy, and Satan’s hatred of the Creator/Redeemer Christ, wouldn’t one expect a counterfeit creation claim to the biblical account? After all, Scripture speaks of other counterfeits, such as salvation by human effort in place of salvation as a gift (Rom 10:3), the little horn counterfeit priesthood on earth in place of Christ’s priesthood in heaven’s sanctuary (Dan 8:9–12), Satan appearing as an angel of light in place of the second coming (2 Cor 11:14; Matt 24:23–24; 1 Thes 4:16–18). Each is a replacement of the Creator by a created idea or person, just as creation by evolution replaces Christ’s speaking, molding, and forming things into existence. The work of nature replaces the work of the Creator. Just as the natural worldview replaces supernatural revelation, so the natural worldview replaces supernatural creation. The latter is the logical conclusion of the first. By contrast, creation by God is found throughout Scripture as God’s work. Christ speaks of God as Creator—in reference to Genesis 1–2 (Matt 19:4–5), the very chapters rejected as non-literal and non-historical myth (Bultmann) or saga (Barth). G. C. Berkouwer was right when he wrote, “science cannot become an ‘interpreter’ alongside of Scripture itself.”³¹ If all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:18), then it follows that “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4; cf. Deut 8:3).

“In fact, every NT writer explicitly or implicitly affirms the historicity of Genesis 1–11 (see Matt 19:4, 5; 24:37–39; Mark 10:6; Luke 3:38; 17:26, 27;

³¹ Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Holy Scripture*, trans. Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 134.

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Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 6:16; 2 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:312; 1 Tim 2:13, 14; Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5; James 3:9; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11, 14; Rev 14:7).³²

Is an External Interpretive Tool Required in Place of the Internal Interpretive Tool of *Sola Scriptura*?

It is well known that Scripture interprets Scripture (*sola scriptura*). That's why all the biblical references to creation are important to determining whether the Genesis 1–2 account is to be taken literally. In the above references we found no evidence for a non-literal/historical interpretation of creation.

What about *sola scriptura* in this time when some claim that science is a better interpreter of the biblical record of creation? Does Darwinian or neo-Darwinian evolution explain the origin of life, thus providing a new hermeneutical tool when interpreting the Genesis creation? G. C. Berkouwer asks, about this new “occasion” for understanding Scripture, “What is the relationship between such an ‘occasion’ and the authoritative power of the ‘Sacred Scripture is its own interpreter?’” (*sui ipsius interpret*).³³ He concludes that the Reformation principle remains, for “the discussion about Scripture, its God-breathed character and authority, cannot take place via a coerced concession to a new hermeneutical method and the ‘occasion’ of science.”³⁴ I concur with him, and not with a principle of David Tracy, who says the theologian “finds that his ethical commitment to the morality of scientific knowledge forces him to assume a critical posture towards his own and his tradition’s beliefs.”³⁵

What about The 21st Century Scientific Worldview?

If Scripture is God’s revelation to us, does it have authority in the realm of metaphysics? In other words, does the biblical presentation of a literal/historical creation in Genesis 1–2 present an authoritative account that can be accepted by faith, just as salvation through Christ’s atonement is accepted by faith? Or, must Scripture as revelation give way to science as a more empirical reading of created reality? Does the alleged scientific view of the origin of species disprove the Genesis account of origins? Is the Genesis account a mere primitive attempt to describe what the allegedly more enlightened and sophisticated scientific account presents in the 21st century? Is it time for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to update its interpretation of the Genesis account in the light of science, as so many other churches have done? Or is it possible to marry two mutually exclusive worldviews (supernatural and natural) and live at peace? Or should one consider the domains of Scripture and science as decidedly different, with

³² Richard M. Davidson, “Biblical Interpretation,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), *SDA Bible Commentary*, 12:70.

³³ Berkouwer, 133.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁵ David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 7.

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belief as the final word for the Genesis account and empirical evidence as the final word for science?³⁶

In order to consider some of these questions, we will evaluate the important article of Fritz Guy, “Interpreting Genesis One in the Twenty-first Century.”³⁷ Fritz Guy is an influential Adventist theologian who presents a non-literal/historical view of Genesis 1–2, and his view must give comfort and support to many Adventist scientists, for it comes to the Genesis account with the assumption that the “scientific” view of origins is very persuasive. His article is representative of the views of some Adventist scholars. It should not be ignored. It is crucial to the three years’ study that the church is giving to the relationship between faith and science. I commend Fritz Guy for writing his view with clarity and conviction. There is no mistaking where he stands. So his contribution deserves careful study. First we should note that there are many things in the article with which we can agree,³⁸ and these should not go unnoticed, but these do not alter the major purpose of his contribution.

Guy clearly lays out three principle ways to interpret the creation account in Gen 1:1–2:3. He suggests the chapter is either “quasiscientific,” “antirealistic” or “theological.”³⁹ He prefers the last one. In that context he defers to science when interpreting Gen 1 and 2, because empirical science seems more valid to him than the classical interpretation of the creation account that he confines to a spiritual/ theological presentation. Guy dismisses the biblical cosmology of a

³⁶ Even though Genesis 1–2 has nothing to say about science, it is to be understood first within the authority of biblical revelation with its scientific hermeneutic of *sola scriptura*, where the entire context of Scripture on creation corroborates the immediate contextual understanding of Genesis 1–2. Hence the context for understanding the Genesis 1–2 is the canon of divine revelation, rather than the secular context of science.

³⁷ Guy, 5–16.

³⁸ Some examples are: the Sabbath is the climax of the Genesis creation account (6); Ellen White says that long-held truths are not proof that our ideas are infallible (8); science does not and cannot claim that the universe actually began in a Big Bang about 14 billions years ago, even if appearances suggest it (10); antirealism disassociates the observational from the theoretical (10); and, all observation is theory laden (10). He recognizes the following issues: that the brutality and wastefulness of the long evolutionary process is incompatible with an all-wise, all powerful, and all-loving God (8); that if death was present throughout the long evolutionary process, then in what sense is death sin’s wages, and in what sense did humans fall? (8, 13); but he opts for the long ages anyway, because he believes empirical evidence dictates it.

³⁹ Guy seems to read the Genesis account with naturalistic assumptions, saying “Creation progresses from light to the image of God in humanity, from the physically elementary to the psychosocially complex.” (6). He asks if Genesis 1 tells “us how the world actually began or what it means?” (6). He opts for purpose and meaning (8). But, does it not give us both? Guy approaches Genesis 1 to interpret it in light of so-called empirical science. He says, “Accumulating empirical evidence regarding the history of the universe, planet earth, and life raises an obvious and unavoidable issue: how does this evidence affect an interpretation of Genesis 1?” (7). He doesn’t come to Genesis 1–2 as divine revelation and ask how we should interpret the empirical claims of naturalism in the light of the Genesis account. Apparently, to Guy, empirical science has more authority than divine revelation. So it is important that we evaluate the authenticity of empirical claims by science.

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three-decker universe but apparently accepts the big bang cosmology of science.⁴⁰ Could it be that the biblical cosmology is just as non-scientific as scientists in the 21st century speaking of sunrise and sunset? Guy considers the six day creation week as non-literal/historical, whereas the long ages of naturalistic evolution are empirical/scientific. It should be clearly noted that Guy believes in God as the Creator, and he believes in a functional view of revelation,⁴¹ but does not see a literal/historical creation week as revelation.

We need to pause here and remember the famous lecture, “New Testament and Mythology,” that the New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann presented at a pastors’ conference on April 21, 1941, in Frankfurt, Germany. Bultmann said, “The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character.” It is “obsolete.” “Can Christian preaching expect modern man to accept the mythical view of the world as true? To do so would be both senseless and impossible. It would be senseless, because there is nothing specifically Christian in the mythical view of the world as such. It is simply the cosmology of a pre-scientific age.” “For all our thinking to-day is shaped irrevocably by modern science. A blind acceptance of the New Testament mythology would be arbitrary . . . It would involve a sacrifice of the intellect which could have only one result—a curious form of schizophrenia and insincerity. It would mean accepting a view of the world in our faith and religion which we should deny in our everyday life. Modern thought as we have inherited it brings with it criticism of the New Testament view of the world.”⁴²

What is Bultmann saying? Acceptance by modern man, meaning scientifically sophisticated man, necessitates a change of a biblical teaching method. He admits the impossibility of marrying two mutually exclusive worldviews, the naturalistic worldview of science and the supernaturalistic worldview of Scripture. So he believes he has resolved the tension by siding with the modern/scientific naturalistic worldview and jettisons the supernaturalistic worldview, but with disastrous results.

Look what he did to the propositional beliefs of biblical revelation. He said, “No one who is old enough to think for himself supposes that God lives in a local heaven. There is no longer any heaven in the traditional sense of the word . . . We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds

⁴⁰ Guy, 6,10.

⁴¹ Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically* (Berrien Spring: Andrews UP, 1999), 146 (a functional rather than an infallible view of Scripture). He says, “Scripture consists of narratives and interpretations of revelatory events” (98), and “the understanding of the authority of scripture is changing from infallibility to reliability; and the understanding of its function in Christian life is changing from ‘code book’ to ‘case book.’” Guy considers this change to a ‘case book’ to be “an important improvement” (91). For a presentation and evaluation of *Thinking Theologically*, see Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, 1:110–116.

⁴² Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology” in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, 1st English trans. 1953, ed., Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K, 1964, 1953), 1–4 (italics his).

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of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:154ff.)” “Even if we believe that the world as we know it will come to an end in time, we expect the end to take the form of a natural catastrophe, not of a mythical event such as the New Testament expects.”⁴³

Bultmann rightly says that “the biblical doctrine that death is the punishment of sin is equally abhorrent to naturalism and idealism.” But he sides with them in saying, “the only criticism of the New Testament which is theologically relevant is that which arises necessarily out of the situation of modern man.” In other words, the prevailing cultural worldview (or the existential reality of human understanding) is the criterion for critiquing Scripture. He says attributing “human mortality to the fall of Adam is sheer nonsense,” and he objects to the atonement, for how “can the guilt of one man be expiated by the death of another who is sinless—if indeed one may speak of a sinless man at all? What primitive notions of guilt and righteousness does this imply? And what primitive idea of God? The rationale of sacrifice in general may of course throw some light on the theory of the atonement, but even so, what a primitive mythology it is, that a divine Being should become incarnate, and atone for the sins of men through his own blood!”⁴⁴ (Death before the fall and the unnecessary death of Christ to make atonement were also views in papers of other presenters in the Faith and Science Conference at Glacier View Ranch, August 13–20, 2003).

At the end of the day, Bultmann believed he had gone beyond the primitive ideas of Scripture to the more sophisticated ideas of humans who live in an age of empirical science. It is the existential influence of Heidegger and the scientific influence of naturalism that form the human criterion by which he judged Scripture as primitive and hence mythological. At least this should indicate the slippery slope that one scholar tumbled down in making too much of the cosmological worldview of Scripture. He failed to grasp that his questioning of Scripture and placing of human ideas above divine revelation placed him on the wrong side of the biblical cosmic controversy worldview.

The crux of Guy’s article, it seems to me, is the placing of things of nature in the empirical/scientific worldview and things of Genesis 1–2 in the spiritual/theological worldview. A quick glance at this division would logically lead one to think that the empirical/scientific way of looking at creation has an advantage over the spiritual/theological way of looking at creation. The rest of the article substantiates that this is Guy’s conclusion. It is necessary, therefore, to unpack the normal meaning of the terms empirical and scientific and apply them

⁴³ Bultmann, 4–5. See also the Gifford Lectures that Bultmann delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1955, where eschatology is confined to the ever-repeated coming of the Holy Spirit in encounters to human existence, replacing a final cosmic coming of Christ. This is the extent of the reinterpretation and reductionism of Bultmann’s existential hermeneutic. Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1957).

⁴⁴ Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth*, 7.

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to the reasoning of Guy's article.⁴⁵ It should be remembered that the attempt to restrict meaning to the empirical by Logical Positivism ended in failure.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ After which we will also consider other matters he presents.

⁴⁶ Logical positivism came out of a University of Vienna seminar conducted by Moritz Schlick in 1923. It combined the logical rigor of Cambridge with the positivism of Vienna. The members (known as the Vienna Circle) included Morris Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Victor Kraft, Herbert Feigl, and Otto Neurath, who, though "primarily scientists rather than philosophers," were interested in the philosophy of science. Their concerns had been largely shaped by Einstein. They thought they were modern but were rather "the last spokesmen of the Enlightenment." They stood on the border between the change from modernity to postmodernity. The enlarging view of postmodernity would question the narrow view of meaning held by the logical positivists.

Here is the way it developed. Claiming to have exclusive right to the empirical scientific method, the Vienna Circle said there are only two types of meaningful language: (1) Mathematicological truths, where the predicate is included in the subject (such as five minus two is three or two plus two equals four). Nothing is added in the predicate that is not already understood in the subject. These are analytical, or *a priori* statements. They are simply true because they are obvious. (2) Empirical truths, such as the flower in the vase is dead, adds in the predicate something not included in the subject, and is considered a synthetic, or *a posteriori*, statement. These statements or truths are verifiable through sense data. Some adherents of logical positivism call the movement logical empiricism because of the emphasis on empirical verification.

Therefore, statements that define terms (analytical) or statements that have sense data to verify or falsify them (synthetic) are the only types of meaningful statements. According to logical positivism, any other kind of statement besides the mathematicological and empirical statements are nonsense. For there are only three possible categories of language—empirical, *a priori*, and emotive. Theology is placed in the latter category. This means that language used about metaphysics and theology is meaningless.

To understand the impact of analytical philosophy on theology, we must remember that Kant—with his rejection of the transempirical realm as open to sense perceptions, and his rejection of cognitive propositions—set the stage for this kind of thinking. Because of his enormous influence, "many religious philosophers since the time of Kant have contended that God is intellectually unknowable."

Are empiricists being empirical when they reject metaphysical statements as meaningless? "A more empirical, less doctrinaire approach to language would show that there are many noteworthy functions of language besides the analytic and the empirically informative. Among these are the imperative, performative, and interrogative functions of speech." On this basis, how can the scientific method be appraised? As Gordon R. Lewis notes, referring to Edward John Carnell, "No experiment can verify a statement about the value of the scientific method."

Thus logical positivism confined truth statements, or statements of meaning, to a small part of life. All other statements of poetry, music, religion, and art were renounced. But how can anyone live in such a narrowly prescribed world? Furthermore, the theory could not stand under its own test for a truth statement. For how can a theory of language that accepts only mathematicological and empirical statements be tested by that standard? This caused the demise of logical positivism, for it could not live up to its own theory.

Theological propositions transcend human verifiability. There is no empirical evidence for many of the major propositions of theology. For example, the fact that God is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and knows the end from the beginning is beyond human proof. The belief that Jesus was born of a virgin, was resurrected, ascended to heaven, and will return again is not open to human verification. These matters transcend the human because they have to do with the divine. It is like a boy at the beach with his bucket trying to capture the ocean. The vast expanse cannot even be seen by the boy, let alone placed in his bucket.

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First, consider the relegation of Scripture to a spiritual/theological status compared to science as empirical/scientific. Guy denies that Genesis 1–2 is literal/historical “in view of current empirical evidence, including radiometric dating, that suggest a very long history of changing life forms.”⁴⁷ However, empirical research is questioning radiometric dating.⁴⁸ Elaine Kennedy cites research studies in Wyoming, Arizona, coastal Peru, and Argentina that call in question geologic time.⁴⁹ Ariel Roth gives compelling evidence questioning geologic time. He states that “Paraconformities pose a serious challenge to the standard geologic time scale, radiometric dating, and interpretations of extended time for the development of life on earth. They are what would be expected from the rapid deposition of sediments during the Genesis Flood.”⁵⁰ He states that “Present rates of erosion, even when corrected for the effects of agriculture, are so fast, that if the geologic time scale is correct, the continents would have been eroded away over a hundred times.”⁵¹ In questioning the naturalistic explanations for the origin of life, L. J. Gibson argues that even the oldest age imaginable would not explain the origin of life without a Creator, for it “is widely recognized that even 15 billion years is much too short a time to plausibly allow for life to originate spontaneously.”⁵² So, apparently, there is too little time to even get the process of evolution started, and yet there is far too much time to

Theological language transcends empirical verification, not because it is meaningless but because it is far greater than the human methods to analyze it. This point was completely missed by logical positivism. Meaningful cognitive language cannot be restricted to the analytical and empirical. It makes sense to speak about God’s creative acts in Genesis 1–2 in ways that are appropriate to His transcendency over everything human. To use God-talk when describing the acts of humans is not appropriate. But to use God-talk about God is not only appropriate, but necessary.

Danger of Empirical Evidence. Logical positivism was wrong to dismiss theological language because it did not meet its empirical evaluation. It overlooked the fact that there is a danger of empirical evidence in the religious realm. Theological language can be used by counterfeit prophets. In His Olivet talk, Christ repeatedly warned against false prophets (Matt 24:11, 24) and false christs (Matt 24:5, 24), even though they are empirically present. Such false claims can only be tested if Scripture is divine propositional revelation (1 Thes 5:20–22; 1 John 4:1; Isa 8:20, James 1:17; Deut 18:21–22; 1 John 4:2–3; Pet 1:21; Matt 7:16, 18–20; Gal 5:22–23). For sources and a fuller presentation, see Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena*, vol 1, chapter 2, 53–76.

⁴⁷ Guy, “Interpreting,” 8.

⁴⁸ See G. Brent Dalrymple, *The Age of the Earth* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991); Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1977); A. Ariel Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1998).

⁴⁹ Elaine Kennedy, “Time and Geology: A Positive Perspective.” Paper for the Faith and Science Conference, Glacier View, CO., August, 2003.

⁵⁰ Ariel A. Roth, “Scientific Evidence that Affirms a Recent Creation.” Paper for the Faith and Science Conference, Glacier View, CO, August 2003, 5. Leonard Brand makes a case that the forming of the geological column may have began right after creation, and not waited until the global flood.

⁵¹ Ariel A. Roth, 8.

⁵² L. J. Gibson, “Biology and Time.” Paper for Faith and Science Conference Glacier View, CO, August, 2003, 1.

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protect the earth from being flat and the oceans filled (from erosion). On this basis, the mountains and oceans are empirical evidence questioning geologic time.

Guy apparently overlooks the fact that the whole book of Genesis is structured by the word “generations” (*tōlēdōt*), so that the statement “these are the generations of the heavens and the earth” in the Genesis 2:4 (KJV) creation account is as literal/historical as “these are the generations of Noah” (Gen 6:9, KJV), or as literal/historical as God’s promise to establish His covenant with Abraham “and thy seed after thee in their generations” (Gen 17:7, KJV). The non-literal/historical views of the Genesis account have been critiqued by a number of scholars.⁵³ Also, some scientists are calling in question neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory because random selection and chance “runs counter to what is absolutely fundamental to the operation of any formal language system,” for “at the heart of the living world is a sophisticated information-communicating system based on the language of DNA.”⁵⁴

Guy apparently considers the creation account as primitive (non literal/historical) compared to the 21st century sophisticated science about origins (empirical/scientific). But isn’t macro-evolution primitive compared to the complexity of information systems and the astounding performance of complex tasks at the cellular systems level that are goal centered?⁵⁵ By definition macro-evolution (evolving from the simple to the complex on purely naturalistic

⁵³ The non-literal/historical views of Genesis 1-2 (literary framework, theology, liturgy, day-age symbolism, metaphor/parable, and vision) have all been countered. For a thorough presentation supporting the historicity of Genesis 1–2 and presentation of the structure of Genesis see Richard M. Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” *JATS*, 14/2 (Spring 2003): 4–43. On structure, see *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed., Francis D. Nichol (Washington: Review and Herald, rev. ed. 1976), 1:221.

⁵⁴ Neil Broom, *How Blind Is the Watchmaker?* 144.

⁵⁵ See sources in footnote 1, particularly William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, Neil Broom, *How Blind Is the Watchmaker?*, and Michael Behe’s *Darwin’s Black Box*. Cells, with their molecules, are the “bedrock of nature.” One cannot go lower. They are the “ground level of life.” Cells are complex. There is no simplicity prior to the cell. So cells are irreducibly complex. Irreducible complexity denies a gradual evolutionary development. This means that natural selection, to have any meaning, requires acceptance of a fully functional acquisition. Evolutionary theory has no empirical evidence for how each part became fully functional, and thus complex. If there is complexity before natural selection can meaningfully take place, this calls evolution in question. Some examples of irreducible complexity are (1) cells containing thousands of different kinds of proteins, each assigned a specific task, such as: the nucleus for storage of DNA, the mitochondria which produce energy for the cell, the endoplasmic reticulum which processes proteins, the Golgi apparatus, a shunt off station for proteins to be transported out, the lysome garbage disposal unit, and the peroxisome which helps metabolize fats (Behe, 102); (2) a cilium contains 200 different proteins and is a complex motor engineered with many parts in place in order for it to function as precision equipment; and (3) the coagulation cascade in blood, with its many components. There are many other examples of complexity that present fully functional systems/machines that are irreducibly complex. Function does not take place within the theory of gradualism, for part of a system is no better than a boat without an oar, a steering mechanism, and water to navigate, etc.

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grounds) is logically simplistic. “There is no logical reason why a purely material system should want to embark on a self-improvement program,”⁵⁶ for intentionality transcends the purely material. Of course Guy knows this, and has God using the material system. But is this logical?⁵⁷ We will answer this later.

Guy states that “the astronomical universe is very old, but the present terrestrial ecosystem is relatively young” and this “certainly clashes with a literal interpretation” of Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11.⁵⁸ But if Guy could accept Genesis 1–2 as God’s divine revelation, he would see that the creation of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 can be billions of years ago, meaning that the materials of the earth were prepared a long time before creation week, and hence they were “without form” (Hebrew noun, *tohû*) and “void” (Hebrew noun *bohû*), meaning formless and empty (Gen 1:2). They were formed (days 1–3, Gen 1:3–13) and filled (days 4–6, Gen 1:14–31) in a relatively recent literal/historical creation. Thus Genesis 1:2 is interpreted as a passive gap between the original creation and the creation week of the earth and its own surrounding heavens. Richard Davidson has persuasively argued this interpretation of the biblical text.⁵⁹

Referring to an alleged demonic evolution in an active gap theory of Genesis 1:2, Guy says, “One arguably plausible alternative to the idea of demonic evolution is the idea of creation as divine self-limitation.”⁶⁰ Does Scripture present such an idea of God’s self-limitation in creation? Scripture presents creation as one of the mighty acts of God, far beyond any self-limitation. “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps 33:9). “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Heb 11:3). The phrase “God said” for each of the six days of creation (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24) reveals the power of His creative word. For all but one of the days, “God said” is followed by “and it was so,” proclaiming the power of His commands. This great power is further

⁵⁶ Broom, 158.

⁵⁷ Darwin’s term “natural selection” was not meant to imply intention (*Origin of Species*, chapter 4, e.g., “insensibly working” [133], cf. “secondary causes” or “laws impressed on matter by the Creator” [458], which seem contradictory). In Neo-Darwinian study selection is an *internal* event within evolution, and not *external* from beyond the process (as in God). Atheistic evolutionists deny any intelligence operating through the material processes. Their assumption that a material process desires self-improvement is illogical, for how can impersonal forces be endowed with intelligent functions within a purely materialistic worldview? Theistic evolutionists have God as the personal intelligent presence working within a purely materialistic worldview, which is equally illogical, for it ignores the mutually exclusive domains of the purely materialistic worldview and the supernaturalistic worldview. Scientist Neil Broom rightly believes that “the term ‘natural selection’ should be removed from the working vocabulary of evolutionary theory” (169). Broom provides a compelling critique of naturalism on the basis of intentionality in nature. See his chapter 10, “How Natural Is Natural Selection?” (159–169).

⁵⁸ Guy, “Interpreting,” 7.

⁵⁹ Davidson, 4–43.

⁶⁰ Guy, “Interpreting,” 9.

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demonstrated by the speed in which His commands were fulfilled, for the creation days were literal/historical, continuous, contiguous, 24 hour periods of time—for the Hebrew word for day, “*yôm*,” when used with the ordinals (2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc) is always a literal day.⁶¹

His commands had instant response. That’s why He could say each day that the newly created reality was “good” (3, 10, 13, 19, 20, 24). On the sixth day “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Gen 1:31). We are dealing with a literal/historical record that gives one method God used in creation—He commanded and it was so.

On the sixth day, referring to human creation, “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image’” (Gen 1:26–27; cf. Gen 5:1–3). Clearly humans did not evolve from animal descent, in the image of animals, but were made by God in His image. God “formed” Adam (Gen 2:7) and told him that death comes through disobedience to a command of God (not to eat of the forbidden tree (Gen 2:16–17), later corroborated by the wages of sin being death (Rom 6:23), which is an empirical fact.

Rejecting God’s commands (words) as one of His methods to create by opting for the naturalism of theistic evolution is as destructive as rejecting His command (word) not to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen 1:17; Gen 3:1, 4) by opting for an alleged empirical evidence. (Eve saw that the fruit gave wisdom as she listened to a snake speaking human language, Gen 3:1–6.) Eve and believers in evolution both see alleged empirical evidence in the natural realm and reject God’s supernatural Word and work. Furthermore, rejecting the literal/historical week of creation as the context for the literal/historical Sabbath is to reject the literal/historical foundational meaning of Christ’s Sabbath command (Exod 20:11), and as such rejects His Word. Is this any different from modern renditions of the fourth commandment—“Remember the Sabbath,” which omits God’s words about the seventh day and creation week?

Guy believes Scripture speaks to purpose and meaning (qualitative issues) compared to science speaking to process and structure (quantitative issues).⁶² But doesn’t Scripture also speak to the process, or God’s method of creation, as noted above? I concur with Scripture speaking about purpose and meaning, but doesn’t the literal/historical creation week contribute to the purpose and meaning of the Sabbath, a holy sacred rest after six days of creation (Gen 2:2–3)?

⁶¹ Context decides the meaning of the Hebrew word for day (*yom*). For example: “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created” (Gen 2:4). The word “when” in Hebrew is *yôm*, meaning in the day they were created—day = six days. “A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God’s wrath” (Job 20:28). Day = period of God’s wrath. “Like the coolness of snow at harvest time” (Prov 25:13). Time = period of time. In creation week the six days are designated within the time of an evening and a morning (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), and the seventh day (Gen 2:2–3) is the Sabbath of the fourth commandment (Exod 20:8–11).

⁶² Guy, 8.

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Genesis is only one of five books God wrote through Moses. Do these other books interpret the creation week as literal/historical? It is agreed that the author has a right to interpret his own words. All subsequent references of Moses to creation week⁶³ are given a literal/historical interpretation. For example, (1) manna fell for six days but none on the seventh day Sabbath (Exod 16:16:4–6, 21–23, 29–30). (2) The Sabbath in the fourth commandment is based on the seventh day God blessed after six days of creation (Exod 20:8–11). (3) The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people, “for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested (Exod 31:16–17). To interpret the creation record as non-literal/historical does not make sense in these subsequent references.

In the same way as we allow Moses to interpret himself, so we must allow Scripture to interpret itself. No biblical text on the Sabbath denies its foundational meaning and purpose in a literal/historical creation week. So if one uses the designation spiritual/theological for Genesis 1:1–2:3, one must not discount the literal/historical interpretation, nor should one disallow Scripture the right to interpret itself—before human reason, tradition, or experience attempt to do the same. For Scripture to interpret Scripture is a scientific method in biblical/theological methodology.

Hence, before discounting the Genesis account as literal/historical (in view of his understanding of naturalism and biblical cosmology), would it not be better for Guy to consider biblical corroboration of the historicity of Genesis 1–2 (as given previously) and also evaluate the evolutionary natural process from within science (as the Intelligent Design movement is doing) before coming to any final conclusion on Genesis 1–2? This, it seems to me, is a scientific approach because it recognizes the right of both Scripture and science to evaluation from within their own disciplines in harmony with the different language games analyses of Stephen Toulmin,⁶⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer,⁶⁵ and Ludwig Wittgenstein.⁶⁶ Then the speaking (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26), forming (Gen 2:7, 19) and making of Eve from Adam (Gen 2:21–23) as methods used by God to create in six literal/historical, continuous, contiguous 24 hour days (and not merely revelatory days) can be considered in their own right, and then the literal and historical dimensions of Genesis 1–2, and their affirmation as such in other biblical statements, are not excluded.

⁶³ Even the repetition of the Sabbath command with its additional meaning and purpose (celebrate liberation at the Red Sea—rest from enemies, Deut 5:15) is prefaced by reference to the Sabbath as a holy day of rest following six days of work (Deut 5:12–14), based upon the creation holy Sabbath following six days of creation (Gen 2:1–2).

⁶⁴ Stephen Toulmin, *Foresight and Understanding: An Inquiry Into the Aims of Science* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 17.

⁶⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 1960, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossword, 1990, 2nd rev. ed.), 96.

⁶⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1958, trans., G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 3rd ed.), 8–9, 11–12, 19, 23, 88, 241.

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With reference to Genesis 1–2, Guy claims that it “is simply impossible to read both of these passages of Scripture literally”⁶⁷ By contrast, Randall W. Younker comes to a different conclusion.⁶⁸ He rightly argues that rather than two authors for Genesis 1 (P) and Genesis 2 (J), Christ cites Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 as both Mosaic (Mark 10:6–9; Matt 19:4–5), so any alleged difference between Genesis 1 and 2 cannot be attributed to different authors, as historical critical scholarship claimed. Gen 2:4 states that creation was completed, yet Gen 2:5 specifies four things that did not yet exist (“no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up; the Lord had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground”). Each of the four speak about what it will be like after sin enters the world, and so are connected with the fall in Genesis 3. Even the Hebrew botanical terms in Genesis 1:11–12 (Hebrew *deshe*) and Genesis 2:5 are different, the latter being thorny xerophytes (Hebrew *siah*, Gen 21:15 and Job 30:4,7, a plant adapted to dry or desert conditions) due to sin (cf. Gen 3:18). The “plants of the field” (Gen 2:5, 3:18) are grown through labor because of the fall and its effects on creation (Gen 3:17). Before sin Adam and Eve merely worked the garden; after sin they worked the ground through painful toil (Gen 3:17b, 19). Rain didn’t come until the time of the flood, and as a result of human sin (Gen 7:3, 12). So after creation was completed (Gen 1) there were no signs of sin, no cursed earth, no changes in plants, no toiling man, and no rain. There are no contradictions in these future realities due to sin with the sinless creation that was pronounced “very good” in Gen 1:31. Younker allows Scripture to interpret Scripture and in so doing successfully refutes the alleged contradictions and the argument against the literal/historical reality of Genesis 1–2.

3. What does Guy mean by the terms empirical/scientific applied to science⁶⁹ in the area of creation, as opposed to the spiritual/theological account of

⁶⁷ Guy, 12

⁶⁸ Randall W. Younker, “Genesis 2: A Second Creation Account?” in *Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement*, ed. John Templeton Baldwin (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 69–78.

⁶⁹ One can distinguish two types of meaning to the word “empirical” when applied to science: (1) that which can be observed in the lab through replication, and (2) that which is assumed in a philosophical extrapolation of this replicable data across mega-time, which is impossible for any human observer to replicate, and hence metaphysical and not empirical. Even the first interpretation of “empirical” has to be understood in a qualified sense. Nell Broom convincingly argues that scientific knowledge is often fragmented, for it is an abstraction from reality. For example, in studying a complex system, it is necessary for the scientist to choose a manageable part of the same. So, to understand the complex functioning of body joints, a very small sample of cartilage is shaved from the joint, and then studied under an electron microscope on the lab table. It is true that this thin slice of real cartilage can be studied very well under the powerful electron beam, but it is two steps away from its native reality: (1) it is dead, and (2) it is only a mere slice of the rest of it in its living environment. So at best it is not the full reality that is being studied (30–33).

The other factor about scientific empirical objectivity is that it can be less than objective because observation is interpreted through assumptions brought to it by the observer. See Karl Popper,

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creation? Is this worldview confined to evidence replicable in the lab, or does it also embrace methodological naturalism, which is beyond such demonstration and so belongs to philosophical and metaphysical considerations, which are beyond empirical science?

4. It is widely understood today that the non-scientific, non-empirical, philosophical/metaphysical worldview is foundational for macro-evolutionary theories.⁷⁰ This worldview includes a belief in methodological naturalism, which includes natural selection with random chance, and with a natural view of the origin of life that disagrees with the biblical account of creation by God. This idea, extrapolated over the totality of the evolutionary process, cannot be empirically validated, and hence is not empirical science.

5. Guy appears to be a theistic evolutionist. Scientists as theistic evolutionists (who believe that God had something internally to do with the process of evolution which resulted in all life forms) and progressive evolutionists (who believe God contributes by externally creating more complex life forms) investigate nature within the naturalistic worldview of the scientific academy. To have their work accepted as valid science they do their research and writing within the naturalistic worldview. To do anything less or anything else would consign their work to irrelevance comparable to naive biblical fundamentalism with its ignorance of science, as far as the scientific academy is concerned. Yet on the other hand, because these scientists believe in God as creator, they also accept, in that respect, a supernatural worldview. But how can one believe in God as the origin of life and also nature as its origin? It is this impossible marrying of mutually exclusive worldviews (natural and supernatural) that provide the tensions and issues with which some Adventist scientists wrestle.

6. If the worldview of methodological naturalism includes the philosophical and metaphysical assumption about the origin of life, how can this be considered empirical and scientific while relegating the creation account by God to the status of merely spiritual/theological? After all, philosophical metaphysics is no more scientifically empirical than biblical metaphysical statements about the origin of life. One is simply choosing philosophical metaphysics to replace biblical metaphysics, or an idea of humans to replace the revelation of God.

Does a scientific worldview have the right to interpret Scripture? Our scientific worldviews have changed from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican to the

Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach (Oxford, London: University P, 1979), and Michael Polanyi, *Science, Faith and Society* (Chicago: University P, 1966), *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University P, 1962). Guy rightly notes that all observing is “theory laden” (“Interpreting,” 10), and to that degree “empirical” may be less than it should be in science, which would have been a good place for him to begin questioning so called empirical science in the light of divine revelation. See also footnote 63.

⁷⁰ This is not to deny that there is empirical evidence for micro-evolution, for it is observable, but to say that the empirical nature of micro-evolution is assumed to be true in macro-evolution, which is beyond the confines of empirical science.

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Einsteinian examples. If scientific worldviews can change, then who can deny that research may discover further worldviews? How can differing worldviews sit in judgment of Scripture when they sit in judgment of one another?⁷¹ So the present worldview may only have temporary significance, which is a shaky basis for biblical interpretation. If one places science above Scripture, then logic demands that one remain open to a possible future different scientific worldview, or worldviews.

Even if it were possible to know, with absolute assurance, that the present scientific worldview is the final foundational worldview, who is to determine whether it is capable of sitting in judgment of the biblical worldview? If Scripture is God's revelation about reality, and worldviews are human attempts to describe reality, then why couldn't the biblical worldview test the validity of all other worldviews?

The Inherent Design movement may well be the best logical and empirical argument to overthrow the contemporary methodological naturalism worldview that dominates contemporary evolutionary thinking. The Inherent Design movement demonstrates the logic and importance of meeting science with science, calling into question naturalism from within molecular biology and biochemistry, unlike the method of calling into question the biblical creation account by a natural worldview which is itself under question.

If a scientific worldview calls into question the validity of the divine revelation of the Genesis account, then what difference is this in kind from Satan's doubting God's word (Gen 3:1–6) in the context of creation (Gen 2:15–17)? Questioning the revelation of Scripture is equally a concern at the end of Scripture (Rev 22:18–19).

Placing contemporary science (whatever the century) as criterion over Scripture is a placing of the human above the divine. Isn't this the same as the

⁷¹ One is reminded that biblical critical methods have done the same. Each new one has called in question the previous one. For a discussion of this, see Norman R. Gulley, "Reader-Response Theories in Postmodern Hermeneutics: A Challenge to Evangelical Theology," in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton: Victor, 1995), 208–238. Methods of biblical criticism have been used for less than two centuries. They grew out of the Enlightenment with its celebration of human reason. These methods bought into philosophical presuppositions that confined biblical truth to naturalism, which rejected supernaturalism, such as miracles, the divinity of Christ, and the Second Advent, to name but a few. These events depend upon the supernatural breaking into the realm of the natural. Naturalism presents a closed continuum of cause and effect in which events follow laws of predictability. This is precisely what methodological naturalism in evolutionary theories does—it rejects any supernatural inbreaking into the nexus of cause and effect, relying on the "law" of natural selection through random chance. It is a small step from rejecting the miracle of God's act in creation to rejecting any other of His acts in human history. The relative authority of human reason is seen in the fact that new biblical critical methods criticize former methods just as subsequent scientific worldviews criticize former ones. Evolutionary theories, like methods of biblical criticism, have subjected Scripture to vigorous criticism. This needs to be understood in the light of the cosmic controversy biblical worldview in which Satan calls in question God's Word (Gen 3:1–6).

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medieval magisterium placing the church above God's revelation in Scripture? Isn't this what fired the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century?

If any other non-scientific criterion (reason, philosophy, experience, or tradition) is placed above Scripture, to that degree Scripture loses its function to test all things human.

There are questions about evolutionary and geological theories. Science is ignorant about the origin of life.⁷² Belief in any origin of life scenario (science or Scripture) requires faith. This faith reaches back into pre-history, and therefore into the metaphysical or philosophical, and as such is beyond the domain of empirical science. One is faced with a choice: whether to have faith in human theories or in the divine Word of God. One has to ask what a contemporary worldview does to the very essence of Scripture. To accept contemporary worldviews in place of the biblical worldview rejects not only the written Word of God but the work of God as a communicator of reality and truth to intelligent created beings.

It can be argued that it takes more faith to accept the reality of life through selectivity and chance over billions of years (philosophical metaphysics) than through the awesome God of the universe speaking and forming creation into existence in six literal/historical, consecutive, contiguous 24 hour days (biblical metaphysics) in a relatively recent creation.

Guy does not need creation week with its Sabbath to ground his belief in the Sabbath. Throughout his article he speaks against a literal or literalistic interpretation of the Genesis creation account. So a literal creation Sabbath is jettisoned. He says, "how can we maintain the spiritual validity and theological significance of the Sabbath without affirming a literal six-day process of creation followed by a day of divine rest, which the Fourth Commandment gives us as the reason for the Sabbath (Exod 20:11)? In spite of our traditional Sabbath

⁷² Scientist Klaus Dose admits, "More than 30 years of experimentation on the origin of life in the fields of chemical and molecular evolution have led to a better perception of the immensity of the problem of the origin of life on Earth rather than to its solution. At present all discussions on principle theories and experiments in the field either end in stalemate or in a confession of ignorance" Klaus Dose, "The Origin of Life: More Questions than Answers," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 13 (1988): 348. Cited in Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, 168. Currently the Intelligent Design Movement is demonstrating why. See also scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi, "Life's Irreducible Structure," *Science* 160 (June 1968): 1308–1312. Broom successfully argues that physical and chemical processes plus time do not produce life (72–83). Concurring with British neuroscientist Donald MacKay, Broom points to ink on paper as explicable simply as a "chemical interaction between the molecules of ink dye and the cellulose molecules in the wood fibers from which the newsprint is made." He calls this a lower level description. But if under magnification the ink reveals a meaningful message, this involves a higher level of explanation (28–45). DNA with its encoded message is a case in point. Science is unable to explain the origin of complex information found at the cellular level. Information-bearing systems cannot be explained by or confined within natural physical and chemical laws. As Dembski argues, "only information begets information" (*Intelligent Design*, 183), for "empirical evidence fails to establish the reduction of intelligent agency to natural causes" (*Intelligent Design*, 224).

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apologetics, the best theological foundation for the continuing value of the seventh-day Sabbath is Jesus' own practice of and teaching about the Sabbath."⁷³

Yet the pre-incarnate Christ, who gave Moses the ten commandments on Sinai, inscribed the following propositional revelation in stone (Exod 24:12): "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exod 20:11). God created all things through Christ (Heb 1:1–2). In the fourth commandment Christ was writing about His own experience in human history at the end of creation week (Gen 2:1–3, cf. John 1:1–3, 14; Col 1:15–17). Christ as "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28) made the Sabbath for all humans (Mark 2:27). Christ's pre-incarnate teaching about the Sabbath clearly endorsed the six days creation week, where the days were literal, historical, consecutive, contiguous, 24 hour days with each bordered by an "evening and morning" (Gen 1:5, 6, 13, 19, 23, 31) and not merely revelatory days with millions of years between them. And so it is not possible to ground Sabbath-keeping in Christ's incarnational practice and teaching without reference to creation week because He began His practice of Sabbath keeping at the end of creation week and presents the Genesis creation account as literal history in His pre-incarnate teaching—because He was there. No wonder the incarnate Christ speaks of the creation of Adam and Eve as a literal/historical fact (Matt 19:4–5).

Guy says, "We cannot use our convictions about the character of God to argue that macroevolution didn't occur because God wouldn't work that way any more than we can say that the Holocaust didn't happen because God wouldn't allow it."⁷⁴ But is this comparing apples with apples? The fact that God allows certain actions of others after the cosmic controversy was launched on planet earth is altogether different from God's own acts prior to the inception of the controversy. Allowing others to act is different from acting Himself. Allowing others gives them the freedom of choice, but acting Himself is His freedom of choice. If He always refused to allow others to act, how could evil reveal itself to the onlooking universe? Allowing these actions reveals that God allows creaturely freedom to act even against Him, which was demonstrated at Calvary. Christ's holocaust at the cross was infinitely worse than any other one.

However, if God allowed Himself to create through the natural process of selection and chance, in which the horrors of torture and death over billions of years was necessary to arrive at creating humans, then this would be the longest and cruelest holocaust of all. At least Calvary was a holocaust that others brought upon Christ, but this would be a holocaust that He brought upon the animal kingdom. If Christ chose to create through billions of years of horror when He could have chosen to create without any death (as documented in the

⁷³ Guy, "Interpreting," 13

⁷⁴ Guy, "Interpreting," 9

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historical record of Genesis 1–2), then He would rightly be charged as the ultimate terrorist. The demonstration of God’s love at Calvary is incompatible with any alleged claim that He chose to create through the medium of horror.

If Genesis 1–2 is revelation, then Guy’s epistemology would be the opposite of what it is—then Scripture would be more important than science. Guy is right to focus on hermeneutics when coming to Genesis 1. But it seems to me that hermeneutics requires more than to say that (1) reading a text is interpreting it, as Guy asserts,⁷⁵ and (2) a literalistic interpretation requires justification because “No interpretation has a preferred status, much less immunity to rigorous criticism on literary, factual, logical, or theological grounds.”⁷⁶ Is it not more important to state that biblical interpretation is Scripture interpreting Scripture (*sola scriptura*), so that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the biblical view of creation can emerge? Is it not wise to consider all that Scripture has to say about creation and allow that to give insight into the Genesis account? Would it not be best to look at all biblical truths in the light of the greatest revelation of God at Calvary?

The revelation at Calvary was made in history. It had witnesses. As such it provides empirical (historical) evidence of how loving God is, even asking His Father to forgive those who heaped cruelty upon Him (Luke 23:34). Assuming that this same Christ heaped cruelty on animals not for part of a day, but for billions of years, is not a historical datum with witnesses who wrote about it, and so it is not empirical reality. Rather, it is an interpretation from within a naturalistic worldview.

One must also read the Genesis creation account in light of God’s creation of the humanity of the God-man (John 1:1, 14; Matt 1:20), the creation of the first Adam in light of the incarnation of the second Adam (1 Cor 15:45, cf. Rom 5:18–19). Here is a biblical type/antitype gift of love that is fully compatible with God’s gift of love at Calvary (John 3:16).⁷⁷ Here is the God of love of Scripture and not the God of theistic evolution. The two are distinctly different.

⁷⁵ Guy, “Interpreting,” 7

⁷⁶ Guy, “Interpreting,” 7

⁷⁷ It is true that the creation of Adam and the creation of the God-man are two unique but different levels of God’s creative ability. Both speak of God’s awesome gifts to humankind as Creator. Neither hints that God needed help. In both He created one in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27), and One in the image of man (Heb 2:14). God was not dependent upon anything pre-existing to accomplish His creation, for the pre-existence of the divinity of Christ is eternally uncreated. Adam and Eve formed by the Father through Christ (Heb 1:2) and Christ born of the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20) are equally indescribable and inexplicable mysteries that indicate the infinite gulf between the powerful Creator and His loving nearness in creating humans and in becoming also human (John 1:1, 14). Just as salvation is a gift without human works (2nd Adam), so creation is a gift without any evolutionary contribution (1st Adam). For God’s speaking with immediate response in creating in Genesis 1 is appropriate to the *Elohim* God who did the creating. It is illogical for such an all-powerful God to be dependent upon billions of years of animal torture to accomplish His work, and yet invite Adam and Eve to keep a literal Sabbath as the seventh day of His powerful creation of all the world and its heavenly environs.

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The fact that the onlooking universe shouted for joy at the creation of this world (Job 38:4–7) is inexplicable if Christ created through causing animal suffering for billions of years. Christ called creation “very good” (Gen 1:31), and that is worth singing about. After Christ’s ascension, beings in heaven praised God as worthy and deserving of glory because He created all things (Rev 4:10–11). That would be impossible if He created through cruelty. A part of God’s end-time message calls the world to worship the Creator and bring Him glory (Rev 14:6–7), which could not be done if He created through cruelty. The propositional revelation of Scripture is consistent that God is deserving of glory and worship as Creator (e.g., Rev 4:6–11), for His creative work can only be understood in relation to His character as a God of love (1 John 4:8–16).

Christ’s warning of Adam about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, stating that eating it would bring death (Gen 2:17), indicates that death was not yet a present reality. Here evil and death are associated with disobedience to the Creator. Such disobedience would bring curses on nature, Adam, and Eve (Gen 3:17–19). When Christ recreates the earth there will be no more curse (Rev 22:3). Clearly curses and death are linked to disobedience and have nothing to do with Christ’s method of creation. If the new earth will have no curse, the curses came through the fall, and the first creation was “very good,” it is logical that the first creation had no curses or death. That’s why Scripture speaks of death as the wages for sin (Rom 6:23) and an enemy (1 Cor 15:26), and never as God’s chosen method to create. That’s why Scripture says Adam introduced sin and death to the world (Rom 5:12). It was Adam and not His Creator who introduced death into the world. It was Christ who came to die to put death to death and liberate a fallen race (Rom 4:25). It was the one act of the first Adam that brought this death-condemnation, and the one act of the second Adam’s death that brought salvation (Rom 5:18). Christ did not use death to create humans in Eden; He died to save humans at Calvary.

Christ created “every green plant for food” for animals (Gen 1:30). They were not created as predators, nor will they be predators in the new earth (Isa 65:25), and no death or pain will be there either (Rev 21:4). Predation is a post-fall phenomenon⁷⁸ and should not be read back into the creative process. The God of love created in love. The fact that He sees the sparrow fall (Luke 12:6–7) and was concerned about “the many cattle” in Nineveh if it was destroyed (Jon

⁷⁸ Why does God permit evil? It is true that God apparently allowed predation after the fall (Psa 104:21, 27–28; Job 38:39–41), just as He allowed humans to eat meat after the flood (Gen 9:3; cf. Gen 6:1). It is also truth that the great suffering in the world is a result of the fall. The curse was immediate on nature and humans (Gen 3:14–19), and even the firstborn human murdered his brother (Gen 4:1–16). Humans became so depraved that their thoughts were only evil all the time (Gen 6:5). Although God is in ultimate control, He allows Satan to demonstrate the fruits of his rebellion. A biblical example is the case of Job and his family (Job 1:6–2:10). In the creation of the new world, God “will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4).

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4:11) is evidence that He would not cause animal suffering in an evolutionary plan of creation. How important it is to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, rather than allow a nonbiblical idea (naturalism) to have that function.

If Christ did heap cruelty upon animals for billions of years, this would have more to say about a prior hell than about a loving Creator. Assuming that Christ is that cruel negates any love He manifested in His temporary hell at Calvary. Some persons may be tempted to say, "He got what He deserved." Given a cosmic controversy in which Satan hates Christ and has engaged in a process of disinformation about God (Hebrew word *rekullah* of Ezekiel 28:15–16)⁷⁹ since the inception of his rebellion, it makes sense that a natural method of creation through horror is something he would promote, for it effectively destroys the drawing power of Calvary. Satan hates the cross because it reveals what God is really like and what he (Satan) is really like. Creation through horror is compatible with Satan's hatred against Christ at the cross and not compatible with a loving Creator-Redeemer who dies for others (rather than inflicting death). Life through death is a biblical concept of atonement and not a biblical concept of creation.

Apparently⁸⁰ Guy sees no problem in the natural process with all its horror, as if it had no part in reflecting upon God's judgment and wisdom, which clearly contradicts the biblical revelation of God as just (Neh 9:32–33; Ps 97:2; Zeph 3:5; Rev 15:3; 19:1–2), and wise (1 Kgs 4:29, 2 Chron 1:10; Ps 51:6; Prov 2:6, Col 2:2–3; James 1:5). By contrast, Scripture even says God created in wisdom (Ps 104:24; 136:5; Jer 10:12), and in love (Ps 100:3–5). Guy approves the following comments of others: "We see God 'not in the predator but in the prey'" (Murphy)⁸¹ and "'God too suffers, not less than creatures'" (Rolston).⁸² If God chose to suffer for billions of years in order to create, when He could create without bringing suffering to Himself, one would have to wonder at His wisdom. This seems more like a sadist and not like an omnipotent loving (Elohim-Yahweh) God who can create without any dependence upon natural processes, and its terror to animals. If Christ is a sadist, how does this deflect from His suffering at Calvary?

Conclusion

In view of the biblical presentation of God's infinite love, as manifested at Calvary, it is inconceivable that He would subject animals to great suffering

⁷⁹ The Hebrew word *rekullah* means "trading" or "peddling," referring to goods or gossip. Here Satan spreads gossip about God. See Richard M. Davidson, "Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium," *JATS*, 11/1–2 (2000): 108.

⁸⁰ After my presentation at Glacier View Ranch, Fritz Guy told me that there is a problem with the horror of the natural method of creation. One would hope that the implications of this fact could change his interpretation of the Genesis creation.

⁸¹ Guy, "Interpreting," 12, see footnote 47.

⁸² Guy, "Interpreting," 12, see footnote 48

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over mega-time as His chosen method to create humans. Nor is it conceivable that He would tell us that He created in six days and ask us to keep the seventh-day Sabbath in commemoration of His creative work, when He created over mega-time, leaving the creation Sabbath without any meaning (Exod 20:8–11). These alone are sufficient reason to question any accommodation of the biblical record to the current scientific worldview and to accept the literal/historical interpretation of the Genesis creation, as Scripture does, according to the evidence given in this article. This is the contribution of inherent revelation. The contribution of inherent design by the Intelligent Design movement may well be the best empirical and logical critique of naturalism. Inherent revelation and inherent design reveal the Creator and restore God to His place within Scripture and nature.

Appendix

The above argument, based on Scripture, with reference to inherent design and logic, stands on its own merit. Here is additional affirmation on the importance of Scripture found in the writings of Ellen G. White.

First, Guy questions Ellen White’s “literalistic” interpretation of Genesis 1, saying, “If she were engaged in her prophetic ministry at the beginning of the twenty-first century, recognizing what is almost universally known today about natural history, she would undoubtedly avoid making a divisive issue of the interpretation of Genesis 1.”⁸³ Would Guy also say that if Moses lived today, science would change the way he wrote the creation account? It appears that Guy evaluates the contribution of Moses and Ellen G. White on a literal creation as their own primitive pre-scientific ideas and gives no credence that their writing is more than human culture-conditioned ideas. Yet, paradoxically, Guy selectively uses both Scripture and Ellen G. White as authoritative when he assumes they help his argument (e.g., Christ’s Sabbath-keeping practice⁸⁴ and Ellen G. White’s statements that more understanding of truth is to come,⁸⁵ and nature sheds light on Scripture⁸⁶). In doing such he seemingly accepts these contributions as divine revelation, or in what way would they be authoritative if merely human ideas?

The Ellen G. White quote, “The book of nature and the written word shed light upon each other”⁸⁷ (which Guy quotes, 7), has an important context. She says, “Geology has been thought to contradict the literal interpretation of the Mosaic record of the creation . . . Such a conclusion is wholly uncalled for. The Bible record is in harmony with itself (*sola scriptura*) and with the teaching of nature. Of the first day employed in the work of creation is given the record,

⁸³ Guy, “Interpreting,” 13.

⁸⁴ Guy, 13.

⁸⁵ Guy, “Interpreting,” 5.

⁸⁶ Guy, “Interpreting,” 7.

⁸⁷ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1903), 128

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‘The evening and the morning were the first day.’ Genesis 1:5. And the same in substance is said of each of the first six days of creation week. Each of these periods Inspiration declares to have been a day consisting of evening and morning, like every other day since that time.’⁸⁸ Note how Ellen White believed in a literal Genesis creation, that is inspired, and is revelation,⁸⁹ and believed in *sola scriptura*, or Scripture interpreting itself. This context is wholly ignored by Guy and others. If taken seriously, Fritz Guy could not have written his article.

Guy’s method in the article is to test Scripture by the ideas of science, rather than the other way round.⁹⁰ Ellen White says, “The Bible is not to be tested by men’s ideas of science, but science is to be brought to the test of the unerring standard.”⁹¹ “The work of creation cannot be explained by science. What science can explain the mystery of life?”⁹² “The Bible is not to be tested by men’s ideas of science. Human knowledge is an unreliable guide . . . Moses wrote under the guidance of the Spirit of God; and a correct theory of geology will never claim discoveries that cannot be reconciled with his statements.”⁹³ Hence the global cataclysm is one important way to explain geology. Ellen White said, “I have been shown that, without Bible history, geology can prove nothing.”⁹⁴ Thus the historical reliability of the divinely revealed biblical six days creation and global flood is the worldview in which nature must be studied.

Guy does not take seriously the profound insights of Ellen White’s statements on creation. Note how crucial these are, and how meaningless human reasoning is without guidance from divine revelation. “But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 128–12 (italics and parenthesis added).

⁸⁹ Ellen G. White, *Education*, 134. “The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man’s unaided reason, nature’s teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of *revelation* can it be read aright. ‘Through faith we understand.’ Hebrews 11:3. ‘*In the beginning God.*’ *Genesis 1:1*. Here alone can the mind in its eager questioning, fleeing as the dove to the ark, find rest” (*Education*, 134 [italics added]).

⁹⁰ Guy, “Interpreting,” 5. “Our central question is this: in the light of what we understand scientifically and theologically in the twenty-first century, how shall we interpret Genesis 1?”

⁹¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents & Teachers* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1913), 425.

⁹² Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (no publishing data), 414.

⁹³ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890 (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1913 edition), 114.

⁹⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek: Steam Press, SDA Publishing Assn., 1870) 1:88.

⁹⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* 1888 (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911 edition), 595.

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“The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”⁹⁶ Scripture is “the one infallible guide.”⁹⁷ It gives “the history of the creation of this world . . .”⁹⁸ “The foundation of all true science is contained in the Bible.”⁹⁹ “The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man’s unaided reason, nature’s teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright.”¹⁰⁰

“But the infidel supposition that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe the record of creation, it is infidelity in disguise. It charges God with commanding men to observe the week of seven literal days in commemoration of seven indefinite periods, which is unlike his dealing with mortals, and is an impeachment of his wisdom.”¹⁰¹

“But when men leave the word of God in regard to the history of creation, and seek to account for God’s creative works upon natural principles, they are upon a boundless ocean of uncertainty. Just how God accomplished the work of creation in six literal days, he has never revealed to mortals. His creative works are just as incomprehensible as his existence.”¹⁰²

“He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God’s word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself. He does not test the Bible by men’s ideas of science; he brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that in true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word; since both have the same Author, a correct understanding of both will prove them to be in harmony. Whatever in so-called scientific teaching contradicts the testimony of God’s word is mere human guesswork.”¹⁰³

“Men will endeavor to explain from natural causes the work of creation, which God has never revealed. But human science cannot search out the secrets of the God of Heaven, and explain the stupendous works of creation, which

⁹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, vii.

⁹⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 102.

⁹⁸ Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), 129.

⁹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 1900 (Washington: Review and Herald, 1941), 101.

¹⁰⁰ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1903), 134.

¹⁰¹ Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:86–87.

¹⁰² Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:88.

¹⁰³ Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 462.

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were a miracle of almighty power, any sooner than it can show how God came into existence.”¹⁰⁴

Ellen White gives a warning about human reason unguided by the Word of God:

“The word of God is given as a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. Those who cast his word behind them, and seek by their own blind philosophy to trace out the wonderful mysteries of Jehovah, will stumble in darkness.”¹⁰⁵ “. . . those who leave the word of God, and seek to account for his created works upon scientific principles, are drifting, without chart or compass, upon an unknown ocean. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to trace the relationship of science and revelation.”¹⁰⁶ There are dimensions of the creation story that are way beyond the human mind, and this calls for humility as we come to God’s word, and plead for His discernment. This is the same God who said to Job, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand” (Job 38:4).

“The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with Scripture. . . . Every part of the Bible is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.”¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰⁴Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:89.

¹⁰⁵Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:89.

¹⁰⁶Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 113.

¹⁰⁷Ellen G. White, *Education*, 190–191.

Creation and Apocalypse

Larry L. Lichtenwalter

Revelation unfolds a vibrant and sustained confession of God as Creator. It presupposes the Genesis creation narrative and posits the overarching worldview that “the whole of finite reality exists by God the Creator’s gift of existence.”¹ The Apocalypse sets the creation of the universe at the heart of its vision of the throne (Rev 4–5). There the “Creation Song of the Elders”² poignantly expresses this central way of characterizing both God and finite reality:³

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created (4:11)

The sovereign creative energy of God expressed in the profound phrase “for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created” concentrates all of Genesis 1 into a single thought.⁴ In Genesis, God’s explosive voice speaks the world and most things in it into existence (Gen 1:6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29; Ps 33:6, 9), thus expressing His *will* through His creative word.⁵ God’s creative power includes both the original act of creation (*they were created*) and His ongoing preservation of the created order (*they existed*).⁶ It also points to the

¹ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge UP, 1993), 50.

² Kendall H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 78, 79.

³ Aune misses the import of this central theological theme and overarching worldview when he suggests that the emphasis on God as *creator* is not a central way of characterizing God in Revelation. See Davie E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, (Dallas: Word, 1997), 312.

⁴ Easley, 9.

⁵ Easley, 79.

⁶ Easley, 79. In another one of its “last-first” rhetorical inversions of events, Revelation’s apparently illogical order of the verbs “they were,” “they existed,” and “they were created” seems to suggest that the existence of everything seems to precede creation (Aune, 312). God’s continued preservation of “all things” in creation is mentioned before his act of first beginning to create them—the reverse would be more logical. It is done to emphasize preservation because the pastoral

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deeply personal nature of Creation (*by your will they were created*). God not only created “all that is,” but He willfully “intended” to bring the universe into existence.⁷ Thus, God on His heavenly throne is praised without end by his court of throne-room attendants who shout and sing about their holy Creator.

A Permeating Motif

This understanding of God as the personal transcendent source of all things permeates both the Apocalypse’s theology and moral vision. In the vision of the mighty angel with the little scroll that lay open in his hand, Revelation expands on God’s creation by explicitly mentioning the contents of the three divisions of the created reality—the heavens, the earth, and the sea (10:6). “*All that is in*” each part is likewise stated three times for emphasis (10:6). Creation is not simply a broad-stroked macrocosm, but inclusive of incredibly detailed content. This is an incredible eschatologically-oriented Creation statement as the mighty angel swears to God the Creator that there will no longer be any delay in the finishing of the mystery of God.⁸ The “Song from the Universe”⁹ likewise depicts “every created thing” (*pân ktísma*) which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and “all things in them” (*tà en autoîs pánta*) (5:13, 14).

intention (and moral purpose) throughout the book is to encourage God’s people both spiritually and morally. See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 335.

⁷ M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989), 106.

⁸ In his commentary on Gen 1:1, Eugene F. Roop writes, “The beginning cannot be ignored as if it is past. Beginnings do not disappear; they form the ground from which all subsequent moments arise” (*Genesis* [Scottsdale: Herald, 1987], 20). In other words, beginnings set the tone and live on in whatever takes place afterward. But the biblical Hebrew on Genesis 1:1 includes something more. The word “beginning” marks a starting point of a specific duration. It’s the first in a series, or the initiation of a series of historical events. It has an end or purpose in view. It’s a word often paired with its antonym “end.” By using this word to open the account of Creation, Moses has not only marked Creation as the starting point of the history of God and His people, but also prepares the way for the consummation of that history at “the end of time,” as per John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 83. See also, “*reshit*” in *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, ed. Laird Harris (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:826. My point is that the “end” is already anticipated in the “beginning” of Genesis 1:1. “The fundamental principle reflected in Genesis 1:1 and the prophetic vision of the end of times in the rest of Scripture is that the ‘last things will be like the first things.’” “Behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth’ (Isa 65:17); ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev 21:1). The allusions to Genesis 1 and 2 in Revelation 22 illustrate the role that these early chapters of Genesis played in shaping the form and content of the scriptural vision of the future” (Sailhamer, 83, 84). But Genesis also provides a paradigm of the moral spiritual issues leading up to the end. See Warren Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake: Carpenter, 1984). The careful reader can trace parallels between the book of Genesis and the issues and events of the last things on earth, including Creation and restoration of Creation as an eschatological reality.

⁹ Easley, 96, 97.

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Three of the most important self-designations by God in Revelation appear in the introduction: I AM “the Alpha and the Omega” (1:8), “the one who is and who was and who is to come” (1:8, cf. 1:4), “the Almighty” (1:8). Later, God says of Himself, “I am . . . the beginning and the end” (21:6). These divine self-declarations by God correspond to the self-declarations by Jesus Christ in the epilogue: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (22:13). Such self-designation likewise “encapsulates the understanding of God as the sole Creator of all things and sovereign Lord of history.”¹⁰ God precedes all things, and he will bring all things to eschatological fulfillment. He is the origin and goal of all history. He has the first word in creation. He has the last word in the new creation. Within Revelation’s literary structure God twice declares Himself Alpha and Omega. First, before the outset of John’s vision (1:8), and finally, when declaring the eschatological accomplishment of His purpose for his whole creation: “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, and the beginning and the end” (21:6).¹¹

Christ’s participation in God’s creation of all things becomes clear in his description at the beginning of message to the church at Laodicea, where he is called “the origin (*archē*) of God’s creation” (3:14). This does not mean that He is the first created being or that in his resurrection he was the beginning of God’s new creation or that he is merely the promise of a new creation by the faithful God.¹² It has the same sense as in the title “the beginning [*archē*] and the end” as used of both God (21:6) and Christ (22:13) and which expresses the eternity of God, who stands sovereign over history’s whole span.¹³ Christ preceded all things as their source. This belief in Christ’s role in creation is at one with the broader New Testament literature (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:5–17; Heb 1:2; John 1:1–3). In particular, Paul’s teaching on Christ’s role in the creation also includes both aspects of the original act of creation and His ongoing preservation of the created order: “For by Him all things **were created**, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, . . . all things **have been created through Him** and for Him. He is before all things, and **in Him all things hold together**” (Col 1:16, 17).¹⁴ Revelation reveals Christ as the divine agent both in God’s creation of all things and in God’s eschatological fulfillment of all things. Thus Christ is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (22:13).

¹⁰ Baukham, 27.

¹¹ Bauckham, 27.

¹² See Beale’s discussion, 297–301.

¹³ Bauckham, 56; Aune, 256; Dennis E. Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Phillipsburg: P & R., 2001), 91.

¹⁴ Paul’s letter to the Colossians was also intended indirectly for those at Laodicea (Col 4:16), thus making it likely that the Laodiceans were acquainted with the theological implications of John’s more abbreviated reference.

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God's eternity in relation to the created world is further expressed in His self-designation, which interprets God's First Testament divine name YHWH—"I AM WHO I AM" (Exod 3:14)¹⁵—with "the One who is and who was and who is to come" (1:4, 8).¹⁶ God cannot be captured by, or limited to, a theological definition. He is simply the God "who is" right here in our present.¹⁷ As such He is the God of the present, the past, and the future. The formula speaks not only of God's being but of his acts: "he comes."¹⁸ Here is the promise of the "eschatological 'visitation' of God."¹⁹ The future holds out much more than the past and the present: more than the God of memory, more than the God of existence, of spirituality, of comfort, and of communion. He is the God *who is to come* and who will act by saving and judging and fulfilling His final purpose for the world.²⁰

In those points in Revelation where the eschatological coming of God is portrayed as taking place and where hymns praise the fulfillment of His purposes, the formula is shortened to "the One who is and who was" (11:17; cf. 16:5). "We give you thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign" (11:17). Thus human beings "may approach the future, but only to find God already there, coming to meet them."²¹ Wherever men are aware of His presence, they are confronted with the "ground and goal of being."²² They can be assured that the same God who did marvelous things for his people in the past, and who is doing the things of salvation in the present, is the God who gives them the certainty and assurance that He keeps his promises with regard to their future. The same powerful and faithful God will stand and act on behalf of his people in the end, as well.²³

Here God is likewise anticipated as the source of new possibilities for His creation and the future of humanity: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away" (21:1). The first creation, because of the Fall, lapses back into nothing and requires a fresh creative act of God to give it a new form of existence,²⁴ one that encompasses both continuity

¹⁵ Bauckham, 28–30; Easley, 14.

¹⁶ This designation of God occurs five times with variations: "the One who is and who was and who is to come" (1:4, 8); "the One who was and is and who is to come" (4:8); "the One who is and who was" (11:17; 16:5).

¹⁷ Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2002), 18.

¹⁸ Boring, 75.

¹⁹ Aune, *Revelation 17–22* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 939, 940.

²⁰ Doukhan, 18.

²¹ David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Polebridge, 1998), 30.

²² G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 291.

²³ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2002), 60, 62.

²⁴ Bauckham, 49.

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and discontinuity (2 Pet 3:13; Isa 65:17). There is eschatological renewal of creation, not its replacement by another.²⁵ For the first time since 1:8, the One who sits on the throne speaks directly, “Behold, I am making all things new” (21:5a). The key significance of the words echoing Isaiah is underlined by God’s own command to John to write them down (21:5b).²⁶

This connection between creation and new creation highlights the cosmic scope of Revelation’s theological and moral horizon, within which its primary concern with the human world is set.²⁷ The new beginning corresponds to the derivation of all things from God’s original creative act. God is the ground of ultimate hope for the future creation of the world. Creation is thus “not confined forever to its own immanent possibilities. It is open to the fresh creative possibilities of its Creator.”²⁸ This eschatological hope for the future of God’s whole creation includes the hope of bodily resurrection from the nothingness of death.²⁹ Trust in God the Creator, who can bring something out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), assumes that He can give eschatological new life back to the dead,³⁰ raised forever beyond the threat of death (21:4; 1:18; 2:8, 10; 20:4–6). “Faith in Creation makes faith in resurrection possible.”³¹

Nuancing the End

When an angel proclaims the “eternal gospel” to all people on earth, calling them to repentance in view of the judgment—which already “has come”—the substance of this gospel is a call to recognize their Creator by worshiping Him. “Fear God and give glory to him, because the hour of his judgment has come; worship him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of water” (14:6). The pairing of judgment and Creation forms a tension that is rich in meaning and reflects the ethos of the Revelation’s tree of life and city thematic, i.e., choosing life “true to life,” as given from the Creator’s hand. On the one hand, the reference to Creation is the celebration of life that says yes to God, to nature, to joy, to love, and to life. On the other hand, pleasure, moral choice, and

²⁵ Revelation 21:4 makes it clear that it is the end of suffering and mortality that is in mind when Revelation speaks of the “passing away” of the “first heaven and the first earth.” This can be extended to the realm of the moral as well, given Revelation’s subsequent discourse on the ethos of the tree and the city (Rev 22:1–4, 14, 15; 21:7–8, 27).

²⁶ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind” (Isa 65:17).

²⁷ Bauckham, 50.

²⁸ Bauckham, 48.

²⁹ Faith in Creation rejects belief in the immortality of the soul. Because we are created beings, we are not immortal by nature (Doukhan, 131).

³⁰ Robert Farrar Capon, *The Foolishness of Preaching: Proclaiming the Gospel Against the Wisdom of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 24–25.

³¹ Doukhan, 131.

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orientation are measured with law, discipline, and judgment.³² Thus there is both given life and moral accountability (Gen 2:16, 17; Eccl. 11:9).

Again, the divine title, “him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of water,” defines God as the One who brought all things into existence. As Creator, He alone has ultimate power over everything. As Creator, to whom all creatures owe their very being, He alone is to be worshiped (5:13). As Creator, who has given the “gift of existence” to reflective moral beings, He alone is the ultimate arbiter of what is moral and “true to life” as He has created it and will recreate (2 Pet 3:13).³³ The Apocalypse’s Creation theme thus situates the creature relative to its Creator. It provides a basis for worship and the foundation for moral life.³⁴ God is thus identified as the Creator of all things as a motivation for people to worship Him instead of creation.³⁵ Such motivation also reflects a moral impulse in that they “fear God and give glory to him,” for “the fear of God” is the beginning of moral life (Deut 6:2; Eccl 12:13; Ps 19:19; 34:11–14; 36:1; Prov 3:7; 8:13; 10:16).³⁶

Revelation’s Creation motif is further evidenced in its pregnant allusions to the “tree of life” (2:7; 22:2, 14, 19), “sea” (4:6; 15:2; 21:1),³⁷ “abyss” (9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3),³⁸ “breath of life” (11:11; cf. Gen 2:7; 13:15), and “four living creatures” (4:6, 8, 9; 5:6, 8, 11, 14; 6:1, 3, 5, 6, 7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4).³⁹ The Apocalypse also sets the creation of the universe at the heart of the vision of the throne (chap. 4), along with its unfolding narrative of the sealed scroll (chapter 5), the breaking of the scroll’s seven seals, and the seven trumpets (6:1–11:19; see esp. 5:13; 10:5–7).⁴⁰ Thus the subject of Creation plays a

³² Doukhan, 132.

³³ Revelation 5:13 refers to “every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them” as worshipping God.

³⁴ Doukhan, 126.

³⁵ Beale, 753.

³⁶ Doukhan, 124.

³⁷ “The image of the throne of God suspended above water proclaims the power of God over the elements. The Apocalypse here represents God as the Creator. The book of Genesis describes the creation of the world in terms of a victory over the element of water, a symbol of emptiness and darkness” (Doukhan, 53). See also Ezek 26:19–21; Jon 2:6; Hab 3:10.

³⁸ The Septuagint uses the Greek term *abussos* to translate the Hebrew word *tehom*, a word employed to describe the earth before Creation (Gen. 1:2), thus alluding to the pre-Creation state of the earth (see Doukhan, 84, 85, 178, 179).

³⁹ A single Greek noun (*zōa*) carries the notion of “the thing which is living.” The imagery of the lion, a calf, a face like a man, and an eagle is drawn from Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek 1:6–10; 10:14). They are angelic beings possibly representing the entire animate creation (Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], 138). “The chief function of the four living creatures is to worship him who sits upon the throne. Thus do they acknowledge God as the creator and sustainer of life. In this worship of the four living creatures, the whole of created order of beings joins, for they represent all things that breathe before him who is the author and sustainer of life” (Edward A. Mc.Dowell, *The Meaning and Message of the Book of Revelation* [Nashville: Broadman, 1951], 78.).

⁴⁰ Doukhan, 54.

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significant part in the Apocalypse's end-time message and has some special links to the end-time.

In Revelation 10 one finds a heightened eschatologically-oriented Creation statement. In the surprise interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet, a mighty angel comes down to earth from heaven and places one foot on the sea and the other on the land. He raises his right hand and swears a solemn oath as to the truthfulness of the message that he brings from the little book that lay open in his hand.⁴¹ He swears to God, "who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT,"⁴² that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets" (10:6, 7). As the angel's posture (one foot on the sea, another on the land, right hand lifted toward heaven) encompasses all the spheres of creation, ascending from the sea's depths to the dry land to the height of heaven, so also the Creator who secures His oath controls all spheres, descending from heaven's heights to dry land and to the deeps.⁴³ Accompanying the proclamation of this prophetic message about the end-time is an apparent renewed emphasis on God, who was and is Creator. The same point is brought out by the first angel's message of Revelation 14, the first of three end-time messages that lead up to the Second Coming of Christ and produce the final harvest of the earth (14:6–14).⁴⁴ This suggests that the question of Creation is viewed as one of the moral/spiritual issues human beings are confronted with not only throughout history, but particularly in the end-time leading up to the eschaton.

An Act of Morality

The "Creation Song of the Elders" provides a clue to the central meaning of God's act of creation and the response it engenders in reflective moral beings.⁴⁵ It is moral. "You are worthy [*áxios*] . . . to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things" (4:11). God's act of Creation is itself viewed as an act

⁴¹ The description of the angel and his address to God is a direct allusion to Dan 12:7 (Beale, 537): "I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed."

⁴² This verse reproduces a variant of the fourth commandment of the decalogue, Exod 20:11: "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them." See also Neh 9:6; Ps 146:6; Acts 4:24; 14:15; Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 565; Beale, 538.

⁴³ Johnson, 161, 162.

⁴⁴ Bauckham, 94–98; Hans K. LaRondelle, *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* (Sarasota: First Impressions, 1997), 362–369; Stefanovic, 436, 456–464; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 848, 849.

⁴⁵ Boring, 107.

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of morality, expressing both His moral nature and being. It also expresses something about created reality itself. As Creator of “all that is” God has moral worth.⁴⁶ The moral worth (*áxios*) to receive glory and honor and power corresponds to both the moral nature and the moral value of His creative action and its intended results. God not only created “all that is,” but He willfully “intended” to bring the universe into existence (“by your will they were created”).⁴⁷ This indicates a moral plan for the creation of “all things” (including moral beings, both human and heavenly).⁴⁸ This plan would undoubtedly respect the nature of things and express truths/laws (both natural and moral) that would need to be protected.⁴⁹ The Genesis narrative highlights these moral implications with the simple statement “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). The “good” which Genesis has in view has a very specific range of meaning—“that which is beneficial for humankind.”⁵⁰ As Revelation’s celestial elders survey created reality and God’s purpose therein, they affirm such “goodness” by extolling both His moral attributes and acts.

The deeply personal nature of Creation is powerfully highlighted in these expressions as well. God is revealed in the Apocalypse as a Person rather than an impersonal object or a mere influence. For God to do all He does in Revelation requires that He be a person, possessing unity of thought, will, character, emotion, and activity. It is thus that the Creator of all reality is adored as a person who willfully creates (4:11). And since the Creator of all reality is a person, all of that reality that God voluntarily produces exists in relationship.⁵¹ While no mere mutuality between God and creation is envisioned, the relationship is nevertheless real, personal, and covenantal. There is a covenant Lord and there are covenant servants, along with their shared environment of created reality (5:1–11:19; 21:1–8; 1:5–6).⁵² This is significant, as the social location for ethics in Revelation is the covenant. God’s covenant with His Creation through history is the stage on which the divine drama is performed in the Apocalypse. It is also

⁴⁶ As composite representatives of all created beings that have life, the four living creatures acknowledge God as the creator and sustainer of life by speaking of His attributes rather than His deeds. God is to be thanked just for being who He is: the all-Holy, Almighty, ever-Living One (4:8). See, McDowell, 78; Johnson, 102; Mounce, 140.

⁴⁷ Boring, 106.

⁴⁸ *Thelema* connotes *will, design, purpose, what is willed*, and is used predominantly of what God has willed: i.e., creation (4:11); redemption (Eph 1.5); callings (Col 1.9), etc.. It points to what a person intends to bring about by his own action *purpose*.

⁴⁹ Thus Revelation is in keeping with the wider biblical understanding of the universe as having an inherent moral factor that cannot be divorced from the proper order of things and which has no thought for material being evil in itself (Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, New American Commentary [Broadman & Holman, 1996], 1A:146, 147).

⁵⁰ Sailhamer, 88.

⁵¹ Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 16.

⁵² Horton, 16.

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the context in which both moral choice and accountability is envisioned.⁵³ This relational dimension of Creation means that God is neither distant nor disinterested in either the material universe or human beings. Reflective moral beings thus acknowledge such relationship with a personal response of worship and obedience—that He is *our* Creator (4:11; 14:7). God’s creative purpose to “dwell among human beings”—when, in the eschaton, He “makes all things new” (3:3) and “they will see his face” (22:4)—anticipates the restoration of the original relationship and intimacy of God with human beings in the first Creation (Eden). The full meaning of the Revelation’s understanding of Creation precludes any drift away from the biblical theme of Creation that would result in even a partial exclusion of a personal Creator God.⁵⁴

Such permeating Creation imagery mirrors the Apocalypse’s “highly reflective consciousness of God.”⁵⁵ Every description or designation or action of God in Revelation touches on, presupposes, or expresses this underlying reality of Creation in one way or another. The term *pantokrátōr* (‘almighty,’ from the terms *pan*, “all,” and *kratein*, “to rule”) sums up this permeating consciousness of the Creator God’s supremacy over all creation.⁵⁶ An expression that occurs nine times in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22), *pantokrátōr* indicates not so much God’s abstract omnipotence as His actual control

⁵³ See Rev 21:1–8; 1:5–6; 5:1–11:19; Lev 26:11–12; Exod 29:45, 19:5; Jer 30:22; Ezek 37:27; 1 Pet 2:9–10); Horton, 15; See also, Stefanovic’s discussion of Revelation’s pervading covenant motif, 167–179; 195–211.

⁵⁴ Eight views that attempt to combine portions of both creation and evolution interpret the geological column differently: (1) Creation (most direct reading of Scripture—God creates in six literal days, each described with its own evening and morning); (2) Gap Theory (God created life on earth in the distant past. Later, following a judgment upon Satan, He destroyed that life, and the creation described in Genesis 1 and 2 then followed); (3) Progressive Creation (God performed multiple creation events spread over long periods of time); (4) Theistic Evolution (God uses the process of evolution to create the world and bridges some of the difficult barriers evolution faces); (5) Deistic Evolution (denies scriptural record of creation but admits some kind of God who was active mainly at the beginning; a usually impersonal God, not now active in human affairs, serves as a first cause); (6) Pantheistic Evolution (God is all and all is God; God progresses with evolution itself); (7) Space Ancestry or Cosmic Creation (extraterrestrial life forms either originate or modify terrestrial life); (8) Mechanistic Evolution (reality is limited to mechanistic causes. The various forms of life have developed as a result of the operation of natural law; there is no intelligent design). See Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1998), 339–346. “None of the eight interpretations of origins discussed above, except the creation model (Model 1), have a good biblical support. Model 2 through 8 suggest progress, while the Bible speaks of degeneration of nature since creation. For several models (Models 4–6), the concept of God is their only serious link to Scripture” (Roth, 346). “The eight models of interpretation of the fossil record given above . . . illustrate how one can easily and imperceptibly drift away from a belief in a recent creation by God to a naturalistic evolution where there is no God” (Roth, 351). The drift away from the biblical theme of creation can result in a gradual exclusion of God.

⁵⁵ Bauckham, 24.

⁵⁶ Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 57, 58.

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over “all things.”⁵⁷ Thus Revelation’s moral vision is highly theocentric, as is its theology.⁵⁸ Our study of the theology and ethics of the Apocalypse must begin with God and both constantly and finally return to God. His Creation, sovereignty, life and self-existence, holiness, throne, righteous acts, justice, transcendence, and coming—and the distinctive ways of speaking of God for each one as well as the other forms of God-language in the Apocalypse—inform the moral quest. God is the ultimate reality behind all earthly appearances and existence. This understanding of God as transcendent Creator, and the distinctive moral vision it cast, was characteristic of what Judaism and early Christianity shared without question.⁵⁹ One must read the Apocalypse through the same eyes if one is to grasp its moral vision.

Touching Human Reality

Revelation’s Creation motif inevitably bears on the nature of human reality. Human living is not meaningless. Human beings are here by design, by plan. They have a certain future because God is the One who created them (4:11; 21:1–7). Nor is human life as God envisioned it “open” as per existentialist, humanist, naturalistic, or pantheistic views of human nature. There is an ordered quality of life consistent with human life, a moral right and wrong (21:8; 27; 22:11, 15; 9:21; cf. 2 Pet 3:13, 14). Immoral behavior is against the kind of behavior God envisioned for human beings (18:4, 5; 9:21). Human equality is assumed and an essential part of human creation. There is no fundamental difference in the essential nature of races (and genders). Every nation, all tribes, peoples, and tongues, the small and the great, rich and poor, free men and slave are equally within the Apocalypse’s field of vision for both redemption and moral accountability (7:9; 11:18; 13:16; 14:6; 19:5, 18; 20:12). Slavery and trafficking in human lives is a reason for divine judgment (18:13).

Creation shows what God thinks about human beings. They are worth creating. They are worth changing in the present and giving a new heavens and a new earth. They are worth dwelling among. They are worth comforting (4:11; 21:1–7; 22:4). A personal God dwelling among human beings shows their true value. Revelation’s Creation is about a Person acting for mankind. Man as a reflective moral being has the capacity to personally respond to God with either worship and obedience or irreverence and disobedience (Rev 14:6–12; 9:20, 21; 22:11, 17; 16:15; 3:19–21). God created human beings as moral beings, making them morally accountable to Himself. He gave them responsibility as stewards to care for Creation, thus holding accountable those who would destroy His Creation (11:18). All that God created is God’s private property—the life of another is sacred—thus their blood will be avenged (6:10; 16:5–7; 18:24; 19:2).

⁵⁷ Bauckham, 30.

⁵⁸ Bauckham, 23.

⁵⁹ Bauckham, 47, 48.

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While the Apocalypse does not develop the notion of the *imago dei* per se, its portrayal of human beings includes several reflections of the divine nature which compose the essential dimensions of human beings. Like God, human beings are relational beings. Worldwide human life is organized into societies—tribes, languages, people, nations (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15).⁶⁰ These words describe the distribution, characteristics, and relationships of human beings,⁶¹ as well as imply the reality of integrating culture. Relationships are grounded in and are the expression of the ontological being of the human person.⁶² They can be *God-related* (3:20) or *other-person-related* (11:10). Revelation's themes of covenant, faithfulness, and truthfulness likewise express man's essential relational nature (2:10, 13; 17:14; 5:1–11:19; 21:8, 27; 22:15).

Like God, human beings have self-conscious rationality. They are able to know themselves and examine and evaluate their own thoughts and assess their own condition (i.e., the ability to experience shame or fear or remember or sense the need to repent; 2:5, 10, 21; 3:3, 18; 16:15; 18:10; 9:20, 21). Human beings are also able to perceive distance between themselves and other moral beings (or powers) and to plan the nature of their relationships with them (2:23; 3:20; 17:13, 17). It is such self-conscious rationality that makes personal relationship possible, for genuine relationships require that the persons view themselves as distinct in the relationship.⁶³

Like God, human beings possess self-determination or freedom. They can choose. They can do what they want. They have the ability to create thoughts and actions that have no determinative cause outside of the self (22:17; 18:4; 2:21, 23; 3:3; 9:20, 21). Such capacity to choose is at the core of the human person and is foundational for mankind as a moral being.⁶⁴ Without freedom, human beings could not make choices or be responsible for them (Deut 30:19).⁶⁵ The ethos of the tree of life and the holy city underscore this reality. Revelation is a book about choice. It is about how we understand the results of our choice, who we are as a result of what we have chosen, and how our choices impact both history and eternity (Rev 22:10–15; 1:3; 2:7, 11, 17, 26–29; 3:5, 6, 12, 13, 21, 22; 13:9).

Like God, human beings have an essential moral nature. The Apocalypse presents human beings as a unity in thought, will, emotion, character, conscience, and activity (2:23; 22:11). It affirms the moral nature of mankind and

⁶⁰ Revelation consistently summarizes humanity with a fourfold pattern. None of the seven lists agree precisely with the other (see Easley's chart, 101).

⁶¹ Mal Couch, ed., *A Bible Handbook to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 134.

⁶² Robert L. Saucy, "Theology of Human Nature," in *Christian Perspectives on Being Human: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Integration*, ed. J. P. Moreland and David M. Ciochi (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 25.

⁶³ Saucy, 27.

⁶⁴ Saucy, 28.

⁶⁵ Miroslav M. Kiš, "Christian Lifestyle and Behavior," *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 677.

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holds the human being morally responsible. This includes self-awareness as well as self-determination in relation to morality. Ultimately, there is no ethics without human beings.

These dimensions of the image of God—relational being, identity and personhood, self-determination, and essential moral nature—“stand as evidence against existential dismissal of any essential nature, thus favoring total freedom of all individuals to mold themselves.”⁶⁶ These same reflections of the divine nature are what all the coercion, oppression, deception, and violence in the Apocalypse override. Such realities dehumanize and tear at the essential well-being of human beings.

Creation and the revelation of Creation in the Apocalypse (together with its heightened consciousness of the person and being of God) not only help us identify who we are but enable us to grasp the basic moral structure and reality of our existence as well. It gives us a sense of being, identity, value, potential, and hope. As Kiš notes: “When we reject our origin in the divine will, act, and purpose, we are at the mercy of the human will, act, and purpose.”⁶⁷ Because the Apocalypse’s Creation motif has such a high conception of human origin, nature, and destiny, it provides us with profound criterion by which to measure both the depravity and the potential of man’s individual and corporate life.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Revelation’s vibrant and sustained confession of God as Creator reveals a highly reflective consciousness of God that elicits both worship and moral response. His Creation, sovereignty, life and self-existence, holiness, throne, righteous acts, justice, and transcendence presuppose the Genesis narrative. They posit the overarching worldview that the whole of finite reality (macro, meso, and micro) exists by God the Creator’s gift of existence. This understanding of God as transcendent Creator and the distinctive moral vision it cast was characteristic of what Judaism and early Christianity shared without question.⁶⁹ One must read the Apocalypse through the same eyes if one is to grasp its theological and moral vision. God as Creator and the Creator’s faithfulness to His creation are alike in view.⁷⁰ Understanding of God, man, sin, redemption, and judgment are profoundly nuanced. The Apocalypse asserts that the question of Creation is to be viewed as one of the moral/spiritual issues human beings are confronted with not only throughout history, but particularly in the end-time leading up to the *eschaton*. The careful reader can trace parallels between the book of Genesis and the issues and events of the last things on earth, including

⁶⁶ Kiš, 678.

⁶⁷ Kiš, 677.

⁶⁸ Caird, 293.

⁶⁹ Bauckham, 47, 48.

⁷⁰ Bauckham, 51–53.

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Creation and restoration of Creation as an eschatological reality.⁷¹ Revelation's Creation motif affirms the trustworthiness of God's Word, requiring a unity of divine revelatory purpose and a consistency of interpretation of that purpose.⁷² The allusions to Genesis 1 and 2 throughout Revelation (especially chap. 22) illustrate the role that these early chapters of Genesis played in shaping the form and content of its vision of the future and of human moral accountability.⁷³ Creation and Apocalypse are more than a mere linking of protology and eschatology. They point with new conviction to the fingerprint of God in history and His signature in the Bible—Creator.

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⁷¹ See Gage.

⁷² Gage, 3.

⁷³ Sailhamer, 83, 84.

Toward a Biblical Theology of God’s Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross in Seven Phases of Divine Universal Judgment (An Overview of a Theocentric- Christocentric Approach)

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The Scriptural teaching about judgment lies at the center of God’s revelation. It is a crux of the biblical message, giving a profound paradigm for our thinking. Next to the fundamental proclamation that God is the Creator (Gen 1–2), the Lord is presented as the Judge: In the Garden of Eden there is the first reference to the trial judgment (Gen 3:8–24),¹ where the grace and justice of God are intermingled.² The biblical Flood narrative is an account about judgment (Gen 6–9).³ Abraham called God “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen 18:25). Two biblical books carry the concept of judgment in their titles: the book of Judges and the book of Daniel.⁴

¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 254: “The purpose of the trial scene is to make clear to the man and the woman what they have done.”

²Grace was demonstrated because the first couple did not die in the day when they ate from the forbidden fruit, as promised by God (Gen 2:16–17; 3:9), and the proto-Gospel with the promise of the seed and victory over the serpent was given (Gen 3:15). See Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole, “The Seed in Genesis 3:15: An Exegetical and Intertextual Study” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Andrews University, 2002). Justice was exhibited because they were expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24) and later died (Gen 5:5).

The very first question of God: “Where are you?” was manifold in purpose. It was an invitation of grace to a dialogue, then a help to materialize where they were in their relationship with God (instead of enjoying His presence they were afraid of Him and hiding), and finally it was also a call to responsibility for their past sinful action.

³Richard M. Davidson, “The Flood,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 261–263; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1987), 155–166.

⁴The book of Judges is called in Hebrew as *shophtim*, derived from the root *shāpat*, “to judge.” The Hebrew name “Daniel” means “God is my Judge.” In a sense we all bear the symbolic name

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Daniel contains the best heavenly judgment scene ever recorded in the Scriptures (Dan 7). Prophets as servants of the covenant speak eloquently about God's impending and eschatological judgments (e.g., Joel 3:12; Jonah 3:4; Hos 1:8; 2:23; Amos 5:18–20; Isa 6:1–13; 26:9–11; Jer 11:20; Ezek 7:3–4; 9:1–11; 18:30). Additionally, wisdom literature paints the judgment picture (e.g., Job 19:25, 29; Ps 50:6; 96:13; Eccl 12:13–14). Also New Testament passages point clearly to the same reality (e.g., Matt 16:27; 25:31–46; Rom 2:16; 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1–2, 8; Heb 9:27). The book of Revelation cannot be understood without grasping this decisive work of God. It not only contains scattered references to the theme of judgment, but this thought is an integral part of the essential kerygma of that book (6:10; 11:17–18; 15:3–4; 16:5–7).⁵ Thus these samples from the first pages of the Bible to the last book of Revelation not only convincingly demonstrate before readers the significance of the theme of judgment, but also provide crucial insights into the unfolding drama of God's judging activity.

Judgment is an integral part of God's nature; it is His characteristic divine prerogative. To understand God means to know and comprehend His judgments, which are very comprehensive. Through the study of His judgments, we can know who He is and what is His character. God actually invites us to understand His judgments in order to be able to deliberately declare that He is love and justice (Rom 3:4; Pss 51:4; 34:8; Phil 2:10–11), because His word and character were challenged and ridiculed from the very beginning (Gen 3:1–5; Ezek 28:16 [the Hebrew root *rākal* can also mean “go around to gossip or slander”⁶]; Isa 14:12–15; Job 1:6–12).⁷

In the Bible there is a twofold definition of God's judgment: positive and negative.⁸ Both aspects are usually presented and are complementary, but it is

Daniel, because God is Judge of all of us. In the book of Revelation the last, seventh church is named “Laodicea” (Rev 3:14–22), which means “people of judgment.”

⁵Ranko Stefanovic, *The Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 2002), 31, 365–367, 523–572; Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 44–46, 372–482; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 271–367.

⁶Richard M. Davidson, “Satan's Celestial Slander,” *Perspective Digest* 1/1 (1996): 31–34.

⁷See, Jose M. Bertoluci, “The Son of the Morning and the Guardian Cherub in the Context of the Controversy Between Good and Evil” (Th.D. Dissertation, Andrews University, 1985); Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997); *ibid.*, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001); Christian Breuninger, “Where Angels Fear to Tread: Appraising the Current Fascination with Spiritual Warfare,” *Covenant Quarterly* 53 (1995): 37–43; Peggy Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 43 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988); Stephen T. Davis, *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, new ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior*. Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

⁸From the very beginning of God's revelation these two indispensable aspects of judgment are practiced. For example: 1) in the story of Adam's fall into sin, God condemns but also saves and

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necessary to emphasize that the primary meaning is undeniably a judgment in favor of God's faithful people (Deut 32:36; 1 Chron 16:33–35; Dan 7:22; Heb 9:27–28). When God judges, it means first of all that He justifies, delivers, saves, vindicates, and protects.⁹ Judgment means justification, salvation, deliverance, and vindication. There are many examples of this positive aspect of the judgment of God, because biblical teaching about judgment is first of all redemptive in nature (Ps 76:8–9).¹⁰ David can ask God: "Judge me, O Lord"¹¹ (Ps 7:8), because he knows that judgment is a vindication; it is God's intervention on behalf of the saints; it is His vindication against our enemies. In the divine heavenly court, judgment is pronounced "in favor of the saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:22). Nothing can be better than this forensic proclamation, because on this verdict depends the eternal life of the redeemed.

However, those who choose not to be positively judged by God, those who refuse to accept God's righteousness, stay under His condemnation (Gen 6:3; John 3:36; Rom 1:18–19).¹² When sinners refuse to be justified, saved, delivered, and vindicated by God, then they are left on their own and condemned to death, because divine judgment is also condemnation, punishment, and destruction. We can, therefore, use the language of salvation to describe God's judging activity—to be saved or condemned.

To talk about judgment is a serious and solemn matter, because God is holy and a "consuming fire" (Exod 3:5; Deut 4:24; Isa 6:3; 30:27, 30; Heb 12:29); but at the same time, it is a message full of hope, salvation, assurance, and joy (Ps 9:1–12; Rev 12:10–12). If God were not the Judge of the Universe, we would never have assurance of the eradication of sin, evil, the wicked, fallen angels, and Satan. Cemeteries, hospitals, and prisons would be here till the pre-

promises a Seed; 2) in the Flood account, wickedness is condemned and destroyed, but Noah is saved (the whole focus is on God's grace and remembrance of Noah); 3) in the story of the tower of Babel, people are dispersed, but God chooses to continue His plans through Abraham, etc. Regarding the positive aspect of the judgment in reconciliation and justification, see Hans K. LaRondelle, *Christ our Salvation: What God Does for Us and in Us* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1980); idem, *Assurance of Salvation* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 1999); Edward Heppenstall, *Salvation Unlimited* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1974).

⁹See, F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 192, 936, 1047; William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 70, 338, 380. Hebrew language employs three key words for judgment—*mishpat*, *dîn*, and *rib*; and the New Testament works with three basic terms for judgment as well—*krîsis*, *krîno*, and *krîma*.

¹⁰Every time sinners are justified, when they are declared right before God, they are passing through divine judgment (Rom 3:21–26). The whole biblical book of Judges demonstrates that the role of judges is positive: to deliver the people of God from their enemies, protect, care for, vindicate. See also Ps 37:38–39.

¹¹The Bible translation I use in this article is the New International Version.

¹²To judge in the sense of to condemn, punish, and/or destroy is a secondary meaning of this word. However, in some passages of the Bible, this meaning of condemnation is stressed and has a primary function (e.g., Ps 143:2; John 5:29; Rom 2:16; Heb 13:4).

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scious gift of life would be extinguished, because sin brings death, suffering, and violence. However, God is the Judge and the Victor (Ps 7:11; John 16:33; Rev 3:21); thus He brings an end to evil, and the salvation and life of His faithful followers is secured for all eternity. Actually, there is no Gospel without judgment. Everyone must be judged by the Gospel of Jesus (Rom 2:14), and without any exception all people have to appear before the judgment seat of God, as Paul asserts (2 Cor 5:10). Judgment is an integral part of the eternal Gospel (Rev 14:6–13).

It is my deep conviction that we need to develop a new pattern regarding God's universal judgment. This new approach will help us to perceive in a more consistent and comprehensive way how God deals with sin and how He saves sinners. For a long time our Adventist theology has not put enough emphasis upon the cross of Jesus Christ as the center of all of God's judgments,¹³ even though Adventist authors have taught the importance of the cross of Jesus along with salvation in Christ. However, the cross has often not been presented in direct connection with God's eschatological judgment, but rather separately, detached.¹⁴ The victory of Jesus in the drama of the cross has frequently not been seen as playing a dominant role in the context of God's eschatological judgment. It is particularly true in regard to the three final eschatological phases of God's

¹³See, for example, Gerhard F. Hasel, "Divine Judgment," *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000), 815–856; Mark Finley, *Studying Together: A Ready-reference Bible Handbook*, rev. ed. (Fallbrook: Hart Research Center, 1995), 21–22; Richard Rice, *Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1997), 328–346.

One may detect two extremes in Christian literature: either everything in relationship to judgment was done and accomplished on the cross, or God's eschatological judgments are put too far from the perspective of the cross. These one-sided positions fail to do justice to the total picture of biblical teaching.

¹⁴It is necessary to stress that the cruciality of salvation in Jesus accomplished at the cross is a very dominant and significant concept in Adventist theology. Jesus Christ is seen as our Advocate or Intercessor at the judgment; but simplified presentations about the judgment confuse some, hindering their ability to grasp clearly the true meaning of the whole concept of judgment—namely, putting cross and judgment together.

For the beauty of the explanation of how we are saved in Jesus Christ at God's judgment, see, for example, LaRondelle, *Assurance of Salvation*, 93–101; Morris L. Venden, *Never Without an Intercessor: The Good News About the Judgment* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1996); Edward Heppenstall, *Our High Priest: Jesus Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1972), 33–76; Frank B. Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1996); Ivan T. Blazen, "Justification and Judgment—3: Judgment and Assurance," *Adventist Review*, 4 August 1983, 5–6. See also two articles by Richard M. Davidson, "Assurance in the Judgment," *Adventist Review*, 7 January 1988, 18–20; idem, "The Good News of Yom Kippur," *JATS* 2/2 (1991): 4–27, who connects the cross with the pre-advent judgment.

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universal judgment that they have too often been isolated from the judgment at the cross.¹⁵

This unwitting and unintentional distancing of the cross and the pre-advent judgment (the ultimate event in popular Adventist thinking for the determination of people's eternal destiny) is the cause of frustration for many sincere Adventist Christians. This disconnection is for them almost like a divorce from Jesus when they think they have to make it through the judgment on their own. They may think that in the judgment they stand "naked" and alone before God's magnifying glass when they go through the x-ray of the light of His perfect law and His holiness. The distance between eschatology and the cross may lead to wrong impressions, may provide false patterns for thinking, and may even rob an honest student of the Bible of the assurance and joy of salvation. God's character is in this way distorted and twisted. The result is that many are scared of God, afraid of His judgment, and live in spiritual schizophrenia.

To launch the exposition of God's eschatological judgments with the pre-advent judgment is a narrow approach and may mislead, because according to the Bible, **eschatological** time was inaugurated with the first coming of Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1–2; 9:29; 1 Pet 1:20; 4:7; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Pet 3:3; 1 Tim 4:1; 1 Thess 4:16–17). The key factor in my approach is the fundamental recognition that the eschatological judgments start with the first coming of Christ when the last days were introduced and when Jesus Christ made atonement for sin and brought salvation and eternal justice (Isa 53:1–12; Dan 9:24, 27; John 1:29; 2 Cor 5:18–21; and also prefigured in the daily sanctuary ceremonies which culminated in the Day of Atonement). We always need to have in our minds that biblical eschatology has a double focus: the first and second coming of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ However, Christ's first advent is the fundamental basis for His second coming. The eschatological judgments center in the cross because the first coming of Christ installs the "last days," and with the incarnation the last aeon arrived. There are numerous texts that prove this crucial point (see above). All biblical teachings point and converge at the cross, and from the cross all doctrine springs up and is further elaborated and developed.¹⁷ The cross of

¹⁵These three phases of God's eschatological judgment will be discussed below: 1) pre-advent judgment; 2) judgment during the millennium which takes place after the second coming of Christ; and 3) the last judgment which will be executed at the end of millennium.

¹⁶George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), idem, *The Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 47–48; Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, rev. ed., trans. Floyd V. Filson (London: SCM, 1962).

¹⁷In Adventist theology this point was made very clear by Ellen G. White when she wrote: "The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers" (*Gospel Workers* [Washington: Review and Herald, 1915], 315). And again: "Of all professing

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Jesus Christ is the central truth of all doctrine! It means that the cross also has to be central for the biblical doctrine of judgment.

The purpose of this article is to suggest a fresh, holistic, and comprehensive theology of God's judgment in light of the cross of Jesus purposely standing at the center of divine judging activities. All aspects of God's universal judgment are tied together from the perspective of the cross. In this article I do not deal so much with the exegetical details of God's judgments,¹⁸ but rather with the overall picture and theology. This interpretation of the panorama of divine judgment in all phases, but especially the pre-advent judgment, is written from the perspective of a person who has heard the good news about God, given his/her life to Jesus, unconditionally accepted His amazing grace, and actively lives the experience of salvation in Christ.

Theologically speaking, there is only one judgment of God—the universal judgment, which is like an umbrella over all judgments that God executes. However, this universal judgment has different phases. I argue for seven phases of God's universal judgment: one pre-eschatological and six eschatological. All are explained from the perspective of time (history) and nature (content) and are centered in the cross.¹⁹

Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world" (*Gospel Workers*, 156). See also *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1956), 5:1137–1138; Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1911), 560.

¹⁸My basic presupposition is that theology must be always built on solid exegesis. In this study I have built on many insightful and pertinent theological and exegetical works, such as: Hasel, "Divine Judgment," 815–856; William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 1 (Washington: Review and Herald, 1982); idem, *Daniel 1–7: Prophecy as History*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier Series (Boise: Pacific Press, 1996); idem, *Daniel 7–12: Prophecies of the End Time*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier Series (Boise: Pacific Press, 1996); Jacques B. Doukhan, *Daniel: The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1987); idem, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000); Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1994); Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2 (Washington: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1986); idem, *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3 (Washington: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1986); idem, *Symposium on Revelation-Book II*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 7 (Washington: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1986); idem, *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Theological, and Historical Studies*, abr. ed. (Silver Spring: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1989); C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Daniel* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1981); idem, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1985).

¹⁹See the overview chart at the end of this article.

I am indebted to Jon Paulien for some vocabulary in relation to the three judgments he mentions in his commentary on the Gospel according to John. He speaks about 1) judgment at the cross; 2) judgment in the preaching of the gospel; and 3) judgment at the end. It is interesting to observe that he does not call these judgments eschatological. See Jon Paulien, *John: Jesus Gives Life to a New Generation*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise: Pacific Press, 1995), 125–127.

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The cross of Jesus divides human history into three dispensations or epochs of time: the first one as the “pre-cross dispensation,” the second as the “cross dispensation,” and the third as the “post-cross dispensation.”²⁰ The cross is the pivotal, crucial, and irreplaceable dividing point. The pre-cross epoch may be described as pre-eschatological, and the second and third epochs together form an eschatological period of time.

First Phase: Pre-Cross Judgments

The first phase of God’s universal judgment consists of His interventions into human affairs before the first coming of Jesus Christ—into the life of an individual or a community. We need to remember that God’s judgments are eschatological in nature.²¹ When, for example, God intervenes in order to justify sinners, it means that the final judgment has broken into our existence and history,²² and He is declaring a repentant person right. This is true for the situation before or after the cross (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:1–4). In addition, these pre-cross divine judgments were interferences meant by God to stop the avalanche of sin in society (as in the case of the Flood of Gen 6–9 or the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah described in Gen 19). Here eschatological time penetrated into specific historical space and time.

These pre-cross judgments were **preliminary**, or **mini-judgments**,²³ and many of them were **typological** in nature.²⁴ The New Testament in the typological sense refers to the situations of people before the Flood (Matt 24:37–39; Luke 17:26–27) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28–29) and announces the antitypical fulfillment in the world before the second coming of Christ—“as it was during Noah’s day, so will it be at the end when the Son of Man will return.”

Revelation 13:8 stresses that the focal and central point for the whole human salvific history is the cross of Jesus Christ, because He is “the Lamb that was slain from the creation [foundation] of the world.” The same is stressed by Paul: “For he chose us in him [Jesus Christ] before the creation of the world to

²⁰I do not use the term “dispensation” in the same sense as dispensationalists do; different dispensations do not represent different ways of salvation. The purpose of that distinction is to place the cross at the center of salvation history.

²¹The contradiction of this statement with the “pre-eschatological dispensation” of time is apparent, and may be explained only in the sense that the “pre-eschatological judgments” are pre-cross events, and in the strict biblical meaning that the cross of Jesus inaugurated the eschatological times.

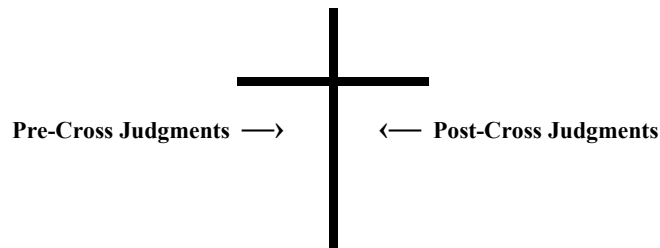
²²George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 441–443.

²³Thus Clifford Goldstein, *False Balances: The Truth About Judgment, the Sanctuary, and Your Salvation* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1992), 39–44.

²⁴Regarding typology and typological structures, see Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typos Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews UP, 1981); idem, “Typology and the Levitical System—1,” *Ministry*, February 1984, 16–19, 30; idem, “Typology and the Levitical System—2,” *Ministry*, April 1984, 10–13.

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be holy and blameless in his sight” (Eph 1:4).²⁵ This means that the cross is a symbol of grace, of God’s activity on our behalf from the very beginning of humanity.²⁶ Without that grace, the first couple in the Garden of Eden would have died after they sinned, because God plainly stated that “in the day” they eat from the forbidden fruit, they “will surely die” (Gen 2:16–17). But in view of God’s ultimate sacrifice on the cross, they were given grace, forgiven, and new life was offered. At the cross everything merges, and from it deeper insights spill out. From this view of the cross, I want to explore the theology of divine judgment in its seven phases. This is why I divide God’s judgments into pre- and post-cross.



There are multiple examples of the pre-cross phase of God’s judgments, because every time God saves or condemns, He is acting as a Judge.²⁷ All people saved in the Old Testament dispensation of time were saved only on the basis of God’s grace flowing from the cross and never on the basis of the law, obedience, or their own righteousness achieved through their good deeds (Gen 5:24; 6:8–9; 15:6; Deut 14:2; Ps 32:1–2; 51:8–10; Hab 2:4). The love and grace of God and faith in God were the integral parts of their transforming experience of salvation from the very beginning.²⁸

²⁵See also 1 Pet 1:20: “He [Christ, a Lamb without blemish and defect] was chosen before the creation of the world.”

²⁶The merits of the cross are anticipated in God’s salvific activity, they are taken as a reality, as though it had already taken place and salvation was accomplished. The certainty of the victory of Jesus on the cross is taken for granted. Some examples will suffice: in the Flood account, Noah received grace; after the Tower of Babel, Abraham was called to be God’s witness in this world; Moses was God’s instrument of salvation in a situation of judgment (Exod 32:30–32), etc. These judgments in history before Christ’s death are pre-eschatological only in the sense that with the first coming of Jesus eschatological time originated.

²⁷For example: the judgment of Adam and Eve after they sinned and were driven out of the Garden of Eden (Gen 3), the judgment upon Cain (Gen 4), the Flood (Gen 6–9), the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), the ten plagues with judgment on Egyptian gods (Exod 7–12), the rebellion of Korah (Num 16), etc.

²⁸There are no two ways of salvation—one for the people living in the Old Testament dispensation of time and another for the repentant in the New Testament dispensation. There is only one Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Heb 13:8). In the Old Testament times people were saved in view of the cross (looking forward to this crucial yet future event), and in the New Testament they are saved in retrospective view of the cross (looking back to this historically accomplished saving act of God).

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There is no specific pattern in these pre-cross judgments that helps us discern how and why God specifically intervenes in human history. Not all the wicked were condemned or punished, and it seems that God chose to demonstrate in the cases of some people and events how He hates sin in order to give humans an important lesson about His righteousness, holiness, and love. These pre-cross judgments were very often pedagogic in nature, and their purpose was to stop the spread of sin.²⁹ In specific crucial situations, God chose to teach humans that evil will not go unpunished and that the righteous will be vindicated and receive their reward (Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:11). These pre-cross judgments were usually mixed with mercy. For example, the judgment Flood story is first of all about God's grace to Noah and then about the condemnation of the wicked; pouring judgment on the builders of the Tower of Babel is recounted as a background for God's call of Abraham; judgment in Egypt culminates with the Exodus of God's people, etc. Thus, these judgments of God are both redemptive and punitive. Having these facts in mind, I call the nature of this first phase of God's judgment **the pedagogical or typological judgment**.

Second Phase: The Judgment on the Cross

The crucial phase of God's eschatological judgment originated with His judgment on the cross when Jesus Christ as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) died for us (Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:3; Heb 7:27). On the cross, Jesus experienced the wrath of God over sin and the holy God's condemnation of sin (Gal 3:13; cf. John 3:36; Rom 1:18). By taking our sins upon Himself, Christ became sin in order that we might live and receive His righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). Thus, Jesus experienced God's objective judgment on sin and died the second death in place of sinners. In this way, the whole world was judged at the cross, because our sins killed Jesus (Isa 53:4-6; 1 Cor 15:3). We were condemned to death, but because of Jesus' sacrificial substitutionary death, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16; cf. 1:12; 3:36).³⁰

This pivotal stage of the cross is presented by Jesus Himself when He stated: "'Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself'" (John 12:31, 32). And again, "'In regard to judgment, because

²⁹The same principle is true and can be observed in the specific historical post-cross judgments. Suitable examples are Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) and Herod (Acts 12:21-24).

³⁰About the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ as an atoning sacrifice and substitution, see especially Raoul Dederen, "Christ's Atoning Ministry on the Cross," *Ministry Insert*, January 1976, 3C-30C; Leon Morris, *Glory in the Cross: A Study in Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966); idem, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965); idem, *The Atonement: Its Meaning and Significance* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1983); John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1986); Alister E. McGrath, *The Mystery of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); H. D. McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985).

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the prince of this world now stands condemned” (John 16:11). The cross was the fulfillment of the proto-Gospel of Gen 3:15 about the promised Seed who will crush the head of the serpent, Satan.³¹ Paul eloquently describes this triumphant victory over Satan, evil, and sin in Col 2:13–15 and Eph 4:8 (cf. Luke 10:18).³² Also, the book of Revelation speaks about this pivotal victory of Jesus (Rev 12:7–12). Thus, Satan was judged and defeated along with everyone who associates with the archenemy of God. God Himself was “judged,” i.e., vindicated, and it was proven that He is the God of love, truth, justice, and freedom.

The judgment on the cross is **the central judgment**, because the cross of Christ is the central point in human history, and at Calvary in the intense agony of suffering He fought for our salvation and secured it. In total humility and surrender to His Father, Christ won the victory. Even the safety of the whole universe depends on that key event, because the rebellion against the loving Lord started in heaven. The cross was and is a focal point of the whole universe; this is why we are today the spectacle for the inhabitants of heaven (1 Cor 4:9), and our fight of faith has a cosmic dimension (Eph 3:10; 6:12).

Witnesses of this judgment were multiple: the whole heaven, and upon the earth those who were present at the crucifixion of Jesus—Romans, Jews, Pilate, and Herod, who together conspired against Jesus (Acts 4:27). Everything in the universe depended on this crucial event of salvation history! Through Christ's death salvation was secured once and for all (Heb 9:26–28). It is no wonder that this ultimate event in history is so **central** and **cosmic** in scope. This is why I call this judgment **the central-cosmic judgment**. Jesus revealed who God is, that He is always on the side of the sufferer, because in our distress and suffering He suffered with us (Isa 63:9). Thus God proved that He is indeed love and just (Rom 1:17; 2:4; 1 John 4:16–17).

After this central and cosmic phase of divine judgment come five **post-cross judgments** which are eschatological in nature and are an outworking of the central cross judgment. Each one of them has a different role to play and is indispensable and irreplaceable in the story of redemption (see below for details).

Third Phase: The Judgment During our Lifetime

The judgment which occurs during our lifetime is a third phase of God's universal judgment, and it is at the same time the first post-cross eschatological judgment.³³ It happens every time we make our decision for or against God. This

³¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 36–42; Ojewole.

³²Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

³³I need to emphasize that this judgment was also experienced by people living before the cross (from Adam on), because they had to make their decisions for or against God. In this sense, this decisive judgment really belongs to both dispensations of time—post-cross as well as pre-cross. I put

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occurs when we react to the Gospel,³⁴ to the preaching of the Word of God. It means that this judgment depends on the decisions we make in relationship to Christ, to His deeds for us. For example, during a sermon in a worship service or during witnessing and Bible studies, God's judgment is in effect according to our response to the message heard. On these occasions, the judgment hour has arrived and is present. Jesus demonstrates this point very clearly: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).³⁵ Once we believe, we receive eternal life as a gift! Thus, the nature of this judgment during our lifetime can be called **the decisive judgment**, because a personal decision of each individual to the proclamation of the Gospel is crucial. When personal decisions are made in relationship to God, this judgment occurs.

Key texts which describe this phase of God's judging activities can be found in such passages as John 5:22–24; 3:16–18, 36; 14:6; 16:8–11; Rom 5:1–2; 8:1–4, 31–39; Eph 2:4–10; 1 John 2:28; 4:17; Isa 53:11–12; and Dan 11:33–35; 12:3.

This judgment occurs positively when humans are justified by God, when they are forgiven. God justifies sinners who come to Him and confess their sins, renounce them, and decide to follow Him in humility and obedience, wanting to serve others unselfishly. In that moment, God declares a repentant sinner just. This means that the eschatological judgment breaks into the life of the believer. We are what we will become because God is looking upon us from the future perspective. By the transforming power of God's grace, we will be like Him! The amazing grace of God will gradually change us in order to reflect the character of God.

this kind of judgment after the cross only for pedagogical reasons in order to simplify the flow of different types of judgments from the perspective of the first coming of Christ. However, the principles are applicable to both periods of time.

³⁴By the Gospel I do not mean only a narrow understanding about the life and death of Jesus, even though it is the integral and central part of it, but Gospel in totality revealed in the totality of Scripture—God as our Creator, Judge, Redeemer, Law-giver, Lord, Intercessor, Friend, Re-Creator, etc. Gospel from the Creation and the Fall to the new creation, from the Gospel according to Moses to the Gospel according to the Apocalypse. Gospel is about God's true character and His doings revealed in each book of the Bible and to its best in the life, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ. He was the Living Gospel! But we can know Him only through the written Gospel of the whole Bible.

³⁵The phrase of Jesus: "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned" (NIV) is also translated "he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment" (NKJV). Both translations are possible and correct. The Greek phrase used here, *krísin ouk érchetai*, is open to both renderings, and they both make good sense, but from a different angle. In the first case, Jesus' sentence means that the believer in Jesus will not be condemned at the divine judgment at the end of time (at the affirmative judgment) because such a person accepted Jesus' word and followed Him; in the second case, it means that such a person will have no part in the Last Judgment because he will be affirmed by Jesus as His at the affirmative judgment and will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ and live for ever! See below for more details.

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During our life, our response to Jesus is what determines the outcome of the judgment. We are free to make any decision we please, but we need to understand that upon this decision rests our eternal destiny. There is nothing God or anyone can do to change the outcome of our decisions. The real issues in this judgment are: What will I do with Jesus? Whom will I trust? What is my reaction to the Gospel? These decisions are done during a lifetime with consequences for all eternity: saved or condemned, faithful or unfaithful, good or evil. Nothing and no one can reverse our decisions or refute the passing of God's judgment!

All humanity, those who ask for forgiveness but also those who refuse to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, are the participants at this judgment. God is the primary witness, because this judgment has a more or less private character—it occurs between God and the believer. Of course, people living around the saved must notice the profound change in their lives, because the Gospel always has ethical dimensions.

The following simple illustration demonstrates what Christ means to the repentant person. We sinners are like a paper upon which are written all over our many sins. Jesus Christ is represented by a Bible. As sinners we have heard the good news about our God, and for the first time we are attracted to Him for His goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and love toward us. We see His beauty, holiness, grace, and tender care. We accept Him as our Creator and Savior; we respond to His grace. This is why we are coming to Him as we are. If we come to Him and confess our sins openly, sincerely, and honestly, "He is faithful and just" to forgive all our sins and "purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7; Isa 1:17). He accepts us 100%, without any reservation, and we are in Christ, hidden in Him, as the paper can be placed inside the Bible and becomes totally hidden in the Bible. We are thus completely covered by the white robe of His righteousness. This means that His righteousness is our righteousness; His purity is our purity; His perfection is our perfection; His character is our character; and we are seen by God as if we had never sinned!³⁶ Moreover, when the heavenly Father looks upon us, He does not see us sinners, but His beloved son Jesus Christ! This is the perfect Gospel.

This "in Christ" motif is a dominant thought in Pauline writings. We have everything in Christ (see, for example, Rom 3:22; 6:11, 23; 8:31; 9:1; 12:5; 16:7, 9, 10; 1 Cor 1:2, 4, 30; 3:1; 4:10, 15; etc).³⁷ Salvation in Jesus is irreplaceable. Everything in our lives depends on our relationship to God and on what He

³⁶The best explanation of the miracle of forgiveness and salvation in God's judgment is found in the book *Steps to Christ* (Boise: Pacific Press, n.d., reprint 1892), written by Ellen Gould White: "If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had never sinned" (62).

³⁷See Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 58–62, 168–169, 232–233, 371–373.

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has done for us from Creation to the present. The marvelous deeds of God climax on the cross of Jesus. Our relationship to Jesus, therefore, decides our eternal destiny.

However, the good news does not stop here. God also gives to His followers eternal life. Those who believe in Jesus already *now* have (not merely *will* have) eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 11:25; 1 John 5:13)!

In addition, amazing grace is at the same time transforming grace. We are not only counted by God as being without any blemish or spot (Eph 5:27; Col 1:22; 1 Tim 6:14), perfectly covered by His blood, but the power of His Spirit and Word is changing us so that we can gradually reflect more and more His perfect character (Rom 8:4). We grow in Him as we daily walk with Him (Col 2:6; 1 John 2:6; 2 Pet 3:18). Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins (Matt 1:21) in order that sin might have no power in our lives (Rom 6:6). Consequently, we fight a good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12). God's love leads us to make right decisions, and it is God who gives us the strength to actually do God's will, to live in harmony with the will of God. Not only is the imputed righteousness a gift from God, but also obedience (imparted righteousness).

The Gospel does not terminate here! The next marvelous thing God does with us is very well explained by Paul in Eph 2:1–10. As sinners we were dead in our trespasses and sins (v. 1), but because of God's great love and mercy for us (v. 4), when we accepted Jesus as our Savior, He resurrected us, made us alive with Christ (v. 5). And then comes the incredibly surprising news: "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Jesus Christ" (v. 6)! When we are in Christ, we are already in heaven, seated with Him on the right side of the Father (Eph 1:20; compare Rev 3:21). It means that we not only have eternal life, but we are in heaven already, seated with God on His throne in the heavenly sanctuary.³⁸ We do not need to worry about our salvation or judgment, but walk and rejoice in it.

I have to confess that when I first understood this tremendous truth, I was not able to stay quiet and motionless behind my study desk. I was literally jumping and shouting for joy: "Glory, hallelujah, hosanna to God!" Every time I think about it, I praise and glorify our awesome God. The more I understand His love toward us, the more I stand in awe before Him, and I want to follow Him because He is so good. God's grace is more than amazing. It's a fantastic grace! When God saves, He saves perfectly. We are already with Him in heaven. It is only a matter of time until it will happen, because now we are there and see Him by faith, but after His second coming we will see Him face to face and stay with Him forever.

We need, of course, to understand the dynamics of biblical truth in healthy tension between "already" but "not yet." This paradox we live in faith, because we have "already" all of it (we live in the kingdom of grace), but in reality we

³⁸See also Heb 8:1–2; 4:26; 9:11–12; 6:19–20; 10:19–25; 12:22–24.

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need to wait for the second coming of Christ to encounter Him face to face, receive eternal life, and actually be seated with Him on the throne (Rev 3:21); His kingdom of glory is “not yet” here. Because God’s victory and His coming is so certain, therefore we already have everything in Him now!

We need to come to the throne of grace every day (Heb 4:16; 7:25; 10:19–23). Because we are saved by the grace of God in Jesus Christ through faith (Eph 2:8), this has ethical consequences; we are now “created in Christ to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (v. 10).

If God is so involved with us, who can separate us from such great love of God? Paul is certain that no one and nothing on earth or in the whole universe can separate us from that love (Rom 8:35–39). Let me stress that even sin cannot separate us from God, but only unconfessed sin, stubborn staying in sin, cherished sin will ultimately separate us from the love of God. Our wrong attitude kills whatever is valuable, beautiful, and good.

When we accept Jesus we are justified, and as a result there is no more condemnation against us (Rom 5:1, 9; 8:1, 33, 34; 1 Cor 6:11).³⁹ God’s grace works in the life of saved people. Grace is like a pregnancy—it works instantly, even though it is not visible immediately. It needs time to be visible, tangible. It is the same with God’s grace: it transforms, but time is required for the process. Justification is a creative power of God that brings new life. It is an existential process: it re-creates true life, with the final eschatological renewal and transformation starting in our time and space.

Jesus Christ declares that He is our Judge (John 5:22)! This does not contradict Dan 7:22, because the Aramaic text does not convey the idea that the Ancient of Days Himself is pronouncing judgment, but that the judgment was pronounced (Peil form of *yehib*; Peil is a passive conjugation) in favor of the saints of the Most High. The biblical text in Dan 7 is silent as to who pronounced the judgment. However, in the context, the best candidate for pronouncing the verdict is a heavenly and divine person (clouds are a symbol of the deity)⁴⁰—the Son of Man who is very intimately related to the saints of the Most High, active for them, and has the highest authority. He is presented at the center of the judgment vision. The heavenly Father is presiding over the judgment, but Jesus is actually the one pronouncing the verdict.

Although the Gospel that we sit in Jesus Christ already in heaven is so beautiful, this is not yet the end of the good news about our God as the Judge. He is the One who is also convening a judgment in heaven so that He can, in front of the whole universe, legally secure our place there forever. This leads us to the fourth needed and important phase of God’s judgment.

³⁹George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 441–3.

⁴⁰Richard M. Davidson, “Cloud, Cloud of the Lord,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 102–103.

Fourth Phase: The Pre-Advent Judgment

God does not need to convene the judgment in heaven in order to condemn people, because we are all sinners and thus condemned to death. If He is calling a court into session in heaven prior to His second coming,⁴¹ its primary purpose is to secure legally our place in the heavenly family for eternity. Jesus, as the true Witness, will proclaim in front of the whole universe at the heavenly tribunal that we are His, that His grace is sufficient for us, that He made us new persons, changed by the power of His grace! He wants to secure it legally, openly, and publicly, and also transparently to all inhabitants of the universe, so that no one during eternity will ever raise the question of something being done unfairly, secretly, and partially. Jesus makes it plain that the saved are trustworthy people, that they fit in heaven because God's amazing grace is a transforming grace that changes them. God wants us to be accepted into heaven without any doubts or question marks.

Phase number two of God's post-cross judgments is the pre-advent judgment described mainly in Dan 7:9–27; Matt 22:1–14; Rev 11:19; 14:7.⁴² This judgment is performed in heaven (Dan 7:9–10, 13–14) prior to the second coming of Christ when the rewards will be given. Seventh-day Adventists explain that this judgment started in 1844 according to the book of Daniel (Dan 7–9).⁴³

⁴¹The sequence of the events in Dan 7 is very clear: after the fourth kingdom (Rome) there is: 1) a persecution of the saints (7–8, 21, 23–25); 2) then judgment in heaven (9–12, 22a, 26); and 3) finally the kingdom of God (13–14, 22b, 27). This sequence is repeated three times in the same chapter!

⁴²Very often the judgments described in the New Testament do not make a clear distinction between the final phases of divine universal judgment. In some biblical passages regarding the judgment, these particular phases blend together and look like one event. Only through the deeper insight of the immediate context and often through the larger context of the scriptural revelation does the light shed on the details help the reader understand a more distinct time framework of the specific judgment.

In similar fashion, the Old Testament mentions the first and the second coming of Christ together in one passage without paying special attention to the reality that they are describing two events (e.g., Isa 11:1–9; 52:12–15). Consider this analogy: when looking into the constellation of Orion and seeing all of its stars from our earthly perspective, each star appears as if it is the same distance from us here on earth. However, although the stars look like they are on the same plane in the sky, if one uses a telescope to view Orion, one visualizes great distances in depth between the stars as well as dramatic variances in the distances between the different stars and the earth.

⁴³For the detailed exegetical and theological insights of the pre-advent judgment, see Hasel, "Divine Judgment," 833–846; Shea, *Daniel 7–12*, 85–166; Richard M. Davidson, "The Meaning of Nisdaq in Daniel 8:14," *JATS* 7/1 (Spring 1996): 107–119; Heppenstall, *Our High Priest*, 107–129; Norman Gullett, *Christ is Coming! A Christ-centered Approach to Last-Day Events* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1998), 410–437.

It is important to differentiate between an eschatological time in general inaugurated by the first coming of Jesus and a specific prophetic time of the end starting in 1798 and 1844 according to the historicist school of prophetic interpretation (Dan 7–9). For the explanation of this prophetic eschatological time and the chronological aspect of the judgment, see especially the following studies: Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, 67–171; Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel*, 100–156; idem, *Daniel: The Vision of the End*, 11–44, 153; Richard M. Davidson, "In Confirmation

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We are judged by the standard of God's law, the Decalogue, which is the transcript of His character. Jesus Christ is a perfect living example and personification of this law (James 2:12–13; 1:25; Rom 2:13, 16; 3:21–26; Matt 16:27; John 8:46; 14:30)! He is there for us as our Judge, Advocate (defense attorney), and Intercessor; all at the same time (1 John 2:1). He presents our life in its entirety before the heavenly court as our true and faithful Witness, so we are not going through investigation there alone! We are not standing in front of the court, exposed and abandoned as the court administers its judgment. On the contrary, Jesus is there on our behalf.

In some misleading Christian paintings and pictures, the repentant sinner is portrayed as a lonely being in the middle of the courtroom with millions of angels as witnesses, while God is portrayed as the Judge of the event. Unfortunately, this wrong representation of the judgment does harm to the loving character of God. The correct interpretation of the situation should be portrayed in the following ways: the repentant sinner standing in the courtroom with Jesus by his side, being embraced by his or her Savior; or the sinner standing on the palm of the pierced hand of Jesus; or Jesus standing in the courtroom with the sinner drawn in His heart.

What was done heretofore more or less privately in the life of individuals in relationship between God and themselves is now publicly made known to the whole universe. God affirms His judgment of justification in front of the universe to show that the saved stayed in close relationship with Him (it is not enough to marry, but to stay married). Therefore, the nature of this judgment can be called **the affirmative or confirmatory judgment** that certifies, seals, and ratifies what was done during a person's lifetime. From the perspective of God and the believer, no investigation is going on. God knows those who belong to Him, what happened in the lives of believers, and what relationship they cultivated with Him during their lifetime. Believers cannot influence anything in that judgment. They are totally passive, because all decisions were made during their everyday life. Affirmative judgment is a confirmation of lifetime decisions!

Investigation at this judgment is going on only for the sake of the angels or inhabitants of the universe, because for their sake the books (records of lives) were opened (Dan 7:10). They need to clearly see that those people who will be admitted to heaven to live with them are new people. This is why Jesus Christ as the true Witness of our life decision, orientation, and attitudes—He who knows perfectly our relationship to Him—presents our case to the universe. This presentation will be God's revelation of His amazing grace and transforming power (rather than a display of our sins). The effects will be celebrated in the lives of the individual sinners. It will be a great "power-point" presentation of how He

of the Sanctuary Message," *JATS* 2/1 (1991): 93–114. See also a pertinent dissertation written by Gerhard Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series, vol. 2 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society, 1992), 272, 314, 317.

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worked for us, in us, and through us! Nothing mysterious; no secret activity. It is a legal procedure of admission to heaven in front of the whole universe. It will be plainly revealed if we sincerely accepted God as our Creator and Savior and embraced His grace, or if we were only acting as “good” actors or actresses.

God’s love and justice is demonstrated when He accepts into the heavenly family those who repented and followed Him. God is proven just because Christ demonstrates the transformation of sinners by God’s grace, Word, and Spirit. This process started in their lives, developing through time.

The common name given by Adventists to the pre-advent judgment is the “investigative judgment,” but this designation perhaps does not best describe the overall nature of that judgment, because from the perspective of God and the saved no investigation is going on. God knows who are His, and the redeemed made their decisions for God, and they know if they are in the right relationship with Him or they cultivate or live in sin. This judgment is investigative only from the standpoint of the angels. This is why I want to coin a new name for this particular judgment, namely, **the affirmative judgment**, because God in front of the universe affirms or confirms the relationship established between Him and believers during their lives. Nothing mysterious, hidden, or esoteric is performed at this judgment. It is a revelatory judgment because Jesus personally reveals the ethical dynamics of the relationship between Him and His faithful children.⁴⁴

This judgment is like the final inspection of a house. Inspection comes after a long period of construction, and at the end comes the process of “sealing” or approving the work. Part of this affirmative judgment is a review of lives, a demonstration of life’s orientation and attitudes, and finally comes the confirmation of a judged person. The pre-advent judgment is thus the last legal procedure before the second coming of Jesus to make clear to the universe who at the second coming of Christ will be saved and who rejected.

All professing believers in God are judged, not only those who truly follow Him but also those who are opposing His people in the name of “their God.”⁴⁵ In a sense, God is also vindicated, as it is demonstrated that His previous approval of a believer was correct. In this affirmative judgment, God is vindicated in forgiving those who asked openly, sincerely, and honestly for forgiveness of their sins, trespasses, and mistakes.

⁴⁴Ivan T. Blazen, “Justification and Judgment,” in *70 Weeks, Leviticus, Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Washington: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 339–388; idem, “Justification and Judgment—1: Justification by Faith and Judgment According to Works,” *Adventist Review*, 28 July 1983, 4–6; idem, “Justification and Judgment—6: Pre-advent Judgment and John’s Judgment,” *Adventist Review*, 25 August 1983, 9–12; Heppenstall, *Our High Priest*, 131–140.

⁴⁵Dan 8–9 reveals that the little horn, the antichrist power which played God, tried to change God’s law, trampled down His truth, and persecuted God’s faithful followers, is judged and condemned to death (see Dan 7:11, 26, and Dan 8:25). For all the details of this phase of God’s judgment, see especially Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” 840–842.

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Let me be personal. I imagine the situation in heaven when my name will be called in this judgment in the following way: Jesus will stand right beside me and with one hand will embrace me and with another will present my case—fairly, objectively, without denying anything. I will be seen as a sinner, condemned. But He is not there in order to display my sins like in a shop window. He will, on the contrary, point first of all to His amazing transforming powerful grace, and in front of the whole universe He, as the true Witness of my entire life, will explain my attitude toward God, my inner motives, my thinking, my deeds, my orientation and direction of life. He will demonstrate it all. Jesus will testify that I made many mistakes, that I transgressed His holy law, but also that I repented, asked for forgiveness, and was changed by His grace. He will proclaim: “My blood is sufficient for the sinner Moskala, His orientation of life is on Me, his attitude toward me and other people is warm and unselfish, he is trustworthy, he is my good and faithful servant.” After such crystal clear testimony by Christ on my behalf, I imagine that in that very moment, the whole heavenly tribunal will jump up from their seats and will applaud God’s amazing grace (not me!). They will clap for joy and shout glory and hosanna to God. Then they will say: “Yes, we want that Moskala, the justified sinner, who was transformed by the grace of God, to live with us. If he would not be here with us, there would be an empty space here; we would miss him. We want to live with him for all eternity.” Thus my place in heaven is secured for eternity. If I am there, it is only because of Him, His love and grace for me!

Fifth Phase: The Judgment at the Second Coming of Christ

The second coming of Jesus Christ is presented in the Bible as an executive judgment when He comes to give, on the one hand, eternal life to those who follow Him, and, on the other hand, condemnation to those who said no to Him (Matt 16:27).⁴⁶

The second coming of Christ is an ultimate consummation of the biblical hope which is the hope of all hopes. Jesus Christ comes with the reward to bring redemption to all true believers of God (Rev 22:12). It is a final deliverance of God’s faithful children from this sinful world (Isa 25:9)! It is actually an execution of a decision taken first in our lives, and then confirmed at the affirmative judgment. When Jesus comes, it is clear who will be resurrected to eternal life and who will suffer eternal condemnation and ultimate death. It is a condemnation and execution of the living wicked people (2 Thess 1:6–10; 2:8). This judgment at the second coming of Christ is therefore **the realization judgment**.

⁴⁶There are many pertinent studies about the second coming of Christ. See especially, Millard J. Erickson: *Christian Theology*, unabridged ed., 3 volumes in one (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983–5), 1185–1204; V. Norskov Olsen, ed., *The Advent Hope in Scripture and History* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1987); Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and Second Advent* (Nashville: Southern, 1978); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Advent Hope for Human Hopelessness* (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1986).

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At the second coming, all the living humans will be judged, but only the faithful believers will be saved. Also those who died in the Lord will be resurrected to eternal life (Job 19:25–27; Dan 12:2, 13; John 5:39–40, 44; 11:25–26; Rev 14:13)!

It is of high significance to stress that in all His judgments, God has taken our decisions, motives, thinking, orientation, attitudes, and behavior, and life very seriously. He never acts arbitrarily or capriciously, and He does not perform judgment partially or with favoritism. His judgments are fair, according to the truth. He never condemns before first attempting to save. The lake of fire was not prepared for humans, but only for the devil and his evil angels (Matt 25:41). Unfortunately, if a person refuses God's saving activity on his behalf (John 16:9), the individual must face the consequences of his or her decisions—condemnation and eternal death.

God is good all the time, even when He is executing judgment. He has no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18:32, 33:11). To destroy is a very strange act for God (Isa 28:21). But, as in the case of the biblical Flood (Gen 6:11–13), so Jesus at His second coming will come to destroy those who destroyed the earth (Rev. 11:18), because wicked people became a destroying force, agents against life. God is always pro-life oriented, and as a great Surgeon he has to come and remove the cancer from humanity and the whole universe so the original, beautiful, abounding life may continue. He comes to destroy what was already destroyed by human corruption, sin, evil, selfishness, stubbornness, indifference, and pride. True meaningful life can only be experienced where there is love, truth, justice, order, respect, creativity, sacrifice, and service.

If someone will be condemned to death, it is not because that person is a sinner, but because that individual did not accept Jesus Christ as the solution to his/her sins, because that person refused to surrender to the influence of the Holy Spirit and the authority of His Word. The only solution for the problem of sin is Jesus Christ. Some will remain in sin, refusing divine help and the offer of salvation. There is no hope for such stubborn, evil, indifferent, selfish, and/or prideful people (John 16:9).

Sixth Phase: The Judgment During the Millennium

This phase of God's eschatological judgment takes place during the millennium.⁴⁷ The redeemed people will be taken to heaven at the second coming of Christ, while the wicked will die because of the brightness of the presence of

⁴⁷About different views on the millennium, see Hans K. LaRondelle, "The One Thousand Years of Revelation 20," *Ministry* (September 1982), 12–16; idem, "The Millennium: Its Old Testament Roots," *Ministry* (November 1982), 10–12; idem, "The Millennium: A Revelation of God's Character," *Ministry* (January 1983), 7–9; Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979); Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977); Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennium Maze* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992).

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Jesus (2 Thess 1:6–10; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:21). The key biblical passage describing this judgment is found in Rev 20:1–6.⁴⁸

What is the purpose of this judgment? We do not have much in the biblical text itself about this judgment; therefore we need to deduce things from the larger context. God wants all His people to be happy throughout all eternity despite the fact that somebody beloved by the saved will not be present. God opens to the redeemed all His inner thoughts and decisions and explains to them what He was doing to save those who will eternally perish, and He will unmask their inner reactions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations. God will take time to explain to the saved what they were really doing and how they were thinking and feeling.

This judgment will be an endorsement of God's previous decisions taken during the lifetime of the wicked and publicly displayed in heaven during the affirmative judgment. What was confirmed previously in heaven in front of the heavenly inhabitants during the affirmative judgment is now displayed to the redeemed. Everybody will understand why God had to decide negatively in their cases, because God's decision in regard to their lives was built on their negative attitude toward God. The cross, the ultimate revelation of God's love and the only solution to their wickedness, was rejected by these people!

To the redeemed, learning why God could not admit the unrepentant to heaven and to the New Jerusalem comes as a deeper revelation of His love and justice. They understand that He could not forgive those who did not ask for forgiveness or asked for it hypocritically. God demonstrates that these people rejected His saving grace that leads to good works and obedience (Gal 5:6; Matt 7:21–23; 1 Cor 7:19).

All the redeemed attest to God's goodness, love, and justice, despite their beloved human fellows being condemned to eternal death. The nature of this judgment can be characterized as **the attestation judgment** when all of the redeemed attest to God's justice and love in His decision not to admit to heaven those who did not surrender their lives to God,⁴⁹ refused His saving activity for them, and continued in their destructive behavior. They will also judge the evil angels and Satan (Rev 20:4; 1 Cor 6:2–3; Matt 19:28). The book of Revelation tells little about this judging activity of the redeemed during the millennium.

⁴⁸For deeper exegetical insights into this biblical passage, see Peter M. van Bemmelen, "The Millennium and the Judgment," *JATS* 8/1–2 (1997): 150–160; Joel Badina, "The Millennium," in *Symposium on Revelation-Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring: General Conference Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 225–242; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation*, 494–500; Stefanovic, 561–567; Gulley, 438–457; Ekkehardt Mueller, "Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 20," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 37/2 (1999): 227–255.

⁴⁹For how people are saved at the judgment, see Clifford Goldstein, *Graffiti in the Holy of Holies* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2003), 115–142; Morris Venden, *Good News and Bad News About the Judgment* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1982); Gulley, 458–461; LaRondelle, *Assurance of Salvation*.

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The millennium is also the time for healing and reconciliation. Imagine the situation when the Prophet Isaiah will meet King Manasseh who killed him; or what about the meeting between David and Uriah, whose wife David took and whose murder he ordered?

In this attestive judgment God is vindicated, for He did not forgive those who did not ask for forgiveness. They identified themselves with sin, and in their pride refused to humble themselves and ask Jesus to change them. In their stubbornness or indifference they rebelled against God. All the redeemed will now be able to see what God was doing for all the people whose fate is eternal death. God makes no mistakes. He did not forget even the least one who gave his/her life to Him. Only those who stayed outside need reap their consequences.

Seventh Phase: The Last Judgment

In Adventist theology, the cross is intimately connected with the last judgment.⁵⁰ In this final judgment on earth at the end of the millennium when the wicked will be resurrected, they will gather to attack God and His people in the New Jerusalem (Rev 20:7–10; 21:1–3), and the cross of Jesus will be elevated above the throne of God. God Himself is seated on the great white throne, and He judges all unrepentant creatures (Rev 20:11–12).⁵¹ In the light of the cross, the history of sin and salvation will be displayed—each stage of the rebellion against God as well His wonderful plan of redemption from the beginning of the rebellion of Satan in heaven through the supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to the final victory at the second coming will be shown. Also, all the wicked will see their lives in the light of the cross. They will see what God was doing for their salvation, how many chances they rejected, how they despised His grace in their pride and ignorance. Their stubbornness and indifference will be keenly unmasked, and they will see the true nature of their rebellion.

After that, Satan, all of the fallen angels, and all sinners will acknowledge that God is just in dealing with them. All will bow down before God and proclaim His righteousness and love (Phil 2:9–10; Rom 3:4; Rev 15:3–4). However, afterwards Satan will be angry at himself that he, under the clear evidence, admitted God's victory, and he will try to reverse his defeat. He will lead all sinners into a final desperate attack against the holy city. Their wicked character is thus proven and demonstrated once again. Even the best information about God, His character and actions, will not change these beings. They are wicked through and through. There is only one solution—destroy them. The fire from heaven will fall and will definitively do away with sin, evil, and rebellion (Rev

⁵⁰Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1950), 666.

⁵¹About the Final Judgment, see Stefanovic, 568–572; John Lawson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury, 1980), 264–270; L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, reprint), 728–735; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1140–1157; Erickson, 1200–1241.

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20:9–10). This will be **the annihilative judgment**, the final eternal non-reversible death. For those who rejected Jesus as their Savior and stayed in this stubborn attitude, there is no hope. They only destroyed. God needs, therefore, out of love, to destroy those destroyers. The nature of this judgment is **the final execution**; it is thus **the executive judgment**. God has to react to the destructive behavior of unrepentant humans, evil angels, and the devil. If He did not react, evil would “triumph” and life would be jeopardized and ultimately annihilated. God is presented as the Surgeon. Sin, sinners, and the devil with his angels are wiped out and the earth is purged of evil (Rev 20:13–15).

After cutting off what was sick and sinful without possible healing, He acts as Re-Creator of life. The last judgment will totally undo the damage of sin. He will create the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev 21–22).⁵² Salvation and life will be secured for all eternity. Sin will never occur again! All intelligent beings in the universe will serve God faithfully out of love and gratitude because they know the goodness, love, justice, and truth of God.

This final phase of God's universal judgment is really universal. All are there: it is a cosmic audience with all the inhabitants of heaven and all the redeemed witnessing that the wicked of all generations, all fallen angels, and Satan are judged, condemned, and executed. Thus God will finally destroy all spots of sin and evil. And love, peace, harmony, joy, justice, freedom, order, and truth will reign for all eternity. God as the Lord of lords and God of gods will be worshiped forever and ever by everyone.

God is vindicated, for all see that He is the God of love and justice (Rev 19:2–3); consequently, He can now destroy those who rebelled against Him. God never destroys because someone is turning against Him, because that somebody unplugged himself or herself from Him. He is not like a crazy young man who would say to the girlfriend he “loves” but who refuses to love him: “Love me or I will kill you.” God destroys only destroyers of life. He does not punish us for the fact that we say no to Him, but for the reality of life—because when someone turns away from God, that person becomes a destroyer of everything that is valuable, beautiful, positive, and good.

Biblical judgment is not anthropocentric, but theocentric. It is not first of all about us and our salvation, but a self-revelation of God, of who He is! He was accused in front of the universe of injustice, wrongdoing. But by his open way of government He clearly demonstrates that He is a God of love and justice. He does not favor anyone; He is not arbitrary, but gracious with respect of the truth. His judgments are open so that everybody can see the beauty of His decision, His fair treatment of each individual, of sin, and of the perversion of those who associate themselves with evil and deliberately stay in sin.

The beauty of God's good news about judgment attracts humans to God! The theology of God's judgment is the ultimate revelation and demonstration of

⁵²Grudem, 1158–1167; Stefanovic, 573–613.

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the love, truth, and justice of God (Rev 15:2–4; Phil 2:10–11; Rom 3:4; Ps 51:4). God’s government is open; God’s ways are demonstrated and proved right and just. God is just while justifying sinners who accepted Him and trust Him as their personal Savior. It is a deeper revelation of God’s character in how He deals with the problem of sin, sinners, Satan, and fallen angels, and how He saves those who cultivate faith in Him! Salvation is secured and the safety of the whole universe is ensured for eternity.

God is never judged in the sense that He is called to a trial, because no one has the power to summon Him to court, and there is no standard outside of God by which He can be judged (see the excellent insights by Edward Zinke in E. Edward Zinke and Roland R. Hegstad, *The Certainty of the Second Coming* [Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2000], 81-89.) Rather, He demonstrates the beauty and consistency of His own character. He himself in His love opens all that He is doing and invites others to see His judgments for themselves in order that all can be convinced by the evidence of His way of treating sin, sinners, fallen angels, and Satan that everything points to a God of love, justice, peace, truth, order, and freedom. This is why all the inhabitants of heaven will happily serve God throughout eternity, and no intelligent being will ever again think to revolt against such an awesome God. God will now recreate everything that sin damaged. The pattern is clear: creation, de-creation, re-creation.

God’s government is an open government; He hides nothing. He desires that the intelligent beings in the whole universe deliberately follow Him because they know Him for who He is. They love Him because they can trust Him.

In summary, the Gospel according to divine judgment is perfect as seen from the perspective of a genuine believer in Jesus:

1) God gives us educational lessons in “mini-judgments” from the past that we may know that He is truly the God of grace, love, justice, truth, and order and the Guarantor of freedom, that He loves people but hates sin, that we are responsible for our actions, and that there are consequences (pedagogical/typological judgment);

2) Then, Jesus Christ died for us, took upon Himself our sins, and experienced the judgment of condemnation that we may live and never be condemned to the second death (central-cosmic judgment at the cross);

3) Jesus applies what He accomplished at the cross to our present experience; He justifies and changes us by His amazing grace, Word, and Spirit; He gives us eternal life, His peace, joy, and full assurance of salvation, and He sets us with Him in heaven on His throne (decisive judgment during our lifetime);

4) Jesus as our true Witness and Intercessor secures legally, openly, and transparently our place in heaven by affirming in front of the universe that we have truly accepted His righteousness (justification is the basis of salvation), cultivated our relationship with Him, and consequently, that we are fit (sanctification is the fruit of salvation)—by His transforming grace, Word, and

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Spirit—to be admitted into the heavenly family in order to enjoy life throughout eternity (pre-advent affirmative judgment);

5) Jesus Christ comes personally to the earth for His faithful followers at His second coming in order to give them eternal life, to actualize for them tangibly and physically what they hoped for (realization judgment at the second coming of Christ);

6) Jesus Christ takes time to explain to the saved His decisions and thinking in order to help them to understand His judgments and cope with the eternal loss of their loved ones; He provides time for healing (attestation judgment during the millennium);

7) And finally, God Himself annihilates forever all evil—Satan, evil angels, the wicked, and sin—so that only love, peace, and harmony will reign, and He as Creator will recreate for His people the New Earth and New Heaven; thus true and meaningful life can be fully enjoyed and is secured eternally (the final executive judgment).

This universal judgment of God with seven phases makes perfect sense and cannot be made better. It is the perfect Gospel, because our God is a perfect God; He wants our best. All of this and more we have when we are in Christ! It gives the most beautiful picture of our loving, gracious, holy, just, and truthful God! He is the Victor; He is in control; He loves us more than we can comprehend. No one else is like Him. He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings. To Him alone belongs glory!

The biblical teaching about divine judgment is the Gospel, very good news about our incredible and marvelous God. Judgment is nothing one needs to be afraid of. It's not a stick to beat, threaten, or push us to be good and behave well. It is a message of hope and gives assurance of our salvation. It turns our sight from ourselves and focuses it on God. It presents a bright picture about God as our Judge Who is for us, always does His maximum to save us, delivers us from our enemies, and vindicates us in front of the whole universe. Judgment does not rob us of confidence but brings true joy of life. It presents the Judge of the Universe as our personal Creator, Savior, and Friend who wants our best, who does everything possible to secure salvation for us (John 14:1–3; 17:1–3). He lives and stands in heaven for us! “If God is for us, who can be against us” (Rom 8:31)?

With such good news about judgment, I cannot conclude differently than with a prayer: “Rise up, O God, Judge of the earth” (Ps 82:8)! “O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure” (Ps 7:9)!

“Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord” (Jer 10:24). Because we have so wonderful a God, we can have full assurance of salvation. The apostle John proclaims: “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we

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may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28), and again “Love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him” (1 John 4:17).

This is truly the Gospel according to divine judgment!

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Toward a Theology of God's Universal Judgment: A Celebration of the Cross
Seven Phases of Divine Judging Activity
 (An Overview of a Theocentric-Christocentric Approach)

	I. Pre-Eschatological Judgment	II. Eschatological Judgments					
		Post-Cross Judgments					
Time:	<i>1. Pre-Cross Judgments</i>	2. JUDGMENT ON THE CROSS	<i>3. Judgment During Our Lifetime</i>	<i>4. Pre-Advent Judgment</i>	<i>5. Judgment at the Second Coming of Christ</i>	<i>6. Judgment During the Millennium</i>	<i>7. The Last (Final) Judgment</i>
Nature:	<i>1. Pedagogical or Typological Judgment</i>	<i>2. Central-cosmic Judgment</i>	<i>3. Decisive Judgment</i>	<i>4. Affirmative Judgment</i>	<i>5. Realization Judgment</i>	<i>6. Attestation Judgment</i>	<i>7. Executive Judgment</i>
Key Biblical References:	Gen 3 Gen 4 Gen 6-9 Gen 11-12 Gen 19; etc. Exod 7-12 Exod 13-14; etc.	John 12:31-32 Isa 53:3-8 Dan 9:24-27 John 16:11 Rom 8:3 Rev 13:8 Rev 12:7-12 Eph 1:4 1 Pet 1:20	John 5:22-24 Isa 53:11-12 Dan 11:33-35; 12:3 John 3:16-18, 36 John 14:6; 16:8-11 Rom 5:1-2; 8:1-4 Rom 8:31-39 Eph 2:4-10 1 John 2:28; 4:17	Dan 7-8 Rev 14:7 Rev 19:2 Matt 22:1-14	Rev 19:17-21 Matt 25:31-46 John 5:28-29 1 Cor 4:4-5 Dan 12:2, 13	Rev 20:4-6 1 Cor 6:2-3 Matt 19:28	Rev 20:7-15 John 12:48 Acts 17:31
Content:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Preliminary •Typological •Mini-judgments •Educational •Positive-Negative •Salvation-Condemnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Crucial •Pivotal •Central •Cosmic in Scope •Objective •Positive-Negative •Salvation-Condemnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Decisive •Personal/Private •Response to the preaching of the Gospel •Occurs when humans are justified (forgiven) •Positive-Negative •Salvation-Condemnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Affirmative •Confirmatory •Revelatory •Evaluative •Investigative (only for angels) •Public •Positive-Negative •Salvation-Condemnation (the Antichrist Judged) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Consummation of biblical hope •Redemption of all true believers in God •Condemnation and execution of the living wicked •Positive-Negative •Salvation-Condemnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Confirmatory •Revelatory •Endorses God's previous decisions •Negative •Condemnation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Condemnation •Executive •Annihilative •Negative
Place:	Earth	Earth	Earth	Heaven	Earth	Heaven	Earth

Time:	1. <i>Pre-Cross Judgments</i>	2. JUDGMENT ON THE CROSS	3. <i>Judgment During Our Lifetime</i>	4. <i>Pre-Advent Judgment</i>	5. <i>Judgment at the Second Coming of Christ</i>	6. <i>Judgment During the Millennium</i>	7. <i>The Last (Final) Judgment</i>
Nature:	1. <i>Pedagogical or Typological Judgment</i>	2. <i>Central-cosmic Judgment</i>	3. <i>Decisive Judgment</i>	4. <i>Affirmative Judgment</i>	5. <i>Realization Judgment</i>	6. <i>Attestation Judgment</i>	7. <i>Executive Judgment</i>
Place:	Earth	Earth	Earth	Heaven	Earth	Heaven	Earth
	<p>Pre-Cross Judgments Post-Cross Judgments</p> <p>Rev 13:8 Eph 1:4 1 Pet 1:20</p> <p>Relationship Christ's Merits</p> <p>Merits & Relationship Affirmed to Universe</p>				<p>Executive Judgment (in Three Stages)</p> <p>Humans cannot influence the results or change the final outcome.</p> <p>Decisions were made during lifetime and then affirmed at the pre-advent judgment!</p> <p>God deals with issues of salvation or condemnation objectively, publicly, and openly.</p>		
Direct Beneficiaries: (For the Sake of) Further Description:	Survivors	Whole universe, including humanity	Individual human persons	Whole universe (angels)	Redeemed people	Redeemed people	Whole Universe, including redeemed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Usually mixed with mercy •Sometimes executive •Lesson for survival •Redemptive and punitive •God's surgical action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •God's triumphant victory over Satan, evil, sin •God is judged and vindicated: He is the God of love, justice, truth, freedom, and order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •God justifies sinners •God declares sinner right (eschatological judgment breaks into the life of the believer) •You are what you will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Revelation of God's grace and power (rather than display of our sins); demonstration of how He worked <i>for</i> us and <i>in</i> and <i>through</i> us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Resurrection of dead in Christ •Consummation of hope of all hopes •Jesus Christ with rewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •God wants all the redeemed to be happy throughout eternity •Revelation of God's love and Justice while not forgiving those who rejected His saving grave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All intelligent beings in the universe will serve God gratefully out of love and gratitude because they know goodness of God

Time:	<i>1. Pre-Cross Judgments</i>	<i>2. JUDGMENT ON THE CROSS</i>	<i>3. Judgment During Our Lifetime</i>	<i>4. Pre-Advent Judgment</i>	<i>5. Judgment at the Second Coming of Christ</i>	<i>6. Judgment During the Millennium</i>	<i>7. The Last (Final) Judgment</i>
Nature:	<i>1. Pedagogical or Typological Judgment</i>	<i>2. Central-cosmic Judgment</i>	<i>3. Decisive Judgment</i>	<i>4. Affirmative Judgment</i>	<i>5. Realization Judgment</i>	<i>6. Attestation Judgment</i>	<i>7. Executive Judgment</i>
Further Description Con't:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Wall against the avalanche of evil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •God passed judgment upon sin and Satan •The whole world and all humanity judged •God's revelation—Who He is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Decisions made for or against God •After death nothing can be changed (sealed; no second chance) •Real issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –What do I do with Jesus? –Whom will I trust? –What is my reaction to the Gospel? •Decisions are made in lifetime for all eternity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> –Saved-unsaved –Faithful-unfaithful –Good-evil •Nothing and nobody can reverse this judgment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Nothing mysterious •No secret activity •Legal admission to heaven in front of the whole universe •Plainly and openly reveals God as Creator and Savior •God is proven just because sinners are transformed by God's grace, Word, and Spirit •God's love and justice are demonstrated when He accepts into the heavenly family those who repented and followed Him 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All living humans judged, but only faithful believers saved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All redeemed attest to God's goodness and justice in not admitting into heaven those who refused His saving activity for them and continued in destructive behavior •Judgment of evil angels and Satan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The overall judgment has very positive results •God as the Surgeon •God as the Re-Creator •Total undoing of the damage done by sin •Salvation and life secured for all eternity •Sin or rebellion will never occur again

Theology of God's Judgment: Revelation and Demonstration of the Love, Truth, and Justice of God (Rev 15:2-4; Phil 2:10-11; Rom 3:4; Ps 51:4)

**God's Government is Open—God's Ways Are Demonstrated and Proved Just
God Is Just While Justifying Sinners Who Accept Him and Trust in Him as Their Personal Savior
Deeper Revelation of God's Character in How He Deals with the Problem of Sin, Sinners, Satan,
and Fallen Angels and How He Saves Those Who Cultivate Faith in Him**