

# Enrichment

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers

## Faith & Science

Interpreting God's Word  
and God's World **44**



**How the  
Affordable  
Care Act  
will affect  
your church** 18

Topical vs.  
expository  
preaching **25**

**Are you  
leaving a  
legacy  
of trust?** 28

10 steps  
to better  
networking **32**

**Can the  
pastor's  
spouse  
balance  
ministry  
and a  
career?** 34



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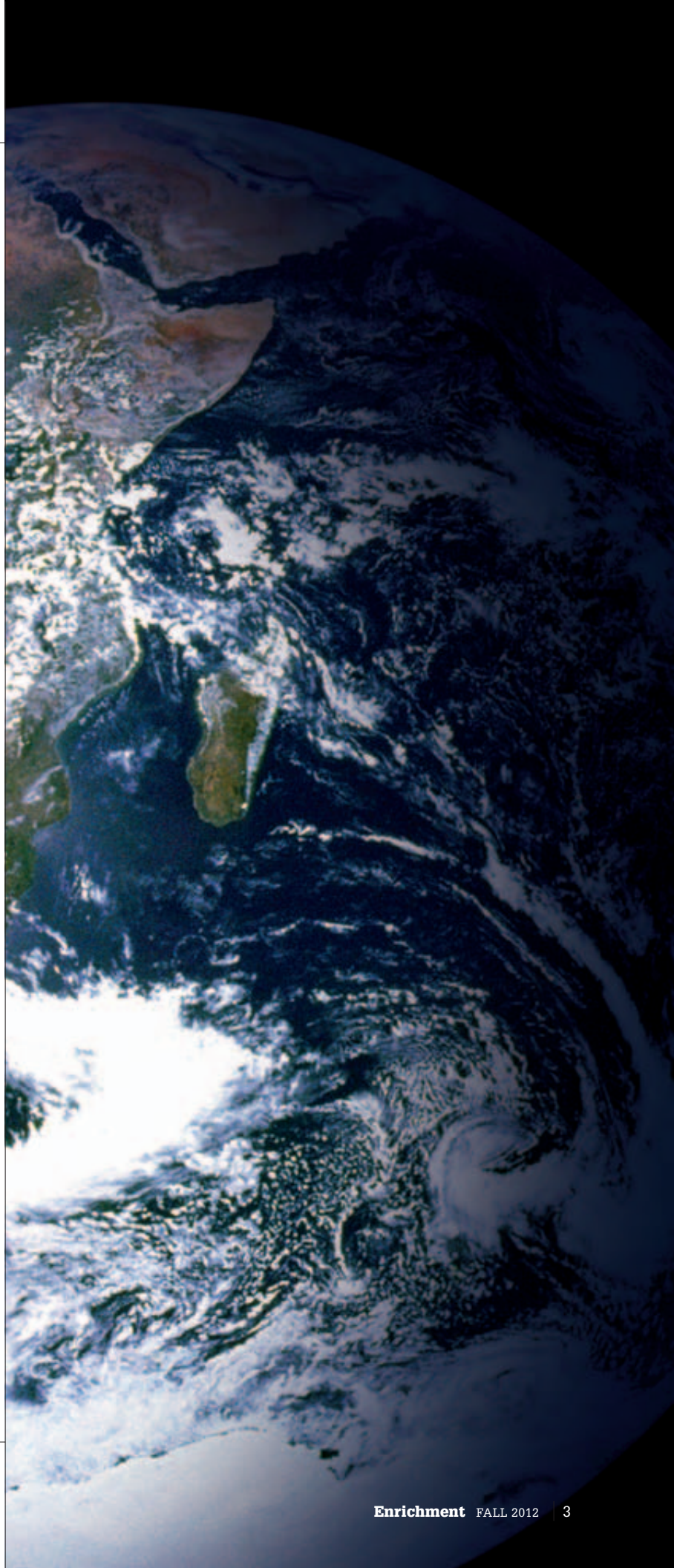
**Y**ou'll notice several changes as you leaf through this issue of *Enrichment*. We've sought to give a crisper, cleaner look to the cover, contents, and article pages. Content has been rearranged; your favorite "Shop Talk" columnists are now located closer to the front. (Be sure to read Richard Hammar's "Clergy, Church & Law" column on page 18. He discusses how the Affordable Care Act may affect your church.) A new section, Clergy Craft, begins on page 128.

Despite the changes, we remain a thematic publication. That is, each issue explores one topic in depth. This issue's theme, Faith & Science (page 44), may stretch your thinking a bit. We've sought to bring a balanced — and biblical — perspective to science-related issues on which evangelical Christians often disagree.

Look for additional changes in upcoming issues, including a variety of feature articles, an expanded Books section, and letters to the editor. E-mail your comments to [EJeditor@ag.org](mailto:EJeditor@ag.org) or post comments on our Facebook page. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

We hope you'll regard the changes as improvements. Our objective is to make *Enrichment* more attractive, readable, and useful to you, the minister. Are we on track? Tell us what you think.

Press on! 📧





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## 16 LEAD LONG...LEAD STRONG

### **Social Networking**

By **SCOTT HAGAN**

Successful spiritual leadership requires sacred time and solitude. Social media is a challenge to that ideal.

## 18 CLERGY, CHURCH & LAW

### **The Supreme Court's Health Care Ruling**

By **RICHARD R. HAMMAR**

What is the significance of the ruling upholding the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act?

## 22 MOVING LEADERS FORWARD

### **What To Do When Your Team Says It Cannot Be Done**

By **GLENN REYNOLDS**

Transformational leaders regularly encounter opposition to their change agenda. How should they respond?

## 25 ON PREACHING

### **Where Do You Start?**

By **DOUG GREEN**

Unlike topical preaching, expository preaching starts with the text and lets God's Word both ask and answer the question.

## 28 MANAGING THE MAYHEM OF MINISTRY

### **Your Leadership Legacy**

By **CAL LeMON**

Building trust with your congregation is determined by how those who follow you will respond to seven statements.

## 32 WELL CONNECTED

### **10 Steps To Better Networking**

By **JUSTIN LATHROP**

Here are practical ideas you can begin incorporating into your work today.

## 34 Q&A FOR MINISTRY WIVES

### **I'm Having Trouble Balancing Ministry and a Career**

By **GABRIELE RIENAS**

A pastor's wife struggles with guilt because her full-time job limits involvement at church.

## 37 IN CONTEXT

### **The Birth of Jesus**

By **MARC TURNAGE**

Several traditional elements of the Christmas story are nowhere in the scriptural text.

## 40 MINISTRY & MEDICAL ETHICS

### **Measuring Responsibility: Moral Agency and the Brain**

By **CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL**

Debates over free will versus determinism may have practical implications for a person's behavior.



## InDepth

# Faith & Science

Interpreting God's Word and God's World

## 44 Introduction

By **GEORGE O. WOOD**

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND SCIENCE

## 46 Faith and Science: Friend or Foe?

By **AMOS YONG**

How should faith and science interact? Here are four basic positions with sound recommendations for biblical and theological reflection on scientific matters.

## 52 INTERVIEW

### **A Dialogue on Faith and Science**

**STEVE KRSTULOVICH, CECIL MILLER, and CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL**

Perspectives from three scientists that will help Pentecostal ministers more competently engage their churches in the ongoing faith and science dialogue. *(continued on page 6)*

10 EShorts

43 EJ Online

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## Faith & Science (continued from page 5)

### II THE EARTH'S AGE: VARIOUS EVANGELICAL POSITIONS

#### 64 The Case for a Young Earth

By KURT P. WISE

Not only does the Genesis account maintain that the creation is young; according to this author, a young creation is foundational to the rest of Scripture.

#### 70 The Case for Day-Age Creation

By HUGH ROSS

Is belief in an old earth and in days as "ages" perfectly consistent with the belief that God created in 6 literal days?

#### 76 The Case for an Old Earth (The Literary Framework Interpretation)

By DAVIS A. YOUNG

Is the 7-day creation account chronological or meant as a literary framework or symbolic structure designed to reinforce the purposefulness of God in creation?

82 Response to Davis A. Young and Hugh Ross

By KURT P. WISE

83 Response to Kurt P. Wise and Davis A. Young

By HUGH ROSS

84 Response to Kurt P. Wise and Hugh Ross

By DAVIS A. YOUNG

### III MINISTRY IN A SCIENTIFIC AGE: PRACTICAL ISSUES

#### 86 Preparing Young People for a Life of Faith

By MICHAEL TENNESON

Is your church a safe place where youth can question, discuss, and debate controversial faith-science topics?

#### 92 Science and the Pulpit: Ministering to Scientifically Literate People

By CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

Here are pitfalls to avoid and positive approaches to take when speaking about science from the pulpit.

#### 98 Four Truths About the Religion and Science Debate

By JOHN MARK REYNOLDS

Here are four things you need to know to successfully live in the tension between science and religion.

### IV DEFENSE OF FAITH AGAINST "NEW ATHEIST" SCIENCE

#### 104 Does Science Prove That God Does Not Exist? A Look at Richard Dawkins

By GREGORY E. GANSSLE

We must make careful observations to see whether there are good reasons to think that Richard Dawkins' best argument against the existence of God is true.

#### 110 Is Religious Belief Just a Brain Function?

By PAUL COPAN

Are humans evolutionarily "hard-wired" to believe in God? Consider the alleged evidence and this author's response to it.

#### 116 Navigating Sam Harris' *The Moral Landscape*

By WILLIAM LANE CRAIG

If God does not exist, what foundation remains for objective moral values and duties? Can science answer questions of morality?

#### 122 Science, Doubt & Miracles

By TIMOTHY MCGREW

Are miracles at odds with modern science? Can science settle the question of miracles?

#### 144 A Final Word A Pentecostal Way Forward Through the Challenges of Science

By GEORGE PAUL WOOD

How should Christians live between the benefits of science and its apparent challenges to our faith?

128 ClergyCraft    132 News&Trends    134 Books    139 With Christ    140 News&Resources    143 Ad Index



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**Executive Editor:** George Paul Wood / **Managing Editor:** Rick Knoth / **Associate Editor:** Richard Schoonover / **ART Director:** Steve Lopez / **Office Coordinator:** Connie Cross / **Design:** Dave Danielson, Lucas Key, Steve Lopez, Sarah Simmons. **E-mail:** enrichmentjournal@ag.org / **website:** enrichmentjournal.ag.org

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# Experience God

as His Beloved, Empowered Child

## Dancing with My Daddy

by Valery Murphy

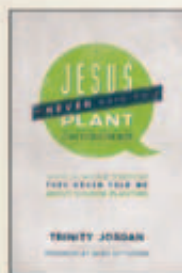
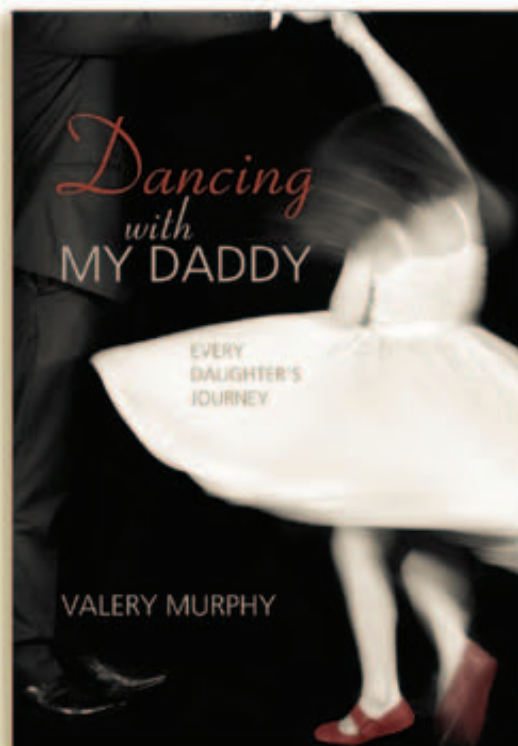
The vital relationship between father and daughter is often hindered by life's difficulties, and daughters often measure God with the measure shaped by their earthly dad. Murphy contrasts both the endearing and imperfect and explores how anyone can learn from life's relationships, as we see our "Daddy" in heaven a little more clearly.

Great for small groups and individuals.

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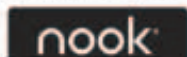
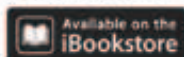
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*Bryce,  
Murray State University in Kentucky*

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*Alyssa,  
a leader from Master's Commission in Bellevue, Nebraska*

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Central Bible College*



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*Karla,  
Sacramento State University*



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TRENDWATCH

# 21 TRENDS

## IN THE 21ST CENTURY:

### How Young Adults Are Challenging Christianity and Creating Culture

1. **Generation overload.** They are going through a quarter-life crisis; overstimulated, overworked, overstressed, but underpaid.
2. **Identity.** They are still defining themselves and their beliefs.
3. **Beliefs.** They do not get organized religion, but they do get Jesus.
4. **Relationships.** They are delaying marriage, cohabitating, and staying home longer.
5. **Generation connect.** 4G, Wi-Fi, Smart phones, Google, Flickr, YouTube, Blogs, Facebook, and Twitter bring them together (example — the social media phenomenon).
6. **Spirituality.** They want a provocative, challenging faith that is culturally aware.
7. **Finances.** They are in-debt from the beginning of their adult life.
8. **Global.** They think green and give to worthwhile causes (example — Tom's Shoes).
9. **Leadership.** They are looking for authenticity and opportunity.
10. **Generation next.** They are the leaders of today and tomorrow.
11. **Community.** They thrive in organic structures (example — "tribes," coffee shops, small groups, etc.).
12. **Seekers.** They have a deep longing to worship something.
13. **Innovative.** They think outside the box because they do not know there is a box. Living extreme is the new normal.
14. **Mentorship.** They are looking for you to "be with" them, not "talk at" them.
15. **Generation momentum.** They want a vision of church and life worth dying for.
16. **Creativity.** They are redefining prayer and the worship arts.
17. **Consumerism redefined.** They want functionality and aesthetic appeal. They will pay more for the experience (example — Apple, IKEA, Starbucks, etc.).
18. **Worship mindset.** They integrate the ancient with the future (candles and computers).
19. **Motivation.** They strive for excellence, not perfection.
20. **Generation confusion.** They search for religious information from books, podcasts, Wikipedia, or various preachers instead of going to the Bible.
21. **Generation wondering.** They are moving approximately every 2 years — dislocating them from family, traditions, and generational roots (strangers living among strangers).

— DAVID LERMY

Connections pastor, Lawton First Assembly,  
Lawton, Oklahoma. Used with his permission.



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AN OLYMPIC MOMENT

## LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE

The Games of the XXX Olympiad in London found Usain Bolt defending his gold medal in the 100- and 200-meter dashes and maintaining his reputation as the fastest man on earth. Meanwhile, Michael Phelps became the most decorated Olympian of all times winning his 22nd medal.

But a controversy surrounding the placement of the Olympic cauldron dimmed the golden glow of "The Games." Unlike previous venues, the flame heralding the Olympic spirit was not visible to the masses.

Olympic officials came under attack for hiding the cauldron made of 206 sculpted rods (representing the participating nations) inside the track and field stadium. Only those with tickets granting them entrance to the stadium could see the "light of the world." Thousands were disappointed by not being able to take pictures of the cauldron as a way of participating in the Olympic experience.

For Jesus, we are not to keep the light of the gospel from the masses. He warned, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14–16).

— GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS,  
Mercer Island, Washington



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## IN DEFENSE OF FAITH

### NEW ANGLES ON RELIGION VERSUS SECULARISM

**S**cience and theology discussions find their place in a larger religion versus secularism debate. Surprising angles on this whole theme are emerging, as expressed in a recent issue of the UK publication, *The Spectator*. Calling himself an unbeliever, author Matthew Parris takes on secularists like Richard Dawkins and also chides people of faith for not being more robust in their declaration.

Parris offers a sweeping broadside when he warns that faithful followers of the world's religions should be wary of a lazy mish-mash of covert agnosticism being advanced in the defense of religion. Parris says, "Whatever floats your boat is not the well-spring of Judaic belief. ... Jesus did not come to earth to offer the muzzy comforts of a weekly ritual, church weddings, and the rhythm of public holidays."<sup>1</sup>

Parris also says that if faith is true, it must have the most profound consequences both for individuals and for society. In addition, Parris honestly admits that if he seriously suspected a faith might be true, he would devote the rest of his life to finding out. He concludes his essay by observing that religion that is familiar, comforting, and useful is not good enough. The real question to answer remains: *Is it true?*

— **BYRON KLAUS, D.Min.**, president,  
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

#### Note

1. Matthew Parris, "Beware — I Would Say to Believers — the Patronage of Unbelievers," *The Spectator*, February 25, 2012, at <http://www.spectator.co.uk/columnists/all/7667978/beware-i-would-say-to-believers-the-patronage-of-unbelievers.html>. Accessed 20 March, 2012.



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## FROM BOOMERS TO ZOOMERS

### UNBRANDED

**W**ho would have thought that a corporate giant like Eastman Kodak would file for bankruptcy in mid-January 2012 after 131 years of creating a brand name so familiar that "Kodak" equals photograph. In truth, Kodak had been struggling for years to accommodate the market shift toward digital images. Their attempts to adapt were unsuccessful. It is sad to see a household brand name become obsolete and antiquated.



It seems, however, that we could say the same thing of organized religion. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life<sup>1</sup> identifies the millennial generation as the least likely to belong to a particular denomination. Denominational branding is slipping with this generation because it represents an outdated and out-of-touch approach to religious life. Their preference is for a spirituality that engages with real world issues. Millennials want a religion that makes a difference in the world, so they struggle with a brand loyalty to something that does not appear to make a difference.

As Pentecostals, we have historically embraced an engaged and connected missional spirituality. Is our brand slipping?

— **RANDY WALLS**, director of continuing education,  
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

#### Note

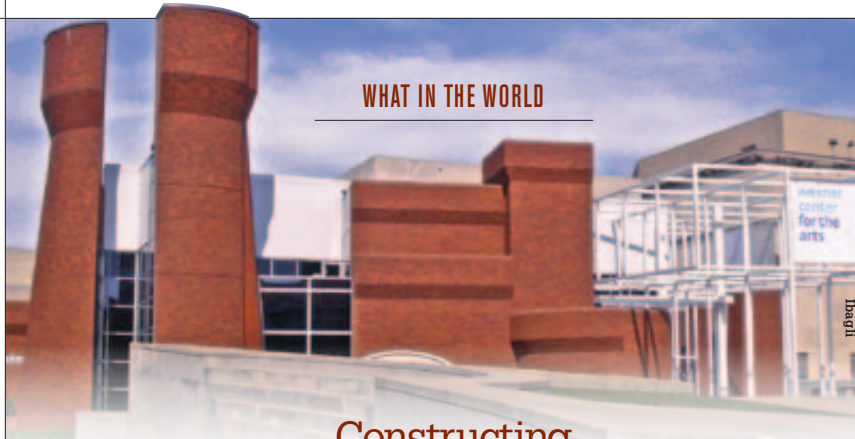
1. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Religion Among the Millennials," February 2010. Available at <http://www.pewforum.org/Age/Religion-Among-the-Millennials.aspx>. Accessed 20 March, 2012.



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WHAT IN THE WORLD

## Constructing Deconstructionism

**R**avi Zacharias regularly speaks in contexts where people challenge his defense of Christianity. In the course of one presentation, Zacharias spoke of the limitations of a deconstructionist worldview. He notes an example of these limitations when he observes *Newsweek's* labeling a new performing arts center at a major university as America's "first deconstructionist building." For example, when you enter this building you encounter stairways that go nowhere, pillars that hang from the ceiling without purpose, and angled surfaces configured to create a sense of vertigo. The architecture intentionally reflects life as senseless and incoherent and the "capriciousness of the rules that organize a built world."

Zacharias asked: "Were the same assumptions present when this same building's foundation was put in place that allowed this cathedral of deconstructionism to be built?"

Zacharias' question is poignant in its simplicity. We can attempt to offer explanation about life as seemingly senseless, but if the architect of this building followed these same assumptions in the creation of the foundation for the building, no one would dare enter it for fear of his own life.

It is possible to dress up and romanticize our bizarre experiments in social reconstruction while disavowing truth or absolutes. But one dares not play such deadly games with the foundation of good thinking or there will be destructive consequences.

— BYRON KLAUS, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

## Single-Parent Families

Of the 74.6 million children younger than 18 in 2011, most (69 percent) lived with two parents, while another 27 percent lived with one parent, and 4 percent with no parents. Of those children who lived with two parents, 92 percent lived with two biological or two adoptive parents.

Among the children who lived with one parent, 87 percent lived with their mother.

Of the children living with no parents present, 57 percent lived with

at least one grandparent.

In 2011, 10 percent of children under 18 lived with at least one grandparent. Seventy-eight percent of these children also lived with at least one parent.

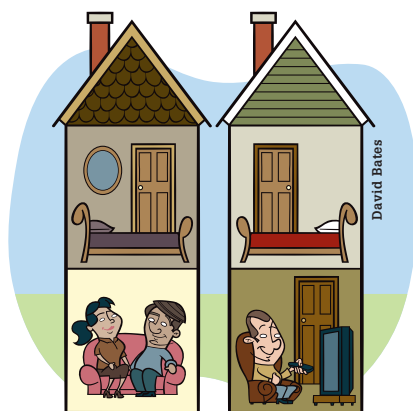
Of the 67.8 million opposite-sex couples that lived together, 89 percent were

married couples, while the remaining 11 percent were unmarried.



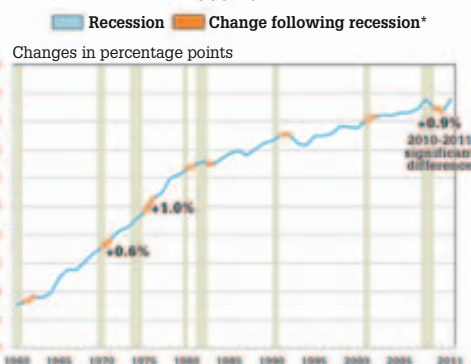
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## Single-Person Households



In general, the percent of all households that contain just one person has risen over the last half of the 20th century and into the 21st century. The percentage of such households rose from 13 percent in 1960 to 28 percent in 2011. While the percentage may not differ significantly from one year to the next, the overall trend has been an upward one.

### Percent of Households With One Person 1960-2011



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU.

\*Changes after recessions where values are not shown were not a significant change from the first full year following the recession to the year prior.



## CHRISTIAN ARTS

### THE 168 FILM PROJECT'S "WRITE OF PASSAGE" CONTEST

In recent years several ministries have cropped up in Hollywood to encourage Christians to make a difference in the movie and TV industry. One such ministry is 168 Film Project, which sponsors contests to encourage Christians to grow as filmmakers. In October each year 168 Film Project hosts its Write of Passage contest for aspiring screenwriters.

The Write of Passage contest gives participants 168 hours (1 week) to write a script (up to 12 pages) for a short film. Writers base their scripts on an assigned theme and Bible verse.

Entry fees start at \$35. Participants are assigned a producer (mentor) with experience in film and/or screenwriting who will review and, up to three times, make suggestions on the participant's script during the writing week. Writers can decide whether to incorporate the suggestions into their scripts and resubmit for further comment.

Awards include a cash prize for the top script and meetings with Hollywood professionals. Finalist scripts might be produced and screened at the 168 Film Festival in March.

For writers in your congregation who might want to participate, it is helpful to have scriptwriting software. Popular programs are available for purchase; a few are free online. A study of story structure is also helpful. The contest is designed for writers of all levels to compete and learn so Christians are trained to bring God's Word to the screen.

Find more information at [www.168Project.com](http://www.168Project.com).

### THE KAIROS PRIZE FOR SCREENWRITERS

The Kairos Prize for Spiritually Uplifting Screenplays among the Christian ministries in Hollywood exists to encourage Christians to make a difference in the movie and TV industry. Established in 2005 by Movieguide®, the Kairos Prize gives a total of \$50,000 in cash awards for the top three scripts in the contest.

The Kairos Prize seeks "to promote positive change in the motion picture industry."

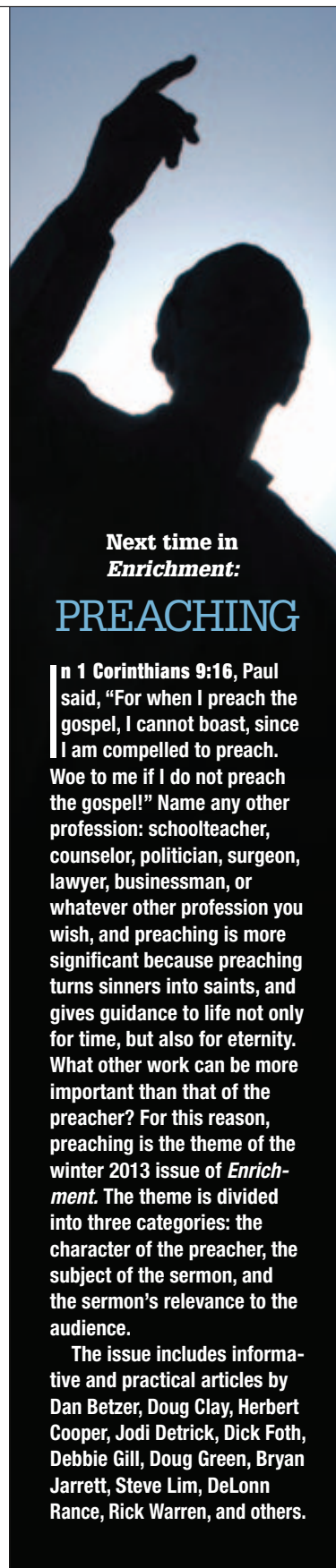
According to the website at KairosPrize.com, "The primary purpose of the prize is to further the influence of moral and spiritual values within the entertainment industry."

Pure Flix Entertainment recently released the 2006 grand prize winner, *Johnny*. Two other Kairos winners are currently in development. The goal of the Kairos Prize is to bring scripts to Hollywood that result in a greater increase in either man's love or understanding of God.

The Kairos Prizes are presented at the annual Movieguide® Faith and Values Awards Gala and Report to the Entertainment Industry in February. Dr. Ted Baehr, founder and publisher of Movieguide®, presents highlights of Movieguide®'s annual Report to the Entertainment Industry at the gala. This annual report uses "box office figures to prove once again that moviegoers prefer movies with faith and values that celebrate and illustrate American, patriotic, Christian, and conservative principles in entertaining, inspiring ways."

Also awarded at the gala are the Epiphany Prizes for movies and television, with the top prize of \$100,000 for the Most Inspiring Movie of the year. For more information, visit [www.movieguideawards.com](http://www.movieguideawards.com).

— DIANNE E. BUTTS, Pueblo, Colorado



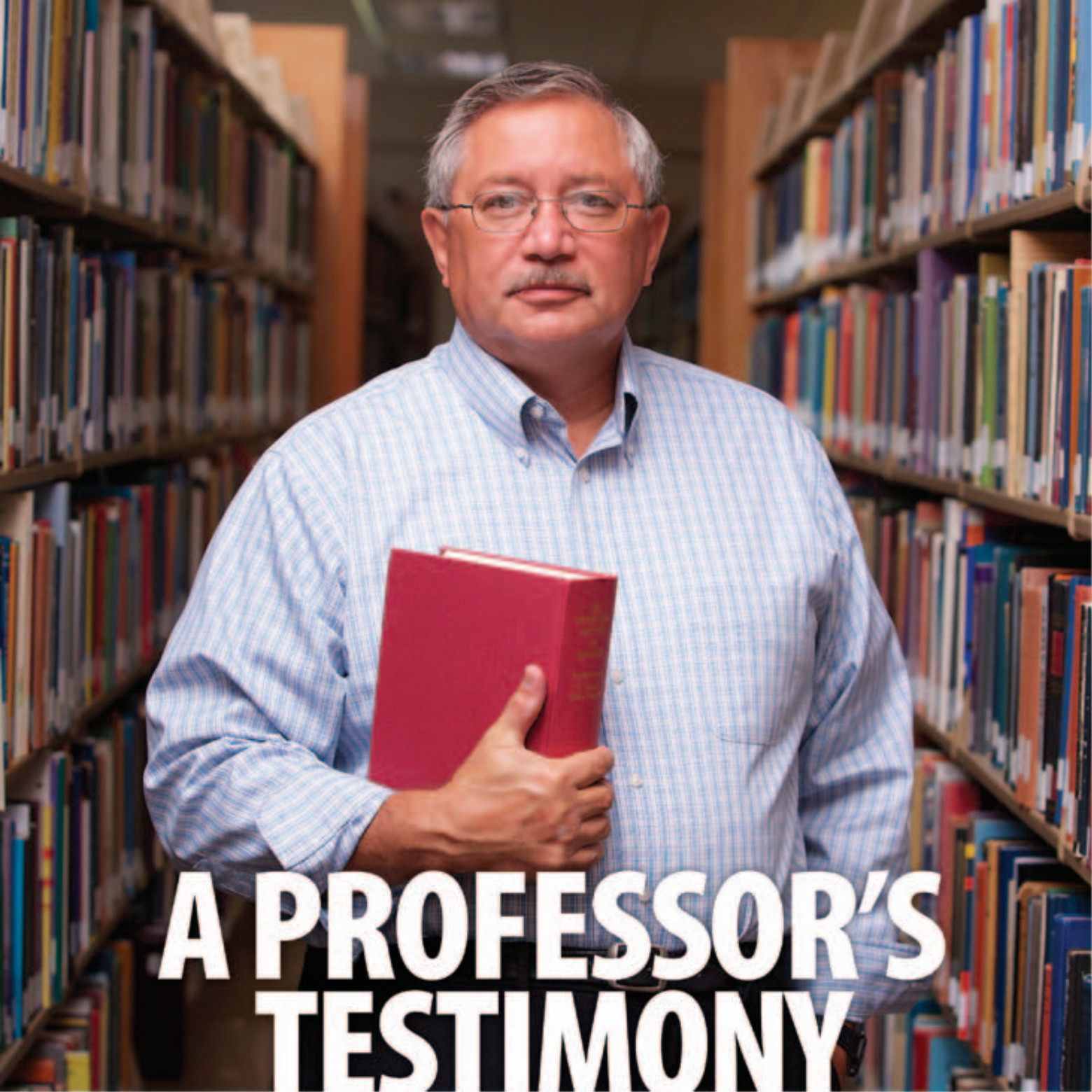
Next time in  
*Enrichment*:

## PREACHING

In 1 Corinthians 9:16, Paul said, "For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" Name any other profession: schoolteacher, counselor, politician, surgeon, lawyer, businessman, or whatever other profession you wish, and preaching is more significant because preaching turns sinners into saints, and gives guidance to life not only for time, but also for eternity. What other work can be more important than that of the preacher? For this reason, preaching is the theme of the winter 2013 issue of *Enrichment*. The theme is divided into three categories: the character of the preacher, the subject of the sermon, and the sermon's relevance to the audience.

The issue includes informative and practical articles by Dan Betzer, Doug Clay, Herbert Cooper, Jodi Detrick, Dick Foth, Debbie Gill, Doug Green, Bryan Jarrett, Steve Lim, DeLonn Rance, Rick Warren, and others.





# A PROFESSOR'S TESTIMONY

► BY **DR. JAMES HERNANDO**

**M**y journey to my present post at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary begins with my conversion to personal faith in Christ from nominal Catholicism.

As a youth I went to church often,

but I did not hear the gospel until 1972 during the Jesus Movement in a tent revival service at a Pentecostal church. There the gospel was presented clearly and simply, and I understood that the sinner being described was certainly me.

I repented and responded to the altar call to give my life to Christ.

Thereafter, I discovered a whole new world within the pages of Scripture and became an avid student of the Bible. It was like looking at the world through an entirely new set of lenses, which made sense of the senseless and gave me hope and purpose for life.

As a new believer, I soon became



*"It became apparent to me that if I could accurately interpret and expound the teachings of Scripture, God would save, deliver, and renew lost sinners."*

very aware that not everyone believed the same things, even when agreeing that the Bible was the Word of God. I began to teach Sunday School and discovered the *Adult School Quarterly* written by Dr. Stanley Horton. I was overwhelmed at how clear he made the teachings of the Bible and how its truth prompted and fostered my own spiritual growth.

Already in the field of education, I aspired to teach the Bible. God's call to do just that came when I was confronted with a student who had just lost a close relative in a house fire. Knowing of his grandmother's faith, I encouraged him with the hope of the Resurrection and at that moment knew God was calling me to teach His Word and the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Shortly after that experience, I resigned my teaching position and went to Bible college (Valley Forge) where I sat under the anointed and sound teaching of Pentecostal scholars.

Again, it was the transformative power of the Scriptures that made the greatest impression on me. It became apparent to me that if I could accurately interpret and expound the teachings of Scripture, God would save, deliver, and renew lost

sinners. Bible college was followed by seminary at AGTS, a doctoral program on the East Coast, and eventually a teaching ministry at Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, North Dakota.

It was there that I met and taught countless students from all walks of life, each with a story of God's grace. Over 8 years I saw repeatedly, in memorable ways, how God uses His Word to transform and fashion sinners into servants of His church.

My advice to people considering graduate education in biblical studies and theology is to nurture a passion for God *through* His Word. Determine the ground and source of your faith.

Hammer out in advance what you believe about the Scriptures. Are they God's written revelation to humanity or merely the variegated religious thoughts of men? Then, humbly and soberly consider the weight of James' admonition: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." (James 3:1)

**Dr. James Hernando is professor of New Testament at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.**

## Q&A

with James Hernando

### 1. Tell us a little about yourself, what you teach at AGTS, and your family.

I'm professor of New Testament and have been so since 1990. I have three grown sons (Matthew 32, Eric, 28 and Danny, 26). Matt has a Ph.D. in history and is looking for a permanent teaching position. Eric is an instructor at Grand Canyon University, and Danny is a Special Ops Marine currently deployed. They all love the Lord and are serving Him in their chosen professions and callings.

### 2. Tell us about your early years.

I was born into a nominal Catholic family. Due to alcoholism, my parents lost custody of me and two of my sisters. I was raised by my older sister and brother-in-law, also nominal Catholics, until I went to college.

### 3. What do you like about teaching?

Watching people get excited about the Word of God, understanding what it means, and applying it to their lives.

### 4. How can students use the *Dictionary of Hermeneutics*?

College and seminary textbooks in hermeneutics are so filled with names and terms that are undefined or with so little background as to be unintelligible. My book seeks to fill in the gap of background knowledge that would make sense of terms, topics, and people connected with the field of biblical interpretation.

### 5. Is your dictionary a tool that can be used by people who are not pastors and don't plan to enter ministry?

Yes, it would be helpful to all lay people who read books related to the Bible or Christian theology or doctrine. My goal was to write for those who had little or no background knowledge.

### 6. What comments have you heard about the *Dictionary of Hermeneutics*?

"a helpful resource"; "a good review of what I used to know"; "it became a steady companion when reading my textbooks."



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James Hernando

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BY SCOTT HAGAN

**I** am a digital immigrant. Born in 1962, vocational (paid) ministry did not begin for me until 1983. I started in ministry as a junior high youth pastor at a large San Jose area church. The structure for success was simple. Spend an hour with the Lord first thing every morning. Maintain office hours. Sit behind an organized desk. Be on time to staff meetings.

Monumental to the task was keeping my Day-Timer current.

To be successful, I had to generate, collaborate, and communicate my ideas with staff as well as make and honor future appointments and commitments by first writing them down on a calendar. And all of this was supposed to happen during office hours that began at 9 and ended at 5.

If your church was big enough, a secretary sat at the front desk and took calls. She then wrote down the information on tiny slips of paper and handed them to you each time you passed by her desk.

If you did respond after hours, you did so



Successful spiritual leadership requires sacred time and solitude. Social media is a challenge to that ideal.

because you had an exceptional disposition that allowed for extended availability.

But that was the exception.

I have spent the previous 25 years of my life assimilating all sorts of new technological advancements. Well, actually about five. In no specific order they were the automatic garage door opener, the microwave, the auto-reverse car cassette player, and the television remote control. And, of course, the big one: the electric car window. Beyond that, there was not much new that required mental orientation. Little did I know, however, that the fax machine and the cordless phone were right around the corner.

Then somewhere near the halfway point of my leadership life, I found myself deported to a new land of digital demands where ideas and commitments have no correlation to office hours and where leaders shifted from settlers back to explorers. Instead of office hours, the leader simply started traveling each new day until the energy ran out or he or she could no longer concentrate. Then after a brief cat nap the exploration continued with collaborating, generating, and connecting.

As long as you can concentrate, the clock becomes irrelevant.

We now live a leadership life without filters. Even with old structures of secretaries and office hours, the advent of 24-hour-a-day digital accessibility has created a hazy flustered world in which most leaders have no idea if and when they caught up with whatever it was they were chasing.

Successful spiritual leadership requires sacred time and solitude. Social media is a challenge to that ideal.

When Christ was ministering to His flock, He was in charge of His time and had agents of support within His apostolic crew that ran interference and helped carry the load. Christ had the luxury of no social media, no demands from e-mail, and no intrusive phone calls. People carried His word the old fashioned way through story and reflection.

Pastors spend most of their energy focused on understanding the Word of God and its implications for everyday people in everyday life. The ministerial challenge is to translate the Word into workable solutions for life. In the modern church, ministers make these solutions real through their astuteness and storytelling capacity. When shared, the passion in which they give the message brings



the congregation to clarity and orchestrates a sense of connection with the Word and the minister. As the deliverer of the message, congregants often place pastors on pedestals.

Being a minister requires relational connections — sharing and orchestrating personal experiences related to Christ's Word — but it does not guarantee a relationship, a personal friendship for all of those who perceive it as a reality. Friendships are born from common experiences that are invested in deeply by the participants; friendships are reciprocal and equitable. Friends engage in relationship because of the personal benefits relationships generate. Ministers cannot make meaningful friendships with every congregant. That is not their role; they are responsible to bring the Word to their congregation in a manner for others to hear and in a way that encourages relationships that are made in Christ.

A Pentecostal pastor's desire to be available 24/7 has inherent pitfalls in the modern social-media age. Ministers must manage their time to ensure they professionally balance their ministerial relationships and do not feed superiority or personal burnout.

A Pentecostal pastor must respond to the need for transparency and genuineness while expressing boundaries that allow for family, sacred time for study and reflection, and a small group of friends chosen because of their ability to contribute to the quality of the life of the pastor.

The pastoral emphasis must help believers develop the character traits congruent with Christ's life in the congregation, and not to become a caricature of a minister driven by a false sense of kinship so easily promoted through social media connections.

No man can manage the levels of information that flow among us without a plan for discernment of meaning and for action. Effective communicators and leaders manage information to enhance their understanding and improve decision making. Information does not improve the quality of our lives unless we can use it and apply it within the context of work, family, and community. Information feeds knowledge and builds the infrastructures necessary for wisdom.

The demands from social media encourage relational connections, but they do not necessarily generate true relationships that invest in another's success. The pressure of too many

Leadership cannot be digital; it must be actual, based on kinship and human interactions.



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connections thwarts the level and the quality of our helping relationships. Sadly, many individuals forecast the relationships established through social media as being viable, when, in fact, those connections are superficial and lack reciprocal affiliation.

For pastors, social media relationships are troublesome and lack the boundaries necessary to do pastoral work because there is no way to confirm information and have dialogue. It has become the venue for drive-by connections — sharing information without checking for understanding, giving feedback, and coming to shared understanding and agreements. A better system needs to emerge to reframe how pastors tend to their congregations.

For example, pastors could do a blog and send it to their Facebook connections rather than attempting to answer all individual e-mails or requests. Regular meetings with people who share common needs would be encouraged; these thematically organized meetings for a 4-6 week period would have a goal that the group continues under peer leadership. Pastors can then move on to other congregational concerns. Individual relationships in a pastor's life should feed needs, strengthen skill sets, support personal growth, and contribute to the quality of family and community life.

Fearful of invisibility, modern pastors often see solitude as a contradiction to the need for social media connectedness. We need a massive deliverance from this mindset before it's too late. True leadership cannot be digital; it must be actual, based on kinship and human interactions. Huge numbers of Friends and Followers have become the new TV rating that defines personal success and influence. We have seen the fallout of isolated and lonely leaders who mistakenly interpreted large TV ratings as meaning.

I hope we do not make the same error with social media. Social media is a phenomenal way to advertise, encourage, and even teach. It's a part, but never the sum total. It will never replace the true genius of God's kingdom: "*Follow me as I follow Christ.*" ■



**SCOTT HAGAN** is senior pastor, Real Life Church of the Assemblies of God, Sacramento, California.

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# The Supreme Court's Health Care Ruling



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BY RICHARD R. HAMMAR

**Resource.** For a full analysis of the Affordable Care Act's provisions to churches and church employees, see Richard Hammar's special reports on the health care laws: (1) *Health Care Reform — How the New Laws Will Affect Your Church*, and (2) *A Valuable Credit for Churches*, available as downloads from [ChurchLawandTax.com](http://ChurchLawandTax.com).

**I**n 2010, Congress enacted the 2,500-page Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (the "Act" or "Affordable Care Act") to increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance and decrease the cost of health care. One of the key provisions in the Act is the "individual mandate," which requires most Americans to maintain "minimum essential" health insurance coverage as defined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The mandate does not apply to some individuals, such as prisoners and undocumented aliens. Many individuals will receive the required



What is the significance of the ruling upholding the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act?

coverage through their employer, or from a government program such as Medicaid or Medicare. But for individuals who are not exempt and do not receive health insurance through a third party, the means of satisfying the requirement is to purchase insurance from a private company.

The purpose of the individual mandate is to bring millions of uninsured healthy young people into the insurance system to prevent the dramatic increase in premiums that otherwise would occur due to the Act's requirement that health insurers provide coverage for unhealthy persons with prior conditions.

On the day the President signed the Act into law, Florida and 12 other states filed a complaint in the federal district court for the Northern District of Florida. Those plaintiffs were later joined by 13 more states, several individuals, and the National Federation of Independent Business. The plaintiffs alleged, among other things, that the individual mandate provisions of the Act exceeded Congress's powers under the Constitution. The district court agreed, holding that Congress lacked constitutional power to enact the individual mandate. The district court determined that the individual mandate could not be severed from the remainder of the Act, and therefore struck down the Act in its entirety.

A federal appeals court agreed that the individual mandate exceeds Congress's power under the Constitution. The court unanimously agreed that the individual mandate did not impose a tax, and so could not be authorized by Congress's power under the Constitution to "lay and collect taxes." The court also held that the individual mandate was not supported by Congress's power under the Constitution to "regulate Commerce ... among the several States."

The United States Supreme Court agreed to determine the constitutionality of the Act, and issued its ruling on June 28, 2012.

## INDIVIDUAL MANDATE

The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision written by Chief Justice John Roberts, ruled that the individual mandate is not a valid exercise of Congress's power to regulate commerce. The Court stressed that Congress is an "enumerated powers" institution that can only do those things that are expressly authorized by the Constitution. It acknowledged that the Constitution grants Congress the power to "regulate



Commerce.” But, it noted that the power to *regulate* commerce presupposes the existence of commercial activity to be regulated. To the surprise of many Court-watchers, the Court went on to rule that Congress had the authority to create the individual mandate under its constitutional authority to collect taxes.

### IMPACT ON CHURCH EMPLOYEES

What is the significance of the Supreme Court’s ruling upholding the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act? Consider the following:

- All of the deadlines and requirements in the Act remain intact. The more important deadlines and requirements for churches are summarized below:
- Most Americans will be required to have health insurance that provides “minimum essential coverage” (as defined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services) by 2014 or face a monetary penalty of the greater of \$95 or one percent of income in 2014, \$325 or two percent of income in 2015, and \$695 or 2.5 percent of income in 2016, up to a cap. Families will pay half the amount for children up to a cap of \$2,250 for the entire family. After 2016, dollar amounts will increase by the annual cost of living adjustment. The penalty applies to any period in which an individual does not maintain minimum essential coverage and is determined monthly.

This provision is intended to bring actuarial integrity to a plan that aims to extend health care coverage to an additional 32 million Americans. There are limited exceptions for members of religious sects that are opposed on religious grounds to purchasing health insurance, individuals not lawfully present in the United States, incarcerated individuals, and members of “health care sharing ministries.”

Exemptions from the penalty will be made for those who cannot afford coverage, taxpayers with income below the filing threshold, those who have received a hardship waiver, and those who were not covered for a period of less than 3 months during the year.

- Individuals are free to keep their existing insurance under a “grandfather” provision, subject to some conditions.
- Beginning in 2014, uninsured individuals can purchase insurance coverage through a state-operated “Exchange.” An Exchange must offer four levels of benefits. Low-income persons may

The health care reform law contains no special exemptions for churches. Churches are subject to the same requirements and penalties as a for-profit employer.



qualify for a tax credit to assist in paying their premiums.

- Prohibits health insurers from excluding coverage of pre-existing conditions for children.
- Provides \$5 billion in federal support for a new program to provide affordable coverage to uninsured Americans with pre-existing conditions until new Exchanges are operational in 2014.
- Prohibits insurers from imposing lifetime limits on benefits.
- Stops insurers from rescinding insurance when claims are filed, except in cases of fraud or intentional misrepresentation of material fact.

### IMPACT ON CHURCHES

The health care reform legislation does not require employers to provide health insurance for their employees. Instead, the legislation places the responsibility to obtain coverage on individuals, subject to a penalty for non-compliance. However, an “applicable large employer” that does not offer coverage for all its full-time employees, offers minimum essential coverage that is unaffordable, or offers minimum essential coverage that consists of a plan under which the plan’s share of the total allowed cost of benefits is less than 60 percent, is required to pay a penalty if any full-time employee is certified to the employer as having purchased health insurance through a state Exchange with respect to which a tax credit or cost-sharing reduction is allowed or paid to the employee.

**Key point.** The health care reform law contains no special exemptions for churches. Churches are subject to the same requirements and penalties as a for-profit employer. However, note that employers with fewer than 50 employees are not subject to the shared responsibility provisions of the new law.

An employer is an *applicable large employer* with respect to any calendar year if it employed an average of at least 50 full-time employees during the preceding calendar year.

An applicable large employer that offers, for any month, its full-time employees and their dependents the opportunity to enroll in minimum essential coverage under an employer-sponsored plan is subject to a penalty if any full-time employee is certified to the employer as having enrolled in health insurance coverage purchased through a state Exchange with

respect to which a premium tax credit or cost-sharing reduction is allowed or paid to such employee or employees.

The penalty is an excise tax that is imposed for each employee who receives a premium tax credit or cost-sharing reduction for health insurance purchased through a state Exchange. For each full-time employee receiving a premium tax credit or cost-sharing subsidy through a state Exchange for any month, the employer is required to pay an amount equal to one-twelfth of \$3,000. The penalty for each employer for any month is capped at an amount equal to the number of full-time employees during the month (regardless of how many employees are receiving a premium tax credit or cost-sharing reduction) in excess of 30, multiplied by one-twelfth of \$2,000.

#### **SMALL EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE TAX CREDIT**

One of the main objectives of the Affordable Care Act is universal health coverage. The Act contains several provisions to achieve this goal. One of them is a tax credit that will help small businesses and tax-exempt organizations afford the cost of providing health insurance for their employees. The credit is up to 25 percent of the cost of health insurance premiums paid by a qualifying employer for its employees.

For an employer to qualify for the credit it must meet the following three requirements:

1. it has fewer than 25 "full-time equivalent employees" (FTEs) for the tax year;
2. the average annual wages of its employees for the year is less than \$50,000 per FTE, and
3. it pays premiums for health insurance coverage under a "qualifying arrangement."

The credit is reduced for employers with more than 10 FTEs for the tax year. It is reduced to zero for employers with 25 or more FTEs. Further, the credit is reduced for employers that paid average annual wages of more than \$25,000 for the year. It is reduced to zero for employers that pay average annual wages of \$50,000 or more.

Note that a church with 25 or more employees may qualify for the credit if some of its employees are part-time. This is because the limitation on the number of employees is based on FTEs. So, a church with 25 or more

The requirement that churches and other religious employers provide contraception and "morning after" drugs unleashed a tidal wave of opposition.



employees could qualify for the credit if some of its employees work part-time.

If a minister is an employee for income tax reporting purposes, he or she is taken into account in determining an employer's FTEs for purposes of the health care tax credit. If the minister is self-employed for income tax reporting purposes, he or she is not taken into account in determining an employer's FTEs or premiums paid.

Small businesses can claim the credit for 2010 through 2013 and for any 2 years after that. For tax years 2010 to 2013, the maximum credit is 25 percent of premiums paid by eligible tax-exempt organizations. Beginning in 2014, the maximum tax credit will increase to 35 percent of premiums paid by eligible tax-exempt organizations.

Note that qualifying tax-exempt employers (including churches) having no taxable income to be offset with a tax credit will claim a "refundable" tax credit, meaning that the amount of the credit that would otherwise have offset taxable income is refunded to them.

#### **EXTENSION OF DEPENDENT COVERAGE**

The health care reform legislation requires plans that provide dependent medical coverage of children to continue to make the coverage available for an adult child until the child turns age 26 even if the young adult no longer lives with his or her parents, is not a dependent on a parent's tax return, or is no longer a student. The extended coverage must be provided not later than plan years beginning on or after September 23, 2010. This applies to all plans in the individual market, all new employer plans, and existing employer plans if the young adult is not eligible for employer coverage on his or her own.

There is a transition for certain existing group plans that generally do not have to provide dependent coverage until 2014 if the adult child has another offer of employer-based coverage aside from coverage through the parent. The new policy providing access for young adults applies to both married and unmarried children, although their own spouses and children do not qualify.

For plan or policy years beginning on or after September 23, 2010, plans and issuers must give children who qualify an opportunity to enroll that continues for at least 30



days regardless of whether the plan or coverage offers an open enrollment period. This enrollment opportunity and a written notice must be provided not later than the first day of the first plan or policy year beginning on or after September 23, 2010. The new policy does not otherwise change the enrollment period or start of the plan or policy year.

Any qualified young adult must be offered all of the benefit packages available to similarly situated individuals who did not lose coverage because of cessation of dependent status. The qualified individual cannot be required to pay more for coverage than those similarly situated individuals. The new policy applies only to health insurance plans that offer dependent coverage in the first place. While most insurers and employer-sponsored plans offer dependent coverage, there is no requirement to do so.

## CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTIFACIENTS

The Affordable Care Act requires that most health insurance plans cover women's preventive services without charging a copay or deductible beginning in August, 2012. These preventive health services include coverage, without cost sharing, for "all Food and Drug Administration approved contraceptive methods, sterilization procedures, and patient education and counseling for all women with reproductive capacity," as prescribed by a provider. Most group or individual health insurance coverage is required to provide this coverage.

The HHS website states: "Women will have access to all Food and Drug Administration-approved contraceptive methods, sterilization procedures, and patient education and counseling. These recommendations do not include abortifacient drugs. Most workers in employer-sponsored plans are currently covered for contraceptives. Family planning services are an essential preventive service for women and critical to appropriately spacing and ensuring intended pregnancies, which results in improved maternal health and better birth outcomes."

The requirement that churches and other religious employers provide contraception, and certain "morning after" drugs such as "Plan B" and "Ella" that are not regarded as abortifacients by HHS because they prevent conception rather than "interfere with pregnancy," unleashed a tidal wave of opposition

While the definition of an exempt religious employer would cover some churches, it would not cover many religious organizations, agencies, schools, and parachurch ministries.

by the Catholic Church and many Protestants. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops drafted a letter expressing outrage at the rule and insisting on a change. The letter stated: "The drugs that Americans would be forced to subsidize under the new rule include Ella, which was approved by the FDA as an 'emergency contraceptive' but can act like the abortion drug RU-486. It can abort an established pregnancy weeks after conception. The pro-life majority of Americans — Catholics and others — would be outraged to learn that their premiums must be used for this purpose."

HHS regulations incorporate a narrow exemption for some religious employers, but many religious organizations consider it to be unacceptably narrow. The regulations define an exempt religious employer as one that:

- (1) has the inculcation of religious values as its purpose;
- (2) primarily employs persons who share its religious tenets;
- (3) primarily serves persons who share its religious tenets; and
- (4) is a non-profit organization under section 6033(a)(1) and section 6033(a)(3)(A)(i) or (iii) of the tax code. Sections 6033(a)(3)(A)(i) and (iii) refer to churches, their integrated auxiliaries, and conventions or associations of churches, as well as to the exclusively religious activities of any religious order.

While this definition of an exempt religious employer would cover some churches, it would not cover many religious organizations, agencies, schools, and parachurch ministries. To illustrate, many church-affiliated universities, seminaries, and social service agencies that provide social services for the underprivileged would not qualify.

**Key point.** In May of 2012, several Catholic dioceses, universities, and institutions filed a lawsuit in federal court claiming that the imposition of the contraceptive mandate on several Catholic entities contrary to their religious convictions violates the First Amendment guaranty of religious freedom. This case is pending. ■



**RICHARD R. HAMMAR, LL.M., CPA**, is legal counsel for The General Council of the Assemblies of God. This article is excerpted from *Church Law & Tax Report*, © 2012 Christianity Today International, and will be available on [churchlawandtax.com](http://churchlawandtax.com).

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# What To Do When Your Team Says It Cannot Be Done



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The leader cannot simply cave in when objections or doubts surface. He cannot just give up because someone raised an issue or noticed a deficiency in the plan.

BY GLENN REYNOLDS

**So, what do you guys think?"**

Every leader has heard the chirping crickets after that question. Finally, the silence breaks with a barrage of reasons why you cannot do the new idea, plan, or initiative. Whether it is with volunteers or paid staff, transformational leaders regularly encounter opposition to their change agenda. Suddenly, the leader faces opposition that says that his church cannot do his idea. What does he or she do with that?

## WHAT NOT TO DO

First, what a leader cannot do. The thing you do not want to do is blow ahead like nothing ever happened, like no one ever made an objection or surfaced a doubt. Sometimes the leader can be so confident of the idea that he does this without even realizing it. Objections mean we need to slow down to really listen to what is going on around us as we present the new idea or vision for change. Developing the skill of situational awareness allows the leader to reduce unintentional and intentional instances of steamrolling over the team.

The opposite is also true. The leader cannot simply cave in when objections or doubts surface. He cannot just give up because someone raised an issue or noticed a deficiency in the plan.

So, what is a leader to do when the team says it cannot be done?

## TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE OPPOSITION

Critical to understanding the objections raised are the assumptions the leader makes about the team. First, you need to humbly assume you can learn something new if you listen, instead of thinking the team just does not get what you are saying. Second, you need to assume the team member is trying to make sure the ministry stays on track, rather than assuming he is trying to undermine your authority or make you look bad. If you cannot make those two assumptions, seriously evaluate who should stay on the team.

As you seek to understand where the



opposition is coming from, several questions can help you zero in on the issues behind the issue. Why do they think the way they do? Could they be right? What is the root of their response — emotional or logical? Is there history behind their response?

In trying to understand the opposition to the idea, you have a choice in the power style you employ. You can embrace assertive power, where you go on an all-in sales drive to get your idea across. Or, you can employ receptive power. Receptive power is not an oxymoron; instead, it is the power you wield by genuinely listening and hearing the concerns and doubts from the people on your team.

### FLIP THE SCRIPT

As you attempt to surface doubts and get to the issues behind the issues, flipping the script is a helpful technique to employ as you talk with people. After listening to the other person's objections, ask, "What would you do to solve the problem?" Do not ask this in a snarky or condescending tone, but in a way that genuinely desires input. This question drives home the point that doing nothing is not an option, but reinforces the idea that we have to work together to find a solution.

One of the greatest issues facing pastors is the challenge of integrating multiple generations into the same church. A long-term member of a church I led was telling me how the old timers were feeling pushed aside in a youth movement. He based much of his anecdotal stories on the narrative older members had constructed, rather than the facts. Instead of arguing about each of the incidents he described, I simply flipped the script and asked, "How would you go about getting the older members to be willing to make sacrifices to reach a new generation? After all, if there is nobody to pass the baton to, we have wasted our efforts." He did not have an answer. But, I invited him to work together with me to find the solution. He said he would. Flipping the script transfers responsibility to the doubter to engage not just in substantive questions, but answers as well.

### INCORPORATE VALID OBJECTIONS

As you genuinely understand where the doubt comes from, you might determine there is something to their argument. In that case, it

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is important to adjust your plan. This will take more time and effort than you want to expend, but in the end the results are often worth it. Leaders tend to be impatient, wanting everything changed yesterday. But sometimes, slower is faster. Sometimes slowing down to get the plan right before you roll it out to the entire congregation or organization might take longer in the short term, but in the long view it will save time. Imagine the time you might waste scrapping the entire plan or ministry and start over because you refused to slow down and make adjustments along the way.

### TAKE ACTION

After you have listened and incorporated the valid objections, it is time to act. Surely, one danger is pushing the doubts down and moving full throttle with the idea. But another — possibly more acute danger — is not acting at all. All of us have fallen prey to the paralysis of indecision. You cannot debate whether or not to start a new ministry, revise a budget, or hire a new staff member. In Christian circles, we buy time by suggesting we need to keep praying about it. At some point, though, you must make a decision. There comes a time to commit to a course of action and move forward with conviction.

### DO THE RIGHT THING AND EXPECT GOOD THINGS TO HAPPEN

The Bible says the sons of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do. Once you have scanned the environment and understood the source of doubts and made the necessary adjustments, it is time to trust your instincts as a God-ordained leader and make the call you need to make. And, do it without fear, but with the expectation that good things are going to happen.

If you have done right by your team — listened to them and incorporated their valid objections, prayed and sought God's guidance — then you can move forward with confidence in your decision. If you have gone about making the decision in the right way, the possibility of a right outcome dramatically increases.

Nordstrom's department store is a good example of doing the right thing and expecting good things to happen. They have a no-questions return policy on all merchandise. No questions asked — ever. They have lost

money with that policy in the short term, but in the long term they have reaped even more rewards because of customer loyalty. Doing right by their customers has built a reputation of customer service that exceeds other department stores.

When you do right by listening to the objections and surfacing the doubts of your team and volunteers, you will build a reputation for having an open mind and an open heart. That, in turn, will open their hand to join with you in the organizational transformation you seek.

### **BE WILLING TO TAKE A LOSS**

Pastors love people. And, we want everyone to go with us to the vision that God has put in our hearts. But simply put, not everyone is up for the trip.

David Grissom, chairman of Mayfair Capital, said, "You owe it to the organization to always listen to those people and to their point of view, because guess what? They may be right. So you cannot be dismissive of that. But what I have found is that there tends to

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be a pattern. The naysayers tend to be the naysayers, and pretty soon you say to yourself as you are coming up with a new initiative, 'I know Ted's not going to like this.' You can debate it and have an open and clear discussion; but, at the end of the day, a decision has to be made. And when you finally make a decision, you say to the naysayers, 'The train is getting ready to leave the station and I really hope you are on it.' Now, what's left unsaid is, if they are not on it, they might be happier somewhere else."

There are times when the leader has to be willing to lose a team member or a congregational member to move in the new direction, but if you walk through the first steps, you will not take this last step nearly as often. ■



**GLENN REYNOLDS** is lead pastor of Bethel Temple (Assemblies of God), Hampton, Virginia. He is a doctor of ministry candidate at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, where his degree concentration is redemptive leadership and organizational development.

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# Where Do You Start?



Hemera

BY DOUG GREEN

## What are you preaching this week?

You must start somewhere. Every week a blank page is staring you down. Do you start with a question or the text?

If you start with a question, you are choosing the topic of your sermon, looking to the Bible for the answer. This is **topical** preaching. However, if you start with the text, you are letting God's Word both ask and answer the question. This is **expository** preaching.

Every sound preacher wants to turn a blank page into a life-changing worship experience with the eternal God. But first you must start somewhere.

Throughout the calendar year, a biblical pulpit will start in both places, for both are appropriate origins for the various situations inside the church. Topical preaching is often



Over the long haul, the pulpit that predominantly starts with the text is both healthier and easier.

correct for the occasion; however, over the long haul, the pulpit that predominantly starts with the text is both healthier and easier. Pragmatically, expository preaching is the most efficient mode for preparation. Idealistically, it is a superior form of preaching. I know; I have done it both ways, and I have learned my lessons on the job — with the grace of a patient congregation. Let me explain.

I have been the lead pastor of North Hills Church in Brea, California, for over 18 years, trying to preach something new to the same congregation every Sunday. For the first 7 years I preached topically — series based on the felt need questions of life. I would ask questions that were relevant and try my best to give creative answers. I hustled each week, working hard to come up with new information.

Then, I changed.

Consequently, for the last 11 years, I have been committed to expository preaching — working through one book of the Bible at a time. I have tackled books in both Testaments, covering every verse within — from the first to the last. It has changed everything about my pulpit ministry. If you are open-minded to the challenge, it will change you, too.

## PRACTICAL BENEFITS

First, let me give four practical benefits of expository preaching.

**1. No wondering what is next.** If you preach topically, you will spend a chunk of time trying to figure out what you are going to say each week. This is hard work, week after week, to be responsible for the content of a sermon. Topical preaching is a commitment to start over every week. When you preach through a book in the Bible, for example, you simply preach what is next. When I took a year to preach through the Psalms (I only made it to Psalm 40, knowing some day I will return to the finish the other 110), I always knew where I would be next week, the next Psalm.

**2. Less time in preparation.** Preaching from the same book saves prep time. For example, I just finished 19 months in the Book of Romans, preaching one pericope (unit of thought) at a time. The hours I spent preparing to preach chapter 1 made preaching chapter 2 a bit easier, and so on. By the time

I got to the “therefores” in the first verses of chapters 5, 8, and 12, I was fully prepared for what the therefore was there for. It is like this: last month’s preparation assists next month’s preparation. It is amazing how much easier it really is. Biblical preaching is all about context, and a commitment to a thorough exploration of one book makes more sense than a weekly plunge into a new context.

**3. No accusations of heavy-handedness.**

When you preach through a book in the Bible — just preaching what is next — people can never accuse you of choosing a topic because of a situation in the church. God always amazes me how His Word in its given order seems to be timed with perfection for our church. This leaves the responsibility on God to deal with the difficult issues that crop up in the church. Surely, I can trust His Word to say what needs to be said even before I know what it is. The expository preacher leaves the coordination of the future wisdom of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

**4. A sense of accomplishment.** People want a sense of completion. When you thoroughly handle a book in the Bible — going slow enough to give it justice, fast enough to grapple with a unit of thought each week — you create anticipation in the beginning of such a series and admiration at the end of the same. Everybody, including the preacher, likes to see something all the way through. Rather than jumping all over the Bible week after week, plant some roots in one book and see it from beginning to end. Modern believers will appreciate the biblical roots you will give them. They will understand the individual verses within the larger context of the book. They will appreciate biblical achievement.

**IDEALISTIC BENEFITS**

Now, then, let me give you four idealistic benefits of expository preaching.

**1. Keeps you talking about God.** When you let the text dictate your sermon topic, your preaching will be more “God-centered” and less “man-centered.” Many pulpits in America today are man-centered, self-help propagators, using Scripture to validate what the preacher decides to say. But when Scripture sets your content, you allow God to raise the questions as well as supply the answers. Guess what? He does not waste the pages of Scripture on man-sized solutions to our God-sized problems. (*God knows there are whole*



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If you preach topically, you will spend a chunk of time trying to figure out what you are going to say each week.

*sections for this genre in your local bookstore.*) He demands you look to Him for answers. The text will always remind you how God’s ways are always better than man’s ways.

**2. Leads to better exegesis.** When you start with the text, you will tend toward exegesis not eisegesis. By preaching through a book, you have already rooted your mind in context, not textual isolation. Exegesis bows to the idea of the original author writing to the original audience, which, once understood, you can always apply to modern fixes. Expository preaching demands sound exegesis. Unfortunately, topical preaching often does not. Although sound preachers will handle the text correctly in a topical sermon, expository preaching, by definition, forces you to do so. It is the only option, for the expositor does not use the text to support his or her ideas, but declares the text is the idea you preach.

**3. Enables you to say, “Thus saith the Lord.”** When you begin with the text, you can have a confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture. The Bible is written really well. As is, it always says it better than you can. After all, they are God’s words. Thus, when you read Scripture, grasp it, wrestle with it, and study it. You must understand something vital: God is talking. Your goal is not to give a sermon. Your goal is to give God’s words — words that modern hearts are desperate to hear. When you take the time to carefully expose the text to your audience, you will then be able to say, “Thus saith the Lord.” Afterward, in the lobby, you can take all the compliments you get and give the credit directly to God, for you were only borrowing His original thoughts, not squandering their time with yours.

**4. You will preach the full counsel of God.**

When you walk through book after book in the Bible, intertwining the Old and New Testaments, you will demonstrate to your congregation you are committed to the entire Bible, not just the familiar or favorite parts. Studies have shown that most people in the pews know little about the Bible; they are biblically illiterate. Biblical preachers welcome the challenge to take them through virgin terrain, introducing them to new words of God, not giving them the same words over and over again.

Many years ago I was on a plane having a conversation with a New Age man. He told me he liked most of what Jesus said, but not all of it. I said, “You cannot say that. You have



to take the whole message."

He replied, "Why? You don't. You pick and choose what you want to preach. Do you really preach everything that's in the Bible?"

He was right. I was convicted.

Since, without skipping any of the difficult portions, I have thoroughly covered in this order: Psalms 1–40, Luke, Habakkuk, Ephesians, Genesis, Revelation, John, Judges, Ruth, and Romans. It has taken me 11 years to get through these 10 books. While I would love to finish all 66 books, I am in no hurry to rush through what is sacred. There is so much God wants to say.

Although it is occasionally appropriate for us to preach topically, over the long haul the pulpit that predominantly starts with the text is both superior and easier.

When it comes to preaching, you will need to do what God tells you to do. However, I hope I have challenged your pulpit ministry, for there is so much God wants to say to you and to your church. He loves the ongoing opportunity to fill your blank page with His words of life. ■

God always amazes me how His Word in its given order seems to be timed with perfection for our church.



**DOUG GREEN, D.Min.**, founding pastor, North Hills Church, Brea, California

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"Matthew, wake up! The preacher said, 'There's an app for that,' not 'Take a nap, Matt!'"

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## Your Leadership Legacy

BY CAL LEMON

**I** have refused for the past 32 years to change my personal physician. And I am scared. Dr. Tim is hinting he may be considering some beach where the sun shines almost every day to enjoy his retirement years.

Frankly, at my age, I do not want to fill out a sheaf of forms, introduce myself to a new medical professional, and get started again recounting my medical history.

I am already grieving the loss of someone who knows me well and who I, without hesitation, trust. Dr. Tim has joined an exclusive club that includes my family, my financial consultant, my automobile mechanic, my dentist, and my accountant as people I completely trust.

Oh, one more person should be on that list — my pastor. The legacy of my pastor, my spiritual coach, and friend, will always be wrapped in trust. I regularly open my heart and mind, with abandonment, and know my



Building trust takes time and is determined by how those who follow you will respond to seven statements.

pastor will guard these personal treasures.

Are you leaving a legacy of trust? Are you for real? Building trust with your congregation takes time and is determined by how those who follow you will respond to seven statements.

### YOUR TRUST QUOTIENT

In my work with for-profit corporations, trust is plastered everywhere. The verbiage of the marketplace is constantly morphing into the next “must read” book or full-day seminar. The latest buzzwords that decorate leadership writing include *transformational leadership*, *servant leadership*, *engagement leadership*, *organizational leadership*, and *compelling leadership*. In spite of the mania for another catch phrase to sell something, there is, and always has been, one foundational leadership characteristic: *trust*.

In commenting on the meteoric success of the Whole Foods grocery store chain, Gary Hamel, in his book *The Future of Management*, says, “Conversely, team members will



stay motivated over the long term only if they trust top management to let them share in the bounty of their own productivity."

Daniel Goleman, author of the perpetually best-selling business book, *Emotional Intelligence*, says leaders with high E.Q. (emotional intelligence quotient) can create around them vibrant "trust networks." These are collections of colleagues who risk professional futures, income, and reputation based on the trust quotient they have with their leader.

Therefore, your ministry (your ability to gather and build a covenant community of faith centered around Someone greater than you) is actually a collection of trust networks. These networks follow you and endure difficulty with you because they ... trust you.

But trust takes time. People need time to see if you are for real. They determine for real by whether those who follow you will respond to the following seven statements.

#### **I WILL TRUST YOU IF YOU TELL ME THE TRUTH**

Tom Hanks entertained us with, "There is no crying in baseball" (*A League of Their Own*). How about a new adage, "There is no lying in the church."

What constitutes lying in the church? Have you ever said to someone in your trust network, "I do not see any problems with getting \$1 million in financing for this new addition," even when you had serious doubts?

When asked at a clergy meeting if your congregation was numerically growing, you responded, "We have doubled our attendance in the last year," when you knew the numbers were far below that statement?

Has a staff member looked at you in your weekly meeting and asked, "Will you be here all day today?" and you responded, "I will not be leaving until 5 p.m." You also knew, at that moment, you would be picking up your child from school at 3:30 p.m. and likely would not return.

These are the kind of lies that do not result in an immediate request for your resignation. At the same time, it is the accumulation of mistruths that chip away at trust.

#### **I WILL TRUST YOU IF YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU ARE THINKING**

Second guessing is not productive.

We usually are able to accurately read others' nonverbal messages. Looking down

It's the  
accumulation  
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that chip  
away at trust.



when giving a decision, turning away from the speaker when we do not agree, and constantly interrupting when we think we are losing control of the conversation, all scream nonverbal messages.

You diminish trust when people around you have to constantly try to figure out your real message.

The antidote for this communication malady is to either say, "Right now I do not have a response. I will let you know by noon tomorrow," or "My answer is no to your request for the following reasons. ..."

Most people in your ministry will tell you they would rather have a definitive no than to play the game, "What Is He/She Really Saying Today?"

#### **I WILL TRUST YOU WHEN YOU CORRECT ME IN PRIVATE**

Twelve people sit around this oblong conference table. It is a normally scheduled meeting in your ministry.

You are the final decision maker in the room. A spirited debate has been bubbling over the past 20 minutes about budget priorities for next year. You have listened to one person at the table who has been, in your opinion, sucking the air out of the debate with an unmet need for power, and you break in with, "If you had thought through your position, you would know there is no way any of us would approve that unrealistic amount of money."

The room goes into freeze frame. Caught in the silence you trudge on with, "Now, let's get back to spiritual and rational conversation over this budget area."

No one moves or says anything. With halting gate the meeting continues. You have already done the damage.

Personal comments that excoriate an individual will always decimate trust. If you, the leader, are disappointed, disgusted, or displeased with someone, end the meeting, make an appointment with the person you are concerned about, and, above all ... close the door.

#### **I WILL TRUST YOU IF YOU DO NOT SHOOT THE MESSENGER**

Have you ever delivered bad news only to find out you, the messenger, have become the bad news?

The high school pastor walks into your office and says, "The preregistration for this year's summer camp is about 50 percent

below what we need.”

You, the lead pastor, respond, “Well, if you were doing what this congregation is paying you to do, these numbers would not be so dismal. I don’t care what you have to do, fill that bus with at least 35 kids. Do we understand each other?”

The youth pastor is the responsible messenger, but you do not solve this problem by emotionally beating up the messenger.

This trust network could have been strengthened by the lead pastor responding, “Sounds like we have a challenge about youth camp. How about if both of us take some time to create solutions to fill that bus and meet back here at 3 p.m. tomorrow. Will that work for you?”

### **I WILL TRUST YOU WHEN YOU LISTEN TO ME**

We build the art of listening on attending the speaker with “unconditional positive regard.” This means when another person is speaking, you, the leader, have locked into his or her story.

When you, the leader, look at your wrist-watch while someone is talking to you, when you check your e-mails on your Smart Phone when a parishioner asks you a question, or when you do not respond to an inquiry in a staff meeting because your “mind was somewhere else” ... you have just added to your trust-deficit account.

Your inattention will always hobble your leadership. Listening is not a biological event; listening is a decision. And, everyone around you can tell when you have just checked out of a conversation.

Good-bye, trust.

### **I WILL TRUST YOU WHEN YOU FORGIVE MY FAILURE**

The sum total of your ministry is restoration. With fevered pitch and weeping eyes we eloquently declare the kingdom of God has arrived on the coattails of an ancient Carpenter from backwoods Nazareth who, with a touch of His hand, restored the selfish, arrogant, and broken among us to become children of the Creator of the universe.

Does this magnificent, life-changing story extend to the staff, elders, board members, historic parishioners, and family members who, because of imperfections, often fail?

This is not an appeal to excuse failure;

You diminish trust when people around you have to constantly try to figure out your real message.



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rather, this is an appeal to forgive and then, with our restorative Lord’s help, refuse to remember. If there are silent but pervasive reminders that, “You failed and I really cannot expect much more in the future,” watch trust evaporate.

### **WRITING YOUR LEGACY ... NOW**

Our message to a watching world is we are travelers, not landowners, in this world. Today is transitory and will evaporate with another tick of the second hand on our watch.

So, with eternity approaching, what will be the residue, the legacy of your spiritual leadership? Yes, people will talk about you.

Frankly, these friends, colleagues, neighbors, fellow-believers will not summarize your life by surveying your academic transcript, bank account balance, or even homiletic hortatory. No, the precipitate of our lives and leadership will ultimately be whether or not we were trustworthy. ■



**CAL LeMON, D.Min.**, president, Executive Enrichment, Inc., Springfield, Missouri, a corporate education and consulting firm

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“Yeah, I hear the Doomsday guys have gone quarterly.”



# You Will Discover...

Amazing Stories, Amazing People, Amazing Faith

## Amazing Faith

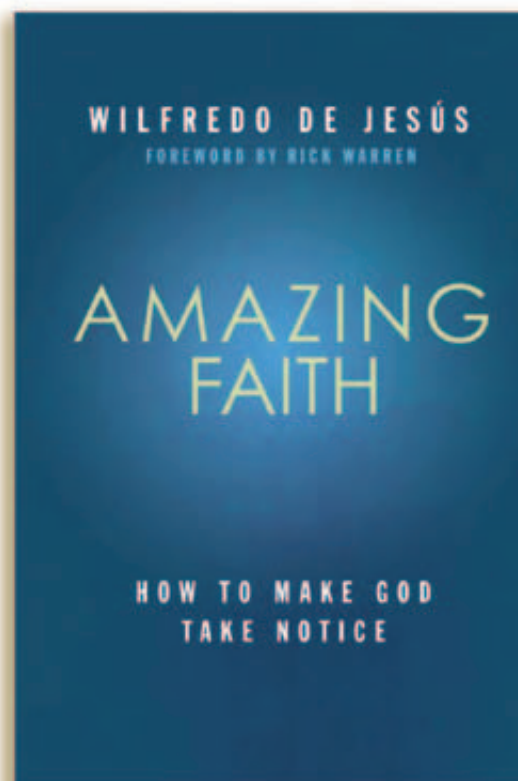
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## Steps to Better Networking

BY JUSTIN LATHROP

**I**t had been a long day. I was ready to get off the stuffy airplane, so I grabbed my luggage, got off the plane, headed home, got ready for bed, and went to sleep. When I woke up the next morning, I unzipped my suitcase only to discover that the clothes were not mine.

Later that day I received a Facebook message from a friend who knew what had happened and thought he might know the other person. He had another friend who had picked up the wrong luggage and was lamenting his situation.

I could not believe this. Could it be that easy?

I asked our mutual friend how he had put our two situations together. He said it was easy because both of our Facebook updates were similar. Facebook is certainly a place to build community, but it never occurred to me that it could also be a place to recover lost luggage. I got my luggage back, and, of course, made a new connection.



It never occurred to me that Facebook could be a place to recover lost luggage.

Any time two people meet, the world becomes a smaller place. This is the ultimate goal of social networking. As we discussed in “5 Ways to Build a Professional Ministry Network (Without Losing Your Soul)” [*Enrichment*, summer 2012], professional networking is not a self-serving endeavor, especially within the context of ministry. You are not meant to do life alone. Professional networking is something you must do if you are committed to staying in vocational ministry for the long haul.

Further, social networking did not begin with the invention of Twitter or Facebook. Technology, however, accelerates your ability to connect with others and multiplies your efforts in ways you might not have been able to do any other way. I have connections and close friends that I might never have met had it not been for online social-networking tools.

The goal of my previous article was to provide context for professional networking. It has been my experience that most people come at this subject from different angles with certain assumptions based on past experiences. I wanted to make sure we were on the same page to avoid confusion so this material could be as helpful as possible. Here are 10 practical ideas you can begin incorporating into your work today.

**1. Be yourself.** People can pretend from a distance. As you meet more and more people, it will become difficult for you to consistently be someone you are not. (Though some people are pretty good at it.) Reputation is everything. Someone will eventually find out if you are not being truthful, and the consequences will be devastating. Everyone has an agenda when it comes to professional networking, and anyone who says he does not is not being honest. There is nothing wrong with having an agenda. The question is who is at the top of your agenda: you or the person with whom you are connecting?

**2. Be prepared.** Winston Churchill said, “Preparation, if not the key to genius, is the key to sounding like a genius.” Just like you spend time preparing sermons and lectures for different audiences, you must remember to whom you are talking. It will shape the level of preparation needed before a phone call or in-person meeting. You prepare differently to meet the CEO of a Fortune 500 company than you would your college roommate.

**3. Choose the right channel.** The reason



why it is important to utilize tools like e-mail, Twitter, Facebook, smart phones, and text messaging is because everyone has different preferences. When you are trying to connect to others, it is not about your preferences but theirs. If you are not already experimenting with different communication platforms, I encourage you to do so. Try new options often.

#### 4. List the people you want to meet.

Every year I make a list of the people I want to meet and why. This helps me set goals. If you are not a natural networker, perhaps your goal will be simply to meet new people weekly. Think about your friends. Who do they know that you should know? Leverage your existing social circles to meet new people.

**5. Add value in every conversation and interaction.** Do not be the person who meets other people for selfish reasons. Have a purpose for connecting with someone, even if it is a good friend or peer. While there is certainly time to just catch up, most people appreciate having a specific purpose.

**6. Give without expecting anything in return.** The idea of generosity is just as powerful in the context of professional networking as it is when you talk about stewardship. Zig Ziglar says, "You will get all you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want." Look for opportunities to share an idea, book, article, compliment, or anything that demonstrates you understand the needs of the other person and want to help.

**7. Be a problem-solver.** Do not be a gossip or the person who complicates relationships. Help others do more than they first thought possible. Collaborate on solutions.

**8. Do not count favors.** You have done this with a sibling growing up. Now that you are an adult, stop bemoaning all the help you have given others and how everyone has forgotten you. If you have really helped that many people, you will benefit from all the time and energy at some point in the future. It is not your motive for doing it, but the idea of paying it forward is a common thread for people who practice good habits of professional networking.

#### 9. Connect people with opportunity.

Become an advocate for others in your network. Few things can outweigh a personal recommendation or an endorsement from a trusted source about another person. You want other people to do this for you, so do it yourself.

Technology accelerates our ability to connect with others and multiplies our efforts in ways we might not have been able to do any other way.



When you help people complete tasks, accomplish their goals, or achieve something significant, you become what Seth Godin calls a *linchpin*. So few people do this that you immediately know who these people are in your life.

The more you incorporate these 10 habits, the more effective you will be at growing your church. Jesus came to save people, not processes, procedures, or protocol. If you are going to be truly effective at building the Kingdom through intentional networking, then you may need to do things different from what you did today.

If you want to be a better professional networker, consider these steps:

- **Start taking names.** You meet a lot of people. How can you keep names straight? Take photos with your phone and record names. Get business cards or contact information so you have the ability to follow up with them.
- **Follow up.** Cultivate connections. Not everyone you meet is a great connection, but you do not know that on the front end. If possible, follow up via e-mail, handwritten note, Twitter mention, Facebook wall post, or a phone call.
- **Work a system.** As you meet and follow up with more people, develop a system that will help you keep up. It may not happen immediately, but people who are intentional about networking need something in place to keep up with new connections. Work toward a system that works for you. It will eventually become second nature.

My next article will address how to maximize a pastor or leadership conference. Conferences can be costly and time consuming. They are also ripe with opportunity to expand your network and meet new people. If you are not walking away from a pastor or leadership conference with dozens of names to add to your network, you are not taking full advantage of the time, money, and opportunity contained within these events. 📌



**JUSTIN LATHROP** is director of Strategic Relations for the Assemblies of God National Leadership and Resource Center. He blogs regularly at [JustinLathrop.com](http://JustinLathrop.com).

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# I'm Having Trouble Balancing Ministry and a Career



Stockbyte

BY GABRIELE RIENAS

**Q**

**I am a pastor's wife with two elementary school-age children. I have a corporate career that I love. It is my dream job and, with my husband's full support,**

**I believe I am using my God-given gifts to make a difference in the business world. It also blesses our family with financial stability. The downside is that my work is full-time, requiring seasonal long hours and occasional travel. I often feel guilty that I am not as involved at church as I would like to be and therefore am not a typical pastor's wife. I wonder if I am making the right choices.**



It is quite different for pastors' wives than it used to be. The expectations have softened considerably.

**A**

You are asking questions that many women ask. These are questions we periodically need to explore to keep us on track. *How am I doing with the*

*gifts, resources, and responsibilities I have?*

In your situation, several points stand out:

- *I love my career.*
- *It has been my dream.*
- *I am using my God-given gifts.*
- *It blesses our family financially.*
- *My husband is supportive.*

These are strong, positive points, and I celebrate that you are embracing God's gifts for your life. Your life can be a powerful example of one who maximizes God's individualized agenda and calling.



Because of your corporate title, you encounter people and situations that no one else would have access to in the same way. Ask God every day to use you in a way that represents Him in a compelling way. Ministry can take place in all circumstances both within and outside the structure of the church. If you believe God has placed you in your setting, embrace it every day as your calling and mission as much as your husband does when he gets behind the pulpit.

Ask God for creativity and wisdom as to how you can best represent Him. What is the best way to love the people in your office and extended work settings? How can you make a difference? How can you minister to and pray for others? You are in a position to make an incredible impact on a population that you might not be able to reach with standard methods of evangelism.

Periodically share with your church your vision and passion for your calling. Find ways to share stories of God moments and divine interventions in your corporate relationships. In this way, the congregation can take ownership of the impact God is making through you. Your husband's verbal support can also help people open up to the tremendous possibilities.

In addition to naming the good things, you expressed some angst about your current position in relation to being a pastor's wife. This reflects the ambivalence that so many women feel about getting it all right and balancing multiple roles. On top of that, you no doubt experience the pressure of ministry expectations.

First, let me deal with the term *typical pastor's wife*. Out of curiosity, I googled the term and the first five hits were in bold letters: **"The typical pastor's wife is dead."** The terminology is a bit dramatic, but the point is clear. It is quite different for us pastors' wives than it used to be — at least in most places. The expectations have softened considerably.

One pastor's wife blogs, "I think the 'typical pastors' wife' is dead. You know, that woman who had it all together, never seemed to struggle, played the piano, attended every event, and met everyone's expectations ... although she could have had some help with her wardrobe."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, even as we celebrate

Are you giving your husband and children the attention and time they need to feel loved and secure? How are things with your soul? How is it impacted by your career?



our freedom, let us remember we are responsible for embracing the roles and responsibilities God gives us at various seasons of our lives. Your husband is a pastor and this reality carries implications for you. Supporting him in his calling is a foundation to loving him well, just as you could reasonably expect him to support you. Rather than asking, "What would a typical pastor's wife do?" ask, "Taking into account the gifts and responsibilities that God has given me (i.e. my career), how can I best support my husband in what God has called him to?"

Additionally, God has called us as believers to body ministry, which means we should all be using our gifts to serve one another. You can define what this looks like in your particular church, but somehow, somewhere, you need to be contributing to the health of the body of Christ.

You need to regularly evaluate two additional areas to see if they cohabit well with your life choices. The first is the impact of your career on your children and family life. Are you giving your husband and children the attention and time they need to feel loved and secure? Second, consider your inner life: your times of solitude and intimacy with the Lord and the state and condition of your heart. How are things with your soul? How is it impacted by your career? There is nothing more important than these two things and your life choices should always be adapted to make them a priority.

Walking with God requires a learning and growing relationship that includes evaluation, self-examination, and honest questions. Maintain a heart that stays open and vulnerable to God's agenda and leading for all the seasons of your life. In the meantime, embrace fully what God has placed before you today and enjoy it with thankfulness. ■

#### Note

1. Lori Whilite, "The Typical Pastor's Wife Is Dead." From <http://www.torchleader.com/tl/2011/05/the-typical-pastors-wife-is-dead.html>. Accessed 17 January 2012.



**GABRIELE RIENAS**, a pastor's wife for 30 years and a professional counselor, lives in Beaverton, Oregon. She speaks at retreats, conferences, and events worldwide. Contact her at 503-705-9230. Visit her website: [www.gabrielerienas.com](http://www.gabrielerienas.com).

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# The Birth of Jesus



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BY MARC TURNAGE

**T**radition. It's a word Tevye clings to throughout *Fiddler on the Roof*. As Christians, we also have our traditions — from worship styles and service order

to readings of biblical passages. Some of the most enduring Christian traditions center around Jesus' birth story. Everyone knows about the inn and the stable, longstanding elements of Christmas pageants and nativity crèches. We are also familiar with Joseph and Mary's arrival in Bethlehem just as she is due to give birth, which precipitates their need to find immediate lodging from uninterested innkeepers, usually dressed in their father's bathrobe. We believe these elements are parts of the story, yet I find something interesting as I guide Christians through the land of Israel and challenge them to read Luke's account of Jesus' birth. Many are shocked to find those traditional elements are nowhere in the scriptural text. Luke assumed his first-century readers understood the cultural and linguistic details of



Many are shocked to find those traditional elements of the Christmas story are nowhere in the scriptural text.

his narrative, and therefore did not provide the background modern readers need to understand his account of Jesus' birth.

## AN INN IN BETHLEHEM?

Most modern readers do not realize that Luke did not explicitly mention Joseph and Mary's accommodations in Bethlehem. Luke's ambiguity concerning where Mary and Joseph stayed does not appear in most modern translations that support the traditional Christmas picture of Joseph and Mary having "no place in the inn." For example, the New Revised Standard Version reads: "While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn (καταλύματι)" (Luke 2:6,7, NRSV).<sup>1</sup>

The Greek word καταλύμα is a generic word meaning "lodging, place to stay, accommodations"<sup>2</sup> or possibly "guest room, dining room."<sup>3</sup> Luke used the word καταλύμα twice in his Gospel (2:7; 22:11; cf. Mark 14:14). Luke's use of the word in 22:11 refers to the "upper room/accommodations" where Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples. If Luke had intended that Joseph and Mary found no room in an inn, he would have used the preferable Greek word πανδοχείον "inn," which he used to describe the place where the Good Samaritan took the man beaten by robbers (10:34).

The Syriac, Coptic, and Latin translations of the Gospel of Luke likewise did not understand the Greek word κατάλυμα to mean "inn" as they variously translated the final clause of Luke 2:7 "where they were dwelling," "in the house of dwelling," or "in the place of dwelling." In other words, the early Christians did not think Joseph and Mary could not find lodging in an inn. In short, Luke never mentions an inn or an innkeeper. We should understand his use of κατάλυμα in a generic sense of a "place to stay" or "accommodations."

The misunderstanding of the Greek word κατάλυμα as "inn" has also impacted how translators understood the final clause in Luke 2:7 ("because there was no place for them in the inn": διότι οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς τόπος ἐν τῷ καταλύματι; NRSV), in part because

translators assumed that the problem facing Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem was the fact they were denied a place to stay. This also has led to the traditional assumption that Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem while she was in the final days of her pregnancy. Luke, however, presents a different picture: “It happened that while they were there, the days for her to give birth were fulfilled” (2:6, author’s translation).

According to Luke, Joseph and Mary had been in Bethlehem for an undisclosed period prior to the birth of Jesus,<sup>4</sup> and, therefore, had a place to stay. The definite article, τῷ, before κατάλυμα in verse 7, then, is anaphoric and points back to the accommodations presupposed for Joseph and Mary in verse 6.<sup>5</sup>

Joseph and Mary had to stay somewhere prior to Jesus’ birth, and it is this place that the phrase “the accommodations” (τῷ κατάλυματι: 2:7) refers.<sup>6</sup> Also, their accommodations prior to Jesus’ birth proved unsuitable for the birth and neonatal care of Jesus and His mother. Thus, the phrase should not be translated “there was no place for them” but rather as “they did not have a place.”<sup>7</sup>

The entire clause at the end of Luke 2:7 should be translated “because they did not have space in their accommodations” or “because they did not have room in their place to stay.” In other words, the room where Joseph and Mary lived in Bethlehem prior to the birth of Jesus could not accommodate Jesus’ birth.

#### **BETHLEHEM, THE TOWN OF JOSEPH**

A Roman census required people to register in the place where they owned land. Thus, a person registered for taxation purposes in the place where he lived or in the principal town of his taxation district.<sup>8</sup> Joseph’s compliance with the census and registering in Bethlehem indicates that Bethlehem was Joseph’s “own city” (Luke 2:3), and not merely his ancestral home. Fulfilling the mandate of the census in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1–4) indicated he owned property there, and perhaps he lived there. At the very least, Joseph had family in Bethlehem, which underscores that he and Mary did not need to stay in an “inn.”

Modern readers often assume Joseph brought Mary with him to Bethlehem because he had to for the Roman census. This is simply not true. In fact, Luke describes two

Modern readers often assume Joseph brought Mary with him to Bethlehem because he had to for the Roman census. This is simply not true.



separate events taking place in the lives of Joseph and Mary: 1) Joseph’s compliance with the census in Bethlehem where he owned property, and 2) Joseph’s gathering of his betrothed (2:5) Mary into his home.

The Gospels reflect the Jewish cultural world of the first century. Luke’s description of Joseph and Mary in 2:5–7 carefully portrays the process of marriage in first-century Jewish homes. According to ancient Jewish marriage customs, the marital process included two phases. The initial phase was the “betrothal” (אירוסין), which took place at the home of the bride’s father, where she remained following the ceremony (*m. Pesahim* 3:7; *m. Ketubot* 5:2). The groom gave his bride money or something of value and told her that through it she was betrothed to him “according to the law of Moses and Israel” (*m. Ketubot* 4:9).<sup>9</sup> When the bride and groom felt ready for marriage, they held the marriage celebration, which culminated in “home-taking” (נישואין) the bride into the home of the groom.

Typically the married couple began their married life in the home of the groom’s parents. The groom’s father customarily set aside a room in the house for the newlywed couple or built an upper room, a marital house (בית חתנות) on the roof. These attics could serve also as guest rooms after the married couple built their own home.<sup>10</sup>

Luke characterized Mary as Joseph’s “betrothed” when he took her from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Luke, however, describes them as cohabitating at the time of Jesus’ birth (2:7). This transition of Mary from being Joseph’s betrothed to cohabitating with him indicates that Bethlehem was the site of the wedding, when Joseph brought Mary from the home of her father (Nazareth) into his home (Bethlehem).<sup>11</sup>

Galileans strictly prohibited premarital intimacy between a betrothed couple (*t. Ketubot* 1:4; *b. Ketubot* 12a; cf. Luke 1:27), which means that for Joseph and Mary to cohabitate, as they clearly were by the time of Jesus’ birth, a marriage ceremony took place in Bethlehem (cf. Matthew 1:24,25).

Joseph’s act of bringing Mary from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem brought her into his home, most likely the home of his parents. The small marital chamber for the newlywed couple could not accommodate the relatives, midwives, and people needed



to assist with Jesus' birth.

In antiquity the most critical moment of the pregnancy was the moment of childbirth. Mary would have required assistance to give birth. Archaeological discoveries in Bethlehem, around the Church of the Nativity, and in Nazareth have revealed that many small homes consisted of one large room divided into two sections, with one section being more elevated than the other. In regions of hills, like Bethlehem (and Nazareth), these village homes were built in front of caves, which functioned as the back of the house.<sup>12</sup> Villagers kept their animals in their homes, typically using the cave or the back section of the home as the animal's lodging. Stone mangers often separated the two sections of the home, which also enabled the animals to eat once owners brought them into the house. These homes could also have a small room on the roof or the side of the house to accommodate family members and guests.

When we read Luke's narrative of Jesus' birth within the cultural, religious, archaeological, and linguistic world of the first century, his story looks something like this: Joseph, who lived in Bethlehem (or at least owned property there), brought Mary his betrothed from Nazareth to Bethlehem where they were married. While they were living there, most likely in the small marital chamber built by Joseph's father, "their accommodations" (τῶ καταλύματι) could not handle those on hand to help Mary with the birth of Jesus. Mary, then, gave birth to Jesus in the front, living room of the house and laid Him in a manger, which served the animals within the house.

It looks quite different from our Christmas pageants and nativity crèches, but it fits the first-century world of Jesus and Luke's account. In this way, it reminds us as modern readers that we must engage the reality of the Incarnation: God came in time and place (Galatians 4:4), and His coming must be understood from the standpoint of that world, not ours. ■

#### Notes

1. Scripture quotations marked NRSV are taken from The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version / Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, ©1989. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
2. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 899.

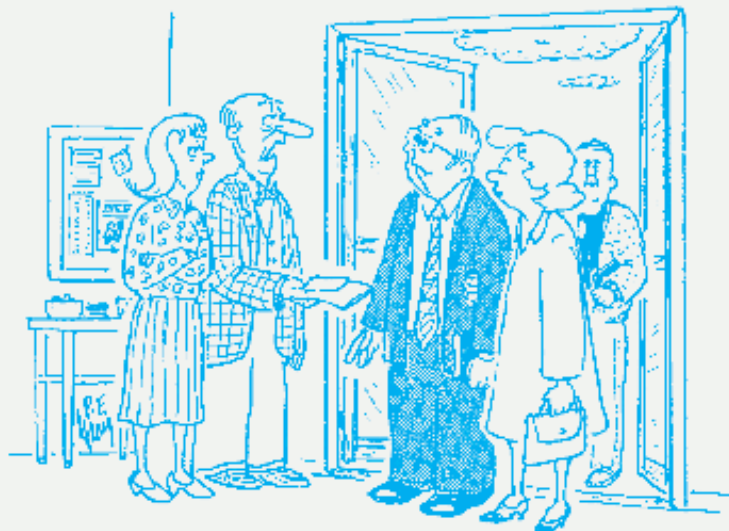
When we read Luke's narrative within the cultural, religious, archaeological, and linguistic world of the first century, his story looks quite different from our Christmas pageants and nativity crèches.

3. W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 415.
4. This also suggests that κατάλυμα did not mean "inn."
5. Stephen C. Carlson, "The Accommodations of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem: κατάλυμα in Luke 2:7," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 326–42).
6. Because the definite article before κατάλυμα refers back to Joseph and Mary's accommodations in verse 6, it is appropriate to translate the Greek phrase using the possessive pronoun "their," thus "their accommodations."
7. Carlson, "The Accommodations of Joseph and Mary, 335, 36. The dative pronoun αὐτοῖς should be understood as a dative of possession, not a dative of advantage; hence the translation of οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς τόπος as "they did not have a place" instead of "there was no place for them."
8. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (ed. G. Vermes and F. Millar; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 1:411–13.
9. S. Safrai, "Home and Family," in *The Jewish People in the First Century* (ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern; Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1972), 2:754,55.
10. Safrai, "Home and Family," 2:730,31.
11. Carlson, "The Accommodations of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem," 339.
12. The earliest artistic depictions of the birth of Jesus show Him being born in a cave. Also, an early noncanonical Gospel, the Protoevangelium of James, describes the birth of Jesus as taking place in a cave. Only from the Middle Ages onward does Christian artwork show Jesus' birth occurring in a barn.



**MARC TURNAGE**, director, Center for Holy Lands Studies for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri

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"Welcome to Oakridge Church. We'd shake your hands, but we just ran out of hand sanitizer."



## Measuring Responsibility: Moral Agency and the Brain

BY CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL

**T**eaching parishioners to take responsibility for their actions and make God-pleasing decisions comprises a key part of a pastor's role. A Christian understanding of morality hinges



Debates over free will versus determinism may have practical implications for behavior.

on the belief that each person facing temptation has the freedom to choose to obey God, and God will hold him accountable for his moral choices. As Paul explained in a letter to the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Our understanding of our moral agency, or ability to make moral judgments and act accordingly, connects to our sense of guilt for wrongdoing as well as our sense of pride in our achievements. Research studies show that people who read a statement reinforcing belief in free will cheat less on a subsequent test than those who read statements encouraging a belief in determinism (portraying behavior as the consequence of environmental and genetic factors). These studies suggest that debates over free will versus determinism may have practical implications for a person's behavior.<sup>1</sup>



Forefront neuroscience research seeks to explore the neural basis of moral agency, looking for brain functions that influence our decision-making ability. Researchers often gain insights by studying diseases and injuries. For example, studies of rare neurological disorders, such as alien hand syndrome, help researchers understand the relationship between agency and purposeful limb movement. Research conclusions lead to more than just philosophical debates. Examining the biological basis for our actions can change how and why we hold people responsible for their moral decisions.

### A BIOLOGICAL BASIS FOR DECISIONS

Moral decision making has a clear biological basis. When people feel guilt, compassion, or embarrassment, certain regions of the brain become activated, specifically the anterior and medial prefrontal cortex and the superior temporal sulcus. Empathic emotions, such as guilt and compassion, recruit the mesolimbic pathway as well. Indignation and disgust activate the amygdala. Reflecting on a moral decision involves a large network within the brain.<sup>2</sup> Of course, as Jesus told the Pharisees, "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him" (Matthew 12:34,35). As fully integrated beings, we should expect that our brains must process our moral choices.

A potential conflict between how we view our freedom to make moral decisions and current neuroscience research surfaces in experiments that measure our awareness of decision making. Neuroscience experiments performed since the 1980s demonstrate that the brain makes a subconscious decision before becoming consciously aware of the choice. For example, the same electrical brain wave changes shown to precede all limb movements occur hundreds of milliseconds before a person consciously decides to move a limb. One interpretation of these results is that our brains decide our choices in advance, making our freedom to choose our behavior an illusion.

A closer look at these experiments, which involve simple actions such as pushing a button, opens up the possibility of alternative interpretations. The experiments measure

Some philosophers propose that like the wave-particle duality found in quantum mechanics, free will and determinacy will remain a paradox of the biological sciences.



the subjective feeling of having an impulse to move, rather than the process of deliberating a decision that would require higher cognitive function. Additionally, the experiments do not rule out the concept of a "free won't" or the ability to consciously override our subconscious impulses.

Perhaps on a more philosophical level, our imagination, defined as our ability to make models of future scenarios and potential consequences of our actions, implies that we are capable of choices. The predictability of our brain functions permits us to act reliably as moral agents. Some philosophers propose that like the wave-particle duality found in quantum mechanics, free will and determinacy will remain a paradox of the biological sciences.

### WHEN ONE HAND KNOWS NOT

Jesus instructed His disciples to "do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" when they gave to the poor so their reward would come from their Heavenly Father and not from men (Matthew 6:3). For a person suffering from the rare medical condition known as alien hand syndrome (AHS), having a left hand that knows not what the right hand is doing, is a daily reality. The condition, first identified in 1908, involves a hand behaving as if it had a will of its own distinct from the desires of the person. A person with AHS can feel normal sensation in the hand, but he loses a sense of agency in the limb. The patient cannot voluntarily control the hand, yet the hand makes purposeful movements.

For example, a person may turn on a light switch with his right hand by choice, then find that his left hand turns the light back off. When a patient attempts to feed himself, his left hand may try to prevent the right hand from bringing the spoon to his mouth. The rare condition interests researchers because a person's sense of agency has been disconnected from the purposeful movement of the limb. Doctors have documented most cases of AHS in people who have had the two hemispheres of their brain surgically separated in a procedure used to relieve the symptoms of extreme cases of epilepsy. AHS also occurs in patients who have experienced brain injury from a stroke, head trauma, tumor, or infection.

Some psychologists cite AHS as evidence that there is a part of the brain that gives a

person the sense of having a free will over his behavior. Thus, these psychologists contend that our brains simply created the illusion of free will, which the brain disrupts for the patient experiencing AHS. However, as William P. Cheshire, Jr., professor of neurology at the Mayo Clinic in Florida, points out, "If free will is ultimately a delusion and human decisions are reducible to the blind product of material efficient causes, then there could be no reason to argue that one ought to choose to act in a certain way instead of another. ... It would make no sense to appeal to reason as a guide to decisions if all thought ultimately reduces to the irresistible consequence of material causes prodding us as inexorably as lines of computer code."<sup>3</sup> He feels that if free will truly exists, we should expect to find an area of the brain that processes our sense of agency. He considers the acquired inability to perceive alien hand behavior as similar to patients who, though able to hear, lose the ability to recognize the rhythm and harmony of sounds, a condition known as receptive amusia (musical deafness). Just as musical deafness does not prove that a symphony is an illusion, the loss of a sense of agency for a left hand does not prove that free will does not exist.

### ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Neuroscience research that measures a person's responsibility for his or her actions has everyday ethical implications. Our understanding of brain development may change how we punish juvenile offenders. In specific cases, we may discover that a suspected criminal was not responsible for his behavior because a brain tumor impeded a crucial mental function.

Beyond applications in the justice system, neuroscience research may improve our ability to predict behavior. If we find that changes in certain brain structures predict antisocial behavior, what should we do with that information? Should we screen for propensity to violent behavior? Like genetic testing, such screening raises issues related to confidentiality, invasion of privacy, and failure to consider the environmental factors that may render such predictions meaningless.

In exploring the biological basis for moral agency, we must be cautious that we do not medicalize away personal responsibility, redefining sin as simply a disease state. As

In exploring the biological basis for moral agency, we must be cautious that we do not medicalize away personal responsibility.



Joshua told the Children of Israel, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). That choice is still before us, and every pastor must remind his or her flock of the importance of this decision. ■

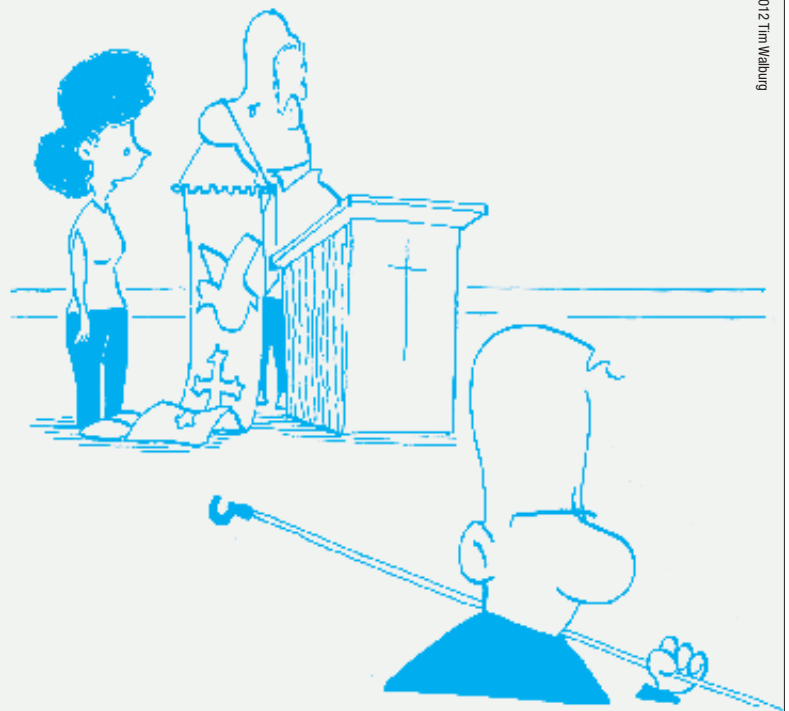
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**CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL, Ph.D.**, an ordained minister, author, medical writer, and research scientist trained at Harvard Medical School and Harvard University. She speaks in churches and conferences nationwide and addresses faith and science issues at [www.questionyourdoubts.com](http://www.questionyourdoubts.com).

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## Breaking Down Faith Barriers With Science

By **Patti Townley-Covert and Joe Aguirre**

**Many believe that most scientists are anti-God.** While there are many scientists who are Christians, nonbelieving scientists would probably turn to Christ if someone presented them with reasonable testimony concerning the validity of Christianity. Patti Townley-Covert and Joe Aguirre share the personal account of Nobel prize-winner, Dr. Richard Smalley, who turned to Christ. They also provide practical ways believers can share their faith with scientists.

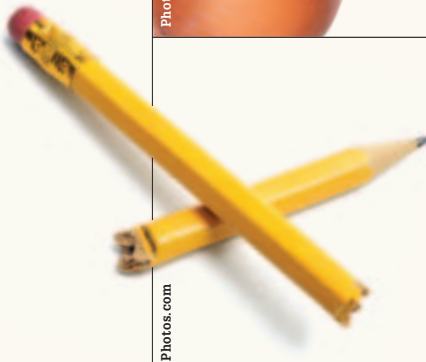


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## The Missional Church

By **Terry Minter**

**Many pastors and church members have a program-evangelism strategy.** They become “purveyors of religious provisions” in an attempt to attract people. Another evangelism method is that of the missional church. This method trains, empowers, and sends its members into the community to do evangelism. This timely article will help you evaluate your church. Are you a program-evangelism centered church or a missional church?



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## Don't Mess With Stress

By **Mark Bryan Robinson**

**Stress and ministry often go hand-in-hand.** There is never enough time to accomplish all the tasks required of ministers, plus the stress of dealing with peoples' demands. Stress, however, can have a detrimental affect of our physical and spiritual well-being. Mark Bryan Robinson shares his personal journey in battling stress. As pastor, you can learn from Robinson's experience on how to effectively deal with stress.

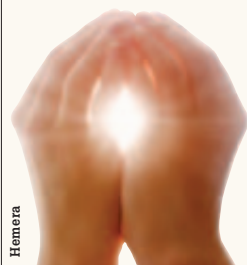


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## The Premise of Discipleship: There Can Be No Discipleship Without Relationship

By **Randy Helms**

**“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations”** (Matthew 28:19,20). Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples. Down through the years, Christians have suggested various ways to accomplish this task. But what is the goal of discipleship? Without this goal in focus, we will not produce the kind of disciples Christ desires. This article presents a compelling plan on how to develop spiritually mature disciples.



Hemera

## Spiritual Gifts

By **Randy Hurst**

**The apostle Paul's first letter** to the Corinthian church provided much-needed direction for those who were mishandling God's gifts. Paul's practical advice to the Corinthians is just as valuable for us today. Randy Hurst examines 1 Corinthians 12–14 and helps bring balance to the manifestations of spiritual gifts for today's Pentecostal church.

# InDepth: **Faith & Science** Interpreting God's Word and God's World

**INTRODUCTION** By **George O. Wood**

**during my junior year** at Evangel College (now University),

I began to experience a crisis of faith. I was troubled by the discrepancy between many of my fellow Pentecostals' spirituality and their character. They claimed to have deep spiritual experiences, but they weren't growing in Christlikeness or producing the fruit of the Spirit, which is love. (I realize, looking back, that like a lot of young people I was very judgmental and not cutting others the slack I now hope they will give me.) I began to wonder whether Christianity was based

solely on subjective experientialism.

A chapel speaker helped me see that Christianity was based on fact, not feeling. In a riveting message, he demonstrated the truth of the Resurrection by outlining the historical evidence for it and replying to skeptical objections against it. In many ways, this speaker won my mind for Christ and set the course of my Christian life and pastoral ministry. Subjective experiences are a weak foundation for Christian faith, but objective truth is solid ground.

Today, many young people are experiencing similar crises of faith. We live in a culture



that is dominated by science. On the positive side of the equation, the so-called STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) are making new discoveries that improve human life. We all benefit from new medical technologies, computers with faster processing speeds and greater memory, advanced communication gadgets, and so on. Christian young people want to participate in these scientific discoveries.

On the negative side of the equation, science sometimes seems to crowd out faith, calling into question biblical teaching on creation, for example. In his book, *You Lost Me*, David Kinnaman quotes a young man named Mike who says, "To be honest, I think that learning about science was the straw that broke the camel's back. I knew from church that I couldn't believe in both science and God, so that was it. I didn't believe in God anymore."<sup>1</sup> My heart went out to this young man. If only he could have had an experience like mine with someone demonstrating to him that biblical faith and scientific facts do not contradict one another. Was there no one in this young man's life to win his mind for Christ?

On June 27,28, 2011, the National Leadership and Resource Center of the Assemblies of God sponsored its inaugural Faith and Science Conference at my alma mater, Evangel University, here in Springfield, Missouri. Participants included theologians and scientists, pastors and laity, teachers and students. We have published the papers presented at this conference in *Proceedings of the Inaugural Faith & Science Conference*.<sup>2</sup> They represent a variety of perspectives on the faith-science relationship generally, as well as on origins issues specifically.

After the conference, which was well-received by participants, Dr. Jim Bradford and I asked the editors of *Enrichment* to prepare an issue of the journal on the relationship of faith and science. The issue you hold in your hands is the result. The theme articles that follow touch on four broad issues: (1) The article by Amos Yong and the interview with

Steve Krstulovich, Cecil Miller, and Christina Powell address in broad strokes the relationship between faith and science. (2) The articles by Kurt Wise, Hugh Ross, and Davis Young represent the spectrum of evangelical positions on Earth's age. (3) In their articles, Michael Tenneson, Christina Powell, Jim Bradford, and John Mark Reynolds touch on practical issues that arise when you minister in a scientific age. (4) The concluding articles by Gregory Gannse, Paul Copan, William Lane Craig, and Timothy McGrew present a reasoned defense of faith against New Atheist misuses of science.

I recognize that this issue of *Enrichment* is tough sledding, intellectually speaking. The journal normally addresses best practices in ministry, but this issue goes deep into matters of history, biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, scientific evidence, and apologetics. Also, this issue might be frustrating to some because it does not side with one position on the earth's-age debate. For these reasons, some of you might be tempted not to read the theme articles. I encourage you to resist this temptation.

Why? Because your congregation and the world you are trying to reach are filled with Mikes and with younger versions of me. They have questions about faith in the light of scientific advances. If you want to win them for the gospel, you must also win their minds for Christ. We offer this issue of *Enrichment* as an aid toward accomplishing that mission. 🙏



**GEORGE O. WOOD, D.Th.P.**, general superintendent of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri

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#### Notes

1. David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... And Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2011), 131.
2. David R. Bundrick and Steve Badger, eds., *Proceedings of the Inaugural Faith & Science Conference* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 2011). For more information on ordering materials from this conference, visit: [faithandscience.ag.org/](http://faithandscience.ag.org/).

# Faith and Science: **Friend or Foe?**

By **Amos Yong**

**M**

**any Pentecostals have  
assumed** or heard that

the Bible conflicts with modern science. This is especially true when discussing scientific theories about the age of the earth and the origins and development of life.

Often pastors broadcast this assumption from their pulpits in ways that

move our college- and university-educated members to reconsider whether they can, with good conscience, remain in our churches.







## Faith and Science: Friend or Foe?

(continued from page 46)

It is not necessarily that these members think they know better. But they do know there are a variety of views about scientific theories. A pastor's insistence that there is only one way to see things says to these members: "Leave your mind at the door before you come into church." This may not be the intended message, but it is implicit in the way pastors sometimes talk about the 7 days of creation when our audience has come to understand the ancient Hebrews did not interpret these as literally as we do.

We should be aware, however, that over the last two generations more and more Pentecostals have gone on for higher education, with an increasing number in the sciences. And as they have studied the theological and scientific disciplines, they also have come to entertain a spectrum of positions. While too many have, as a result, left our churches, a good number have remained faithful to the Pentecostal message. For those who have stayed, what binds them together is the conviction that their faith and their scientific knowledge are not necessarily antagonistic.

This article summarizes four basic positions of how theology and science have interacted and provides sound recommendations for biblical and theological reflection on scientific matters.

### FOUR THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE POSITIONS

#### Conflict

The first position is the historic position of *conflict*. Some Pentecostals remain convinced that whenever science appears to contradict the plain sense of the Bible, science must be wrong. Therefore, if the Bible says that God created the world in 7 days, then any theories that the earth is older than that must be false. This view assumes that the Book of Genesis provides an ancient scientific account that is in concordance with later scientific developments. However, the basis for such an assumption is not obvious. Genesis 1–3 could well reflect God's accommodation to the understanding of the ancient world instead. If so, then it tells us about God the Creator as opposed not to modern science, but to the creation myths of the ancient world.

The conflict position remains important if contemporary science oversteps its boundaries. Some scientists go beyond what science says to make metaphysical and theological claims. These claims also come with a set of presuppositions, such as matter or nature is all there is. This is not genuine science but

*scientism*. Pentecostals need to resist such assertions.

#### Independent

The second position views theology and science as *independent*. In broad terms, those who hold this view say that science concerns nature and the material world, while theology concerns morality, the spiritual world, and the afterlife. Different norms and methods guide these two views, and they should not conflict with each other.

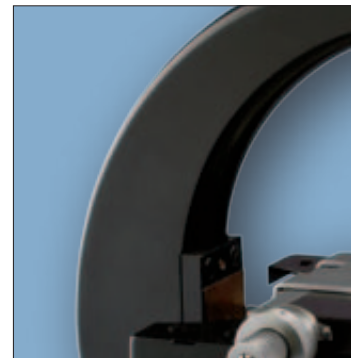
For many, the independence model works because there are differences in assumptions and approaches between theology and science. There is also a practical aspect to this position. It is probably most prevalent among Pentecostals who end up working in the theological or scientific disciplines. Because it takes years of graduate-level education to master a discipline, most Pentecostals have neither the time nor resources to gain sufficient expertise in both arenas to form a well-reasoned opinion.

However, while such a truce between theology and science might make it easy to do our work and retain our faith, it does not provide resources for integrating our faith and our work in the modern world. The result is that many Pentecostal scientists go to church on Sundays and lift up holy hands but then go back to their scientific laboratories during the week and do not think much about the theological aspects of their work.

On the other side, Pentecostal theologians and all Christians use scientific technology continuously — from electronics to communications to transportation to medicine and beyond. Yet theologians do not think much about how to reconcile their theology with the science that makes such technology possible. If this continues in our churches, our students who go off to secular colleges and universities will not be able to make theological sense of what they are learning. In reality, we do not live in compartmentalized silos. While we wear different hats — as theologians, scientists, spouses, parents, etc. — we still share a common world given to us by God.

#### Cooperating

The third position sees theology and science as *cooperating* with each other. There are certainly different forms of such cooperation. Two of the most popular currently among evangelical and Pentecostal scientists and theologians are intelligent design (ID) and old-earth creationism (OEC). The ID movement has a formally organized platform but also includes many others who are not a part of the formal ID organizations yet believe we can detect design in nature. Most of the latter insist that whatever else science might tell us about *how* things



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came about, theology tells us *why* they have come about. Theology reveals what science currently struggles to recognize — that nature reveals features that suggest a designer, who believers worship as God.

The challenge for ID at this point is that most mainstream scientists say this belief does not employ the scientific method and has not produced any testable hypotheses. In short, ID might belong in a theology classroom but not in a science classroom. Things may change going forward, however, as many scientists are working diligently to develop the scientific aspects of this idea.

OEC also comes in many forms. What binds these forms together is a commitment to God's creative and providential activity in the world, and acceptance of the evidence for a very ancient earth and cosmos of at least millions if not billions

However, neither should we assume conflict or independence either. Instead, theologians and scientists need to be open to consulting and learning from each other. After all, as Paul wrote, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12<sup>1</sup>). In some cases, we might find that we need to oppose what science suggests because of *scientism*. In other cases, there could be cooperation at various levels. Nevertheless, we must discern these on a case-by-case basis. This requires that both sides be willing to collaborate in a search for truth.

The challenge here, of course, is that the scientific establishment is not usually in the habit of consulting with Pentecostals on matters related to their research. On the other side, neither have Pentecostals prepared themselves to engage these matters through an informed Christian faith. We Pentecostals



Some scientists go beyond what science says to make metaphysical and theological claims. These claims also come with a set of presuppositions, such as *matter or nature is all there is*. This is not genuine science, but *scientism*.

of years. Some OEC advocates believe that the "days" of Genesis 1 refer to incalculable eons of time. Others believe in a primordial fall that inserts a lengthy period between the first and second verses of Genesis 1. A third group accepts the standard accounts of the sciences regarding an old earth and some kind of theory of progressive creation. Within this camp, many believe only in microevolution (within species), but a few also accept macroevolution (across species). Yet all OEC supporters accept that however things came about or developed, they did so directed by God's creative handiwork.

The challenge for those who believe in cooperation between theology and science is that there are so many variables to consider and so many possible positions to adhere to about how such cooperation ought to proceed. Some are willing to cooperate, but they are not as trusting of science since its hypotheses and theories are continuously subject to change. They would be concerned that others urging cooperation are too willing to assume science is right and risk undermining biblical faith.

### Partnership

This leads to the fourth option: that of theology and science in *dialogue* or *partnership*. If the third model assumes a kind of cooperative enterprise, the fourth model simply says that we ought not to presume such cooperation is always possible.

appear content to use the results of modern science when it suits our purposes. Yet we fail to see that the underlying science that makes possible the comforts of modern life invite deeper theological reflection on biblical teachings as well.

If Pentecostals inform themselves about both theology and the sciences, they might find that this partnership model provides a fruitful way forward. On the one hand, we will be more likely to encourage our scientists in their work and create opportunities for our scientists and theologians to work together. On the other hand, we will provide a model for our children to emulate so they can be better prepared for a world that will be even more complex than it currently is. Theologically, we might also come to see that our presuppositions about life in the Spirit do not oppose the life of the mind or the scientific vocation. In fact, the Scriptures teach the creation of all things not only through Jesus as the Word of God (Colossians 1:16,17 and Hebrews 1:2), but also through God's Spirit or breath, which "swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). Further, the work of the Spirit in the world is clear:

- "If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and all mortals return to dust" (Job 34:14,15);
- "When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

## Faith and Science: Friend or Foe?

(continued from page 49)

When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground" (Psalm 104:29,30);

- The prophet Isaiah also foretells that "until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest" (Isaiah 32:15).

In other words, whereas previous generations might have thought that the work of the Spirit was only in our hearts, the Bible tells us otherwise. The Spirit's work is intimately present and active in our bodies (which we experience daily), in the church, and in God's creation as a whole.

Perhaps we could also see that if God can speak to us through the many tongues and languages of Pentecost, then science, correctly understood, might also be a means to declare and witness "about God's deeds of power" (Acts 2:11). We need to support pioneering researchers and thinkers to venture into both fields. They might provide an interpretation and translations of the difficult languages that constitute both theology and science.

The church has long believed that God has revealed His glory in His two books: Scripture and nature. If the Holy Spirit leads the people of God into all truth, will not the Spirit lead theologians and scientists together also in unveiling the truth of God and the world? Of course, whatever our pronouncements, we need to always follow the apostle Paul's guidelines. When people give prophecies in the congregation, he warned, "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said" (1 Corinthians 14:29). Why should this be any different for our theologians and scientists?

### CONCLUSION

Here are a few recommendations. First, we need to realize that for much of the 2,000-year history of the Church, Christians were at the forefront of scientific discovery. As the Assemblies of God's position paper on "The Doctrine of Creation" (passed by the General Presbytery on July 30, 2011), says: "Believing scientists and biblical scholars consider no fundamental conflict to exist between God's Word and His works" (available at [http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position\\_papers/](http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers/)). Let us not allow a strident set of atheistic voices from the science community or an equally anxious set of fundamentalist Christian perspectives

perpetuate a warfare mentality between theology and science. Let us instead distinguish what is nonnegotiable, like the existence of God as Creator, from issues of second-tier import, and then allow our believing scientists and our faithful theologians to keep doing their work at this level.

Perhaps one way we can foster sound biblical and theological reflection on scientific matters is by inviting any scientists or science teachers in our congregations to share their testimonies. Another way is to incorporate the testimonies of believing scientists into our sermons and teaching.

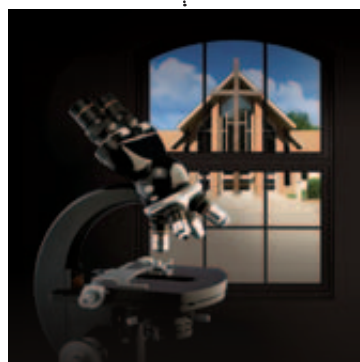
Second, we need to support Assemblies of God higher education. The Alliance for AG Higher Education has been proactive in promoting the work of our schools and our faculties. Inquire about having faculty from one of our Assemblies of God universities visit your church. Many faculty, even those who work in the sciences, have a call to preach and carry ministerial credentials. Others can share how their Pentecostal faith informs their work. Most of our schools have church

ministries offices that can coordinate such visits from faculty. Such exposure to our church members will encourage our young people to aspire to all that God might call them to through a college education.

Jesus urged us to love God not only with all of our heart, soul, and strength, but also with all of our mind (Luke 10:27). Our colleges and universities can help us do better in this regard.

My final set of recommendations is that we need to continue to work to overcome the history and culture of anti-intellectualism that persists in some segments of the Pentecostal church. When Pentecostals first emerged in the early 20th century, the educational establishment marginalized them and in turn Pentecostals demonized the educational establishment. But times have changed. So how do we transform the climate from one that has been hostile to academia and science?

Pastors need to get to know the scientists, medical personnel, and science teachers attending their congregations. The latter listen to their pastors each week. Pastors need to find out about their work and their views, and perhaps read books they recommend on topics of mutual interest. Then, involve them more intentionally in the life of the church? Have them lead adult education classes or make presentations to



We Pentecostals appear content to use the results of modern science when it suits our purposes. Yet we fail to see that the underlying science that makes possible the comforts of modern life invite deeper theological reflection on biblical teachings as well.



the senior high group about how they integrate their faith and their work. Have open forums involving these resident experts that provide space to discuss questions our students are encountering in public schools. These events will go a long way to quelling the fears that are otherwise hyped by the volatile rhetoric of the media.

Do not make Christians in the scientific community feel like they do not belong. God has called them to their vocation, and they can help us do better in loving God with our minds. By fostering such discussions within our churches, and by furthering relationships between our colleges and our churches, we will create environments of research, scholarship, and dialogue. This will in turn motivate pastors and scientists to compare notes, listen to, and learn from one another. Along the way, this will inspire them to bring their Pentecostal perspectives to the wider theology and science academies.

Why continue to allow the secular or non-Pentecostal voices in the theology and science fields to set the research agendas? How might we also develop methods and approaches to explore and better understand Pentecostal experiences and phenomena like healing and the miraculous? Our Pentecostal faith should not be threatened by theological and scientific study; it should instead be enriched by it.

Continue to be vigilant in prayer for the Pentecostal

movement. The Father of Jesus Christ who had led us by the Spirit to the ends of the earth will not abandon us as we step into the halls of academia and scientific inquiry. Instead, the Spirit who leads the church of Christ into all truth will continue to guard our hearts and minds. The same Spirit will empower us to bear witness to the truth in ways that will turn others to Christ. ☒



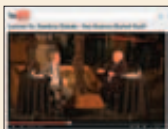
**AMOS YONG, Ph.D.**, is J. Rodman Williams professor of theology at Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

#### Note

1. Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version / Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. — Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, ©1989. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## EJ Editors' Recommended Faith & Science Resources

**John C. Lennox**, professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford and pastoral advisor at Green Templeton College, Oxford, provides an intellectual defense of Christianity through lectures and debates throughout North America and Eastern and Western Europe on issues related to the interface between science, philosophy, and theology. The following resources of Lennox are recommendations by the EJ editors. These resources will supplement the reader's understanding of important matters related to the faith and science discussion.



### BOOKS

#### ■ *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?*

(Wilkinson House, Oxford, 2009).

The relationship between science, both biological and cosmological, and Christian beliefs is closely examined and evidence carefully marshaled to dispel the idea that the two approaches are incompatible.

[ej.ag.org/201204godsendertaker](http://ej.ag.org/201204godsendertaker)

#### ■ *God and Stephen Hawking: Whose Design Is It Anyway?*

(Wilkinson House, Oxford, 2011).

(Wilkinson House, Oxford, 2011).

This thought-provoking book will contribute to

reasoned discussion on a fundamental question: Has science buried God? The book assists readers to understand some of the most important issues that lie at the heart of the contemporary debate about God and science.

[ej.ag.org/201204godandhawking](http://ej.ag.org/201204godandhawking)

#### ■ *Gunning for God: Why the New Atheists Are Missing the Target*

(Wilkinson House, Oxford, 2011).

John Lennox points out some of the most glaring fallacies in the New Atheist approach by tackling Hawking, Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens, and French philosopher Michel Onfray. [ej.ag.org/201204gunningforgod](http://ej.ag.org/201204gunningforgod)



### VIDEO/AUDIO

In these video and audio segments, John Lennox explores the legitimacy of miracles, the faith/science myth, and answers the question, "Has science buried God?"

#### ■ Miracles

In this video, John Lennox answers the question, "Is belief in the supernatural irrational?" [ej.ag.org/201204johnlennoxsupernatural](http://ej.ag.org/201204johnlennoxsupernatural)

#### ■ Religion vs. Science Myth

In this audio/video, John Lennox explores the faith/science conflict myth and answers the question, "Is religion at war with science?" [ej.ag.org/201204johnlennoxfaithscienceconflict](http://ej.ag.org/201204johnlennoxfaithscienceconflict)

#### ■ Has Science Buried God?

A fascinating and historic debate between Richard Dawkins and John Lennox on science, philosophy, and God [2008] [ej.ag.org/201204johnlennoxanddawkins](http://ej.ag.org/201204johnlennoxanddawkins)

# A Dialogue on Faith and Science

Interview with Stephen Krstulovich, Cecil Miller,  
and Christina M.H. Powell

**People often consider faith and science competitors.** In today's

secular culture, Pentecostal ministers must engage rather than disengage in the ongoing faith and science dialogue if they are to equip, evangelize, and disciple an ever scientifically literate audience.

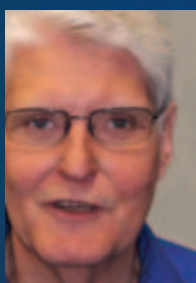
This faith and science interview, conducted by Enrichment journal's managing editor

Rick Knoth, brings together three prominent scientists who are also Assemblies of God ministers. These faithful scientists pursue research because of their belief in God, not in spite of it.



*Their scientific and theological expertise provides a much-needed perspective to help Pentecostal ministers more competently engage their churches in the ongoing faith and science dialogue.*

**Stephen Krstulovich** is an award-winning lead engineer at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory near Chicago. Fermilab is a U.S. Department of Energy national laboratory whose mission is to advance the understanding of the fundamental nature of matter and energy. Steve has been involved in Fermilab for over 25 years and shares on topics related to new discoveries of the laws of nature and the cosmos and their impact on faith and science.



**Cecil Miller, Ph.D.**, is a professor of Biology at Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, California, a position he has held since 2000. Dr. Miller completed a 3-year post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Southern California Norris Cancer Center where he studied the genetic changes resulting in cell immortality and mechanisms of chemical carcinogenesis.

**Christina M.H. Powell, Ph.D.**, is a biomedical consultant, bioinformaticist, and research scientist trained at Harvard Medical School. Her degree is in virology and she specializes in cancer studies. Christina speaks in churches nationwide on faith and science issues, and she is a regular contributor to *Enrichment* journal, addressing ministry and medical ethics issues.



## A Dialogue on Faith and Science

(continued from page 53)


### **H**ow did you come to faith in Christ? What motivated you to become a professional scientist? Did you feel called by God?

**POWELL:** My faith journey and my journey toward scientific research came around the same time. I was 8 years old when I made my commitment to follow Christ. I was exposed to two different books — the Bible and a book that explained how we could use knowledge of nutritional research to combat different diseases. I was drawn to wanting to make a difference in the world and improve the human condition. You can do that through the spiritual help that comes through the Bible, which also impacts emotional, mental, and physical reality, and you can also do this through scientific research to treat cancer and other diseases. I grew from that point — from 8 years old all the way through my Harvard Ph.D. with both of those areas growing in my life.

went one step at a time in science, looking back I see how the pieces fit together for the vibrant ministry I now have in the field of science. The call was clear. I kept pursuing by faith, even though I did not understand it and could not articulate it.

**KRSTULOVICH:** I have always loved science. I had an interest in God all my life, but I did not understand what it meant to have a relationship with God. I came to faith in God at Argon National Laboratory. I had been wrestling for some time about how a person could approach a Being like God. If God is this incredible Being of absolute perfection, how on earth could you approach Him?

I enjoyed being at Argon. I was enthralled with the beauty of science itself, the things we discover, the hidden beauties and symmetries.



66 If you cut off reality to only be explained by something that we can test in the laboratory, then you are removing the possibility for the supernatural.

— Powell

**MILLER:** My faith journey is a bit more traditional. I grew up in a Pentecostal pastor's home in Canada. My dad was the pastor of the German Pentecostal church. I came to faith at a young age, grew up in church, and grew up in the traditions of the church. When I thought about career and ministry, I attended Bible school for 1 year. I felt very unsettled, even though my devotion and my learning about God were strong. So I talked with the dean and told him I wanted to study science. I trusted him; he was a friend of my father. He said, "Well, why don't you pursue a career in science?"

So I did undergraduate and graduate degrees in science. I gradually found my way in terms of using my interests, knowledge, and understanding to a career in science.

I definitely felt called. My first understanding was a call to ministry. God was leading me; I just did not understand where, because it did not fit my definition of ministry. As I continued along my career path and

With science you take apart the atom, and find it is quarks and gluons. Take that apart and it's the nature of time and space itself. There is an endless progression of beauty and intricacy. Sometimes I get daily e-mails of latest discoveries. Sometimes a fear comes over me. I think, *Who is this Person?* God is so beyond what we think He can be.

One afternoon alone in my office I was convinced there was no way I would ever make myself good enough to face such a Being. That is when the truth of the gospel hit me: God has to reach me. It has to be on His terms. That afternoon I got on my knees and said, "God, I don't understand it all. I feel all mixed up like a scrambled egg. I don't know all the answers, but I know this for sure; I'm not going to get there on my own." And I put my faith in Christ. God has been answering those questions all along. It's a beautiful journey.

### **How has your faith shaped the way you do your science? Conversely, how has science shaped your faith?**

**POWELL:** My faith has enhanced my drive for compassion. Compassion in the medical field is the desire to make a difference in patients' lives by making basic scientific discoveries that can find new treatments for disease. My faith is very much tied into the compassion that is underneath my research. My

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faith has also tied into a pursuit for excellence in what I do. When you feel your faith is an outgrowth of wanting to do your best for the God who gave you your gifts and abilities, it causes you to want to work even harder and do an even better job.

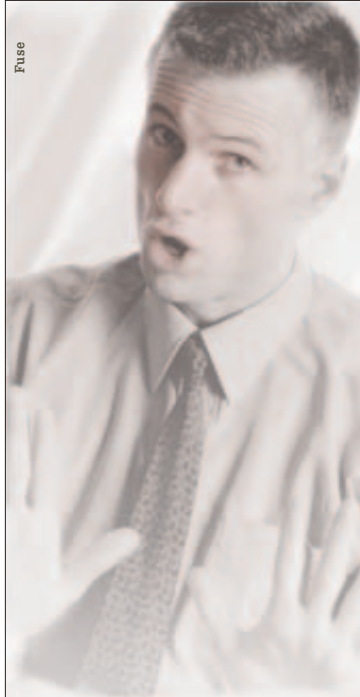
**MILLER:** My faith has influenced the science I do by giving me an appreciation that, in the work I am doing in science, I am worshipping and serving God. It has opened my eyes to what it means to worship. Studying about His creation is studying about Him and what He created. It has opened my eyes to give relevance, importance, and passion for understanding, rather than fearing and being concerned about what I might find and how it might affect me in terms of my belief system.

In terms of faith, the more I discover, the more I learn. The more I think — my primary field is physiology — the more I think about the Psalmist in Psalm 139:13,14 who talked about the wonderful works of God, that we are knit together in our mother's womb. It's beyond explanation. I get to see that at a deeper and deeper level as I study and learn more. As I do my work, I become smaller and smaller and see myself as much less significant. Who God is becomes greater and greater. It gives me an adoration and real privilege to serve a God who has an interest in humans.

**KRSTULOVICH:** Faith is the energizer, and it makes science thrilling. When you think you are unwrapping something that is not just some random mess, but that there are intricate, beautiful things you are going to find, it is exciting. The strangest thing is when men refuse to acknowledge God. They will say, "Well, it just seems like the more we learn, the more pointless it all is." It's like a sunset. Some people can look at it and say how beautiful, what a wonderful creation, how gorgeous. Others look at it and say it's going to be dark soon. What God does — what your faith does — is a vital part of how you do your work.

#### Why do people think faith and science conflict?

**MILLER:** Historically the church has initiated a lot of this



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People on both sides of the discussion can be very dogmatic. We should be looking for truth.

— Krstulovich



conflict. Back to the Copernican revolution, Galileo, and in those cases the church was dogmatic and adamant; and, in time, those views were proven wrong. This sets up a rift. Dogmatism causes people on either side to not think about alternatives.

**POWELL:** I agree. There is a historical basis to this conflict. One persistent myth in American education is that theologians opposed Christopher Columbus' trip to the New World; when truly, during that time, no educated person thought the earth was flat. There is excitement in the media when you set up conflict, but I prefer an integration model and compatibility model.

**KRSTULOVICH:** Part of this conflict comes from the way people present this argument, especially in the media. People on both sides of the discussion can be very dogmatic. We should be looking for truth.

Faith and science is really a partnership. In my work, science enhances faith. It blows me away to appreciate who this Being is whom we call our Father.

#### What are the big questions at the core of the debate between faith and science?

**POWELL:** Whether there's purpose in the universe? Whether the laws of nature allow for the possibility of miracles? Whether science can explain morality in our religious beliefs? Whether science can exclude the possibility of free will? Whether science allows for the possibility of divine action?

**KRSTULOVICH:** One other question is the limits to knowledge itself. We are seeing in science that our analogies, our concepts, even our use of mathematics are limits in the way we perceive science. This can give us a false sense of what we think we know. This is how scientists make discoveries. Many times we come to appreciate our limitations. This is what drives science. Another question is the relationship between science and philosophy. This is huge. For the last 20 or 30 years, scientists have thrown down the gauntlet that philosophy is too important to leave to the philosophers.



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## A Dialogue on Faith and Science

(continued from page 55)

**MILLER:** The age of the earth or the age of the universe is a huge area of contention among some people on both sides. Also origins — where did the beginning happen and how did it happen? And finally, how did creation occur? How did the world come to be? In biology, especially, there are huge differences of opinion about the actual existence and sustenance of the earth and the universe.

### Has science made belief in God obsolete?

**KRSTULOVICH:** Quite the opposite. What we are seeing in science — what we are discovering from microbiology to the universe itself — is almost backing science into a corner; science is putting God right in front of us. Much of the virile reaction against this is coming from those who do not want to engage in that particular discussion. God is doing pretty well.

**MILLER:** We cannot use a scientific method to prove the existence of God and many of the works of God. So we have to be careful from a systemological perspective not to try to make science answer questions it is not equipped to do. Learn from the Scriptures about God, the incarnation of Christ, and the Resurrection. We will not discover those from science, but science can give us answers about majesty and wonderful works of God in nature.

**POWELL:** The fishing-net illustration by Sir Abbingdon, an astronomer, puts this in perspective. Imagine you had a fishing net with a 3-inch mesh. You went fishing in the ocean week after week, and you came back and looked at the sea creatures you captured. You realized there were no fish smaller than 3 inches. If you concluded there could not possibly be 1-inch fish in the ocean, this would not be accurate. This is what happens when we fish for supernatural realities with scientific methods.

### What diversity of opinion exists among scientists on issues that have a religious component?

**KRSTULOVICH:** Back in the '80s, God

was pretty much left out of the discussion. But as we began to discover new things, we have entire colloquia and lectures that touch on this issue. It appears to me, there are not that many scientists you would call hardened atheists. Most tend to be fence sitters. There is a wide acceptance of pantheism. Not looking at Jehovah as a personality, but perhaps looking at some sort of a spirit that motivates the universe, spelling Chance with a capital C. Those who are strongly atheistic are extremely vocal and popular. We really see there is a softer side. Physics, in particular — the branch I get involved in — is notorious in scientific circles for being open to God.

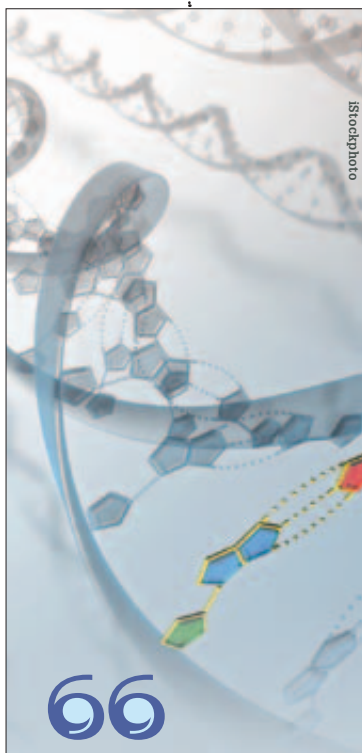
**POWELL:** The scientific opinion is probably as diverse as the general population, and perhaps not all that different from it in terms of different religious beliefs. I was surprised when I entered Harvard to find the diversity of religious practices of scientists. Scientists were in the lab during the week and in church on Sunday. Part of it, as Steve said, is moving past the popular image of the vocal atheist speaking for all of science. It is just not true.

### What can Christians do if they feel science is challenging their faith at a fundamental level? How can they meet that challenge?

**MILLER:** Religious beliefs have survived since the beginning of time. Specifically in science, there were big challenges we had to overcome in terms of our understanding of the universe. The first was the Copernican Revolution. We survived that.

There have also been disagreements about the calendar. During the Maccabees this was most debated. Is it a lunar calendar? Is it a solar calendar? The Scripture talks about the "greater light," so many believed it was a solar calendar, but others believed it was a lunar calendar. After we had satellites, we discovered it's 365  $\frac{1}{4}$  days. I heard recently that we have a quarter second — a quarter leap second. That's how precise we are.

When we get more precision that cannot be denied scientifically, then adjustments are made. We think about Scripture in a different way, but it does not alter our



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When you look at the complexity, randomness is becoming less and less of a viable explanation of how things came to be and how things continue to operate.

— Miller



## A Dialogue on Faith and Science

(continued from page 57)

view about God and His influence in our lives and overall plan of salvation. That is fundamental and will not change as scientists make more discoveries.

We need to study Scripture and become informed with science and find truth. If some things we believe are not true, then we need to alter them. Maybe some science, once you study it, shows misconceptions or misinterpretations. But the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth.

**KRSTULOVICH:** The prophets tell us we should love justice and mercy and walk humbly with our God. Every age faces challenges, but God is able to manage. We need to learn patience. There is a tendency to become dogmatic where we don't need to be. We do want to be firm, but we need to realize that our understanding, especially of the Scriptures, needs to be well grounded. Challenges move us to dig deeper. We need to realize that God is at work. How many times in the past has God intervened just when it looked like archaeology or other sciences were about to overthrow things. What we are beginning to understand is we do not understand a lot. We are privileged to live in an amazing time.

**POWELL:** Integrating faith is a discipleship issue, and we could probably handle it in the same way we handle any discipleship issue. If a person is struggling with a question about faith and science, he should seek someone who is further down the road in both scientific knowledge and Christian maturity to guide him. We are living in an era where scientists are more willing to integrate faith; and, as a result, there are resources to put the two together. The Association for the Advancement of Science now has a committee to deal with dialogue of science, ethics, and religion. And in your church, seek out others who have dealt with these issues and resolved them successfully.

### What is the biggest challenge to our faith from a scientific point of view?

**KRSTULOVICH:** It's important to realize that many reputable scientists are as upset by Dawkins, Hitchens, and Shermers for their dogmatism. What they are talking about is not

# 66

When you feel your faith is an outgrowth of wanting to do your best for the God who gave you your gifts and abilities, it causes you to want to work even harder and do an even better job.

— Powell



science. They are trying to use science as a foil to advance a social agenda. If you read their works, they are pretty blatant about promoting their social agenda. We need to take an opposite attitude. Do not take this dogmatic type of unreasonable attack and use the same tactics. The apostle Peter says to show our reasonableness in these things.

**POWELL:** It comes down to a philosophy of whether or not everything can always have a naturalistic explanation. If you cut off reality to only be explained by something that we can test in the laboratory, then you are removing the possibility for the supernatural. It's back to the fishnet. Are there other realities than what are caught in the scientific net? If we answer yes to that, it makes it easier to answer other questions.

### Are there any science-based arguments for God?

**MILLER:** Most arguments for God fit into the teleological realm, where you cannot take God into a laboratory and prove His existence. When you look at the complexity, randomness is becoming less and less of a viable explanation of how things came to be and how things continue to operate. We understand at a genetic level the complexities to such a high degree now. You do not hear people argue statistics anymore, because those arguments are not relevant. There are other questions. When scientists think about the complexity and detail of the universe — the whole concept of design — it causes them to pause and think about some other force that is involved. It just does not seem feasible to an intelligent thinking person who understands the complexity that it is random.

I was talking to a molecular biologist about this topic. I asked, "How can you still think that these are random processes?"

She gave an insightful answer: "It depends what you accept as evidence. What's there is sufficient evidence for me."

As we parted, I said, "Well, it's not sufficient evidence for me. It just doesn't add up."

In 100 years, we will not be talking about this. The evidence will be so overwhelming that there will have to be something



other than just random naturalistic forces that caused it to be and to sustain it.

**KRSTULOVICH:** Yes, there are science-based arguments for God. I did a paper for the Faith and Science conference for the Assemblies of God in June. One of my main citations was Leonard Susskind in a book, *The Cosmic Landscape: String Theory and the Illusion of Intelligent Design*. Susskind was intent on trying to counteract the need for God, but he was trying to be open at the same time. He would say, "Well, we just can't explain many things." The cosmological constant is tuned to 120 orders of magnitude. How can that possibly be? So this landscape idea, which is simply dogmatism of its own nature, is the only way out. The only other explanation is supernatural agents. It was interesting to see the conundrum that people who have that position are going through. They are not sitting as comfortably as many of us might think, even though *PBS* likes to display it as sort of a unified front.

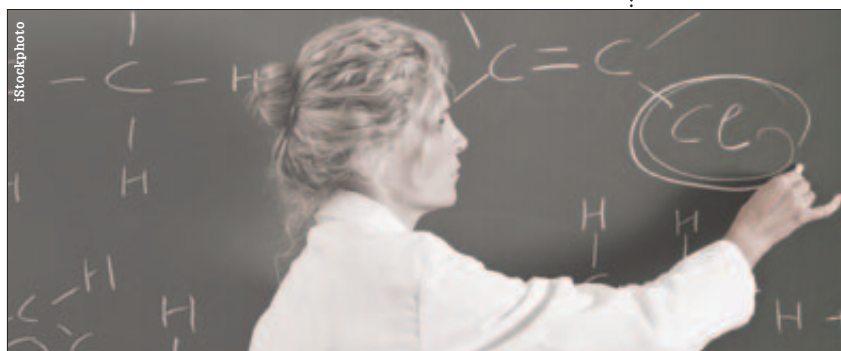
The more of us who are in science, the more opportunity we will have to share Christ with people who are often neglected and do not have access to the gospel.

**Dr. Powell, as a Pentecostal, how do you integrate prayer for miraculous healing with research for medical healing?**

**POWELL:** Science does not disprove miracles. Yet we know that miracles, by their nature, are rare. We pray for miracles because medicine does not always produce a cure. Also, sometimes people need healing on a spiritual level or healing in a relationship with another person.

It comes down to a question of whether or not science allows miracles. If you believe science and miracles are not mutually exclusive, it makes sense to do the best you can with science to seek a medical answer for diseases.

So when you go into the laboratory to find a cure for a disease, you are doing the best with what God has given you in terms of resources to try to cure diseases. This is not



“There are not that many scientists you would call hardened atheists. Most tend to be fence sitters.”

— Krstulovich

In fact, when you see scientists let down their hair — as I normally get to do every week at colloquiums and lectures — you will see they are very insightful. They have a lot of interest in this question. We really need to appreciate that.

**Dr. Miller, many worry that not enough American college students study science, technology, engineering, or mathematics as major disciplines. Why is the study of science important? Why should Christians pursue it as a vocation?**

**MILLER:** In general, I feel Christians should study every field. Every professional field is a different mission field. By neglecting that area, you are neglecting an opportunity to shine the light of Christ in a dark place.

Second, from a national standpoint, there is a huge dearth of competent scientists working in the sciences. We estimate that less than 50 percent of people who graduate with science degrees work in science. With a science degree, there are so many options open. By making great discoveries in science, you have a platform that many people would listen to because of the greatness of the discoveries.

incompatible with praying for a miraculous intervention for a person. As we know, not everyone is cured through science, and not everyone receives a miracle, so it makes sense to do both.

**Fermilab performs research on the cutting edge of particle physics. What has your work on the very small things of nature taught you about God and the universe?**

**KRSTULOVICH:** My work at Fermilab has shown the interrelatedness of things, the intricacy of things. The very smallest scales influence the very largest scales, apparently. Things at the fundamental Planck scale of reality affect things of a cosmic nature. It's like one giant, intricate web. The subject we are taking into consideration here is something far beyond our traditional thinking, our ways of looking at things, even from a scientific perspective. We need to be open in the science, as well as in the faith to see the reality, the truth of what's behind it. Of course, the advantage of faith is we have a lot of things outside of just physical realities to help us understand what the truth is.

## A Dialogue on Faith and Science

(continued from page 59)

**Dr. Powell, what advice do you have for pastors who are increasingly being asked to address the uses of science and technology that are fraught with moral implications, such as reproductive technologies, stem-cell therapies, end-of-life issues, etc.?**

**POWELL:** First, they should read the Ministry & Medical Ethics column in *Enrichment* where I discuss these issues. They can also read material being put out by Christian scientists on these issues, and figure out how they can speak to them within their congregations and maybe even within counseling sessions. Parishioners really do want faith-based input on these issues. They look to their pastor for guidance.

**Each of you holds ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God. What advice do you have for your fellow ministers about how to evangelize scientifically literate nonbelievers and disciple scientifically literate believers?**

**MILLER:** Unless you are trained as a scientist, do not try to evangelize or help scientists who are Christians from a scientific perspective. You do not have the tools to do that, and you will lose credibility within the first 30 seconds of a conversation. Accept who you are and what you know, and inform yourself as much as you can so you can have a good

conversation. But as a minister, you are dealing with things on the spiritual level and things of the heart and possibly personal things. In that vein, you have expertise. You know the Scriptures; you have the training; you have the experience with being led by the Spirit. These are places scientists do not understand well. Concentrate your efforts there. You cannot argue anybody into the kingdom of God. It comes down, ultimately, to faith. You can guide anybody, as a minister, no matter what his or her faith is.

I have had to deal with pastors who have been excited in this mission field. They are going to evangelize the scientific world. I remember one person who made a video using science as a way to encourage people to come to faith. The video had so many mistakes that were scientifically incorrect. I pleaded with him not to show this. He would have been a laughing-stock. Think of scientists as people who need to encounter the love of God and approach it that way. Then you will have access to their hearts, and you will be able to, through the work of the Holy Spirit, help them come to know the Lord and grow in faith.

**KRSTULOVICH:** We need to show a reasonable attitude and a teachable attitude. We do have truth, but we do not have all truth. The way we look at the truth we do have at times is colored

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by our preconceptions. Science does not prove anything; all its arguments are based on the fact they have to be disprovable. The fact is the evidence we see for God, for a Creator, is so great. Take our everyday life. If we had that much evidence on something, the decision about what steps to take would be made a long time ago. We are seeing more and more hoops science has to go through to keep pushing God further and further back, and it's becoming embarrassing. Many scientists who are naturalistic, materialist, acknowledge the embarrassment. It seems unreasonable to deny it. Yet it's like, well, we have to stick with this naturalistic explanation of things to the end. We need to realize we are on the right side of the argument. We may not understand all the technological intricacies of the argument, but it is the same thing with our faith. There is more eyewitness testimony for the resurrection of Jesus Christ than any other fact in ancient history. What are you going to do? Throw away all ancient history? Then what do you have to do about Jesus? We have a reasonable faith. We can be reasonable people, and we need to show that reasonable and humble attitude.

**POWELL:** With unbelievers, use accurate information or state you do not know the answer. Scientists appreciate integrity. They will be wary of overly simplistic answers to difficult questions. Scientists want evidence. One of the most powerful apologetics is how Christians live their lives. How do we show love for one another in the body of Christ? Are we seeking to make the world a better place?

Disciple believers. Point them in the direction of resources to explore. Emphasize the importance of reading the Bible to verify what they hear in sermons and classes. Recognize that scientists, by virtue of their training and abilities, tend to be discerning. Be honest in all your dealings. Pursue excellence in your ministry.

Scientists are seeking evidence of all kinds. It's part of what scientific training does. One of the most powerful apologetics available is Christians showing love for one another. If we provide the evidence and fruits of our faith in how we interact with the scientists we want to reach and with one another, and they see something real, then that will begin the pursuit. From there you can guide them toward resources for the more scientific answers.

Almost all scientists I know care about the pursuit of excellence. To the degree you pursue excellence in your ministry, you are going to draw the

educated scientists, because they will respect and honor you doing well in what you do. Do not step into things that are not your area of expertise, because scientists really do care about accurate information. They will look to see what you do, so do it with integrity. And above all, love your people.

### What can ministers do to increase their scientific literacy?

**MILLER:** Be lifelong learners. Resources are available for the public, because the scientific community is concerned about making sure the public understands what they do and the importance of what they do. The scientific meetings I am affiliated with always have a session for the general public. You do not have to have a scientific background; it's made for the nonscientist, and they have fabulous speakers.

Be an avid reader. It does not matter which newspaper or magazine you read; all have a science section. You can get scientific information from the Web. Reading books is important.

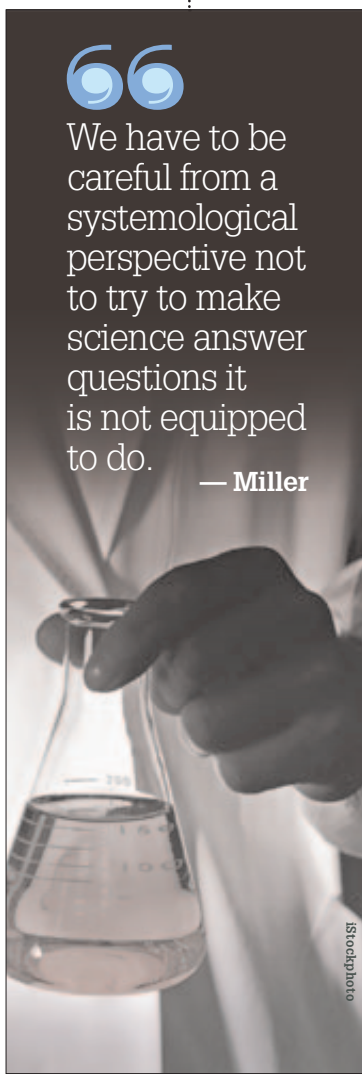
Finally, be open minded. We know some answers, but we do not know it all. If you come with an open mind and want to learn something, you may have people in your church who can teach you. Be willing to let them speak freely and not be condemned for it. You can learn from those you encounter on a regular basis.

**KRSTULOVICH:** I understand pastors need to be abreast of the issues, so they can respond to people like the Dawkins and Hitchens. But do not let that color your view of science. Be enamored with the wonder and beauty of science. Science is revealing things about God, about existence, even about the beauty of the Bible and the way it is written — things we never would have imagined. Every 2 to 4 years, knowledge grows in various fields of science. That means if you left school several years ago, you know half as much as people who graduate today. How could anybody keep up with this? Do not feel intimidated by it; enjoy the wonder of it. Yes, you need to read some things. You must be aware of the twisting and turning that is being done to use science as a club. But if you want to get into science, get into something that is going to help inspire you, something that is going to help you see the beauty in it. Read books that share the wonder of creation that we are seeing. You can approach it then with love, rather than a fear or phobia.



We have to be careful from a systemological perspective not to try to make science answer questions it is not equipped to do.

— Miller



## A Dialogue on Faith and Science

(continued from page 61)

**POWELL:** Take a scientist to lunch. If you have people in your congregation who work within these fields, get to know them. Part of pastoring is relationships. Think of faith and science as something that is going to happen in the context of relationships instead of thinking of it in terms of information that you have to take in and learn and process. If you have fears or misconceptions about science, they may go away when you get to know a scientist. A scientist's misconceptions about a pastor may go away when he or she gets to know you. Try to do this in the context of relationships. That is the best continuing education on this topic.

### Share a concluding thought or challenge with our readers as it relates to the faith and science dialogue.

**MILLER:** Be humble. Love all people. Learn what you can. Try not to be too opinionated and judgmental. If you come to the person with your heart, it will be reciprocated, and you will be able to advance the kingdom of God in a spiritual level, even though it may not be in terms of contributing a lot of new information. If you deal with the person and his heart and his relationship with God, that is ultimately most important — that is eternal. What we do in science will pass, as the whole earth will pass. The higher priority is building the Kingdom through your ministry to us as scientists in a spiritual realm.

**POWELL:** Respect the limits of both science and theology. As a pastor, teach your congregation to use science wisely without dismissing the supernatural. Show respect for the contributions of science, while leading your people to deepen their faith. Become comfortable living with unanswered questions as you journey through this life seeing “but a poor reflection as in a mirror” until you see Christ face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).

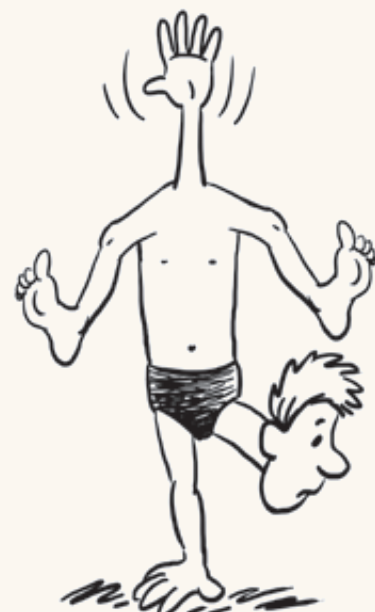
We have to be prepared to live with unanswered questions, not only in the area of faith and science, but just as believers in our faith journeys in general. We know we are going to see through the glass darkly on this side. So whenever you are encountering places with science and faith, whenever you are struggling to see them integrate, realize it is okay to say, “I don’t know.” It is okay to live with the unanswered questions for a while; that is part of the faith journey. Get to know scientists and start establishing those relationships

where knowledge can flow — both knowledge of faith and knowledge of science.

**KRSTULOVICH:** Do not feel you must answer all the questions. God is in this game too, and He is going to answer it in a loud and resounding way, as He always and eventually does. We need to realize that science in itself is not an answer. What has our technology given us? It has given us a world where we are fearful of nuclear weapons and pollutions, superbugs, and all kinds of things. Science by itself, without a moral foundation, without God, is like throwing the keys of a Maserati to a kid and saying, “Here, have fun.” It only makes the problems of humanity more acute. Yes, 100 years ago, people dreamed that science was going to change the world and answer all our problems. But as a whole, the world is a lot more mature now, and we realize the limitations of science. I say, “Get in the fight. Rejoice. This is a wonderful time. There has never been anything like this before. What a wonderful time to be alive and to see what God is going to do.” ■

For Stephen Krstulovich's comments on the recent discovery of the so-called “God Particle,” read “‘God Particle’ Discovery — Cause for Concern or Celebration?” at [ej.ag.org/201204/godparticle](http://ej.ag.org/201204/godparticle) or click here.

The next **Faith and Science Conference** is June 23-25, 2014, in Springfield, Mo. The theme is **Genesis and Genetics**. More details will be announced in future issues of *Enrichment* journal.



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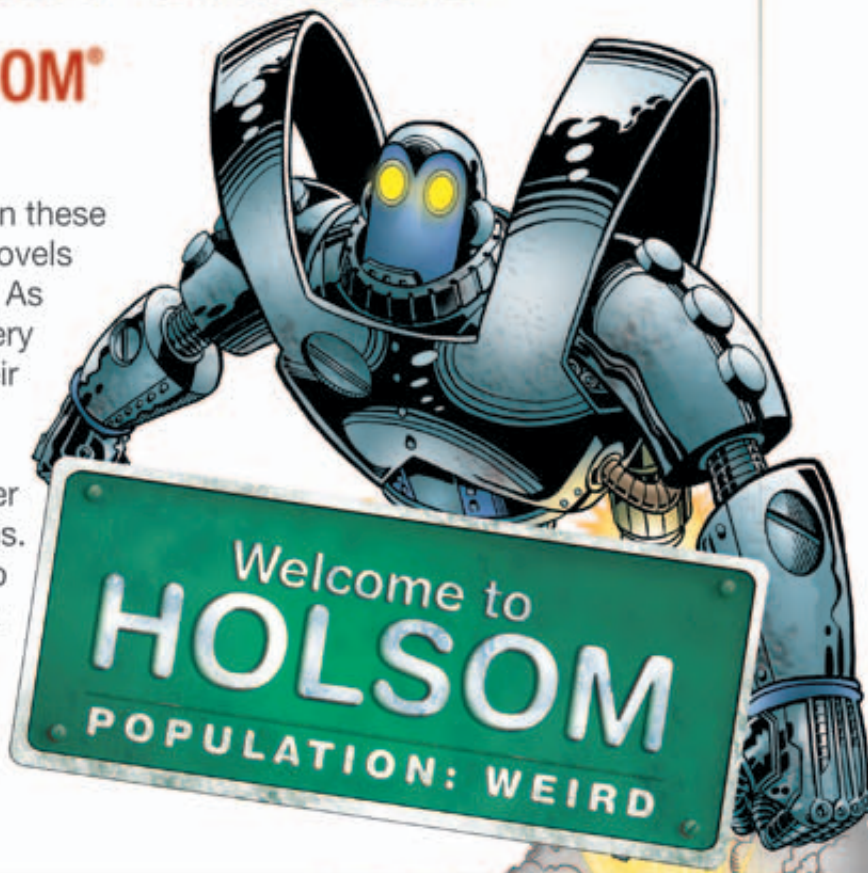
What man might look like if God had commissioned a “creation committee.”



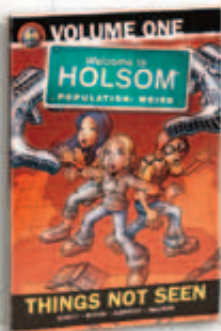
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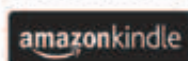
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# The Case for a Young Earth

By **Kurt P. Wise**

**I am a paleontologist.** This means that I study fossils. Somewhat like a crime scene investigator, a paleontologist tries to figure out what happened in the past by studying evidence found in the present. And, as is true in presenting a criminal case in court, some evidence is better than other evidence. For example, in a murder trial, reliable eyewitness testimony is the best. Other evidence — even such things as DNA fingerprinting — is circumstantial evidence.

Circumstantial evidence cannot testify. It is mute. Humans have

to infer what happened, and different people can infer different stories of what happened (like the opposing lawyers in the courtroom).

Not only does the Genesis account maintain that the creation is young, but a young creation is foundational to the rest of Scripture. Here is why.

In similar manner, scientists are trying to understand the physical world, but the physical world is mute.

## The Case for a Young Earth

(continued from page 65)

It does not answer the questions of the scientist. If the scientist uses the physical world alone, he must infer the answers. Different scientists can come up with different answers.

The physical world is not the only place to go to determine what happened in the past. Believers know there is an eyewitness to events in the past. After all, God was there. And, seeing as God is everywhere present, at all times, and that He sees and understands all things perfectly, and that He cannot lie, it would seem that God is the *perfect* witness of the events of the past. Furthermore, in the Bible, God inspired a true account of what happened. Observations and descriptions from a completely reliable eyewitness should hold much more weight than speculations about mute circumstantial evidence made by fallen and fallible humans. Therefore, as believers, we should look at the eyewitness account from God before we begin inferring the meaning of circumstantial evidence.

### THE EYEWITNESS CLAIMS CREATION IS YOUNG

The earliest part of creation's history is related in the Book of Genesis. What does Genesis tell about that history? To be careful about this, we need to know how to interpret the Genesis account. After all, not all the Bible is interpreted in the same manner. We interpret history different from poetry, and poetry different from prophecy. But Genesis is written as history. It is most like something literature experts call "historical narrative." Genesis has numerous marks of historical narrative — genealogies, definitions and descriptions, geographic and cultural details, and personal names. It does *not* have the identifying marks of Hebrew poetry or prophecy, and it contrasts with short poetic phrases within the text.

Writers of later Bible books refer to Genesis as if it was true history, and it was understood to be true history by the Hebrews and the Church for thousands of years. Although other parts of Scripture include *non*historical accounts concerning the same period of time, the historical account in Genesis is used to interpret the nonhistorical passages, not the other way around. Finally, although the account is written in a more beautiful style than is true of most histories constructed

by humans, with God as its author we should expect such beauty. Anything God says — even an account of true history — would be expected to be beautiful ... an example of great literature. In fact, anything God does — even the guidance of true history — would be expected to be beautiful ... an example of magnificent orchestration. A beautiful style gives us no

reason to discount Genesis as history.

Not only is the Genesis account history, it is simple history. The Hebrew is simple and straightforward, and the text is readable and understandable by even the young. It makes sense that it should be, because the text was first given to people of the uneducated lower class. After God released the people of Israel from Egypt, He wanted to teach them about himself. He began that reeducation with the Book of Genesis. God may have placed additional truths beneath a surface reading of Genesis, but such truths should only add to (not replace) the meaning gained from the straightforward reading of that account. The straightforward reading, in fact, has been the dominant interpretation of the text for most of Hebrew and Church history. As a friend of mine says: The problem has never been the *interpretation* of Genesis ... it's always been the *re-interpretations* of Genesis — cases where humans *change* the obvious reading of Genesis to fit something believed from *outside* the Bible.

The straightforward reading of Genesis 1 indicates that the creation of *all* things — the heavens, the earth, the seas, and all things in them — occurred in 6 days. Several things indicate these are 24-hour days. First, the days are defined using a cycle of light and dark (Genesis 1:3–5). Second, words and phrases associated with "day" in Genesis 1 — such as numbers and "evening and morning" — refer to 24-hour days elsewhere in Scripture. Third, a weeklong creation is consistent with Jesus' reference to the creation of Adam and Eve "from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:6, KJV) and Abel's death "from the foundation of the world" (Luke 11:50,51, KJV). Fourth, the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:10–12) directly compares the 6 days of God's creation with the 6 days of a human workweek. In fact, the most "natural" way for God to have created everything in the universe is to have created it instantly — taking no time at all. God would need to have had a good reason to spread His creation out over a period of time. He chose to create over 6 days as an example to us. This in turn gives us the only known explanation for "week" (other time periods such as day, month, season, and year are defined using the sun, moon, and stars).

A straightforward reading of Genesis also indicates that only about 2,000 years elapsed between Creation and the time of Abraham. This is done using the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 — genealogies specially designed to mark time. Most genealogies merely indicate how people are related. The more detailed also tell us when people were born and when they died. For a genealogy to be useful in measuring time, however, the age of parents at the birth of children is needed, and very few genealogies have this information. In fact, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are not only the only genealogies



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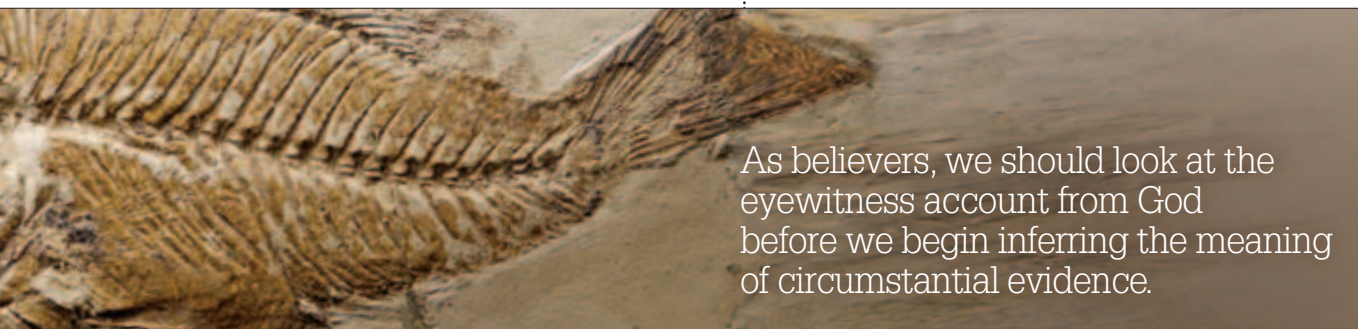
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in Scripture with this information; they are the only such genealogies known in all of ancient Near Eastern literature. And, of all the genealogies in Scripture, they are the only two that must be relied upon to create a timeline from Creation to Christ. These genealogies seem to be specially designed to provide a timeline between the Creation and Abraham. And this straightforward reading of these genealogies has been the reading of Hebrews and the Church until late in the 19th century.

Furthermore, a traditional reading of Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies provides a reasonable explanation for why God's word to man was not written down until the time of Moses. The

- Each part of the creation came into existence instantly by the direct command of God over the course of a single week.
- The original creation was perfect.
- Humans and animals did not die before the fall of man.
- All humans who have ever lived are descended from Adam and Eve.
- The fall of man brought a curse upon the whole creation.
- A global flood in the days of Noah destroyed all land organisms on the planet with the exception of those on the ark.
- The diversity of modern languages came as a result of God's intervention at the Tower of Babel incident.



As believers, we should look at the eyewitness account from God before we begin inferring the meaning of circumstantial evidence.

traditional reading suggests about 2,500 years elapsed between Adam and Moses. Yet, if the genealogies are taken straightforwardly, people before Noah's flood lived for more than 900 years and children overlapped with their parents for centuries. Oral information could be confirmed and checked for centuries. Truth could have been reliably transferred for many generations, and God's word to Adam could have been transferred from generation to generation in as few as seven transmissions. By the time of Moses, human lifetimes were close to what they are now and information would not be transferred as reliably. It makes perfect sense why God thought it was necessary to begin recording His word in written form. The more time that is inserted between Adam and Abraham, the harder it is to provide a reasonable explanation for why God's word was not put in written form. As an example, if Adam is an archaic *Homo sapiens* and a radiometric age of 45,000 years is accepted for him, then one must explain why humans lacked the Bible for over 40,000 years (more than 1,000 generations). Similarly, if Adam was an early Neanderthal and an old-age chronology is accepted, one must explain more than 10,000 generations of no Bible. If Adam was an early *Homo erectus*, one must explain more than 40,000 generations of people not having a Bible.

### YOUNG CREATION IS FOUNDATIONAL

Not only does the Genesis account maintain that the creation is young, but a young creation is foundational to the rest of Scripture. A straightforward reading of the Genesis account suggests:

Accepting the timeline given in that same account allows each of these things to be believed. To believe that the universe and the earth are billions of years old challenges — or rejects — each of these claims. The same methods that lead one to believe in a great age for the earth also suggest that different parts of creation are millions or billions of years apart in age, and that animal death and suffering preceded man's existence by hundreds of millions of years. Such ages would suggest that nothing like a curse came upon the universe at the time of man's fall, that there is no evidence whatsoever for a flood in the days of Noah, and that a variety of languages date back much farther than any reasonable date for the Tower of Babel. In short, if one accepts an earth billions of years old, one must reject the first 11 chapters of Genesis. And, if the events of Genesis 1–11 are wrong, then much of the remainder of Scripture is also wrong, for many passages refer back to these events.

If in fact the events of Genesis 1–11 are wrong, a more serious problem concerns what this implies about God himself. Scripture claims itself to be authored by the Holy Spirit. If Scripture is wrong, even in small part, then the Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of Truth. If that is true, how can we believe any part of Scripture? It would also mean that God himself is not a God of truth. Accepting an earth only thousands of years old allows one to accept God's claims about himself; accepting an earth billions of years old undermines the veracity of God's Word and the nature of God himself.

Another problem arises with the problem of evil. Very possibly the most serious philosophical challenge to Christianity is how

## The Case for a Young Earth

(continued from page 67)

to explain the existence of evil when a God exists who is perfectly good, knows all things, and has all power. Why does He not eliminate the evil completely? This question applies to both moral evil (for example, why are sadistic people allowed to torture other humans?) and what's called natural evil (for example, why do innocent animals have to suffer?). The traditional response is known as Augustine's free-will defense — that evil is a consequence of the choice of free-will beings (more particularly humans). This is fine if the Genesis account is accepted in a straightforward manner, for all moral evil is due to the choice of free-will beings and all natural evil is a consequence of the curse on creation following Adam's sin (in other words, due to the choice of a free-will being). If, however, the earth is considered to be billions of years old, then natural evil precedes even the creation of humans by hundreds of millions of years. And, since Satan was unfallen in the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28:12–15) and the Garden of Eden was not planted until after the creation of man (Genesis 2:7,8), angels did

If the earth is considered to be billions of years old, then natural evil precedes even the creation of humans by hundreds of millions of years.



not fall until after the creation of man either, so natural evil cannot be blamed on them. If the earth is billions of years old, Christianity lacks a satisfactory answer to the problem of natural evil.

The events of Genesis 1–11 are also ultimately foundational to all the doctrines of Christianity. The days of creation are the rationale for the Sabbath in Exodus 23:10–12. The details of the creation of Adam and Eve are the rationale for the headship of the man (1 Timothy 2:12–14). Man's creation as described in Genesis 1 and 2 is the basis for capital punishment, and capital punishment is introduced in Genesis 9:6. The reality of one man's (Adam's) disobedience bringing death into the

world is the basis for the reality of one man's (Jesus') obedience bringing life into the world (Romans 5:12–15). The curse upon the *entire* creation due to man's sin is the explanation for how it is that the *entire* creation will be relieved of the curse with the glorification of humans (Romans 8:17–23). The condemnation of everyone not on Noah's ark is a picture of the condemnation of everyone who does not believe

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in Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:37–39). In fact, I would suggest that if it were carefully worked out, it would become apparent that the theology of the remainder of Scripture — all of theology — is actually based on the truth of the events of the first few chapters of Genesis. It would be more accurate to say that God orchestrated the early history of creation (the events of Genesis 1–11) in such a way that He could build the rest of human history and the theology of the rest of Scripture upon it. I would suggest that *if a person is consistent*, acceptance of an earth that is billions of years old would lead to the systematic rejection of the truth of all of Scripture and the rejection of all the doctrines Christians hold dear. I firmly believe that only by believing that the earth is thousands of years old can a person consistently embrace the doctrines of Christianity.

### CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FOR YOUTH

I have not mentioned physical evidence for a young creation. It is not that such evidence is lacking. It is that the biblical account is a greater source of truth, so I go there first. There is evidence that the creation is only thousands of years old (rather than the traditionally understood billions). For example, there are too few supernovae remnants for our galaxy to be old. This portion of our galaxy has many fewer leftovers from the explosions of stars than would be expected if the galaxy is more than tens of thousands of years old. The inner solar system also has more dust than would be expected if it were even as old as 10,000 years. The oceans are less salty than would be expected if salt has been added to them at the present rate for even a hundred million years (let alone billions of years). Organisms seem to carry far fewer mutations than they should be carrying if they are part of a family tree millions of years old. Genetic throwbacks suggest DNA exists that should have been completely destroyed by mutations if a million generations had passed. Successful hybrids — for example, between camels and llamas — suggest that these organisms were separated on different continents only thousands of years ago rather than millions. The similarity of mitochondrial DNA among human females around the world and of Y-chromosome DNA among human males around the world suggest that all humans are descendant from one male-female pair only thousands of years ago, not millions.

Besides the physical evidence for youth, there is also sufficient reason to question the interpretation of the evidence for old age. In the case of radiometric dating, for example, different methods applied to the same rock give different ages. Although those ages are still all very old (millions and billions of years), the fact different methods give different ages — and do so consistently — suggests that we need a new method of interpreting the radiometric evidence.

### CONCLUSION

Scientists have gathered together a lot of evidence for an old

creation. In all honesty, for most of those evidences no one has yet provided an explanation for them in terms of a young creation. Yet, since the evidence of the physical world cannot interpret itself, but must be interpreted by humans, I choose to accept the youth of creation even if I can't yet understand all that evidence.

As a Christian, and as a scientist interested in understanding fossils, I turn first to the most reliable source of information — the eyewitness account of the all-truthful creator God. That account very clearly indicates that creation is young — only thousands of years old. When I stand before God, I cannot see myself explaining how I ignored His Word to accept the claims of man. And there I must stand. ■



**KURT P. WISE, Ph.D.**, is professor of science and theology and director of the Center for Theology and Science at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Wise is the author of *Faith, Form, and Time: What the Bible Teaches and Science Confirms About Creation and the Age of the Universe* (Broadman & Holman, 2002).

For more information on *Faith, Form, and Time: What the Bible Teaches and Science Confirms About Creation and the Age of the Universe*, go to [ej.ag.org/201204faithformtime](http://ej.ag.org/201204faithformtime) or click here.







# The Case for Day-Age Creation

By **Hugh Ross**

**N**

o one approaches the Bible completely free of bias.

Mine was a secularist's assumption that this book, like other texts considered "sacred," would be easy to dismiss as a culturally important yet humanly crafted

document. I did not disbelieve in a Being beyond the universe. I had studied enough to see growing evidence for the universe's transcendent beginning and, thus, the reality of a transcendent Beginner. I felt no compelling need, however, to find the Bible either true or false.

Some may consider my early attraction to astronomy as a bias, but I see no basis for discounting a researcher's truth filters — such as the rules of logic and evidence — as if they are inappropriate study tools. So this is where I started. I could not have imagined where my inquiry would lead.

From where I stand today, with full confidence in the truth of Scripture and high regard for the prolific scientific enterprise that sprang from widespread access to the Bible, I cannot help but wonder if something other than exegetical difficulties is fueling the creation controversy. The push to choose *either* a high view of the Bible *or* a high view of nature's record seems to come from a sense of vulnerability — an apprehension that discoverable facts might somehow, someday clash irreconcilably with biblical theology. And then what? I simply do not see that danger as real. God's constancy and consistency of character, observed in both Scripture and nature, takes it away.

In this author's view, belief in an old earth and in days as "ages" is perfectly consistent with belief that God created in 6 literal days.

## The Case for Day-Age Creation

(continued from page 71)

Before summarizing the basis for my day-age position, as set forth in *The Genesis Debate, A Matter of Days, More Than a Theory*, and other books and articles, I focus attention on some concerns that repeatedly interfere with the interpretive process. They arise with such frequency and emotional intensity that we cannot ignore them.

### TWO-BOOKS DOCTRINE

Many Christians seem to have forgotten one of Christendom's historic declarations of faith — the Belgic Confession. This document affirms that God has conveyed His truth in "two books," one of words, the other of works. Both the Bible and features of nature "speak" to us of God — His glory, power, righteousness, wisdom, love, and more. The difference is that verbal communication is uniquely authoritative, propositional, and specific in ways that nonverbal expression cannot be.

The authority of words, however, in no way diminishes, as some suggest, the reliability of God's revelation through what He "spoke" into existence. Both forms of His expression require study and interpretation. Understanding is not always immediate and precise. Even in verbally conveying the story of Jesus' earthly life and teachings, we have four separate accounts to aid our comprehension. Properly understood, God's Word (Scripture) and God's world (nature) — as two revelations (one verbal, one physical) from the same God — cannot contradict each other — any more than Matthew can contradict Mark, Luke, or John. Truth is consistent, internally and externally.

### A QUESTION OF LITERAL LANGUAGE

Typically, some describe the 24-hour "day" view as the literal reading of Genesis 1 and alternate readings as nonliteral. Two considerations come to bear on this issue. First and foremost, "age" or "era" (a long but definite time span) is one of the literal meanings of the Hebrew word translated "day" in Genesis 1 and 2 and elsewhere in the Bible. Sometimes biblical writers used the word for all or part of the daylight hours, sometimes for a calendar day, and sometimes for a long but finite period.

Given that biblical Hebrew contains a mere 3,100 words (apart from names), compared to English with a word count in the millions, it is no wonder that most Hebrew words carry *multiple literal* usages. While English offers many words to denote an extended time period, biblical Hebrew provides only *yôm*. The word *olam* came to mean "epoch" in Modern

Hebrew, but in biblical times its usage was restricted to indefinite time, either past or future. Belief in an old earth and in days as "ages" is perfectly consistent with belief that God created in six *literal* days.

### THE EVOLUTION ISSUE

Inappropriate claims about the meaning of "day" have increased their grip from a popular but entirely false connection between earth's measured age and natural-process evolution. Age simply does not equate with evolution. The problem here is that young-earth creationists assign more efficiency to these change processes than any evolutionary biologist would. When they teach that carnivorous activity, which they deem evil, did not exist until after Adam sinned, their view demands that meat-eating creatures rapidly evolved from plant eaters by natural processes alone. Such rapid change also presumably explains how the several million land-dwelling species on earth today evolved from a few thousand animal pairs aboard Noah's ark.

This belief in the super-efficiency of biological change sheds light on the importance of the "day" question. If natural evolutionary processes work as rapidly and effectively as the young-earth view requires, a million- or billion-year-old earth would seem to rule out the need for God's involvement in creation, a doctrine many of us seek to defend.

Ironically, this confidence in rapid change contradicts three independent sets of data, some findings that seriously disturb neo-Darwinists: 1) evidence that life arose in a geologic instant in the absence of a prebiotic soup, 2) calculations by Francisco Ayala, Brandon Carter, John Barrow, and Frank Tipler demonstrating impossible odds against the human species' (or its equivalent's) emergence from a single-celled organism in less than 5 billion years via natural processes alone (1 in  $10^{24,000,000}$  at best), and 3) long-term evolution experiments showing that natural processes cannot account for the hundreds of repeated complex "evolutionary outcomes" observed in nature.

As I read Genesis 1, God created different kinds of animals to reproduce after their own kind. The Hebrew noun translated "kind" is *min*. Both the calendar-day interpretation and the theistic evolution views require that we use *min* broadly enough to include an entire family or order of species. And yet in Leviticus 11:16–18 and Deuteronomy 14:15–17, Moses referred to the horned owl, screech owl, little owl, great owl, desert owl, and white owl individually as distinct *min*. Deuteronomy 14:12–18 lists the red kite, black kite, vulture, and black vulture as separate *min*. Leviticus 11:22 calls the locust, katydid, cricket, and grasshopper separate *min*. The Bible, thus, appears to limit natural-process evolution to a level no higher than the species/genus level.

### DEATH (AND DECAY) BEFORE ADAM AND EVE

Of all the concerns about how to interpret the biblical creation accounts, the issue of death and decay stirs up the most

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intense emotion and debate. The idea that we can somehow harmonize millions of generations of plant and animal death with God's perfect love and with His self-declared "very good" creation seems impossible. Death, as the ultimate enemy and consequence of sin, could not have been part of God's creation until the moment when Adam and Eve rebelled, an act that must have altered *everything*.

People most often cite Romans 5:12 to support this conclusion. This verse says that Adam's sin introduced death, but it also includes some significant qualifiers. Twice the passage specifies the kind of death Adam initiated — spiritual death. It says "death through sin" came to all mankind, not to "all life." Certainly human sin impacted all life. God "cursed" the ground because of human sin, and relational brokenness horribly amplified physical pain.

In truth, God provided for humanity's quality of life and civilization through death. Multiple generations of plant and animal death enriched earth with vast biodeposits, e.g., top soil, coal, oil, gas, limestone, marble, and concentrated metal ores. God bequeathed to us in this way the resources we need to fulfill the Great Commission, to spread the good news worldwide.

It is important to note that we can recognize plant and animal death, even carnivorous activity, as the Creator's plan to benefit plants and animals. Studies show carnivores play a vital role in strengthening herbivore herds. In the absence of carnivores, herbivores suffer a higher rate of starvation and disease. Carnivores also recycle important nutrients that enable larger herbivore herds to thrive.

Given its connection to physical death and decay (or entropy), some have also labeled them as a dire consequence of Adam's sin. From an objective perspective, however, the second law of thermodynamics (law of decay) serves a vital function throughout all creation and for all life. It

impacts everything from the way stars provide us with heat and light to the way we humans and other creatures process food.

Genesis 1 tells us that stars shone prior to Adam's fall into sin. In Genesis 2,3, we see that Adam and Eve digested food and worked before they sinned. Such activities depend on the constant operation of the second thermodynamic law. So it must have been in effect already — not for evil, but for good purposes.

Furthermore, any past changes in the physical laws and constants would show up in astronomers' observations over great

distances. Such discontinuities simply do not appear. The only way to explain their absence (if past changes did occur) would be to suggest that the observable universe is an illusion. To say that the created realm is illusory, however, would be to contradict biblical affirmations of its revelatory power.

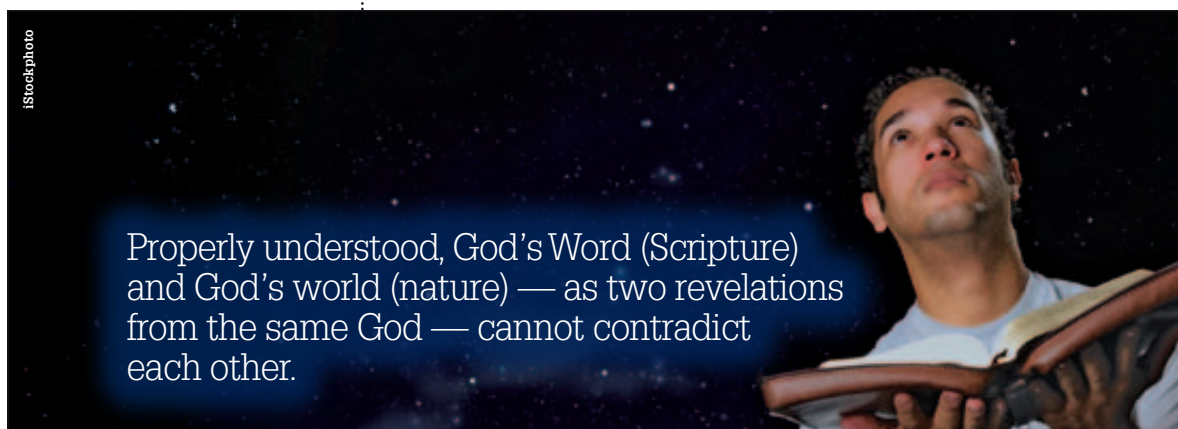
### NEW (OR NEXT) CREATION

In view of all God has provided for our benefit, we live in a "very good" creation. Yet the "new creation" described in Revelation as our future home exceeds the familiar creation in every respect. God's plan extends beyond restoring an earthly paradise. He has promised to bring us with Him into a vastly more wonderful realm.

The universe we now reside in perfectly suits God's purposes to make a way for our deliverance from sin's effects. In the new creation, which will become our home immediately after the Final Judgment, even the potential for sin and its presence will be gone. The suffering, sorrow, decay, death, and even the space, time, and physical features of our familiar universe will exist no more. Until then, the law of decay and death serves God's eternal purposes.

### ASSESSING INTERPRETATIONS

The Genesis 1 creation account is so strikingly compact and profound that for some readers it overshadows the abundant creation content found throughout many of the Bible's other books, not to mention the book of nature. These other



passages of Scripture (and facts of nature) are also true and, in some cases, even more specific in describing God's creative work.

Two questions can help evaluate a model's viability: 1) How comprehensively and accurately does it account for firmly established facts of nature? 2) How consistently does it fit all the relevant biblical material? For models that perform well in response to these questions, here are two more: 3) How successfully does this interpretation anticipate (or predict) the future trajectory of ongoing discovery? 4) Does it decrease or

## The Case for Day-Age Creation

(continued from page 73)

increase significant gaps in understanding?

These are questions by which my colleagues and I have developed and continue to refine our day-age interpretive model.

### OVERVIEW OF GENESIS 1

In the words of 19th-century German theologian Franz Delitzsch, “All attempts to harmonize our biblical story of the creation of the world with the results of natural science have been useless *and must always be so*” (emphasis mine). This statement reminds me of experts’ initial negative reaction to the idea of personal computers.

While evolutionists (theistic and nontheistic) and 24-hour-day creationists tend to agree with Delitzsch (and each other) on this point, I disagree. The more we learn about natural history and the more carefully theologians study the biblical text, the clearer the harmony becomes. Most of the apparent contradictions overlook one or more of the basic interpretive principles.

In describing a sequence of physical events, the Bible begins with a statement of the point of view, or reference frame, and an indication of initial conditions. Next comes a chronological account of what occurred. Then we see the final (changed) conditions. In a nutshell, this narrative pattern gave birth to the scientific method.

The context of Genesis 1:1 is the totality of the cosmos. In Genesis 1:2, however, the frame of reference, or point of view, shifts to earth’s surface. That same verse describes four initial conditions:

- Water covered the whole surface.
- It was dark on the whole surface.
- Earth was formless or disorganized.
- Earth was empty or void (of life).

With the viewpoint and initial conditions established, one can discern the events of the six creation days, which begin sometime after God’s creation of the physical universe:

1. transformation of earth’s atmosphere from opaque to translucent (allowing for the creation of simple life by the “brooding” Spirit).

2. formation of a stable, abundant water cycle.
3. formation of continents and oceans.
4. production of plants on the continents.
5. transformation of earth’s atmosphere from translucent to transparent, allowing earth’s life to see — for the first time — the sun, moon, and stars.
6. production of swarms of small sea animals (the Cambrian explosion).
7. creation of sea mammals and birds (“soulish” animals).
8. creation of three types of advanced land mammals (rodents, difficult-to-tame large mammals, and easy-to-tame large mammals).
9. creation of humans.

We can test this order of events in the light of other Scripture, such as Job 38:8,9 and by nature’s record. For example, plate tectonics studies show that most of the continental land-mass growth occurred when earth was less than half its current age, a time that seems to fit the context of the third creation day.

A 2009 paper published in *Nature* provided isotope evidence that plants were just as prolific on the continental landmasses for the 200 million years previous to the Cambrian and Avalon explosions as for the following 200 million years. In 2011, another *Nature* paper delivered fossil evidence establishing the abundance of plants on continents as far back as 600 million years before the Avalon and Cambrian explosions. In this case, the biblical narrative anticipated the research findings.

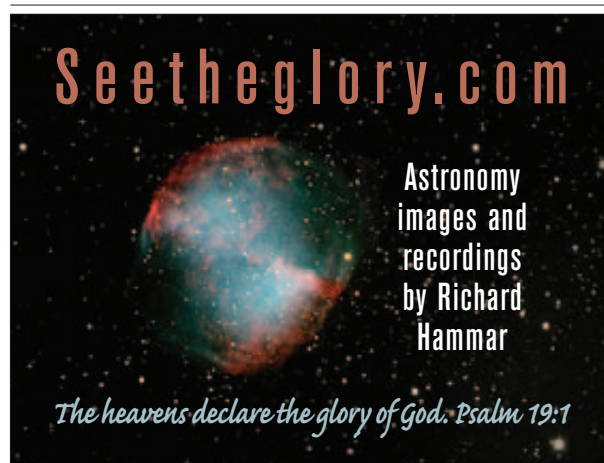
The text skips over creation of the first land mammals to zoom in on God’s creation of three subcategories of land mammals; namely, those animals that would prove most critical for launching human civilization, a theme picked up in more detail in Job 38,39.

Genesis 1 provides a great example of how the more we discover and establish from nature’s record and from other biblical passages, the more reasons we gain to trust in the complete accuracy of God’s Word. No nonbiblical creation story comes close to presenting a realistic and verifiable account.

### CLUES TO MEANING OF “DAY”

According to the Genesis account, God created both the human male and the human female at the end of the sixth day. Genesis 2 describes a series of events that occurred between the arrival of Adam and of Eve:

1. God placed Adam in the Garden after creating him.
2. Adam watched Eden’s trees grow.
3. Adam tended the Garden.
4. Adam named all the *nephesh* (soulish) animals.
5. Adam experienced his aloneness, his lack of a creature like himself.
6. Adam underwent “surgery.”
7. God formed Eve, using some tissue from Adam.
8. Adam recovered from surgery.
9. God introduced Adam to Eve.
10. Adam exclaimed, “*Happa’am*” (“at long last”)!





The implication concerning a substantial time passage seems unmistakable.

Another clue comes from a break in the pattern whereby Moses marks the beginning and ending of each creation period: "And there was evening, and there was morning — the [Xth] day." These words provide a certain cadence to the text. However, Moses does not attach to or associate such wording with the seventh creation day. In fact, several passages of Scripture tell us that the seventh day — God's "rest" or "cessation" from physical creation — continues into the future. (See Psalm 95:7–11; Hebrews 4:4–11; John 5:16–18, for example.) Romans 8 and Revelation 20,21 imply that the seventh day continues until God pronounces His judgment. At that moment, the Lord will usher redeemed humans into an entirely new creation.

The duration of the sixth and seventh days provides textual validation of the day-age interpretation. Some readers see Exodus 20:10,11 as an argument against this view. However, the emphasis in the Exodus passage lies on the pattern of one out of seven, not on the specific duration of "day." (See also Leviticus 25:3,4 where God says to work the land for 6 years, followed by a Sabbath of 1 year.) God uses the creation story as a model for humanity, a divine mandate to balance work's demands with time to worship not created things but the Creator himself.

If God's seventh day represents a long time, and if it implies that period in which God ceases from His work of preparing the world for humanity, it explains a major scientific enigma. It also provides a straightforward comparative analysis of the theistic evolution model alongside the day-age creation model. The day-age interpretation predicts a dramatic difference between seventh-day biological phenomena and phenomena occurring during the previous 6 days. Theistic evolution predicts little or no difference.

Long-term evolution experiments show a marked difference in the rate and degree of speciation. The extreme difference makes sense if God was directly involved in creating earth's life-forms and if God ceased that involvement when He made human beings.

Examples of other helpful tests could come from measuring (1) how rapidly and fully earth's life recovers from mass extinction events, and (2) how well and how quickly mass extinction and mass speciation events compensate for changes in the sun's luminosity, in earth's rotation rate, and in distribution of earth's continents. Research studies in cognitive neuroscience already are beginning to show that human brain function differs not just in degree but also in kind from that of the higher animals.

## CONCLUSION

Debate and discussion of creation's timing and processes will no doubt continue for years to come. I welcome the opportunity to participate in the dialogue. What is written here

represents only a tiny fraction of the research and reasoning on which my interpretive model rests (and continues to undergo revision). As all participants continue to study and to apply appropriate interpretive tests, we will more fully reveal God's truth and glory, and resolve this controversy. For the sake of our disciple-making endeavors, the sooner, the better. ■



**HUGH ROSS, Ph.D.**, president, Reasons to Believe, Glendora, California. Visit the RTB website at [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org).

For more information on Hugh Ross's book *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy*, go to [ej.ag.org/201204\\_matterofdays](http://ej.ag.org/201204_matterofdays) or click here.

For additional Reasons to Believe resources that address the day-age creation question, go to [ej.ag.org/201204\\_howlong\\_days](http://ej.ag.org/201204_howlong_days) or click here.



# The Case for an Old Earth

(The Literary Framework Interpretation)

By **Davis A. Young**

**he Assemblies of God** Statement of Fundamental Truths starts with this statement about the Bible: “The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct.”<sup>17</sup> While God’s Word is both inspired and infallible, human interpretations of it are neither. This is especially the case when it comes to using the Bible to make or buttress scientific claims. Here are a few examples.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In his fifth-century work, *The City of God*, church father Augustine maintained, in part on scriptural grounds, that people did not inhabit the opposite side of the earth. The Australian aborigines would have begged to differ.


In 1613, someone found a set of large fossil bones in the province of Dauphiné, France. Amid dispute over identity of the bones, some suggested that this creature, which scientists named *Theutobochus*, might be human. Nicolas Habcot suggested the bones belonged to one of the giants mentioned in Genesis 6:4. After rediscovery in the 20th century, scientists properly identified the misplaced bones as *Deinotherium*, a large extinct relative of the elephant.

In 1726, naturalist Johann J. Scheuchzer, reporting on a 6-foot-long fossilized skeleton that workers had recently discovered in a quarry at Öhningen, Switzerland, pronounced the remains to be those of an individual who perished in Noah’s flood. They dubbed this unfortunate victim *Homo diluvii testis* — the man witness of the flood. In 1809, however, Georges

Cuvier, known to science as the father of vertebrate anatomy and paleontology, carefully examined the fossil and demonstrated that it was in reality an extinct giant salamander.

In other situations, the entire Christian community held erroneous scientific beliefs on the basis of presumed biblical teaching. For example, in the 17th century, natural philosophers, such as the eminent John Ray, had difficulty accepting the belief that fossils were the remains of extinct creatures because of a widely held concept — the plenitude of creation. Scholars of the era, on the basis of Genesis 1:31, believed that God’s original creation was perfect. They reasoned it was not possible for any group of organisms created by God, e.g., the tiger or the robin, to pass out of existence. Extinction connoted imperfection. The idea of plenitude crumbled, however, when the reality of biological extinction became undeniable. The dodo became extinct in the mid-1700s. Fossils of the ground sloth, mastodon, and woolly mammoth, all known from discoveries in 18th-century America, clearly no longer existed. The last passenger pigeon died in 1914. We now know that by the 15th century the Maoris of New Zealand hunted





Is the 7-day  
creation account  
meant to be  
chronological  
or is it meant  
as a literary  
framework or  
symbolic structure  
designed to  
reinforce the  
purposefulness  
of God in creation?

## The Case for an Old Earth (The Literary Framework Interpretation)

(continued from page 77)

to extinction several species of moa, a bird considerably larger than an ostrich. Extinction is a reality.

Finally, the case that everyone knows about. Until the time of Copernicus (d. 1543) and Galileo (d. 1642), virtually everyone assumed the earth was a stationary body around which all the heavenly bodies revolved daily. Scripture seems to teach the immovability of the earth (Psalm 93:1; 96:10). Joshua 10:13 says the sun stood still during the battle in the valley of Aijalon. However, a growing body of physical evidence demonstrated that a mathematically and physically far simpler explanation of the astronomical observations entailed revolution of the earth and the other planets around the sun.

All these cases involved either an appeal to allegedly plain statements or an inference from Scripture to draw a scientific conclusion about the nature or behavior of an aspect of the created world. In every one of these cases, continued scientific investigation rendered the supposed biblical view to be ill founded. What I am driving at is this: The Christian community has a poor track record when it invokes the Bible as a basis for drawing scientific conclusions about the world. Over and over scientific investigations have shown the incorrectness of biblical interpretations employed in the service of science.

This poor track record persists. One prominent example concerns the age of the earth. A substantial percentage of Christians assume, if not insist, that the earth (and the cosmos) are only a few thousands of years old on the basis of their interpretation of Genesis 1 and of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. Some Christians claim that scientific evidence supports the young-earth position. The problem is that geological evidence accumulated since the mid-1700s to the present by tens of thousands of geologists overwhelmingly supports the view of an extremely ancient earth with a long, complex, dynamic history.

The geological community does not dispute the great age of the earth as if it had not yet decided the issue. It has. The scientific community has discovered strong evidence that the earth is about 4.5 billion years old and that the universe is about 13.7 billion years in age.<sup>2</sup> Findings of geology and astronomy force us to conclude that the commonly held view that the Bible teaches that

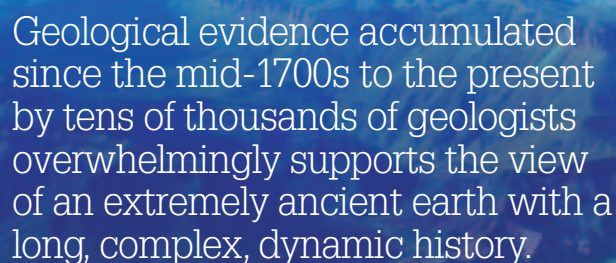
the earth is only a few thousand years old is incorrect.

It will not do to argue that hostile, atheistic unbelievers have collected the so-called evidence and that gullible Christians, eager to gain acceptance in the scientific community, have naively been taken in. That claim is both insulting to the generations of hundreds, if not thousands, of Christian geologists. It is also historically false

because Christians, such as Adam Sedgwick and William Buckland, were among those whose scientific contributions helped establish the view of the great antiquity of the earth. Today there are hundreds of Bible-believing Christian geologists (many of whom belong to the Affiliation of Christian Geologists). All but a few are totally convinced of the vast antiquity of the earth.

### GEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Let us look at why geologists think the earth is old. Geologists recognize three major categories of rocks: sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic.



Geological evidence accumulated since the mid-1700s to the present by tens of thousands of geologists overwhelmingly supports the view of an extremely ancient earth with a long, complex, dynamic history.

### Sedimentary rocks

Early in the 19th century when geology was in its infancy as a science, investigators primarily studied the layered sedimentary rocks, such as sandstone, shale, limestone, and coal — all deposited on the earth's surface, typically from water. The early geologists concluded that the earth is very old.

Sedimentary rocks — formed from vast accumulations of sand, silt, gravel, and lime — typically occur in stacks of layers that may be thousands of feet thick. For example, in the Appalachian Mountains of Pennsylvania, the thickness of the sedimentary rocks exceeds 40,000 feet. Sediment thickness in the Gulf Coast may exceed 60,000 feet. Sedimentary rocks bear evidence of formation in a wide variety of environments: river deltas, lakes, beaches, the deep ocean, shallow seas, desert basins, and glacially carved valleys.

Deposits of extremely thin layers of very fine-grained silt and clay are in stacks on lake bottoms. Cemented sand dunes or beach deposits formed sandstones composed mostly of quartz. Limestone commonly contains fossils indicative of shallow marine environments. Extremely fine-grained black shale likely accumulated on deep-sea bottoms. These stacks of sedimentary rock layers, therefore, contain abundant evidence for continual transitions in environments, strongly indicative of passage of a lot of time.

### Igneous rocks

Igneous rocks solidify from intensely hot molten rock called

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magma. Magma may cool very rapidly on the surface of the earth as lava, particularly if the lava flow is very thin. But gigantic volumes of coarse-grained igneous rock, such as granite, cool very slowly far beneath the surface. At the surface in the coastal mountains of British Columbia, the Sierra Nevada of California, the Andes Mountains, and elsewhere these so-called batholiths are now exposed. The crystallization time of batholiths took tens to hundreds of thousands of years. Geologists are able to calculate the crystallization time from temperature and other thermal properties — size, shape, and depth of intrusion of the magma in the batholith — and the



temperature and other thermal properties of the wall rocks into which the magma is injected.

### Metamorphic rocks

Because metamorphic rocks require high temperature and pressure they, too, formed far beneath the surface. Many metamorphic rocks were originally sedimentary rocks. Unique mineral compositions, preservation of typical sedimentary rock features, such as cross-bedding and the presence of fossils, are among the indicators of surface origin.

Experimental data on the stability of minerals in metamorphic rocks permit estimation of the temperatures and pressures attained by rocks. In some instances, metamorphic rocks reached temperatures above 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit and pressures that could only be generated 10s of miles below the surface. It requires an exceedingly long period of time for a few hundred cubic miles of rock to be buried 5 or 10 miles beneath the surface; for the rocks to heat up from surface temperature to a very high temperature; for the original minerals to react and recrystallize to new minerals; for a cause of uplift to become available; for the overlying rocks to be eroded away as the newly formed metamorphic rocks were uplifted back to the surface; and for the metamorphic rocks to cool to surface temperature as it rose.

### Geological example

The geology of almost any region on earth preserves a record

of an extremely complex history that had to take a long time. This is particularly the case in mountainous regions, such as the area around Salt Lake City, Utah.

Just east of Salt Lake City is the beautiful north-south trending Wasatch Range, which consists predominantly of a sequence of layered sedimentary rocks, such as sandstone, siltstone, mudstone, conglomerate, and limestone, tens of thousands of feet thick. These rocks are steeply tilted, typically downward toward the east. They contain evidence of deposition on tidal mud flats, in river floodplains, in shallow marine environments, and even at the margins of melting glaciers — indicative of slowly changing environmental conditions as the sediments were deposited. This thick sedimentary rock stack was deposited on a very irregular, more or less horizontal surface that separates the sedimentary rocks from a thick mass of underlying metamorphic rocks. Geologists call this surface an *unconformity*, that is, an ancient buried erosion surface — a fossil land surface. Before the sediment stack was ever deposited, the metamorphic rocks were uplifted to the surface as overlying material eroded away. Before that they had been buried and heated.

The sediment layers were deposited on that erosion surface, but now they are tilted toward the east. What caused that tilting? Modern-day earthquakes on the western boundary of the Wasatch Range indicate that the 150- to 200-mile-long Wasatch Fault Zone is still active. Movements on this fault zone are approximately vertical. The rocks east of the fault zone are rising, and the rocks west of the fault zone are subsiding relative to the east side. The movement along the Wasatch Fault Zone resulted in both elevation of the Wasatch Mountains and rotation of the large rock mass that composes the mountains. The documented vertical movement on the fault zone is several thousand feet. In essence, a series of perhaps thousands of earthquakes, large and small and acting over a long period of time, produced the Wasatch Range.

The stack of sedimentary rocks, however, was also affected prior to the time of uplift and faulting. They were affected by movement along more nearly horizontal thrust fault surfaces, along which rocks have shifted west to east as much as 40 miles, much like a carpet that has been shoved across the floor.

Also prior to the episode of uplift and tilting, several large pulses of magma intruded into the stack of sedimentary layers and through the thrust faults to form masses of granite. These magma bodies crystallized about 7 miles beneath the surface, but they are now exposed at the surface. It required hundreds to thousands of years for such intrusions of this size to crystallize at this depth and then cool to surface temperature as the 7-mile thickness of overlying rock eroded away during later

## The Case for an Old Earth (The Literary Framework Interpretation)

(continued from page 79)

elevation of the Wasatch Range.

West and south of the Wasatch Range is an enormous basin that contains the Great Salt Lake, Utah Lake, and Sevier Lake. These lakes are small remnants of a much larger lake, Lake Bonneville, that occupied approximately 20,000 square miles and was more than 1,000 feet deep at its maximum extent.

Around the Salt Lake City area one can clearly identify several sets of benches etched into the lower slopes of the hills and the Wasatch Range. These benches are the remnants of former shorelines of Lake Bonneville. West of Great Salt Lake is a thick deposit of salt that formed while Lake Bonneville experienced as many as 28 extensive episodes of evaporation and refilling.

To summarize, the aspects of the history of the Salt Lake City area began with metamorphism. It was followed by uplift and erosion to produce a land surface on which a thick pile of sediments was deposited in a succession of changing environments ranging from shallow marine to river to glacial. The loose sediments cemented to form sedimentary rocks, and later deformed and displaced horizontally along thrust faults. Several intrusions of magma crystallized to granite. Still later, movements on the Wasatch Fault Zone caused tilting and rotation of the Wasatch Mountains block. Lake Bonneville was then formed and persisted for several thousands of years during the Ice Age. Erosion and uplift of the Wasatch Mountains continue.

The information provided here gives a relative order of geologic events and a sense of the passage of “a lot of time.” But how much time? Can we determine the exact ages of rocks and fossils? Yes.

### DETERMINING AGE

We can determine the ages of items that are only a few thousands of years by a range of methods, including: tree ring, thermoluminescence, obsidian hydration, archaeomagnetic, amino acid racemization dating, varve counting, and other methods. For most very old geological materials, geologists turn to an impressive arsenal — radiometric dating. Geologists apply different radiometric methods to different rock types that they suspect of falling into a particular age range.

We can now date the times of crystallization of magma, the solidification of a lava flow, the recrystallization of a metamorphic rock, the formation of some sandstones from loose sediment, the disruption of the parent body of a meteorite, the length of exposure of a surface rock to erosion, the formation of cave deposits, the formation of glacial ice layers, and much

While God's Word is both inspired and infallible, human interpretations of it are neither.



more. There are also radiometric methods for determining the age of the earth, the moon, and meteorites. They all generally come out around 4.5 billion years. Meteorite ages are remarkably consistent at 4.5 billion years. The oldest known rocks on earth are close to 4.4 billion years.

The radiometric methods involve the decay of radioactive forms (called isotopes) of chemical elements, such as uranium, potassium, samarium, rubidium, and others, into different elements, such as lead, argon, neodymium, and strontium. Scientists have accurately measured the decay rates of radioactive isotopes. Numerous experimental studies have demonstrated that changes in temperature, pressure, electrical fields, magnetic fields, or the minerals in which the radioactive elements occur do not significantly affect the decay rates. Scientists thoroughly understand the physics and mathematics of radiometric dating, and the geologic conditions affecting the

occurrence of the radioactive elements and their decay products.<sup>3</sup> Geologists have great confidence in the results of these well-tested methods.

### BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

What should Christians make of the discovery that their earthly home is 4.5 billion years old? Is there a conflict between geology and Genesis 1 and biblical genealogies? If the Bible is infallible, must we reject the findings of science? Not at all. Rather than view, with suspicion, the virtual consensus among geologists about the vast age of the earth, Christians need to think of science as a gift from God that provides a tool to help us interpret the Bible more properly. Science may not yield a positive interpretation of a biblical passage, but it may help to filter out incorrect interpretations. The scientific knowledge that the earth is billions of years old suggests that the traditional, literal, 6 24-hour day view of creation, a few thousand years ago, is unlikely to be correct. This conclusion should stimulate biblical scholars to search for a more satisfactory interpretation.

Without being dogmatic, I offer a few suggestions. The Old Testament writers lived in a culture far different from the one in which we live. The ancient Israelites knew little about the size, shape, or age of the earth. They did not know that the earth is a globe. They did not know the distances to stars. Their picture of the world was quite different from ours and included a flat earth around which the sun and stars revolved daily.

We have learned from archeology that ancient authors used distinctive literary conventions and symbols. If we are to understand Genesis 1 properly, we must understand the ancient Near Eastern culture of those to whom the writers



addressed. The pagan, polytheistic cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan surrounded and affected the Israelites of old. Israel needed to understand that the so-called gods of the surrounding pagans had no power and that nature had no power to generate “gods.” Israel’s God was the sole, absolute Creator of heaven and earth. Genesis 1 is not merely the story of creation but also a broadside against the pagan deities. The heathen gods included trees, stars, rivers, sun, moon, birds, and mammals. These things are not in the least divine — they are creatures, pure and simple, called into being effortlessly at the verbal behest of the all-powerful God.

Readers of Genesis 1 also need to keep in mind that people in the ancient Near East commonly used the number seven, not simply as a literal number, but as a symbol for completeness. Ancient Near Eastern epic literature, from the Gilgamesh Epic in Mesopotamia to the Ugaritic Poem of Baal and Anath, Legend of King Keret, and Tale of Aqhat is awash in the symbolic use of the number seven, as is the Bible, particularly Revelation. Moreover, people in the Ancient Near East widely used the six plus one, 7-day structure of Genesis 1 as a literary convention for a completed action with a climax on the “seventh day.” The first 6 days (of creation) are referred to in Hebrew without use of the definite article as day one (or first), day second, day third, day fourth, day fifth, day sixth. They refer to the climactic day of rest as “the day the seventh.” This pattern is very similar to that employed in the literature noted above. The point of the literary convention is to highlight a completed, finished event, including a dramatic climax, and not to insist on creation of the world in a literal 144 hours.

Widespread use of numerology and other structural features in Genesis 1 suggests a dramatic, artistic, topical intent by the author. The first 3 days of creation stand in symmetrical relation to the last 3 days. Days 1 and 2 each record one creative event marked by “And God said, ‘Let. ...’”: light (day 1) and firmament (KJV, day 2). On day 3 there are two creative events: appearance of land from sea (day 3a) and creation of plants (day 3b). Days 4 and 5 each record one creative event: heavenly bodies (day 4) and birds and fish (day 5). On day 6, the parallel of day 3, there are again two creative events: land animals (day 6a) and man (day 6b). Scholars have noted for centuries the similarity of content of these two sets of days. Days 1 and 4 focus on light and light-bearers. Days 2 and 5 focus on the firmament and water, whereas day 5 introduces birds under the firmament and fish in the water. Day 3 mentions creation of land and plants, and day 6 mentions animals of the land and the plants as food for the animals and man.<sup>4</sup>

In summary, Genesis 1 teaches us about the Creator and His work in artistic terms, but does not intend to give us a condensed version of geological history or information about the age of the earth. The Creator has endowed us with the curiosity and skill to figure that out on our own. Moses intended that the divine revelation of Genesis 1 would introduce us to our Creator God. ■



**DAVIS A. YOUNG, Ph.D.**, professor of geology, emeritus, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan

For more information on *The Bible, Rocks and Time: Geological Evidence for the Age of the Earth* by Davis A. Young and Ralph F. Stearley, go to [ej.ag.org/201204biblerockstime](http://ej.ag.org/201204biblerockstime) or click here.

#### Notes

1. Assemblies Of God Statement Of Fundamental Truths [http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement\\_of\\_Fundamental\\_Truths/sft\\_full.cfm#1](http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/sft_full.cfm#1).
2. For a historical summary of some of the geological evidence that led to the acceptance of an extremely old earth, see D.A. Young and R.F. Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2008).
3. For more detailed information on radiometric dating with several examples, see chapters 14, 15 in Young and Stearley, *The Bible, Rocks and Time*. See also D.A. Young, 2006, “How Old Is It? How Do We Know: Part One,” in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* v. 58: 259–65.
4. For further reading, see John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2009) and John H. Stek, “What Says the Scripture?” in *Portraits of Creation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 203–65.



# Response to Davis A. Young and Hugh Ross

By Kurt P. Wise

**D**r. Davis Young seems to follow a long tradition popularized by Galileo, formalized by the Royal Society of London, and defended by most believers in the sciences today. Young implies that the error young-earthers make is attempting to draw any scientific conclusions at all from Scripture. He justifies this position by claiming Christians have a poor track record in that regard. Consistently, Young offers a few suggestions for understanding the creation account (scientific naivety of the writers of Scripture; polemic and artistic purposes for Genesis; use of literary conventions and numerology) — each of which would unlink the Genesis account from what it seems to be saying.

Advocates of Young's position commonly suggest that the *only* function of Scripture is spiritual instruction. First, unlike the historical examples Young provides, the young-earth position is neither a fleeting position, nor is it based on a few verses of Scripture. Jews and Christians held it almost universally until the middle of the 18th century, and it is based most explicitly on 11 chapters of the Book of Genesis, and implicitly on much more.

Second, the fact humans have derived nontruths from Scripture does not in any way imply that the Scripture lacks truth. Third, the fact there is an underlying polemic purpose in Genesis and that it was composed in an artistic and beautiful way does not in any way deny the straightforward understanding of the text.

Fourth, although written by the hand of man, the Holy Spirit of truth authored Scripture. It matters not how scientifically ignorant the writers of Scripture were; they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write truth, not error. If the numbers of the text are important, even though they are a minority of the text, and if the symmetry of the text is important, even though it is neither perfect nor a majority of the text, then how much more important is the historical sequence of events related in the text, which actually does make up most of the text.

Holy Spirit-inspired historical narrative must be true history. This would suggest that Scripture intends to convey actual truth about the physical world and can be relied on as a source of that truth.

It matters not how scientifically ignorant the writers of Scripture were; they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write truth, not error.

In contrast to Young, Dr. Hugh Ross believes that scientific information *can* be derived from Scripture. Ross follows a more recent interpretive tradition that suggests that interpreting the days of Genesis as long periods of time will bring the biblical account into accord with science. This interpretation was popular in the early history of geology, but is uncommon now.

This interpretation lost popularity among scientists because as the field of geology developed, no one could maintain the correspondence between the accounts. Ross's model, for example, calls for an initially opaque atmosphere that becomes transparent after the origin of plants. He also claims that plants arose before sea creatures. Geological models, in contrast, are not consistent with such an atmosphere, and fossils of the kinds of plants mentioned on the third day of creation in no way predate the oldest fossils of sea creatures.

The claim that the days of creation are long periods of time has also fallen on disfavor among biblical scholars. Although it is true that the Hebrew word translated "day" has a wide semantic range, the meaning of the word in a particular passage is determined by context, just as in English for the same word. When the word is used in a construct relationship (such as "day of the Lord"), it can mean long periods of time. Such a construct relationship is *not* found in the creation account. The context of the word in Genesis 1 is consistent with the *definition* of the word given in that chapter (a light/dark cycle) *and* the use of the word as it describes the human work week in Exodus 20:11.

Numerous evidences indicate that the writer of Genesis 1 intended "day" to refer to the 24-hour day familiar to humans. Other biblical errors in Ross's article would include organisms reproducing "after their kind" (the Bible nowhere makes that claim), the present creation being "very good" (God made this assessment before the Fall, nowhere after the Fall), and the seventh day still ongoing (the seventh day is not equal to God's rest).

Ross also mischaracterizes the young-age creation model. Although young-age creationists do believe that organisms have changed rapidly, to my knowledge none of them believe that this happened "by natural processes alone" (as in the case of naturalistic evolution). Most of us believe that God *especially designed* that ability — supernaturally placing it in organisms, allowing them to change rapidly. Also, although some have made the claim in the past, modern young-age creationists do not believe the second law of thermodynamics began at the Fall.

The old-earth position is *not* derived from Scripture. It is derived from science and used to distort the interpretation of the Bible. A proper exegesis of Scripture leads to a young-earth position.

— KURT P. WISE, Ph.D.



# Response to Kurt P. Wise and Davis A. Young

By **Hugh Ross**

**Kurt Wise, Davis Young, and I agree** on at least one key creation issue: Genesis 1 introduces readers to our Creator God. We also consider the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. From here our views diverge somewhat.

Given the strength of the geological evidence and our conviction about biblical truth, neither Young nor I see any basis for denying that the Earth is about 4.57 billion years old. At the same time, I see no compelling reason to separate artistic presentation of truth

from factual revelation. On that point, we clearly differ.

Given the strength of exegetical evidence, neither Wise nor I see any basis for denying that Genesis 1–11 provides a literal, historical, and chronological account of natural history. At the same time, we clearly differ in our interpretive approach to science and Scripture.

While God was, indeed, a direct witness to creation's history, astronomers are witnesses, too. Because of light travel time, we

## While God was a direct witness to creation's history, astronomers are witnesses, too.

can directly observe the past — including the moment when light first separated from darkness. Astronomers can see how God was shaping the universe when it was only  $10^{-34}$  seconds old. So the physical world is far from “mute” (see Psalm 19).

If the universe were thousands rather than billions of years old, astronomers' measurements would say so. Instead, they repeatedly and objectively establish an age of 13.76 billion years, with minor adjustments to come as measuring capability advances. To charge this community of scientists (which includes many believers) with collective bias or deception defies logic. Even at 13 or more billion years of age, the cosmos allows vastly insufficient time for natural processes to account for life's existence.

Linguists and Old Testament scholars, including some of the greatest evangelical theologians of our time, have thoroughly considered and debated Wise's arguments for six consecutive 24-hour days based on Hebrew words, grammar, and usage. The lack of consensus among the most ardent spokespersons for biblical inerrancy is significant. With *many* scholars acknowledging “long days” as a viable, *literal* translation of the Hebrew word for *day* — even in conjunction with numbers and markers such as “evening and morning” — no warrant exists for elevating any particular interpretation to the level of Scripture itself.

When Mark and Matthew refer to Adam and Eve's creation as “from the beginning” and Luke associates Abel's death with

“the foundation of the world,” the context clarifies the time frame. Mark and Matthew refer to the beginning of humans and marriage. Similarly, the “world” in Luke implies the world of humanity, not the entire universe or planet.

Genesis 3:17 says, “Cursed is the ground because of you.” According to Jeremiah 33:25, physical laws did not change at the fall of Adam. Something else changed. Human sin meant inevitable disasters due to mismanagement. The timing of Satan's fall is not the issue here.

The designation of earthquakes, hurricanes, wildfires, and other natural phenomena as curse-initiated “evils” represents a distortion of reality. All these phenomena occur at levels we now recognize to be fine-tuned for earth's habitability and for humanity's benefit. Sadly, human shortsightedness and sinful behavior have amplified the destructiveness of such events.

The supernova remnants (SNRs) Wise mentions actually affirm an old, not young, universe. When a supernova explodes, it throws off an expanding shell, the diameter of which divided by its expansion velocity indicates its age. The bigger the shell (and the more dispersed its material), the more difficult to distinguish it from remnants of earlier supernovae and ionized hydrogen clouds.

Only in regions where stars are much less dense than in the Milky Way's core or disk can we distinguish ancient SNRs from these background remnants. SNR GSH 138-01-94, seen in our galaxy's far outer edge, has a measured age of 4.3 million years. Astronomer Rosa Williams has discovered several similarly ancient SNRs in the Magellanic Clouds.

As for a supposed shortage of solar system dust, astronomers now see definitive evidence that the Kuiper Belt (beyond Neptune's orbit) and the much larger Oort Cloud (far beyond that) contain thousands more asteroids and comets than the “main” asteroid belt. The dust-generating mechanisms there easily explain the measured quantity of inner solar system dust.

While an abundance of data confirm the widely accepted figures for the age of the universe and earth, DNA evidence points to a relatively recent origin of our own species, made “in the image of God” (as distinct from earlier primate species). As research continues, we anticipate it will affirm the descent of all humanity from just two people who lived only several tens of thousands of years ago, just as the Bible indicates.

On a more personal note, I believe my own life provides just one among countless examples to refute a false claim that acceptance of earth's measured age leads to “rejection of the truth of all Scripture” and “of all the doctrines Christians hold dear.” The truthfulness of Scripture and of the historic Christian doctrines remains at the core of my walk with Christ and my decades of evangelistic and equipping ministry.

— **HUGH ROSS, Ph.D.**

# Response to Kurt P. Wise and Hugh Ross

By **Davis A. Young**

**Kurt P. Wise eloquently summarized** the case for literal interpretation of Genesis 1–11 and belief in a young earth. He built his case primarily on biblical grounds, downplaying the scientific aspects and conceding that scientists have accumulated “a lot of evidence for an old creation,” and that young-earth creationists have not yet been able to provide a young-earth explanation for most of that evidence. Many young-earth advocates acknowledge that scientific evidence favors an old-earth position.

There is good reason for such a concession. Since the late 18th century, thousands of first-rate geologists and astronomers, including many Christians, have accumulated an ever-increasing abundance of diverse lines of evidence for an ancient earth. By now, the scientific case for millions to billions of years of earth and cosmic history is incontrovertible. Geologists are in infinitely greater agreement about the age of the earth than biblical scholars are about the interpretation of Genesis 1.

The alleged scientific evidence for a young earth advanced by Wise is not persuasive. Scientists determine the salt content of the ocean not only by entry of dissolved ions from river water but also by removal of ions during accumulation of extensive salt deposits. Radiometric dating evidence needs no new interpretation because of discordant results. Discordance of dates obtained by different methods occurs because geologists are dating different geologic events or because of different geochemical properties of the various radioactive elements being used for dating. Geologic events are much more complex than controlled laboratory experiments. Despite the existence of occasional minor discordances, virtually all rock samples yield dates in the range of hundreds of thousands to billions of years.

A major problem confronting adherents of the young-earth view is: “Why do the findings of geology and astronomy differ so drastically from what the literal interpretation of Genesis suggests?” After all, our Creator placed the evidence in the rocks and stars, and all of His works are in complete harmony. We do have a God-breathed, infallible Bible, but we do not have infallible biblical interpreters. Scientific discoveries suggest that we should look more critically at the literal interpretation. For example, the young-earth view, which includes the notion of “no death before the fall” neglects other biblical evidence, such as the final chapters of Job, which treat predation by lions and birds of prey, crushing of ostrich eggs, and the terrifying leviathan as a normal part of creation. Genesis 1:21 mentions creation of the *tannanim* — sea monsters.

Unfortunately, Wise’s literal interpretation and Ross’s day-age interpretation both neglect the valuable archaeological findings pertaining to the culture and literature of the ancient Near East. Without that evidence, contemporary interpreters tend to read Genesis 1–11 in light of modern ideas. For example, Wise said that Genesis suggests a global flood that destroyed all the land animals on the planet. But the first readers of Genesis thought of the earth as flat, not a “globe” or a “planet.” Ross talked about clearing of the atmosphere on day 2 of Genesis 1, but ancient readers understood the “firmament” to be a solid dome separating the waters above from the waters beneath. Several prominent writers of the Early Church, such as Basil, Ambrose, and Augustine believed there was a crystalline solid dome above.

The 6-plus-1-day structure of Genesis 1 closely resembles examples in second-millennium epic Ugaritic and Babylonian literature where writers typically used this as a literary convention. Writers repeatedly used the number seven as a symbol for completeness and perfection in ancient literature, including the Bible. We do ourselves a disservice by neglecting the wealth of archaeological evidence from the ancient Near Eastern world.

**We do have a God-breathed, infallible Bible, but we do not have infallible biblical interpreters.**

Finally, I am sympathetic to the day-age interpretation advocated by Ross. I formerly adopted that position and have frequently invoked the claims about the great length of day 7 and the improbability that the events of day 6 were compressed into 24 hours. Although these claims call into question the 24-hour-day view, they do not necessarily imply the correctness of the day-age interpretation. Parallels drawn by day-age proponents between the events of the 6 days and geological history are generally strained and import ideas into the text things that are not there. Nor are the parallels as persuasive as advocates believe. Fish appear in the fossil record far earlier than do the earliest birds, for example. In addition, the description of day 4 suggests that God made the heavenly bodies on that day. We read improved visibility owing to transformation of the atmosphere into the text.

A closer look at ancient Near Eastern parallels gives us a window into how the ancient Israelites might have understood the biblical text. And closer attention to established scientific knowledge should help filter out flawed textual interpretations.

— **DAVIS A. YOUNG, Ph.D.**



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# Preparing **Young People** for a Life of Faith

By **Michael Tenneson**

**A**bout 30 percent of young people who grow up with a Christian background remain committed to their Christian faith through their 20s.<sup>1</sup>

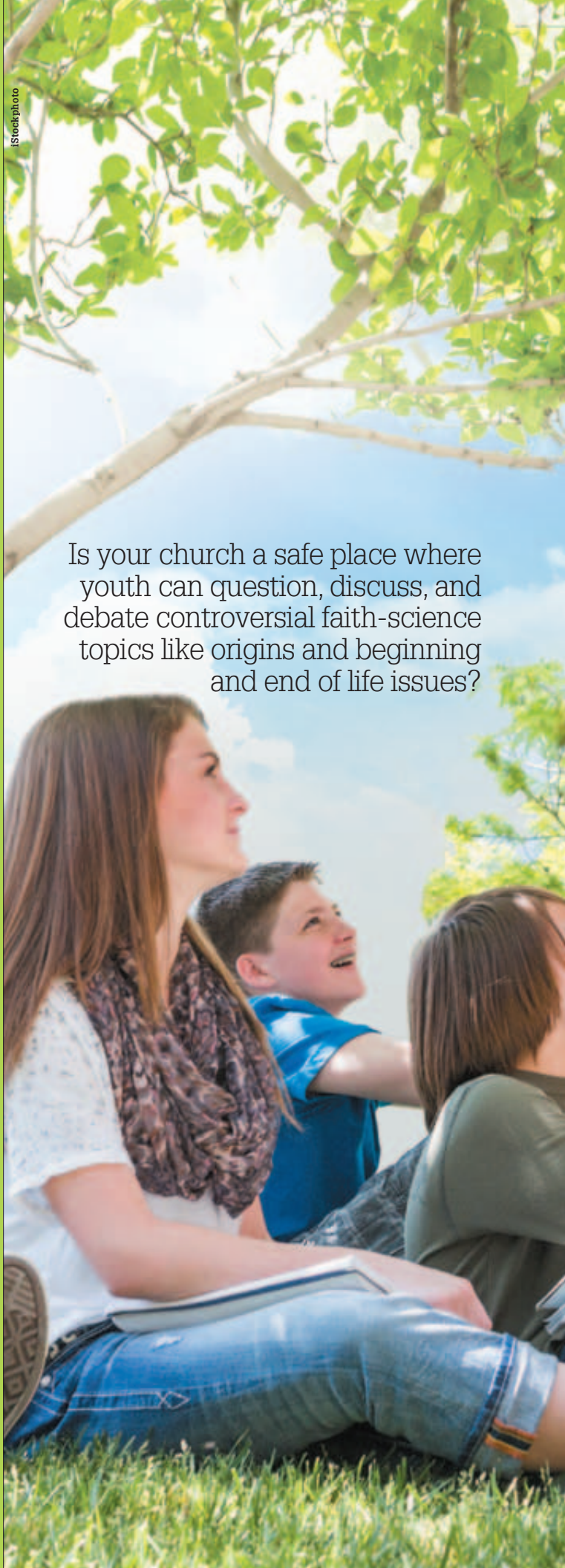
David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, believes this low per-

centage is due in

part to a failure of churches to teach young people to integrate their calling with faith and culture. He says less than 20 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds "have any idea how the Bible ought to inform their scholastic and professional interests."<sup>2</sup>

Although some suggest that college experiences cause church dropout, this does not seem to be the case.

Is your church a safe place where youth can question, discuss, and debate controversial faith-science topics like origins and beginning and end of life issues?









## Preparing Young People for a Life of Faith

(continued from page 87)

Rather, “the university setting does not usually *cause* the disconnect. It exposes the shallow-faith problem of many young disciples.”

The Barna Group found six themes that help explain the ongoing youth-church disconnect: 1) churches seem over-protective, 2) youth have had shallow spiritual experiences, 3) churches come across as antagonistic to science, 4) experiences of young people related to sexuality are judgmental and simplistic, 5) youth wrestle with the exclusive nature of Christianity, and 6) the church feels unfriendly to those who doubt.<sup>4</sup> Some critics of the Barna Group’s conclusions quibble with the details. The majority of youth workers, however, agree that an alarming number of young people are distancing themselves from Christianity.

What is the solution to this disturbing trend? No single cure exists for the array of ailments outlined above. For young people to deepen their faith walk, churches must provide venues for supernatural encounters with God — especially including understanding and receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Contemporary apologetics experts like Sean McDowell and Lee Strobel posit that churches must incorporate both empirical and relational approaches to prepare young Christians for a life of faith beyond the youth group. Young people must have significant personal connections with Christian peers and mentors as they transition from the sheltered youth group environment to the real world. They must also be encouraged to adopt evidence-based approaches to examine the tenets of their faith.<sup>5</sup> A strong mentoring relationship can provide the security needed for a young person to venture into the uncharted territory of critical examination of beliefs.

Based on my experience as a parent and science professor in this demographic group, I agree. Our youth are neither brand loyal nor are they interested in arguments from tradition or authority. They do not find convincing “this is the way we have always done it,” or “This is what our pastor believes.” Christian educators and pastors cannot expect our young constituents to accept what we teach out of loyalty or respect. We must provide them with persuasive evidence in a safe and

nurturing environment.

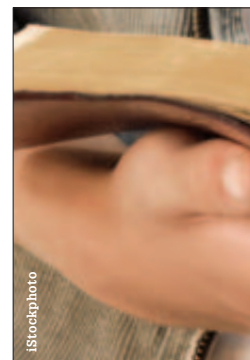
I do not know if I learned more about apologetics from my children or my college students. I have been both a parent and a professor for about 25 years. My oldest son is strong-willed, creative, and bright. He never accepted “Because I told you so” as an explanation for why we need to believe or do things a particular way. His stubborn insistence on sensible justifications forced

me to come up with rational, spiritually grounded supporting points for my faith claims. This journey has been transformative for me. Whereas my early theological instruction involved unquestioned obedience to the authoritative teaching of church leaders and the Scriptures, my son’s resistance to this approach helped me dig deeper and re-examine my own beliefs from an evidentiary perspective. As a result, my faith and confidence in my conclusions are more robust.

Unfortunately, we base some of what we teach as Christian ethos on a superficial reading of the Bible viewed through the foggy lenses of our own biases and presuppositions. Without question, the plain truths of Scripture have universal application to all people at all times. But we must read some biblical teachings through the contextual lens of appropriate hermeneutics to grasp what God was communicating to the original readers. Some teachings of Scripture are culturally bound. Appropriate dress, music, language, and other social conventions vary greatly among cultures. My son continues to chafe under a variety of cultural norms masquerading as “biblical truths.” Even during his rebellious years, he never questioned God’s existence. When he was ready to surrender control of his life to God, he already had a solid fundamental understanding of the Christian life. He was able to hold on to the truth of God’s existence and love for Him because of the convincing evidences learned in his youth. His mind was primed; all he needed was to submit his will.

During my first year of teaching biology at a Christian university, I faced a dilemma. In an ecology course I found that my students not only knew nothing of evolution and natural selection, but they had not even discussed it in any of their preliminary biology coursework. I was and am a creationist. I also knew that to understand the myriad ways that life adapts to its environment, serious students of ecology must understand, at least in principle, the theories of natural selection, microevolution, and macroevolution. This was the impetus for me to embark on a long journey of research into teaching methods to enhance critical thinking in college students. Even though some of my colleagues warned me to tread lightly in this volatile arena, I felt God would honor my efforts to dismantle barriers between science and faith. I just had to be cautious.

In the first paragraph I mentioned six faith-weakening themes identified by the Barna Group. One of them is the perceived antagonism of the church toward science. One quarter of our young people believe Christianity opposes science. Three out of 10 young adults with a Christian background feel that “churches are out of step with the scientific world we live in” (29 percent), a fourth (23 percent) are turned off by the creation-evolution debate, and 18 percent are disillusioned by the anti-intellectualism of Christianity.<sup>6</sup>



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Youth leaders are not adequately addressing this dissatisfaction. Very few are inclined or equipped to discuss faith-science issues. Even though slightly more than half of youth group teens are interested in a science-related profession, only 1 percent of youth group leaders address science-related issues in their teaching.<sup>7</sup> We need youth leaders to become better equipped to handle these topics.

About 10 years ago, my friend, chemistry professor Steve Badger, and I began collaborating on research into using critical thinking skills to teach about the very controversial topic of

After making personal connections with your students, openly summarize your goals. I disclose that my goal is not indoctrination, but that I desire to help them hone their critical thinking abilities and evaluate the evidences for what they believe — from an unashamedly Christian perspective.

Next, I explain the need to make data-driven decisions, not emotional or careless ones. What are the “data”? They range from evidences from nature (science), to theories of truth (philosophy), to theories of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics). Many Christians are reluctant to embark on such explorations



Unfortunately, we base some of what we teach as Christian ethos on a superficial reading of the Bible viewed through the foggy lenses of our own biases and presuppositions.

origins. We have read much, participated in numerous professional meetings, and tried out our ideas on many of our students. Our work has been well received.<sup>8</sup> Anecdotal feedback from our students tells us that our approaches have helped them handle controversial topics without rancor. Here are several practical approaches based on our experiences. Although my expertise is in the science-faith dialogue, these suggestions would work equally well in other controversial teaching environments.

### OPENING ENGAGEMENT

When you begin, explain your qualifications and goals. Your main qualifications are that you are a fellow truth-seeker and that you have some knowledge and experience to share. Take advantage of books or other materials to provide some structure to your teaching. This allows you to reference expert sources if you get in over your head. You can avoid arrogance by acknowledging that the main difference between you and your students is that you have been on this truth quest longer and have traveled farther down the path.

Reassure your students of your personal commitment to God and your tenacious commitment to biblical inspiration and inerrancy. A short biographical testimony of your salvation experience and some basic statements about the reliability of God's Word are also useful. Work to be transparent and show your vulnerability by sharing some recent positive encounters with God and some challenges you are currently dealing with. These contact points help lower barriers. Your group will engage much more with the ideas you present if you have established rapport and gained their respect.

out of fear this will weaken their faith. Such fear is unwarranted since God promises to reward truth seekers (John 16:13).

I argue against simply accepting the viewpoint of some respected person. Each of us must be willing to ferret out the evidences for particular positions, and our evaluations need to be as objective as possible. All of this, of course, needs to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is effective to disclose some details of my views on controversial topics to the group, but not all of them at the outset. When people ask me point blank what I think, I state my position, or I tell them I will answer that later. Whether you share this with the group or only with the one who asked depends on the circumstances. We want to prevent our students from bypassing critical analysis in favor of the easier route of adopting our viewpoints. We are trying to cultivate habits of critical examination, both of the evidences and of our own biases and presuppositions. This will not happen if we spoon-feed conclusions to our students.

### A SAFE PLACE

Youth leaders need to endeavor to make church and the youth group safe havens. Students need to feel free to question, discuss, and debate both core and peripheral ideas in safety. What can we do to accomplish this?

We cannot always avoid controversial issues. Even if we could, this is not helpful. The proverb, “As irons sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17), is apropos here. We gain insight through evaluating opposing viewpoints. Civil discourse and disagreement foster the greatest

## Preparing Young People for a Life of Faith

(continued from page 89)

critical thinking gains. However, to keep a lid on emotional outbursts, I suggest the following ground rules for discussion.

Remind your students (and yourself) to adopt a nonconfrontational, nonadversarial approach. The other person is not the enemy (even if he or she is not a believer). Civil disagreement can yield fantastic gains in critical thinking skills as long as the participants do not take disagreement personally. Remind your students to avoid attributing motive to other people's positions or statements. Reinforce the necessity of responding to statements and supporting evidences, not trying to figure out why the speaker holds a perspective.

Teach how harmful it is to misrepresent your opponent's position. If you fall into this trap, not only will your credibility falter, but your integrity can take a hit too. This can cause severe setbacks in your efforts to garner trust and connectedness.

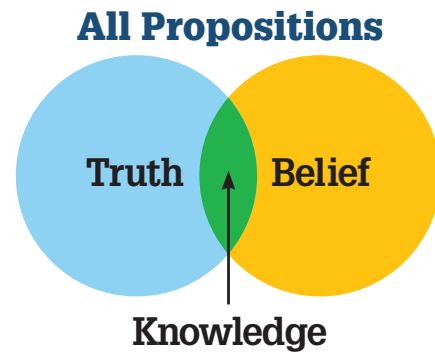
One way to get out of the line of fire is to avoid championing one view over another. Let the proponents of a position share its strengths, and then have the detractors present the weaknesses of that position. As facilitator, you must be careful to present strengths and weaknesses in a balanced manner. If you seem to be masking some weaknesses or overstating some strengths of your pet position, your credibility will suffer.

When discussions get heated, your job is to defuse emotions. Remind your pupils to monitor their speech volume and tone. You can sometimes lower tension with self-effacing humor. I also find it useful to take a time out and remind the group that we are all part of the same family, and that our shared beliefs and values are much more significant than on what we disagree. Timely interruption of a heated discussion with a review of our discussion ground rules will often serve to lower intense emotions. Frequent reminders that *ad hominem* attacks (attacks against the person, not the evidence) are forbidden go a long way to defuse a potential conflagration. Consider reminding the group that we are discussing some second-tier ideas. Remind them that it is okay to end our discussion with some uncertainty and disagreement if we do not find the evidence overwhelmingly convincing. This is not the same as avoiding conflict at all costs. Rather, it reinforces the process of critical thinking. That is, we need to base decisions on objective criteria (data) and not personalities or attributed motives. Sometimes we do not have enough data to arrive at positive conclusions.

What about disagreeable people? I recommend that you not ignore or shun them; rather, treat them with respect. However, you need to insist that they abide by the ground rules. You have the right to insist on civility and arguments based on evidence.

### TRUTH

Regarding content, a good starting point is to define truth. In dealing with faith and science issues, I define truth as reality. Truth exists whether we believe in it or not. The following diagram helps me illustrate relationships between truth, belief, and knowledge.



Statements (or ideas or theories) are either true or false, and they can be believed or rejected. So, it is possible to incorrectly reject truth and to mistakenly believe in a falsehood. We need to do everything possible to avoid these errors. Our goal is to maximize the overlap between truth and belief. In other words, we want to accept as much truth as possible — while avoiding falsehood at the same time. We call the overlap of truth and belief *knowledge*. Knowledge is justified belief; it is a belief that we have reason to conclude is true.

We can feel secure embarking on this search for truth because Jesus tells us His mission was to testify to the truth (John 18:37). A search for truth is the same as a search for God. Whether studied in nature through appropriate tools of science or in the Scriptures using sound hermeneutics, our efforts will reveal God's truths. We need to trust truths obtained from either source. This search can be tortuous. Sometimes we make wrong turns and hit dead ends. These mistakes do not originate in the physical universe (science's purview) or in the inspired, inerrant Word of God (biblical theology's home turf); they are produced by fallible human interpretations. This is why we must carefully evaluate how evidences support or refute our conclusions.

### PRESUPPOSITIONS

Presuppositions are beliefs we possess that affect how we think about a new idea. You could think of them as a grid of boxes. When we learn something new, we try to fit the novel idea into a box. If it does not fit, we often decide the new idea must be false, so we reject it. A more difficult approach is to consider whether or not we need to adjust our organizing grid. Is this new piece of evidence of such importance that I need to modify my grid? Or, is my grid so ingrained that I cannot consider as true anything that does not fit? All of us — pastors, theologians, scientists, professors, and young people — are prone to reject these nonconforming ideas out of hand. Instead, we need to consider the evidence for and against this new idea objectively. We need to base our acceptance or rejection on the weight of evidence, not whether we can shoehorn it into our grid. If we let them, our presuppositions can largely control our conclusions. If we do not challenge the presuppositions of atheists, how could they ever come to a saving knowledge



of Christ? If we are unwilling to model such paradigm shifts, how can we expect our youth to change their minds as a result of our teachings?

## THE WISDOM OF UNCERTAINTY

Science is uncertain. Someone said that the half-life of contemporary scientific explanations of genetics and molecular biology is approximately 5 years. That is, if you examine scientific journals on these topics that are 5 or more years old, about one-half of the propositions made at the time will now be shown to be false. It would be ill-informed to draw too strong a parallel to biblical hermeneutics, but linguistic and archeological advances do inform our biblical scholarship and, consequently, our theology.

The foundation of scientific enterprise is observation and hypothesis testing. Hypothesis testing involves the repeated examination of data and the subsequent acceptance, modification, or rejection of the tested hypothesis. It is second nature for scientists to adjust conclusions based on new evidence. In some areas of faith and science, such an attitude is warranted. As Christians, we are sometimes guilty of the criticism levied against us by our youth — that we are too certain that we have it all figured out (35 percent).<sup>9</sup>

My collaborator, Steve Badger, and I have found that students and educators at Assemblies of God colleges and universities hold diverse views on origins. Some are young-earth creationists, others are old earth creationists, and still others are evolutionary creationists.<sup>10</sup> We find that some respondents are not well-informed about their position, and almost a fourth of the respondents are undecided about which position they embrace. Some find this diversity unsettling. I do not. Holding opinions loosely on this topic may be healthy, at least until more data become available that can help us determine which of these views is the most credible.<sup>11</sup>

Do not fall into the trap of relativity (that any of a variety of explanations could be true, so it does not matter which one we adopt). As group facilitators, we must identify some nonnegotiables, or “hills to die on.” In the context of faith, science, and origins, these would be propositions like the Bible is inerrant and divinely inspired and the Creator-God of the Bible exists. Less certain propositions, for example, would be those that must be interpreted in context. Examples would be stars fixed in a “firmament” or the suggestion that the Scriptures explicitly reveal the age of the creation.

## IMPORTANCE OF DEFINITIONS

Terminology is king in the arena of discussions about origins. Protagonists of the various viewpoints are adept at defining terms to suit their polemics. We need to take time to agree on definitions of significant terms. In the area of origins, these terms include *theism*, *deism*, *atheism*, *Darwinism*, *evolution*, *microevolution*, *macroevolution*, *evolutionism*,

*naturalism*, and *scientism*. We need to admit that some terms have disputed definitions, and why.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is time for church leaders to engage our youth in dialogue on controversial science topics like origins, beginning and end of life issues, and environmental stewardship. With the help of solid Christian writings on these topics, and the advice outlined above, every one of us can venture into meaningful engagements that can help keep our young people from falling away from the faith. Instead, they will “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). They will be able to integrate faith and other disciplines, including science, with the confidence grounded in a deep trust in God and sound critical thinking skills, within the safe, nurturing environment of our church and youth group. 📖



**MICHAEL TENNESON, Ph.D.,**  
teaches biology at Evangel University,  
Springfield, Missouri.

## Notes

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8. Mike Tenneson and Steve Badger, “Teaching Origins to Pentecostal Students,” in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Press, 2009).
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11. Mike Tenneson and Steve Badger, “Teaching Origins to Pentecostal Students,” in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth: Pentecostal Forays in Science and Theology of Creation*, ed. Amos Yong (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Press, 2009).

# Science and the Pulpit: **Ministering to Scientifically Literate People**

By **Christina M.H. Powell**





**W**e live in a world of specialization and technological sophistication. Long gone are the days of the Renaissance when Christian leaders were as well-versed in matters of science as they were in matters of Scripture. Yet pastors without training in the sciences find themselves addressing topics at the intersection of faith and science.

Scientific advances raise bioethical issues that deserve input from spiritual leaders. Popular secular authors claim that science can provide moral guidance and displace the need for faith. Parishioners and church visitors with technical backgrounds wonder how to integrate scientific knowledge and Christian theology.



## Science and the Pulpit: Ministering to Scientifically Literate People

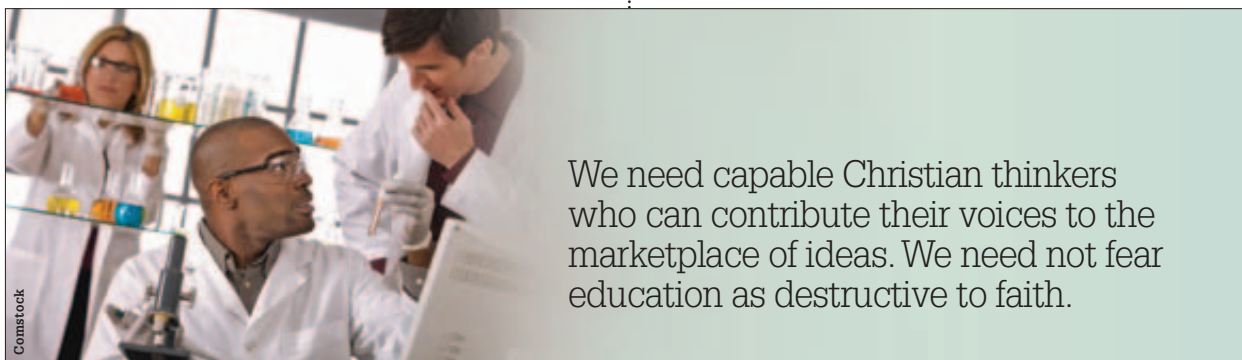
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Pastors who address these concerns provide helpful guidance to their congregations. Yet cultural misunderstandings and historical inaccuracies often conspire to derail positive dialogue about matters of faith and science.

In the first part of this article I describe three pitfalls pastors need to avoid when speaking about science from the pulpit. To provide insight into the origins of these unhelpful approaches to conversations about faith and science, I offer a brief review of the historical relationship between theology and scientific thought. In the second half of this article, I propose three positive approaches to speaking about science from the pulpit. Each approach can form the basis for useful dialogue about matters of faith and science in a variety of ministry settings beyond the pulpit, such as counseling sessions and conversations with those interested in learning more about the Christian faith. Taken together, these three approaches form a philosophy for productively ministering to scientifically literate people.

teaching.”<sup>1</sup> Schools have taught generations of American school children that Christopher Columbus stood before a council of hooded theologians who warned him that he might fall off the edge of a flat earth if he set sail on his voyage. While there was a council at Salamanca in 1486, theologians did not believe the earth was flat, only that the distance to cross the ocean to the Indies was too far.<sup>2</sup> The story of the flat-earth theologians disbelieving Columbus was constructed as historical fiction by the famous American author Washington Irving (1783–1859) in his 1828 book, *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*.<sup>3</sup> With a few exceptions, no educated person from the third century B.C. onward believed the earth was flat. Before the 1830s, no one believed that people in Columbus’ day thought the earth was flat.<sup>4</sup> Why did this story become one of the most persistent myths in modern education?

Beginning in the 1860s, the flat-earth myth became part of a larger story, the conflict between science and religion



We need capable Christian thinkers who can contribute their voices to the marketplace of ideas. We need not fear education as destructive to faith.

### AVOID PROMOTING UNNECESSARY CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH AND SCIENCE

“If it bleeds, it leads.” This oft-used saying among journalists speaks to the role of drama and controversy in generating people’s interest in a story. No wonder most media coverage on the topic of science and theology emphasizes the conflict between the two disciplines. Historical fiction is the basis for at

least one of the stories of the ongoing controversy between science and faith.

According to the Members of the Historical Association: “The idea that educated men at the time of Columbus believed that the earth was flat, and that this belief was one of the obstacles to be overcome by Columbus before he could get his project sanctioned, remains one of the hardest errors in

throughout Western history. Historian John Draper (1811–82) and his prominent followers spread this historical fiction as an accurate account in textbooks, encyclopedias, and scholarly articles. One well-known follower of Draper was Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918), the first president of Cornell University and a history professor. In his two-volume *History of the Warfare of Science With Theology in Christendom* published in 1896, he attempted to show how religion had thwarted the progress of science throughout Western history, using the theologians who disagreed with Columbus as one example.<sup>5</sup>

While controversy can generate interest and an audience, pastors must avoid promoting conflict between faith and science from the pulpit. Believers who work in scientific fields want to integrate faith and science. They see both the book of nature and the Bible as providing insight into reality. Unneeded conflict discounts the valuable contributions to society made by scientific advances, making the scientist feel unwelcome at church. Much of the supposed conflict between faith and science is the product of error, as the flat-earth myth demonstrates. Pastors need to promote truth instead of perpetuating popular errors. Furthermore, promoting conflict between science and theology causes believers

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to compartmentalize their faith and profession, instead of constructing a complete worldview where their faith permeates every aspect of their lives. In the worst case, the perceived conflict can cause people to feel the need to choose between faith and scientific truth.

### **AVOID PAINTING A CARICATURE OF SCIENTISTS IN SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS**

A second pitfall pastors need to avoid is painting a caricature of scientists in sermon illustrations. Dr. Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll, and other fictional scientists conform to the Hollywood image of a lone, mad scientist who plays God without regard to consequences. These scientists solve problems with a flash of insight, often without the input of other colleagues. Often these characters are brilliant, but flawed, individuals.

Real-life scientists work in a community of other scientists. In many ways, the scientific community functions like the Christian community. William G. Pollard (1911–89), a physicist and Anglican priest, wrote a book in 1961 that explored the role of community in both science and faith.<sup>6</sup> The practice of science is similar to other human endeavors, and scientists are no more or less flawed than other human beings.

Sermon illustrations about ungodly professors trying to destroy the faith of Christian young people fall into the category of caricatures worth avoiding. Like lawyer jokes, you may get a laugh or a momentary connection with some members of your audience, but breeding anti-intellectualism in the church ultimately becomes negative. It is much more beneficial to encourage Christian students to one day become university professors. We need capable Christian thinkers who can contribute their voices to the marketplace of ideas. We need not fear education as destructive to faith.

### **AVOID SIMPLISTIC ANSWERS TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS**

Parishioners and seekers with technical backgrounds have been trained to expect complex answers and to live with ambiguity. When they ask difficult questions about the Bible or the relationship of science and faith, they do not expect their pastor to have a quick answer to all their questions. They will respect someone who understands his limits and needs to research a matter further before answering. On the other hand, they have been trained to disregard simplistic answers to difficult questions. They will view as intellectually suspect a pastor who gives easy answers to the challenging questions of the ages.

A great approach to counseling people with intellectual

doubts about their faith is to give them some research to do on their own. Recommend a good book to read, give them some references, or point them in the direction of another scientifically minded member of your congregation. Walk alongside them in their faith journey, but let them take their own steps and make their own discoveries.

### **REACH YOUR LISTENER THROUGH ACCURATE INFORMATION**

Avoiding preaching pitfalls is crucial to ministering to scientifically literate people. While a pastor can avoid the pitfalls by never addressing scientific topics from the pulpit, a better approach is to use science constructively in your sermons. The No. 1 rule for reaching a scientifically minded listener is to use accurate information. Like sour notes jar the ears of a musician, outdated and inaccurate data make a cacophonous noise to a scientist.

When science and faith appear to be in conflict, the reason is often that a scholar failed to respect the limitations of either science or theology.



In science, information quickly becomes outdated. Scientific thinking more than 10 years old may no longer be relevant. Be careful when quoting from scientific sources published more than a few years ago. The best approach you can take when selecting a sermon illustration with scientific content is to share the story with a trusted, scientifically trained member of your congregation before telling the story from the pulpit. Your parishioner will appreciate your desire to seek his or her partnership in ministry in this way. The people in the pews on Sunday morning will appreciate the relevance of your illustration.

### **RECOGNIZE SCIENTIFIC TRUTHS THAT CAN FUNCTION AS PARABLES**

Jesus taught the crowds using parables, many based on the agrarian culture of His day. Current scientific discoveries can inspire many great sermon illustrations for imparting spiritual truth. A good illustration must be scientifically accurate, provide enough information so people unfamiliar with a certain field of science can still understand the main point of the story, and relate the scientific material to the spiritual truth in a natural, unforced way.

While pastors can find material for developing such

illustrations by reading popular science magazines and staying abreast of science news, the best approach to discovering scientific truths that can function as parables is by interacting with the members of your congregation with technical backgrounds. When you ask questions about their professions and their technical interests, you are pastoring them by entering into their world. The connections you establish with them by showing you care about what they do during their workweek will strengthen your ability to counsel them and provide spiritual guidance when needed. In addition, you will walk away from the conversation with great preaching material.

### **RESPECT THE LIMITATIONS OF BOTH SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY**

When science and faith appear to be in conflict, the reason is often that a scholar failed to respect the limitations of either science or theology. While the scientific method is a powerful tool for understanding the natural world, spiritual truth transcends technical analysis. Similarly, while the Bible is accurate, God never intended the Scriptures to serve as a scientific textbook. Together, science and theology give us a more complete view of reality and the human condition.

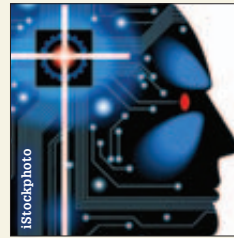
As pastors, teach your congregation to use science wisely without dismissing the supernatural. Show respect for the contributions of science, while leading your people to deepen their faith. Become comfortable living with unanswered questions as you journey through this life seeing “only a reflection as in a mirror” until you see Christ face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). ■



**CHRISTINA M.H. POWELL, Ph.D.**, an ordained minister, author, medical writer, and research scientist trained at Harvard Medical School and Harvard University. She speaks in churches and conferences nationwide and addresses faith and science issues at [www.questionyourdoubts.com](http://www.questionyourdoubts.com).

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## **Preaching the Gospel in a Scientific Culture**

By **James T. Bradford**

**T**he cover article of *Time*, February 21, 2011, featured a fascinating concept known as “Singularity.”<sup>1</sup> It is not a mathematical singularity or a black hole, but a moment in human history when futurists predict that machines will have exceeded human intelligence by such a margin that human existence, as we know it, will change forever.

“Imagine,” the article posits, “a computer scientist that was itself a super-intelligent computer. It would work incredibly quickly. It could draw on huge amounts of data effortlessly. It wouldn’t even take breaks to play Farmville.” Machines creating machines ... technological capacity growing exponentially ... human life being extended by decades, even centuries ... artificial superhuman intelligence that can “write books, make ethical decisions, and appreciate fancy paintings.”

The time line? Just under 35 years from now. Futurists are predicting that by the year 2045, Singularity could be upon us. Quoting again from the article, “In that year ... given the vast increases in computing power and the vast reductions in the cost of the same, the quantity of artificial intelligence created will be about a billion times the sum of all the human intelligence that exists today.” Sound far-fetched? Even NASA hosts what is now a 4-year-old Singularity University for graduate students and high-level executives.

The fruit of science, in the form of advanced technology, is just one of many reasons why future congregations and students will not be content for us to either put our heads in the sand or resort to simplistic preaching against science. There are better ways to engage scientifically impacted people with the gospel.





**First, let me challenge you to avoid either demonizing or deifying science.**

Instead of demonizing science, I encourage you to respect it for what it is and be in awe of the wonders of our created world revealed in science. Part of that respect also involves being fair with the data, remaining a learner yourself, giving voice to those who are integrating science and faith in their own vocations, and avoiding the temptation to quote fringe, antireligion scientists who may not always represent the mainstream of scientific thought.

All the while, be careful of being dogmatic about subjects that you know little about. Augustine warned us 16 centuries ago: "Now it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these [scientific] topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, while not demonizing science, neither should we deify it. Science cannot and will not replace God. To do so it would have to be omniscient. Science would need to analyze all of reality from at least one dimension outside of that in which God could potentially exist if it is to conclusively disprove His existence.

Two of the most groundbreaking scientific theories in the history of science emerged during the 20th century — Einstein's Theory of Relativity and Quantum Theory. Einstein based his theory of relativity on the observation made over a century ago that the speed of light always measures the same no matter what reference frame you measure it from.

The implications of that led to Einstein's space-time curvature and the realization that the closer to the speed of light an object travels the more time slows and space contracts, until at the speed of light time stops and three-dimensional space disappears.

There seems to be a cosmic speed limit to the universe beyond which we cannot see from our reference point.

Quantum theory predicts its own limitations as well. It describes a world in which subatomic particles behave like both compact points and diffuse waves, a world in which you cannot know both a particle's position and momentum at the same time. In fact, the very act of observation changes what you see. In the words of physicist Roger Jones, "Quantum theory claims that science can provide no pictures of the inner workings of nature. ... Not only are we blind to the workings of nature, but even our brief glimpses are of no objective, independent reality but of a subjective, observer-determined world."<sup>3</sup>

It would seem that the laws of nature themselves limit what we can know of nature. Science cannot be omniscient. There are no grounds upon which we should be tempted to deify it.

To the contrary, while some scientists are rejecting faith, others are coming to faith because of what they are discovering. I was fascinated to find an article in *USA Today* nearly 2 years ago entitled, "Science and Faith, the British Way." The writer made this statement: "While impossible to quantify, a surprising number of prominent British researchers at the pinnacle of their fields, with worldwide reputations in the physical and biological sciences, proclaim their evangelical Christian faith. ... First, they say that the likelihood that intelligent, carbon-based life originated in the universe by chance is infinitesimally minute. And second, they proclaim their

belief in what they accept as the first-hand biblical accounts of Jesus' life, death, and physical resurrection."<sup>4</sup>

**Second, let me challenge you to be increasingly focused on the pure gospel and all of its unprecedented implications.**

This is the ultimate story that science cannot disprove. Jesus, God's Son, entered the confines of time and three-dimensional space to reach us. If I could summarize the entire Bible in one sentence, it would be this: "The God who created us has acted to rescue us." The death and resurrection of Jesus and the subsequent powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is continuing to this day, is the tangibly real story that must always define our lives.

Science has not changed the fact "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Neither can science remedy the pathology of the human heart and its separateness from God. Only something "other," something "supernatural," something "beyond nature" can do that — the death of Jesus in our place, paying for our sin; and His resurrection from the dead, securing victory over death and evil. The God of the cosmos can become the Lord and Savior of our lives.

We do not need to be deferring when it comes to the gospel or defensive when it comes to science. May the Lord bless you as you courageously and thoughtfully engage the perplexing issues of our times while convincingly and unapologetically pointing people to the One who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). ■

**JAMES T. BRADFORD, Ph.D.**, is general secretary for The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

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# Four Truths

## About the Religion and Science Debate

By **John Mark Reynolds**

Here are four things you need to know to live in the tension between science and religion.

**I am a product** of a Christian church that was never afraid of any idea. My church taught me church history and that it was okay to ask questions. My church taught me that skepticism was a useful tool in the epistemological toolkit of a Christian. It also taught me that we didn't have to embrace an idea simply because the majority of people had decided it was true. We were free to wonder about the consensus, both in theology and in science. No one told us that the Holy Spirit of God had to be limited to what a majority of people in any given culture or place in time thought He could do. Instead, we served a God so big that He was bigger than all of our categories.





Christianity

Science Topics

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NATURE

ADRIAN BEJAN

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Evolution

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## Four Truths About the Religion and Science Debate

(continued from page 98)

God calls Christians to love Him and to love others. But to love someone means you must know him or her. I could love my wife, Hope, without knowing the color of her eyes, but I would not want to do so. All lovers by nature desire to know the one they love.

As a result, none can say he or she loves God without desiring to know Him and to know about His works. Christians know that God is Creator, so they naturally want to know about His works. Some of God's works are so particular — so singular — to His nature that He must reveal them to us. Others are part of the regular order of creation that He sustains. As a result, both theology and science will be of interest to those who love God, since theology tells of God's particular acts and science His general actions.

A person's heart can grow cold. When true love cools, married couples might try to substitute emotional hype for the deep conversations of their courtship. This anti-intellectualism is a subtle attack on the knowledge on which love feeds.

Anti-intellectualism in the church is unnatural, because it refuses to love the Lord God with the whole person, including the mind. The solution, of course, is not to embrace intellectualism — the error that every problem has a mental solution — but to find wholeness in the love of Jesus.

Today's culture, including some Christians, embraces anti-intellectualism. We see this in a disdain for experts as feelings trump facts. In reaction, some people worship experts and confuse their interpretation of facts with the facts themselves. Intellectuals and anti-intellectuals justify their existence by pointing to the sins of the other group.

The anti-intellectual sees the sterility of the intellectualist and the intellectualist the madness of the anti-intellectual. The pathway of love refuses either extreme, because love will always demand the whole person. The mind is part of love, but only a part, because it is not the whole person.

Much of the debate that occurs around tensions between religion and science takes place within this cultural problem. "Intellectualists" support "science" while "anti-intellectuals"

argue for a role for "religion." In fact, both end up abusing the nature of religion and science.

As those with the most cultural power, intellectualists are best at marginalizing their academic opponents, but often anti-intellectuals seize power in our churches. This presents the Christian community, particularly those following the Spirit, with a chance to model something better. We can love God with our minds and

our hearts. We know, like all those in love, that this journey will always be full of errors and misunderstandings. These "trials" help the relationship grow strong and mature.

The Bible contains information, but getting that information is not always easy. The plan of salvation is plain, but some historical, philosophical, and scientific implications of the message are not so plain.

Why would they be?

The Bible is without error in the autographs when it speaks of history, philosophy, and science, but because that is not the central purpose of the Book, the Bible does not always plainly state those truths. Any literate man or woman can discern the good news, but understanding every nuance of a Bible book requires more training.

In this article I suggest four things that will help us live in this tension between science and religion — four things we should know for sure about religion and science discussions. Any pastor helping his or her congregation with religion and science issues must keep four things firmly in mind. However, before we do anything else, I want to suggest that we don't try to settle the issue. Keep wondering. We live in a big cosmos, God is a big God, and He does what He wants.

### FOUR THINGS TO HELP US LIVE IN THE TENSION BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Since we serve a God who lives and acts, what are the things we need to know to live in this tension between science and religion?

#### Both science and religion are after knowledge

The first big truth is both science and religion want to know, because God designed us with a desire to know. Science and religion want to know about different things, so they are both after knowing.

Science and religion have other things in common. Both science and theology change over time as we come to understand the world better. One of the most embarrassing religion and science problems we had was when best science taught us 2,000 years ago that women were defective men — men who had somehow imploded. Read Aristotle's *Biology* if you want to know more.

When we faced best science at that time, we used Genesis that told us in order to find the full image of God we needed male and female. Best science of the time said that sex was bad. The church, to its regret, was stuck with theology telling them that women are fully human and that sex is good. So however badly the church implemented this teaching, it could never bring it to say that women were not human and that sex was bad. Aren't you glad? Sometimes best science is wrong.



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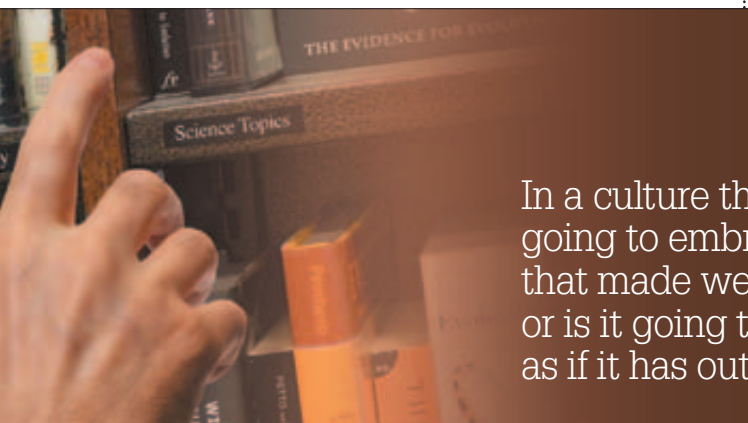


On the other hand, sometimes theology is wrong. Augustine's view of the Trinity would probably get you fired at seminary. Though we do not blame Augustine for his view, it was the best at his time. The more we thought about biblical revelation and our experience with God, we better understood the Trinity.

When I was a boy in school, they taught that we first believed in geocentrism — that the earth is the center of the universe. Because it was wrong, we adopted another view — heliocentrism — that the sun is the center of the universe. But both ideas are wrong. The sun is not the center of the cosmos any

You can understand the temperature of a room with very little recourse to intelligent causation. If it is cooler inside than it is outside, it's cooler for complex, natural reasons. Using physics and chemistry, we can explain why a room is cooler, except we would not have explained exactly *why* it is cooler. It's cooler because an intelligent person decided it should be. We will call this *intelligent causation*. To get a full explanation of why a room is cooler, you need both a natural and an intelligent causation.

Unless science knows that the only intelligent causation is humankind, and unless science knows that human intel-



In a culture that is unsure of itself, is it going to embrace the traditional values that made western civilization possible, or is it going to kick those values away as if it has outgrown them?

more than the earth is the center of the cosmos. So we did not pick heliocentrism because it was true and reject geocentrism because it was false. We had two false ideas. If the modern idea is right, what is the point? Heliocentrism was mathematically better. It made better predictions. It fit the evidence that we had better than the previous view. We picked the better of the two wrong answers. Often in theology and in science, we are not presented with bad ideas and the truth. We are presented with a choice between bad and worse.

Both religion and science must make sense internally and externally. Internally, they need to be coherent and not contradict themselves. Externally, they need to attach to the outside world. But in both cases, there is room for error.

If science is not careful, it will ignore beauty and poetry as means to knowledge. If religion is not careful, it will ignore science as a means to knowledge. We need both sense and sensibility.

### **Both science and religion should be open-minded when it comes to causation**

The second big truth we need to keep in mind is that both science and religion should be open-minded, not close-minded when it comes to causation. What do I mean? What causes a thing to be or exist? When it comes to causation, science most often deals with natural causation. But it should also deal with intelligent causation.

ligence — which to me does not seem to be reducible to chemistry and physics — can be fully explained by natural causes like chemistry and physics, science is always going to, in principle, need to be open to an intelligent causation and natural causation. But some of my friends in science act as if any natural answer, however convoluted, is better than any personal answer. If I suggest that something intelligent acted in space and time, then I am giving up on science.

I know there are intelligent agents in the world, and that intelligence is not reducible to chemistry and physics. Now this may be wrong, but deciding whether it's wrong is not a matter for science, but for philosophers and theologians. No matter how much science we do, we will not be able to determine that kind of question.

Religion, correspondingly, most often deals with intelligent causation, but it can and should deal with natural causation. When we talk about things of the Spirit, we are talking about the action of the Holy Spirit, who is a person. But when we assert that Jesus rose from the dead, it is a person who went into the tomb, and a person who came out. There is a personal reason why this person chose to do it, but it also made a difference in space and time in chemistry and physics. The body that went into the tomb came out of the tomb changed, which meant something happened in terms of the chemistry and physics of the moment.

Natural and intelligent causation cannot be closed to each

## Four Truths About the Religion and Science Debate

(continued from page 101)

other. But do not expect the tension between religion, philosophy, and science to be solved. A way of knowing that relies primarily on natural causation will always be tempted to overexplain everything in terms of natural causation. And the pursuit of wisdom via philosophy or theology that tends to rely on personal causation will overexplain everything in terms of personal causation.

This is why people in our churches often see a miracle where there is not one. Having learned to explain things in terms of personal action, they may see personal action where it isn't. At the same time, if we become too close-minded about personal action, we will not see personal action when it does exist.

### Theology and science will never be reducible to one another in an ultimate sense

This leads us to the third big truth about science and religion. Neither the personal (theology) nor the natural (science) — used as physics and chemistry — will ever be reducible to one another in an ultimate sense.

Scientists say, "We want to be able to experiment with embryos."

Theologians reply, "No, we don't think you should be able to experiment with embryos."

Scientists counter, "Well, we are just doing science."

To which theologians respond, "Yes, but you're wicked men. We're doing ethics."

Science describes the world as it is, but it does not tell us whether this is the way the world ought to be. Science requires ethical limits that only religion and philosophy can safely provide. We are a religion that honors science, but does not worship it.

Simultaneously, there is the anti-intellectual, anti-science attitude that fears science. Enlightenment-driven romantics fear science. The romantics fear science because they believe they should have all their wants, and science limits their dreams by telling them the difference between virtual reality and reality, between fantasy and what is possible. If you fall into scientism, on the other hand, because you worship what is, you refuse to note that something else could be within the limits of what science says is.

Only Christianity says the cosmos is good while simultaneously giving us a reason to enjoy studying the natural world. If there are two ways of finding truth — philosophy and science — why do science? Philosophy is a matter of the soul, and the soul is more important than the body.

When Jesus took on flesh — when reason came and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as the only Son of God, begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth — Jesus linked philosophy and science in His own body. He glorified the study of matter, because God forever joined himself to matter. Jesus came fully in the flesh; this meant science was worth doing. We gained a motivation for the pursuit of the natural world that had never existed before. Because the

natural world was good, and it had clothed God, and continues to clothe the second person of the Trinity. Yet science is not God.

Christianity is open both to natural and intelligent causation. We can wonder if the planets move in an orderly way because God directly pushes them with His thumb. Or we can wonder if God, as a Good Engineer, chooses to put natural causes in place, so planets move as He wishes, but He need not regulate them daily. Which is true? We are open to either answer.

I was healed as a boy. Was I healed by the spontaneous act of God? I will never know, because there was not a full medical diagnosis. Or did God use natural causation to bring healing? In one way, it doesn't matter. In another way, it does. Christianity is open to either answer. If I believe something is a miracle and it turns out not to be, it does not falsify my faith. But if one miracle exists, it falsifies scientism. I need only one miracle to believe in miracles, but my atheistic and agnostic opponents admit not one.

### Christianity and science need each other to flourish

The fourth, and final, big truth is Christianity and science need each other to flourish. Christianity made science possible in the Incarnation. And science, like all good storytelling, is something that should be commended and encouraged, and is utterly wonderful. Why? Because it is man acting as a subcreator, as he must, in the image of God. When J.R.R. Tolkien creates *Lord of the Rings*, he acts as a subcreator, creating literature in a way that describes deeper spiritual truths.

Even more important, when a scientist like Newton, or a scientist working at a school like Evangel University, imagines the way the world could be by studying the cosmos, he acts in the image of God. To resist this, to keep him from doing this, to discourage him, is to resist the image of God within him. And to force him to tell a story that immediately comports with our theology is to limit his wondering in ways that are contrary to the freedom he has gained in Christ.

But if he begins to assert that we must believe his story, that it must be the truth, then we need to resist him because we know interpretations may change. We cannot allow this story to close off the wondering of future scientists, theologians, and philosophers any more than Tolkien should have heeded the warnings of his colleagues when they told him he was wasting his time on elvish scribbles.

And yet, contrary to my childhood, I have discovered that many Christians grow up being told to come up with the right answers when they do science, instead of trying to find the right questions, because that is all we are going to get this side of heaven.

### CONCLUSION

Your quest should not be to encourage your parishioners, when it comes to science and religion, to come up with the



right answers — but to ask better questions. So what are these questions?

Why do most people think religion is belief and science is knowledge? Hasn't science progressed while religion stagnates? Why can't Christianity and science exist in two watertight knowledge compartments? Aren't ethical concerns just getting in the way? How can I communicate this material to a high school science teacher or professor? How can I live with uncertainty while being certain? This is the life of tension.

I'd like to suggest that the Christian life isn't skepticism in the modern sense; it's skepticism in the ancient sense. When Socrates talks about *skepsis* — inquiry — we need to translate that as *wonder*. Wonder doesn't ask any question it can think of, but the questions it has. It asks them in order to know. We have faith seeking understanding, not understanding seeking faith. But neither do we have faith seeking more faith. We have faith, a sensibility, and a sense, seeking a greater sense and a greater sensibility. We are walking in a constant tension between what we think we know and what we are sure we do not know. We walk in wonder.

So, we are stuck between what the Bible seems to say — there was a guy named Noah with a big ark with a lot of animals — and what best science teaches us. I advise my students who are in science not to have two minds, but to realize that their best theological tool set and their best scientific tool set may not comport. They may have one mind with two rulers, and the two rulers use different scales that are utterly incompatible. For all we know, 1,000 years from now, someone will bring them together. But in the meantime, we are going to have to, when we treat humankind, talk about the days of Noah.

For our parishioners and young people, there needs to be the freedom to step back from what best science teaches and what best theology teaches to see if they can try a new way of understanding Genesis that's faithful to the inerrancy of

Scripture without being branded as liberals. Christians have become so uptight that if someone who believes in the inerrancy of Scripture steps back and says perhaps the universe is old and we have misunderstood, parishioners want to kick him out of the church, as if the next step from an old universe is communist dictatorship.

Live a life that's full of wonder, because at the end of the day, a scientist must be driven by love — love of God's cosmos — or they won't do science. Science is like a monastic calling. Who in the world would do it? You wouldn't want to do it for money. To go into science is to pursue an infinite quest, often with no reward. It's to get to the end of your life and, having given your whole life to an idea, discover that you were wrong, and that your contribution to the halls of knowledge was to be the guy who got it wrong. That's a good contribution.

In the same way in theology, you may live your whole life as sure as you were born about some favored doctrine, only to stand before the Lord Jesus and discover there are some Baptists in heaven. If the scientist is guided by love and the theologian is guided by love, it will not amount to sappiness or mere sensibility. But when reason and logic are fueled by passion, then we will have discovered the love that moves the heavens and the furthest stars. ■

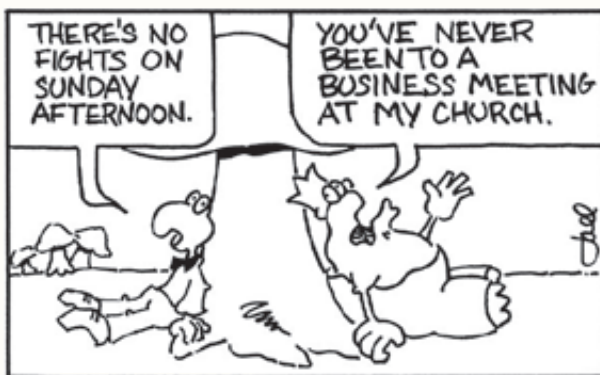


**JOHN MARK REYNOLDS, Ph.D.**, provost, Houston Baptist University, Houston, Texas. This article is abridged from Dr. Reynolds' plenary session at the Faith and Science Conference, June 27, 28, 2011, Springfield, Missouri.



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# Does Science Prove That God Does Not Exist?

A Look at  
Richard Dawkins<sup>1</sup>

By **Gregory E. Ganssle**





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Does the universe as we observe it fit better with the theistic story than it does with the atheistic story? We must make careful observations to see whether there are good reasons to think that Richard Dawkins' best argument against the existence of God is true.

**I**t is not uncommon for people to think there is a strong conflict between the claims of science and the notion that God exists. Some even hold that science proves that there is no God. In this article I investigate this question with the work of Richard Dawkins in mind. Dawkins' book *The God*

*Delusion*<sup>2</sup> is a popular-level defense of atheism in light of current science. I point out that Dawkins never claims that science can disprove the existence of God. He thinks science can show that the reality of God is highly improbable. One of the conflicts between science and religious beliefs he addresses concerns the possibility of miracles.

## SCIENCE AND MIRACLES

It is clear that the sciences cannot directly investigate the existence of God because, according to science, we cannot detect God with our senses. Any connection between scientific investigation and God will need to be indirect. Miracles, however, are events in space and time. If a miracle occurs, we can detect it with the senses. Can the sciences show that miracles *cannot* occur? Dawkins writes, "miracles, by definition, violate the principles of science" (Dawkins, 59).

If miracles cannot occur, this undermines our confidence in the truth of our religious belief. Can science show that miracles are not possible?

People often think of a miracle as a transgression of a law of nature. Some claim that either science in general or some particular science establishes the fact we cannot transgress the laws of nature. Dawkins connects his comment that miracles violate the principles of science to this aspect of the miracles question. Whether we accept this claim depends on what it means to transgress a law of nature. Unfortunately, Dawkins' claim reveals a misunderstanding of science.

The laws of nature discovered by the sciences tell us how things *normally* behave. They tell us, for example, that if we provide enough water and sunlight, grass grows well. Suppose you are doing a science experiment to show that water helps grass grow. You put two trays of dirt together and sprinkle each with grass seed. Over the next few weeks, you water the first tray but not the other. Your aim is to compare the trays and show that the tray you watered has the healthier grass. The result is what *normally* happens. If, however, I sneak into your room each day and pour a little gasoline into the tray you are watering, I will ruin your experiment. The grass will not grow. Will you be able to conclude that water does not help grass grow? No. I have *interfered*, and your experiment no longer is a reliable means to tell what normally happens.

A miracle is the same kind of interference. God intervenes and causes something to happen that would not have normally happened. The fact science investigates what normally

happens should lead us to recognize that science cannot show that miracles cannot occur. The methods of science cannot rule out God's intervention. So, if the methods of science cannot show that miracles cannot happen, how can they enter into arguments for or against God's existence?

Dawkins defends the idea that the claim that God exists is a *scientific*

claim. He seems to imply that we must determine God's existence *scientifically*: "I shall suggest that the existence of God is a scientific hypothesis like any other. Even if hard to test in practice ... God's existence or nonexistence is a scientific fact about the universe, discoverable in principle, if not in practice" (Dawkins, 50). It sounds as though Dawkins thinks we must establish the question of God's existence with the methods of science.

Although Dawkins hints at this position, this is not his real view. Nor should it be. God's existence, he thinks, should have evidence that is available to scientific methods. He does not think scientific methods are the *only* ones that are relevant. The arguments Dawkins raises against God's existence, although they draw on scientific conclusions, are primarily *philosophical* arguments.

It is not unreasonable to think, as Dawkins does, that if God exists, there should be some empirical evidence for His existence. So, even if we cannot discover God directly by observation, there should be some traces of God's existence in the universe He made that provide clues to His existence. Scientific methods should discern some of these traces.

In the rest of this article, I investigate how Dawkins employs some of this evidence in what I think is his best argument against God's existence.

## DAWKINS' BEST ARGUMENT AGAINST GOD'S EXISTENCE

### Natural process or theistic creation?

Dawkins' response to science and miracles, however, is not his best argument. So, after looking at the relationship between science and miracles, I turn to Dawkins' best argument against theism and offer reasons to conclude that it is not very good.

Dawkins' builds his best argument on the claim that a universe made by God would be different from one that is only a product of natural processes. That is, God's existence would make some detectable difference in the world. If God's existence made no difference to what we observe about the universe, we would wonder what belief in God amounted to. Does our universe look like a universe that God made, or does it look like an atheistic universe?

Dawkins claims our universe fits better with an atheistic worldview. His observations about the world show that it has the marks of an atheistic universe rather than the marks of a theistic one. Dawkins does not spell out his argument precisely, but we can summarize his reasoning in the form of a deductive argument:

1. A universe made by God would be different from one made by only natural occurrences.
2. Our universe fits better with a naturalistic universe than with a theistic universe.
3. Therefore, our universe is more likely to be a naturalistic universe than a theistic universe.

This type of argument is valid. If the premises are true, the

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conclusion must be true. It is also an argument about *fit*. This argument claims that our universe *fits* better with the view that there is no God. It also claims that the universe as we find it does not fit as well with the existence of God. In this way, we can test our two worldviews. We can figure out what sort of universe best fits with each, and we can look and see through scientific and other means whether the universe fits better with one theory or the other.

It is important to clarify the notion of *fit*. What Dawkins has in mind is that there is a connection between what our universe is like and what we would *expect* it to be like if there is no God. Dawkins presents most of the work in his argument by this claim.

Does the universe as we observe it fit better with the theistic story than it does with the atheistic story? We must make careful observations to see whether there are good reasons to think that Dawkins' second premise is true.

Although Dawkins does not precisely spell out the way our universe fits with atheism, he does point in the direction of what he has in mind. He believes that any atheistic universe with complex life would include a long period of biological development through a process something like natural selection. Furthermore, I think he holds that a theistic universe would most likely *not* include a long development. Dawkins does not make this claim explicitly, but it seems to lie behind his approach. His argument, then, is that natural selection does not fit well in a theistic universe, but it fits neatly in an atheistic universe. Since Dawkins believes the evidence for natural selection is strong, the probability that the universe is atheistic is very high.<sup>3</sup>

Let us suppose that Dawkins is right — biological development through natural selection does not fit as well into a theistic universe. But if God exists, we cannot restrict the origin of various life forms to gradual processes. God could use any process He wanted to create living things. If God exists, it is possible that He brought the variety of living things into existence at one moment. God is not restricted to processes over long periods of time.

If God exists, our expectations about the development of biological life are wide open. Theism does not *rule out* a long process of biological development, but theists are not restricted to such theories. In an atheistic universe, however, life *has* to develop over a long time. The variety of life forms cannot arise all at once. Complex life required a long developmental process.

Since God could create life in any number of ways, the fact



If theism is true, we should expect a moral world — a world with objective moral obligations. In contrast, such obligations do not fit as well in an atheistic world.

it came as a result of a long process does not provide evidence for theism. Atheism, however, *requires* some kind of long-term biological process for complex biological life. Therefore natural selection *does* provide evidence for atheism. This aspect of the universe, then, does support Dawkins' claim that there is no God. It is important we recognize that natural selection provides evidence for atheism even though it is compatible with theism.

### Three elements that fit better in a theistic universe

According to Dawkins, natural selection supports the claim that the universe is atheistic. This makes Dawkins' argument the best one he offers. If all we look at, however, is the development of complex biological life, his case would be quite strong. Other aspects of the universe as we find it, however, point in the opposite direction. Here are three major elements of our universe that fit significantly better with a universe in which God exists than in the atheistic universe. It is not that they are incompatible with atheism, but they

do not fit neatly into the atheistic world.

**A world that is ordered and open to rational investigation fits better in a theistic universe.** If God exists, the universe is made by an intelligent mind for reasons. This fact leads us to expect that our universe will be something we can grasp rationally. It makes sense that there would be stable laws that allow us to make predictions and draw inferences. If God exists, we would expect an ordered universe. If God exists and made the universe for reasons, it would be surprising if that universe exhibited none of the order that would make it open to rational investigation.

If atheism is true, however, the universe would not need to be open to rational investigation. It fits perfectly well with atheism that the universe be wildly chaotic. While being open to rational study is compatible with an atheistic universe, the theory that God does not exist allows the universe to exhibit any one of a wide variety of descriptions as far as order is concerned. The fact our universe is ordered and susceptible to investigation, however, fits better with the claim that God does exist.

The fact an ordered universe fits better with theism than atheism weakens Dawkins' argument in another way as well. This fact is not merely one way the universe we observe fits with theism. It also provides evidence that Dawkins' contention that the way biological life developed provides evidence for atheism. But life could not develop in the way Dawkins thinks it does unless the world were ordered and followed laws. In other words, it

## Does Science Prove That God Does Not Exist? A Look at Richard Dawkins

(continued from page 107)

takes a theistic universe to make even evolution possible.

**Consciousness fits better in a theistic universe.** Human consciousness is difficult to account for if atheism is true. One feature of consciousness is that each person experiences his own mind directly. We have access to our own thoughts and ideas. I know that I am thinking about coffee. I may not know what you are thinking. You can tell me you are thinking about coffee, or I can deduce it from your behavior or your habits, but I know my own thoughts directly. I have ownership of my own first-person perspective.

If God exists, then the primary thing that exists is a conscious mind. The notion that a conscious mind, if it creates anything, would create other conscious minds that have their own first-person perspectives and can think is not a great mystery.

The view that there is no God claims that any complicated living thing is the product of a long natural process of development from simpler living things. Any species of animals that have conscious minds originated ultimately from species that had no conscious minds by processes that are not carried out by conscious mind. If atheism is true, it is surprising that there would be any conscious minds. The existence of conscious beings, like the order of the universe, is a detectable feature of the universe that confirms

theism as contrasted with atheism.

**Objective moral obligations fit better with a theistic universe.** It seems clear there are moral obligations that are objective in the sense they hold whether or not one wants them to hold or one wants to fulfill them. The claim, "It is wrong to torture a person to death just for fun" seems to be true, and the obligation it prescribes seems to apply to all human beings. It is hard to imagine that such an obligation is binding only because of the desires or goals of some person or society. It is reasonable to think that objective moral obligations exist.

If there are such obligations, they make up another detectable feature of the universe that does not fit well within atheism. Philosopher John Mackie, in his rigorous defense of atheism, admits that such values would ground a strong argument for God: "[Objective moral values] constitute so odd a cluster of qualities and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events, without an all-powerful god to create them. If, then, there are such intrinsically prescriptive objective values, they make the existence of a god more probable than it would have been without them."<sup>4</sup>

If God made us so we would embody certain virtues, the objectivity of moral obligations makes sense. If God has spiritual purposes for us — that we would find a relationship with

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The view that there is no God claims that any complicated living thing is the product of a long natural process of development from simpler living things.

Him and experience Him as our highest good — He may set up moral rules as guidelines for how best to do that. Whatever God's purposes are, it makes sense He would make us the kinds of beings who are subject to moral truths and who can understand and act on them. If theism is true, we should expect a moral world — a world with objective moral obligations. In contrast, such obligations do not fit as well in an atheistic world.

## SUMMARY

Dawkins bases his best argument against the existence of God on the claim that our universe fits better with atheism than it does with theism. The feature Dawkins points to is the fact complex life developed over a long period of time through natural selection. In a universe with no God but with complex life, we would expect there to have been a long process of development. If life did develop in this way, it would count as evidence that atheism is true. So Dawkins' argument identifies one way that the universe fits better with atheism. I have identified, however, three other detectable features of our universe that point to a different conclusion. Each of these features fits better with a theistic universe than with an atheistic universe. The three features I identify show there is good reason to reject Dawkins' claim that the universe fits better with atheism than theism. Furthermore, one of these ways, that our universe is ordered and follows laws, shows that Dawkins overestimates the strength of the support evolution gives to atheism. Dawkins' best argument in the end does not deliver. Science, as we should expect, cannot disprove the existence of God. ■



**GREGORY E. GANSSELE, Ph.D.**,  
associate director and senior fellow,  
Rivendell Institute, Yale University,  
New Haven, Connecticut

For information on Gregory E. Ganssle's lecture *Richard Dawkins: The God Delusion*, available on MP3, go to [ej.ag.org/201204goddelusion](http://ej.ag.org/201204goddelusion) or click here.

## Notes

1. This article is adapted from my book *A Reasonable God: Engaging the New Face of Atheism* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009).
2. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006). Citations to Dawkins will be parenthetical (Dawkins, pp).
3. Many Christians do not think the evidence of biological development through natural selection is high, but they need to recognize that Dawkins thinks it is. He will not be persuaded by any challenge to his argument that doubts current evolutionary theory. It is most wise, in engaging his argument, to find the most common ground and challenge his argument on premises he will accept.
4. J.L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 115, 116.



# Is Religious Belief Just a **Brain Function?**

Religion, we are told, has a scientific explanation; so we have no need of the God hypothesis. But is that so? This article reviews the alleged evidence and then responds to it.

By **Paul Copan**

**T**he “**new atheists**” tend to be a blustery, cranky lot. Even fellow atheists recognize their arguments as embarrassing. These new atheists are on something of a crusade to show that religion is delusional and even harmful. One is Richard Dawkins. He suggests that humans are predisposed by evolution to belief in God. Natural selection has programmed us to do what our biological hardwiring tells us — just like computers. The downside? Humans, like computers, can also go wrong; a virus can infect computers, and humans are likewise vulnerable to harmful mental viruses.<sup>1</sup>



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## Is Religious Belief Just a Brain Function?

(continued from page 110)

Another new atheist — Daniel Dennett, a Tufts University philosopher — focuses on one of the “curious by-products” of evolution — namely, religion.<sup>2</sup> The mind (i.e., the brain, according to Dennett) is a bag of tricks shaped by its drive to survive in a dangerous world. The brain forms *concepts* that lead to religion. These concepts create certain systems: agent-detector, moral-intuition generator, memory-manager, cheater-detector, an inclination for stories and storytelling, various alarm/alerting mechanisms. Putting these into a whole package looks a lot like religion.<sup>3</sup>

Dennett here follows anthropologist Pascal Boyer’s arguments. Boyer believes the latest “scientific” developments reveal that our “central metaphysical urge” stands at the root of all religion; we are inevitably inclined toward “superstition, myth, and faith, or a special emotion that only religion provides.”<sup>4</sup> What *looks* supernatural is really natural; God is simply a brain-trick. God does not exist after all; belief in God is a widespread brain-inspired illusion.

In the past 20 years or so, evolutionary psychologists have attempted to locate the “God idea” in the human brain.<sup>5</sup> Humans are somehow evolutionarily “hard-wired” to believe in God. A number of “cognitive science of religion” (CSR) researchers assert that a biological basis exists for humans acquiring, representing, and transmitting successful (survival-enhancing) religious ideas.<sup>6</sup> Religion, we are told, has a scientific explanation; so we have no need of the God hypothesis. But is that so? Let us review the alleged evidence and then respond to it.

### THE BIOLOGY OF BELIEF?

Here is how religion gets started, gains traction in society, and then gets transmitted from one generation to the next.

**First, humans are biologically equipped to be religious.** When a Buddhist, Pentecostal, or Sufi Muslim has an intense religious experience, his brain readily detects this event. Scientists call this widespread phenomenon “neurotheology,” which suggests a “biological origin for specific religious beliefs.”<sup>7</sup> We have a longing for something beyond ourselves — an apparent biological need for meaning, spirituality, and truth.<sup>8</sup> One writer calls this capacity for spiritual experience (which is rooted in the hyperactivated limbic system) as a “transmitter to god.”<sup>9</sup>

Boyer does not think there is actually a “special neural network that handles God-related thoughts,” but he believes the still-sketchy results of neuropsychological research may yet connect religious experience to the brain’s cortical areas

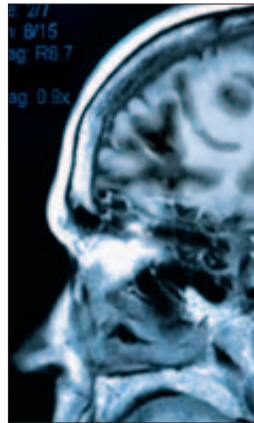
related to intuitive psychology (thinking about other people’s thoughts) and those “that create emotional responses to people’s presence.”<sup>10</sup> This brain activity is the essence of “religion.”

**Second, human psychology is primed for creating supernatural agents.** In *The Belief Instinct*, atheist Jesse Bering states that humans are quick to ascribe purpose to things like biological traits: noses are *for* smelling, hearts *for* pumping blood. We can easily attribute agency to these purposes. We take natural disasters as an omen or sign. “It all happens for a reason,” people frequently say. What is more, many humans are convinced they will live beyond the grave since they just cannot imagine their own nonexistence. Bering calls this an “overactive theory of mind” — the result of our brain’s particular evolution.<sup>11</sup> In these cases, humans invent God to explain mysteries and to plug the holes of our ignorance — what some call the “God of the gaps.”

Dennett affirms much the same thing, noting that humans seem to come with a *hyperactive agent detection device* (HADD).<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Boyer thinks humans tend to “anthropomorphize” their experiences — that is, they project “humanlike and personlike features onto nonhuman and nonpersonlike aspects of the environment.” So they often concoct nonexistent agents — demons, ghosts, God, angels. According to evolutionary understanding (think, “predator and prey”), we have the capacity to detect agents around us, even if they are not there. We project agency (say, a dangerous beast) if we hear a strange noise in the forest, which may in fact be due to the tree branches scraping against each other in the wind — and this tendency enhances survival: better safe than sorry.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, humans easily jump to religious conclusions — including beliefs in souls, spirits, and supernatural agents.<sup>14</sup>

**Third, humans then pass on these religious beliefs (“memes”) and create holy books and religious institutions to reinforce them.** Dennett believes he can “reverse engineer” religious belief. That is, he can backtrack the naturalistic development of religion to its source in unguided biological (Darwinian) evolution — the “universal acid” that eats through traditional concepts like religion and morality, that requires a completely revised outlook on life.<sup>15</sup> Because of the human brain’s wiring, humans have a psychological inclination to create religion — beginning with attempts to see agency in trees and rivers (animism) to more sophisticated religions (monotheism).<sup>16</sup>

Of course, we cannot falsify such claims — that is, there are not any conditions that would show these projected agents do not exist. People tend to store these religious conclusions in their memory and then pass them on to the next generation; these then become embedded in human minds. In



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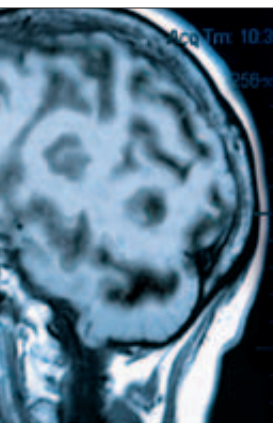
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Boyer's words, "Information about gods and spirits mainly comes from other people."<sup>17</sup> Not only are we biologically hardwired and thus psychologically prepared to believe in God, but we pass such religious ideas on to others in the form of religions and rituals. Dennett writes that while there is no "God gene,"<sup>18</sup> the idea of God, like the idea of chocolate, triggers a certain reaction in our brain. The idea that religion is good for people is a very Darwinistic concept. Like language learning or good manners, we spread these religious ideas

— and the existence of nonphysical entities like souls and God undermines physicalism, which cannot account for key features of human experience such as consciousness, rationality, free will, moral responsibility, and more. The idea of humans being made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27) makes better sense of these features.

**Consciousness:** Naturalism cannot explain how consciousness could have emerged from nonconscious matter. Naturalists philosophers of mind readily acknowledge this. Colin



Naturalistic explanations suggesting theology is a useful fiction — or, worse, a harmful delusion — fall short of telling us why the religious impulse is so deeply imbedded.

nongenetically to the next generation. They are the result of overactive dispositions and sensitivities within many human beings. Dawkins and Dennett call such ideas or convictions "memes."<sup>19</sup> Dennett claims that various religious rituals, music, and art move him — though he is "utterly unpersuaded by the doctrines."<sup>20</sup>

Reinforcing transmitted religious ideas involves a *social* component — the desirable cultural feature of social stability. We created this through mutually beneficial coalitions and networks; we maintain social *control* or dominance through certain social hierarchies involving shamans, priests, and pastors — a system that punishes cheaters and excommunicates the uncooperative.<sup>21</sup>

This is the rough sketch of how religion is strictly brain-based. If Dennett and others are right, then *God* does not exist — nor does the *soul*, *free will*, *human dignity*, *rights*, or *reason*. Now let us see why this scenario fails to eliminate God and genuine religious experience.

## PROBLEMS WITH "BIOLOGIZING" BELIEF IN GOD

**Problem 1: Science cannot eliminate the soul and its capabilities.** Naturalists assume that humans are strictly physical beings. All mental activity dies when the body dies. If we are only physical beings, forces beyond our control produce our beliefs, choices, reasoning, and behavior. According to one naturalistic philosopher, the "desouling" of personhood is "the primary operation of the scientific image."<sup>22</sup> However, we cannot so easily eliminate the soul's existence

McGinn confesses that we cannot "explain how ever-expanding lumps of matter might have developed an inner conscious life."<sup>23</sup> Ned Block admits researchers are "stumped" about this and do not have a clue where to begin explaining it.<sup>24</sup> Jerry Fodor acknowledges not having "the slightest idea how anything material could be conscious."<sup>25</sup> Theists, however, believe in a supremely self-aware Being that brings into being finite (self-)conscious creatures; thus they have a ready-made context to consciousness.<sup>26</sup> Consciousness is an indication of a supernatural, immaterial origin, and it is the central feature of soulish beings. This would include *humans* (whose souls have a range of spiritual, rational, and volitional capabilities — that survive bodily death) and *animals* (whose souls have limited capabilities that cease at death). The main point is that matter cannot produce consciousness, whether in humans or animals.

**Truth and reason:** Beliefs — not bits of physical matter — can be true or false. Matter just *is*.<sup>27</sup> It is nonsense to say one piece of matter is true of another.<sup>28</sup> You see, matter cannot give rise to rationality. Furthermore, why *trust* our beliefs if they have been produced by physical forces beyond our control? Evolution is interested in survival — not true belief — and we may end up holding lots of false beliefs that help us survive. For example "humans have rights" or "humans have moral duties" are false beliefs, according to many naturalists.

Again, why trust beliefs produced by one bit of brain matter bumping into other bits of brain matter? The late atheist geneticist Francis Crick claimed our beliefs and sense of identity are "the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated

## Is Religious Belief Just a Brain Function?

(continued from page 113)

molecules."<sup>29</sup> If so, then Crick's *own* beliefs were "the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules." If religion and morality are simply evolutionary adaptations and a lot of false or illusory beliefs beyond our control are embedded in our brains, then the new atheists are no more rational than religionists, even if accidentally correct. In fact, Dawkins himself had to admit that the wrongness of rape "is as arbitrary as the fact that we have evolved five fingers rather than six."<sup>30</sup>

If, however, a rational God has made us in His image, then pursuing the truth and obeying laws of logic really matter. This God says, "Come let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18, NIV 1984). He calls us to "Love the Lord your God with all your ... mind" (Matthew 22:37). Matter cannot seek truth or reason; this is the work of the soul.

**Free will and moral responsibility:** We instinctively believe that we have genuine freedom, that we could have chosen differently, and that we are responsible for our actions. Free will sets humans apart from animals, which cannot rise above genetics and environment. Little wonder naturalists tend to reject free will given their commitment to a materialistic worldview; the state of the brain dictates our beliefs and actions.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, most theists would argue that our environment, our bodily states, and even our character may *influence* our choices, but these do not *determine* our choices. Such conditions *incline*; they do not *necessitate*.

**Other soulish considerations:** The mind or soul is more than the brain. Scientific discovery reinforces this fact. For example, Jeffrey Satinover of Harvard Medical School notes that by the exercise of the will, we can reconfigure the brain's neural pathways: "The neocortex is the part of the brain that we might consider as the seat of the will. ... It is also the part of the brain whose connections between the neurons will be slowly modified over time, strengthening some connections, weakening others, and eliminating some entirely — all based on how experience shapes us. This ongoing process embeds the emerging pattern of our choices ever more firmly in actual tissue changes. *These changes make it that much more likely for us to make the same choice with less direct effort the next time — and that much more difficult to make a different choice.*"<sup>32</sup>

Studies have shown that patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder, pornographic addictions, arachnophobia (fear of spiders), and depression have been able to "reprogram" their brains by choosing alternative thought patterns. By repeated exercise of the will, new patterns can reshape the brain's wiring. In fact, even the "placebo effect" — in which someone's physical condition improves not because of medication itself — "depends specifically on the patient's mental belief and expectation that a specific remedy will work."<sup>33</sup> This positive physical outcome is one of many examples in which a patient's trust in a physician's hopeful prediction can lead to improved health. In contrast to a *placebo* effect, we have what some call the *nocebo* effect: *losing* confidence in a medical treatment that can become self-fulfilling. In a number of cases (but certainly not all), if you *do not think* medical treatment will work, it *will not*. Improved

or deteriorating health often depends on whether the physician says "Go home and get well" or "This was the best I could do."<sup>34</sup> (Think of the power of "the will to live.")

We could also add near death experiences (NDEs) to all of this evidence. Numerous once-clinically-dead, later-revived patients have described in detail events and environments they could not have known unless they had out-of-body experiences; these experiences imply not only the soul's existence, but the supernatural realm.<sup>35</sup>

**Problem 2: This scenario fails to distinguish the *biology* of belief and the *rationality* of belief.** It is fallacious to say God does not exist because people have religious experiences that can be physically detected in the brain. That is the *genetic fallacy* — calling a view true or false based on its origin. Just because a person is a neo-Nazi does not mean he is wrong for believing 2+2=4. Likewise, God's existence is a separate question from how people come to believe in Him.

We *do* have strong reasons for God's existence — the sort of thing Psalm 19:1,2; Romans 1:20, and other passages indicate: the heavens declare God's glory, and God's invisible attributes are clearly seen through what has been made. What are some of these indicators of God's self-revelation of His power and wisdom and goodness? The absolute beginning of the universe; the universe's intricate fine-tuning; the existence of beauty, rationality, moral duties, consciousness, human dignity and worth; the complex design of amazing machine-like cells (which are often compared to small-scale factories); the remarkable features of the human brain (which has more "switches" than all the computers, routers, and Internet connections on earth, according to a recent Stanford University study).<sup>36</sup> We can better explain these features by an intelligent, powerful, good Creator rather than naturalism. Given naturalism, these features are the result of various valueless, mindless, lifeless physical processes in a universe that came into existence uncaused out of nothing.

**Problem 3: These biological processes actually fit with the idea of having been made to believe in and relate to God.** God has placed eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) — and in our *brains*. It makes perfect sense that we are hardwired or disposed toward belief in God. A 3-year worldwide research through Oxford University indicates that children are intuitive theists; from a very early age humans are disposed to believe in God or the supernatural; we are wired to see purpose in the world and to believe in an after-life. This is clear scientific confirmation that religion is not going away.<sup>37</sup> Natural processes contributing to religious belief make excellent sense if God exists. God has *designed* us in such a way that these sorts of processes enable us to come to know God personally; that is, we are functioning properly when we direct our thinking toward true belief in God.<sup>38</sup>

The new atheists' naturalistic explanations for religious and moral beliefs do absolutely nothing to eradicate the explanatory power of God's existence. In fact, thanks to the cognitive



study of religion, we have fresh reasons for taking God seriously.

Naturalistic explanations suggesting theology is a useful fiction — or, worse, a harmful delusion — fall short of telling us why the religious impulse is so deeply imbedded. Yet if God exists, we have an excellent reason for why religion should show up on the scene. ■



**PAUL COPAN, Ph.D.**, West Palm Beach, Florida, is professor and Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida. He is author and editor of a number of books, including *When God Goes to Starbucks*, *True for You, But Not for Me*, and *Is God A Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. He is also president of the Evangelical Philosophical Society.



To visit Paul Copan's website, go to [www.paulcopan.com](http://www.paulcopan.com) or click here.

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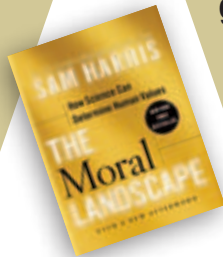
"He'll be with us for awhile — he refuses to die until the Cubs win the World Series."





# Navigating Sam Harris' *The Moral Landscape*

By **William Lane Craig**



**great merit** of Sam Harris' recent book *The Moral Landscape*

is his bold affirmation of the objectivity of moral values and

duties. To say that moral values and duties are objective is to say

they are valid and binding independent of human opinion.

For example, to say that the Holocaust was objectively evil

is to say it was evil even though the Nazis who carried

it out thought it was good. And it would still have been

evil even if the Nazis had won World War II and succeeded in brainwashing or

exterminating everyone who disagreed with them, so everybody who was left

thought the Holocaust was good.

Harris inveighs against what he calls "the overeducated atheistic moral nihilist[s]" and relativists who refuse to condemn as objectively wrong terrible atrocities like the genital mutilation of little girls.<sup>1</sup> Citing Donald Symons, he rightly declares, "If only one person in the world held down a terrified, struggling, screaming little girl, cut off her genitals with a septic blade, and sewed her back up, ... the only question would be how severely that person should be punished."<sup>2</sup> What is *not* in question is that such a person has done something horribly, objectively wrong.

## **OBJECTIVE MORAL VALUES AND DUTIES**

The question then is, what is the best foundation for the existence of objective moral values and duties? What grounds them? What makes certain actions good or evil, right or wrong? Traditionally, God has been the highest Good (*summum bonum*) and His commandments constitutive of our moral duties. But if God does not exist, what foundation remains for objective moral values and duties?

## Navigating Sam Harris' *The Moral Landscape*

(continued from page 117)

Consider first the question of objective moral values. On atheism, what basis is there for affirming objective moral values? In particular, why think that human beings have objective moral worth? On the atheistic view human beings are just accidental byproducts of nature who have evolved relatively recently on an infinitesimal speck of dust called planet Earth — lost somewhere in a hostile and mindless universe — and are doomed to perish individually and collectively in a relatively

functions well in the perpetuation of our species. But on the atheistic view there does not seem to be anything that makes this morality objectively true.

The philosopher of science Michael Ruse reports, "The position of the modern evolutionist ... is that humans have an awareness of morality ... because such an awareness is of biological worth. Morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth. ... Considered as a rationally

To say that moral values and duties are objective is to say they are valid and binding independent of human opinion.

Sam Harris

short time. On atheism it is hard to see any reason to think that human well-being is objectively good, anymore than insect well-being or rat well-being or hyena well-being. This is what Harris calls "The Value Problem."<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of Harris' *The Moral Landscape* is to solve the "value problem," to explain the basis, on atheism, for the existence of objective moral values.<sup>4</sup> He explicitly rejects the view that moral values are Platonic objects existing independently of the world.<sup>5</sup> So his only recourse is to try to ground moral values in the natural world. But can he do that, since nature in and of itself is morally neutral?

### Naturalistic view

On a naturalistic view, moral values are just the behavioral by-products of biological evolution and social conditioning.

Just as a troop of baboons exhibit cooperative and even self-sacrificial behavior because natural selection has determined it to be advantageous in the struggle for survival, so *homo sapiens* — their primate cousins — exhibit similar behavior for the same reason. As a result of sociobiological pressures there has evolved among *homo sapiens* a sort of "herd morality" that

justifiable set of claims about an objective something, ethics is illusory. I appreciate that when somebody says, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' they think they are referring above and beyond themselves. ... Nevertheless, ... such reference is truly without foundation. Morality is just an aid to survival and reproduction, ... and any deeper meaning is illusory."<sup>6</sup>

If we were to rewind the film of human evolution back to the beginning and start anew, people with a very different set of moral values might well have evolved. As Darwin himself wrote in *The Descent of Man*, "If ... men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters, and no one would think of interfering."<sup>7</sup>

For us to think that human beings are special and our morality objectively true is to succumb to the temptation to species-ism — an unjustified bias toward one's own species.

If there is no God, any basis for regarding the herd morality evolved by *homo sapiens* as objectively true seems to have been removed. Take God out of the picture, and all you seem to be left with is an apelike creature on a tiny speck of dust beset with delusions of moral grandeur.

Richard Dawkins' assessment of human worth may be depressing, but why, on atheism, is he mistaken when he says, "There is at bottom no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but pointless indifference. ... We are machines for propagating DNA. ... It is every living object's sole reason for being."<sup>8</sup>

So how does Sam Harris propose to solve the "value problem"? The trick he proposes is simply to *redefine* what he

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means by “good” and “evil” in *nonmoral* terms.<sup>9</sup> He says we should “define ‘good’ as that which supports [the] well-being” of conscious creatures.<sup>10</sup> He states, “Good and evil need only consist in this: misery versus well-being.”<sup>11</sup> Or again: “In speaking of ‘moral truth,’ I am saying that there must be facts regarding human and animal well-being.”<sup>12</sup>

So, he says, “Questions about values ... are really questions about the well-being of conscious creatures.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, he con-

cludes, “It makes no sense ... to ask whether maximizing well-being is ‘good.’”<sup>14</sup> Why not? Because he’s redefined the word “good” to *mean* the well-being of conscious creatures. So to ask, “Why is maximizing creatures’ well-being good?” is on his definition the same as asking, “Why does maximizing creatures’ well-being maximize creatures’ well-being?” It is simply a tautology — talking in a circle. Thus, Harris has “solved” his problem simply by redefining his terms. It is mere word play.

At the end of the day Harris is not really talking about *moral* values. He is just talking about what’s conducive to the flourishing of sentient life on this planet. Seen in this

light, his claim that science can tell us a great deal about what contributes to human flourishing is hardly controversial. Of course, it can — just as it can tell us what is conducive to the flourishing of corn or mosquitoes or bacteria. His so-called “moral landscape” picturing the highs and lows of human flourishing is not really a *moral* landscape at all.

On the next to last page of his book, Harris more or less admits this. For he makes the telling admission that if people such as rapists, liars, and thieves could be just as happy as good people, then his moral landscape would no longer be a *moral* landscape; rather it would just be a continuum of well-being, whose peaks are occupied by good and evil people alike.<sup>15</sup> What is interesting about this is that earlier in the book Harris observed that about 3 million Americans are psychopathic, that is to say, they do not care about the mental states of others. On the contrary, they *enjoy* inflicting pain on other people.<sup>16</sup>

This implies that we can conceive of a possible world in which the continuum of human well-being is not a moral landscape. The peaks of well-being could be occupied by evil people. But this entails that in the actual world the continuum of well-being and the moral landscape are not identical either. For identity is a necessary relation. There is no possible world in which some entity A is not identical to A. So if there is any possible world in which A is not identical to B, it follows that A is not in fact identical to B. Since it’s possible that human well-being and moral goodness are not identical, it follows necessarily that human well-being and moral goodness are not the same, as Harris has asserted. By granting that it’s possible that the continuum of well-being is not identical to the moral landscape, Harris has rendered his view logically incoherent.

Thus, Harris has failed to solve the “value problem.” He has not provided any justification or explanation of why, on atheism, objective moral values would exist at all. His so-called solution is just a semantic trick of providing an arbitrary and idiosyncratic redefinition of the words “good” and “evil” in nonmoral terms.

That takes us to a second question: Does atheism provide a sound foundation for objective moral duties? Duty has to do with moral obligation and prohibition, what I ought or ought not to do. Here reviewers of *The Moral Landscape* have been merciless in pounding Harris’ attempt to provide a naturalistic account of moral obligation. Two problems stand out.

**First: Natural science tells us only what *is*, not what *ought to be*, the case.** As philosopher Jerry Fodor has written, “Science is about facts, not norms; it might tell us how we are, but it wouldn’t tell us what is wrong with how we are.”<sup>17</sup> In particular it cannot tell us that we have a moral obligation to take actions that are conducive to human flourishing.

So if there is no God, what foundation remains for objective moral duties? On the naturalistic view, human beings are just animals, and animals have no moral obligations to one another. When a lion kills a zebra, it kills the zebra, but it does not *murder* the zebra. When a great white shark forcibly copulates with a female, it forcibly copulates with her but it does not *rape* her — for there is no moral dimension to these actions. They are neither prohibited nor obligatory.

So if God does not exist, why think we have any moral obligations to do anything? Who or what imposes these moral duties on us? Where do they come from? It is hard to see why they would be anything more than a subjective impression ingrained into us by societal and parental conditioning.

On the atheistic view, certain actions such as incest and rape may not be biologically and socially advantageous, and so in the course of human development have become taboo, that is, socially unacceptable behavior. But that does absolutely nothing to show that rape or incest is really *wrong*. Such behavior goes on all the time in the animal kingdom. On the atheistic view the rapist who flouts the herd morality is doing nothing more serious than acting unfashionably, the moral equivalent of Lady Gaga. If there is no moral lawgiver, then there is no objective moral law; and if there is no objective moral law, then we have no objective moral duties.

Harris is impatient about such questions: “How much time should we spend worrying about such a transcendent source of value?” he sniffs. “I think the time I will take typing this sentence is already too much.”<sup>18</sup> He makes a half-hearted stab at showing that the divide between facts and values is illusory in three ways:<sup>19</sup>

**1. Facts about maximizing the well-being of conscious creatures must translate into facts about brains.** Perhaps; but this point is irrelevant, since the

question remains, why think that on atheism we have a moral obligation to maximize the well-being of conscious creatures (or that so doing is objectively good in the first place)?

**2. Objective knowledge already has values built into it, since we must value logical consistency, reliance on evidence, etc.** Here again we see Harris' equivocal use of value terminology. This means that objective knowledge requires logical consistency, reliance on evidence, *etc.* as necessary conditions of knowledge. It has nothing to do with *moral* value.

**3. Beliefs about facts and beliefs about values arise from similar brain processes.** So what? Does Harris think this implies that they are the same belief? This confuses the *origin* of a belief with the *content* of the belief. Just because two different beliefs arise from similar brain processes does not imply they have the same meaning or information content. Whatever their origin, beliefs about what *is* the case, and beliefs about what *ought* (or *ought not*) to be the case are not the same belief. One belief could be true and the other false. Harris' view thus lacks any source for objective moral duty.

**Second: "ought" implies "can."** A person is not morally

responsible for an action he is unable to avoid. For example, if somebody shoves you into another person, you are not to blame for bumping into this person. You had no choice. But Harris believes that *all* of our actions are causally determined and that there is no free will.<sup>20</sup> Harris rejects not only libertarian accounts of freedom but also compatibilistic accounts of freedom. But if there is no free will, no one is morally responsible for anything. In the end, Harris admits this, though it's tucked away in his endnotes. Moral responsibility, he says, "is a social construct," not an objective reality: "in neuroscientific terms no person is more or less responsible than any other" for the actions they perform.<sup>21</sup> His thoroughgoing determinism spells the end of any hope or possibility of objective moral duties on his worldview because we have no control over what we do.

Harris recognizes that "determinism really does threaten free will and responsibility as we intuitively understand them."<sup>22</sup> But not to worry! "*The illusion of free will is itself an illusion.*"<sup>23</sup> The point, I take it, is that we do not really have the illusion of free will. Not only is such a claim patently false phenomenologically, as any of us can attest, but it is also irrelevant. The fact remains that whether we experience the illusion of free will or not, on Harris' view we are thoroughly determined in all that we think and do and can therefore have no moral responsibilities.

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## CONCLUSION

On Harris' view there is both no *source* of objective moral duties and no *possibility* of objective moral duty. Therefore, on his view, despite his protestations to the contrary, there is no objective right or wrong.

Thus, Sam Harris' naturalistic view fails to provide a sound foundation for objective moral values and duties. If God does not exist, we are trapped in a morally valueless world in which nothing is prohibited. Harris' atheism thus sits very ill with his ethical objectivism.

What the theist offers Sam Harris is not a new set of moral values — by and large we share a wide range of positions of applied ethics — rather what we can offer is a sound foundation for the moral values and duties that we both hold dear. ☞



**WILLIAM LANE CRAIG, Ph.D., D.Th.**, is research professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California.

To visit William Lane Craig's website Reasonable Faith, go to [www.reasonablefaith.org](http://www.reasonablefaith.org) or click here.

To view the debate "Is the Foundation of Morality Natural or Supernatural?" with William Lane Craig vs. Sam Harris, go to [ej.ag.org/201204foundationofmorality](http://ej.ag.org/201204foundationofmorality) or click here.

## Notes

1. Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 198. He adds, "I sincerely hope that people like Rick Warren have not been paying attention."
2. *Ibid.*, 46.
3. Sam Harris, "A Response to Critics," *Huffington Post* (January 29, 2011); [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sam-harris/a-response-to-critics\\_b\\_815742.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sam-harris/a-response-to-critics_b_815742.html). Accessed 11 January 2012.
4. Harris, *Moral Landscape*, 102.
5. *Ibid.*, 30.
6. Michael Ruse, "Evolutionary Theory and Christian Ethics," in *The Darwinian Paradigm* (London: Routledge, 1989), 262, 268, 289.
7. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2d ed. (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1909), 100.
8. Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), cited in Lewis Wolpert, *Six Impossible Things Before Breakfast* (London: Faber and Faber,

2006), 215. Unfortunately, Wolpert's reference is mistaken. The quotation seems to be a pastiche from Richard Dawkins, *River out of Eden: a Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 133 and Richard Dawkins, "The Ultraviolet Garden," Lecture 4 of 7 Royal Institution Christmas Lectures (1992), <http://physicshead.blogspot.com/2007/01/richard-dawkins-lecture-4-ultraviolet.html>. Accessed 11 January 2012. Thanks to my assistant Joe Gorra for tracking down this reference.

9. Harris repeatedly conflates moral and nonmoral senses of "good" and "bad" throughout his book. For example, he says that there are objectively good and bad moves in chess (*Moral Landscape*, 8). Clearly, a bad move in chess is not a morally evil move, nor is a good move good in the sense of moral worth. Harris fails to appreciate that in English "good" and "bad" are used in a wide range of nonmoral senses, as when we say:

"That's a good way to get yourself killed."

"That's a good game plan."

"The milk has gone bad."

"That's a bad idea."

"The sunshine felt good."

"That's a good route to East Lansing."

"She's in good health."

Similarly, Harris' contrast of "the good life" and "the bad life" is not an ethical contrast between a morally good life and a morally evil life, but a contrast between a pleasurable life and a miserable life. He gives no reason to identify pleasure/misery with moral good/evil or right/wrong.

10. Harris, *Moral Landscape*, 12.
11. *Ibid.*, 198.
12. *Ibid.*, 31.
13. *Ibid.*, 1.
14. *Ibid.*, 12.
15. *Ibid.*, 190.
16. *Ibid.*, 97–99.
17. Cited in *ibid.*, 11.
18. Harris, *Moral Landscape*, 32.
19. *Ibid.*, 11.
20. *Ibid.*, 104.
21. *Ibid.*, 217.
22. *Ibid.*, 218, citing Greene and Cohen.
23. *Ibid.*, 112.



# Science, Doubt & **Miracles**

Are miracles at odds with modern science?  
Can modern science settle the question of miracles?

By **Timothy McGrew**

*Doubt is a proof of modesty; it has seldom harmed the advance of the sciences. I could not say as much for incredulity. Apart from pure mathematics, whoever pronounces the word impossible is wanting in prudence."*

— *François Arago*<sup>1</sup>

**M**y wife and I received an e-mail from a skeptic. His problem with Christianity, he explained, was that it is "hard to believe in the supernatural when you live in a world that science has explained and shaped so well." The complaint is not new. In one form or another, skeptics, for the past 3 centuries, have pressed the charge that miracles are somehow at odds with science





## Science, Doubt, and Miracles

(continued from page 123)

If miracles really were somehow at odds with modern science and technology, that would be awkward. If it comes to a simple choice between the truth of the central claims of Christianity, on the one hand, and whether airplanes fly, on the other ... well, airplanes do fly, so that would seem to settle the matter.

Of course, this is a false dilemma. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus does not commit a Christian to disbelief in the flightworthiness of 747s. Christians who believed in God's miraculous intervention in history were the principal architects of the scientific revolution in the 17th century. From the days of Copernicus and Galileo to the present, we find such Christians working in every branch of science and technology. So what, exactly, is the challenge supposed to be?

### HUME'S ARGUMENT

The 18th-century philosopher David Hume offers one answer. A miracle, according to Hume, is a violation of the laws of nature; and since those laws have been established by extensive and unvaried experience, they are as certain as any empirical beliefs can be. Miracles, by contrast, are supported only by human testimony; and, as we know from sad experience, human testimony is not unfailingly truthful. Faced with a choice between a belief supported by the strongest possible evidence and a rival belief supported by rather uncertain evidence, Hume urges we should always choose the stronger. The rational man will always come down on the side of scientific laws and against their miraculous violation.

On its surface, Hume's argument has a dazzling simplicity and reasonableness.

Who wants to endorse the claim that weak evidence is preferable to strong? But beneath the surface, matters are murkier. At

nearly every point — the definition of the term *miracle*, the concept of a *law of nature*, the description of the evidence for natural laws, and the description of the evidence of testimony — Hume's reasoning conceals more than it reveals, confuses more than it clarifies. The problems are so deep and extensive that one recent critic (who has, it should be noted, no personal sympathy for

Christianity) has christened the argument against miracles *Hume's Abject Failure*.<sup>2</sup>

Consider the notion that a miracle is a *violation* of the laws of nature. As Hume defines them, laws of nature are exceptionless regularities in our experience; a miracle, therefore, is an exception to something that has no exceptions. This move seems like a dubious bit of philosophical judo. Can we really settle the question of miracles so quickly by a couple of definitions?

### A BAFFLED BIRD

An analogy can help us to see what is really going on here. Deep in the heart of a great forest a bird that has never seen a human being lives in contentment at the top of a large and flourishing tree. One day he flies many miles to the north and spends a day eating grubs on the borders of a marsh. The day is clear and fine, with scarcely a cloud. At evening, our bird flies south to his nest. But lo, the tree where he has lived for these years lies flat upon the ground, neatly severed at the base.

Our bird, we may suppose, is a bit of a philosopher. He knows that trees with dead branches sometimes snap and



fall in the wind or even collapse under their own weight. He knows that severe storms can split or knock down even an apparently healthy tree. But in his experience, without exception, healthy trees do not suddenly fall on sunny days. The event is unprecedented. Yet there the tree lies. What is our avian philosopher to make of this? More to the point, what should his skeptical friends think of his testimony that the tree did, indeed, fall?

From our position of superior knowledge, we have no trouble explaining the matter. In all of the bird's experience up until now, man has never played a role. But his world has been invaded by a higher order of being that can make things happen the bird has never experienced or imagined. The generalization he has formed — that healthy trees, left to themselves, do not fall down on sunny days — is true as far as it goes. But this tree was not left to itself.

This analogy suggests that Hume has started with the

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wrong notion of natural laws. We do not properly *define* the laws of nature as exceptionless regularities. Rather, they are our best attempt to say what nature will always do when left to itself. We have collected the vast body of observational and experimental evidence that provides support for our beliefs about the laws of nature from cases where, as Christians and skeptics agree, God has not been intervening to bring about something that nature itself cannot do. What would happen if God chose to do so is another matter entirely. The question, then, is not, "How probable (or improbable) is it that we are wrong about the laws of nature?" Rather, it is, "How probable (or improbable) is it that, in this instance, God has reached into His creation to do something that nature alone could not?"

A miracle, seen from this point of view, is not an exception to the exceptionless; it is, instead, an occasion when nature is not left to itself. Should it be surprising that we would experience something completely unprecedented when God reaches into the order of nature? Or to put the question in the words of the apostle Paul, "Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:8).

Had God chosen to establish laws of the physical universe that He would never violate, then how could He announce His presence or endorse the teaching of one of His messengers? Any startling event would turn out, upon inspection, to be merely the inevitable consequence of earlier physical events in accordance with exceptionless physical laws. God would be, in the memorable words of Henri Lacordaire, the contemplative servant of the works of His own hands, unable to manifest himself by the single act which publicly and instantaneously announces His presence, the act of sovereignty.<sup>4</sup>

Here is at least one clear reason for God to have set up regularities which only He can override: He wishes to make himself known to us in a fashion that leaves no room for reasonable doubt. Eloquent speech and profound philosophy are rare, but they are not beyond the reach of the most gifted human beings. But the raising of the dead is a different matter altogether. Nicodemus reasoned justly when he recognized the divine seal on the ministry of Jesus: "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:2).

There must, then, be natural laws in order for God to



Belief in the resurrection of Jesus does not commit a Christian to disbelief in the flightworthiness of 747s.

### A SKEPTIC DOES THEOLOGY

Here we should pause to let a skeptical voice ask a question. "If God wished to bring about the events you call miracles," our skeptic might ask, "would it not be more dignified and majestic for Him to build them into the laws of the universe at the outset? Those laws, on the theistic hypothesis, are nothing but the physical expression of His will. Why should God — assuming that He exists at all — need to reach into His creation and adjust matters? Couldn't He get it right the first time?"<sup>3</sup>

The question is an invitation to engage in speculative theology, to justify the ways of God to man. And that is always a chancy business. But we are certainly entitled to question the assumptions our skeptic has built into his question. In particular, we should contest the idea that a miracle is merely a makeshift way for God to bring about particular events. This view is at odds with the Christian conception of God's foreknowledge and power. And it has unexpected consequences.

announce His presence in an unmistakable way by intervention. A river, as one of Hume's early critics pointed out, must flow before its stream can be diverted.<sup>5</sup> So if Christianity is true, we should actually expect to find evidence of stability and regularity in the universe. We should expect, that is, the very evidence that Hume tries to use against the credibility of miracles. His starting point is not incompatible with Christianity; properly understood, it is something that Christianity requires.

### OPENING THE FLOODGATES?

But in depriving Hume of his favorite weapon, have we gone too far? Let Hume himself put the challenge. "Does a man of sense," he writes to his friend Hugh Blair, "run after every silly tale of witches, or hobgoblins, or fairies, and canvass particularly the evidence? I never knew any one, that examined and deliberated about nonsense, who did not believe it before the end of his inquiries."<sup>6</sup>

## Science, Doubt, and Miracles

(continued from page 125)

And again: "If a miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion, men, in all ages, have been so much imposed on by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be a full proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even reject it without further examination."<sup>7</sup>

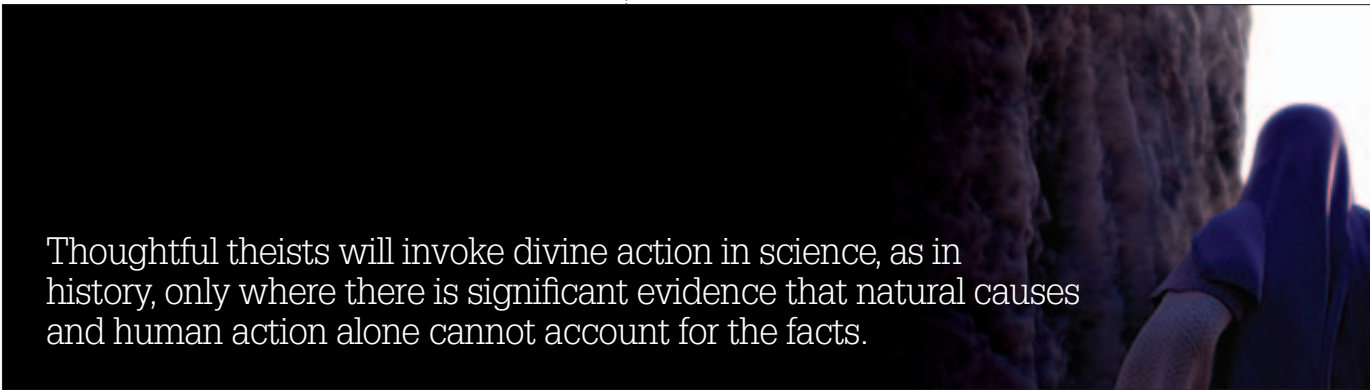
In other words, if we will not take his advice and hold the evidence for the laws of nature as a barrier against belief in miracles and reject them *without examination*, we have no defense against the great flood of nonsense and chicanery that have been peddled in the name of religion. Admit one miracle and you might as well admit them all. And that, bluntly put, is crazy.

No doubt it is. But once again, Hume is maneuvering the Christian into a false position. Openness to the possibility of miracles is not the same thing as hapless credulity about every miracle claim. The Scotland Yard detective Sir Robert Anderson, addressing this false dilemma, gives an incisive response. "These infidel books habitually assume that, if we refuse their nostrums, superstition is our only refuge. This is quite in keeping with the amazing conceit that characterizes them. Wisdom was born with the agnostics. They have monopolized the meager

reminds the Corinthians, to bear false witness against God (1 Corinthians 15:15).

Fortunately, a few simple questions can help us sort the wheat from the chaff, real from counterfeit miracle claims. Was the event accessible to the senses — the sort of thing we can see with our eyes or hear with our ears? Was it public, witnessed by more than just one person? Was it an event that we cannot plausibly attribute to the workings of nature or human agency alone? Did it occur in a context where we might reasonably expect that God would intervene? Did the first proclaimers have much to lose, and nothing (humanly speaking) to gain, by making their testimony public? Was the thing proclaimed in the place and at the time it was allegedly wrought, in a context where those eager to disprove it had the opportunity to bring forth evidence against it if they had any, yet did not?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, the event *might* have occurred just as described, but there is room for reasonable doubt on the matter. So it is with Mohammed's vision of the splitting of the moon, with the Mormon witnesses' view of the golden plates "with a spiritual eye," with the supposed healings of Vespasian recorded in Tacitus and the



Thoughtful theists will invoke divine action in science, as in history, only where there is significant evidence that natural causes and human action alone cannot account for the facts.

stock of intelligence that the evolutionary process has as yet produced for the guidance of the race! But there are Christians in the world who have quite as much sense as they have, who detest superstition as much as they do, and who have far more experience in detecting fallacies and exposing frauds. And if such men are Christians, it is not because they are too stupid to become infidels."<sup>8</sup>

### DOUBT AND INCREDULITY

What does this stance look like in practice? The key is the distinction between *doubt* and *incredulity*. Presented with an account of a putative miracle, one may reasonably request good evidence and withhold assent until that evidence is provided. The reason for hesitation is not that miracles cannot happen or that testimony cannot provide good evidence for a miracle; rather, it is that claims of divine intervention are not to be made lightly. It is a serious thing, as Paul

alleged healings at the tomb of the Abbe Paris, and the numerous miracle reports in the ecclesiastical history of the Middle Ages. But if the answer to all of these questions is yes, then the resources for a purely natural explanation of the event are severely limited. Testimony that meets these criteria is extraordinary and demands our closest attention.

### THE LIMITS OF SCIENCE

The distinction between reasonable doubt, on the one hand, and incredulity, on the other, also enables the thoughtful Christian to answer the charge that belief in miracles is a science stopper. Richard Dawkins poses this challenge by imagining what a committed believer in God would say to scientific researchers who are working to find natural causes for particular natural phenomena.

"If you don't understand how something works, never mind: just give up and say God did it. ... Please don't go to work on



the problem, just give up, and appeal to God. Dear scientist, don't *work* on your mysteries. Bring us your mysteries, for we can use them. Don't squander precious ignorance by researching it away. We need these glorious gaps as a last refuge for God."<sup>9</sup>

It would be fair, in responding to this "god of the gaps" charge, to point out that it paints a false picture of inquiry. The idea that there is some prespecified set of "gaps" in our knowledge that scientific research is systematically closing, one by one, is historically and scientifically naive. We are in a better position today to appreciate the enormous distance between chemistry and consciousness, between inorganic molecules and the simplest forms of life, between randomness and information, than ever before. Science closes some gaps, but it opens others.

But Dawkins' sarcasm misses the mark in another way as well. Thoughtful theists will invoke divine action in science, as in history, only where there is significant evidence that natural causes and human action alone cannot account for the facts. People may, of course, disagree as to whether there is significant evidence. But in practice, the problem is often not the quantity or quality of the evidence; resistance to the notion of divine intervention arises all too frequently from an absolute refusal to

consider supernatural explanations.

In now famous passage, the atheist Richard Lewontin offers a remarkably candid glimpse of this mindset. "We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us

to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world; but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door. The eminent Kant scholar Lewis Beck used to say that anyone who could believe in God could believe in anything. To appeal to an omnipotent deity is to allow that at any moment the regularities of nature may be ruptured, that miracles may happen."<sup>10</sup>

This is not doubt, and despite Lewontin's avowal, it is not science. It is adamant incredulity. It is philosophical naturalism masquerading as science. And Christians need make no apology for opposing naturalism, whatever alias it may be using. Science, properly understood, will tell us the limits of nature. But it will never tell us that nothing lies beyond those limits. ■

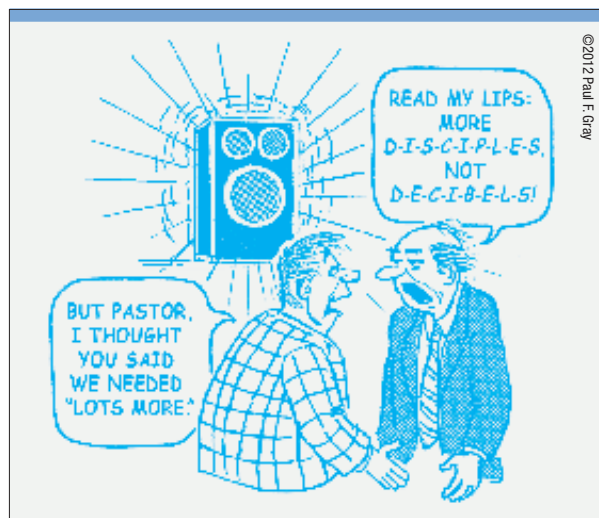


**TIMOTHY MCGREW, Ph.D.**, professor, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan

For a PDF copy of the essay "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth" by Timothy and Lydia McGrew, go to [ej.ag.org/201204/resurrectionofjesus](http://ej.ag.org/201204/resurrectionofjesus) or click here.

#### Notes

1. François Arago, *Éloge de Bailly, Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 2, (Paris: Gide & J. Baudry, 1854), 313.
2. John Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
3. One classic formulation of this objection comes from Voltaire's entry "Miracles" in his *Philosophical Dictionary*. See *The Works of Voltaire*, vol. 11 (New York: E.R. DuMont, 1901), 273.
4. Jean Baptiste, Henri Lacordaire, "Rationalism and Miracles," in *Masterpieces of Eloquence*, vol. 14, Mayo William Hazeltine, ed. (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1905), 5858.
5. William Adams, *An Essay in Answer to Mr. Hume's Essay on Miracles*, 3d ed. (London: B. White, 1767), 15.
6. Quoted in George Campbell, *A Dissertation on Miracles* (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1812), 8.
7. David Hume, *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (London: A. Millar, 1748), 200,01.
8. Sir Robert Anderson, *A Doubter's Doubts About Science and Religion* (New York: Gospel Publishing House, 1909), 92,93.
9. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Mariner Books, 2008), 159.
10. Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," *New York Times Book Review*, January 9, 1997, 31.



THE CHURCH THAT WORKS

# Tongues Without Power?

**D**uring the past 100 years, Pentecostals have become one of the fastest-growing and largest segments of Christianity around the world. Why? Because Pentecostal believers, both by doctrine and by experience, take a personal responsibility for making Christ known.

As believers devote themselves to relevant service, they bring the power of God to bear on human need. This is ministry. Occasionally some believers complain that they have had an experience with speaking in tongues but no power with it. Their problem may be that power is energy available to do work, not just a feeling.

Believers are not spiritual batteries to be charged for a buzz. We are conduits or circuits through whom God's power can flow to meet needs. Whether or not you feel power, God cannot use you to bring healing if you never go to the hurting. He cannot make you a soul winner if you shun sinners, and you will not be energized for God's service until you reach out to people in need.

Dr. Earl Creps, author of *Off-Road Disciplines* and a student of postmodern culture, counsels "seeker-sensitive" churches that do not feel a need to incorporate baptism in the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts into their ministry models. He poses this question: "First of all, are you doing anything dangerous enough that you need the Holy Spirit?"<sup>1</sup> If your church is not storming the gates of hell and your lifestyles and ministries do not provoke the devil, power is not an issue.

— MEL SURFACE, Alvarado, Texas, and RICK DUBOSE, Hurst, Texas  
Adapted from *The Church That Works* by Rick DuBose and Mel Surface

**Note**

1. Dr. Earl Creps, "The Holy Spirit in a Postmodern Generation," North Texas District Assemblies of God 23-Hour Seminar, October, 2003.

“

Let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.

**GALATIANS 6:9, NLT**

”

## PREACHERS, PREPOSITIONS, AND PRONOUNS: ENGLISH LESSONS FROM THE PEW

### ME, MYSELF, AND I

**D**espite rampant misuse by our esteemed government officials and misguided erudite Hollywood stars, we are not to use "myself" as a personal pronoun.

- "Myself and Michele welcome you to the annual Easter Egg Hunt."
- "Myself and the entire cast thank you for this major award."
- "Roger and myself ignored the weatherman's warning."
- "She called myself and my partner incompetent."

Did you catch the grammatical abuses in each sentence? (Refer to corrections below.)

"Myself" is a reflexive word. It must refer to or emphasize another

word in the sentence. "Myself" does not replace "I" as a subject. "Myself" does not replace "me" as an object. It never goes first.

- I took the blame upon myself.

When you are the subject *and* the object in a sentence, using "myself" is correct.

- He caught himself misusing the word "I" in a sentence. Right again.
- Ann excused herself from the room.
- They shouted themselves hoarse as the team scored another point.

See the subject/object correlation? He/himself, she/herself, they/themselves are reflective duos.

- Call my secretary or myself. No.

Call my secretary or me. Correct.

This is tricky, as the implied subject is "you." The only word that would reflect back on the implied "you" would be yourself — which of course would not make sense in this sentence.

- Take care of it yourself. This would again have the implied "you" as the subject, and "yourself" then reflects that "you."

**Remember:**

- Never use "myself" as the subject in a sentence
- Only use reflexive (myself, herself, etc.) when coupled with a previously stated or implied matching noun or pronoun.

**CORRECTIONS:**

- Michele and I.
- The entire cast and I.
- Roger and I.
- She called my partner and me.

— KARA BETH HUDDLESTON,  
Thomaston, Georgia



## GROWING LEADERS

### PROVERBIAL INTAKE: WISDOM

**T**he Bible is loaded with insightful teachings that improve our lives. We fill our soul with love, prosperity, hope, discipline, and integrity.

The Book of Proverbs contains over 100 verses on wisdom and being wise, signifying the importance of this area in our walk with God.

When King Solomon faced the decision to pray for wealth or wisdom, he chose wisdom (2 Chronicles 1:8–14). He used his wisdom to acquire great wealth and riches beyond imagination. It is widely believed his wealth in today's dollars would be valued at well over \$1 trillion. More important than riches, Solomon recorded his wisdom for us to apply in our own lives (see Proverbs 8:11 and 16:16).

We best define wisdom as putting knowledge or experience to work. We derive knowledge from education, and it is of little value if not applied. We gain experience by putting our knowledge to work, and is of little value unless we learn from it. We do not become wise by knowledge or experience alone. It is the combination of the two that produces wisdom (see Proverbs 4:7).

Experience is a great teacher. This, however, takes time. Figuring out what works on our own is a long process. Learning from others provides a shortcut. This is precisely why Proverbs plays such a significant role in our lives. We

gain wisdom by learning and applying the teachings of King Solomon.

I challenge you to do a one-month study of Proverbs, reading one chapter each morning. Select one verse on wisdom and put it into practice that day. You will be amazed by the results.

— JAMES L. CASTELLANO  
Emmaus, Pennsylvania



## UPSIDE-DOWN PERSPECTIVE

### I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

*"For the Lord gives wisdom" (Proverbs 2:6).*

I recently came across a Scripture that expressed my thoughts concerning a personal decision. It seems Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was facing an overwhelming situation in which he declares, "We do not know what to do" (2 Chronicles 20:12). Have you ever felt like that?

I want to make right decisions. I do not want to go outside God's will and find myself flailing about in the midst of consequences I bring on myself. Sometimes the more I try to reason, the more I seek another's counsel, the more muddled my thoughts become, I cry out, "I do not know what to do."



This is when I retreat. I stop talking to others about my dilemma. Ultimately, I need God's wisdom if I am to achieve success in life. I glanced back at the remainder of the Scripture and found my answer: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You" (emphasis mine).

I sit quietly before God and ask Him for His wisdom (James 1:5). Sometimes the answer seems totally out of sync with anything others have advised me. Most often, God leads me to act, not out of logic, but on faith. I tend to make excuses like Moses; but the Lord reminds me, that like Moses, I am more concerned about my own inadequacy than God's adequacy. From that perspective, God calls me to catapult with courage, knowing His wisdom provides all I need.

— PATTI ANN THOMPSON, Kansas City, Missouri

## LEADERLIFE

### BITE YOUR TONGUE

**M**ost leaders have this special gift — a silver tongue. It is one way church leaders share vision, motivate, counsel, and encourage. Being a wordsmith is a gift. But it can also be a problem. Sometimes we have to bite our tongues and keep quiet. For example:

**Meetings.** The chair asks, "What should we do?" Silence. Nobody speaks up. But we have 10 great ideas and our tendency is to jump into that silence ... and those in the room will let us. But in our rush to develop our plans, we forgot to develop leaders.

**Suggestion:** Let someone else break the uncomfortable silence or ask questions to get the group started.

**Counseling.** Many times we ask tough questions that are followed by long silences. Growing antsy and breaking into these stretches may mean we cut our counselee off in the middle of his or her own revelation.

**Suggestion:** If we can resist the urge to talk our way out of a pregnant pause, we may help a hurting person give birth to a new insight.

**Offensive e-mails.** The e-mail is irrational and accusatory. In our anger, we hit "reply" and tear down their argument coolly, logically. Triumphant, we click our "send" button.

**Suggestion:** Hit "save" instead of send. Consider your unsent reply an exercise in releasing your anger, and let it go. Tomorrow you may be in a much better place for responding. Or, do not respond at all.

— PATTI ANN THOMPSON



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“  
Pursue a  
righteous  
life — a life  
of wonder,  
faith, love,  
steadiness,  
courtesy.

1 TIMOTHY 6:11,  
*The Message*

”

## MONEYWISE

### SPIRITUALITY OF MONEY

**G**iving is a *spiritual obligation*. The Bible is clear: people of faith are obligated to give, and those who do so are especially noted and blessed by God. Consider these biblical texts:

- Deuteronomy 15:7: “Don’t be mean and selfish with your money” (CEV<sup>1</sup>).
- 2 Corinthians 9:7: “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
- Isaiah 58:10: “If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”
- Psalm 112:9: “They will always be remembered and greatly praised, because they were kind and freely gave to the poor” (CEV).
- Deuteronomy 15:14: “The more the Lord has given you, the more you should give them” (CEV).
- Proverbs 29:7: “The wicked don’t care about the rights of the poor, but good people do” (CEV).
- Proverbs 14:21: “God blesses everyone who is kind to the poor” (CEV).

— VICTOR PARACHIN, Tulsa, Oklahoma

#### Note

1. Scripture quotations marked CEV are taken from The Contemporary English Version with Apocrypha. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, 1995 by the American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.



## HOLY LAUGHTER

### WORSHIP SONGS FOR “SEEKERS”



#### Love Divine

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Singles groups, dances for teens,  
More than bars, church is compelling,

For a red-hot dating scene.

Singles, divorced, all are welcomed,  
Find the love that’s, oh so, right;  
Visit us on Sunday morning,  
Have a date this Friday night.

#### At Therapy

(Sing to the tune *At Calvary*.)

Years I spent with lowest self-esteem,  
Self-help books on pop psychology,  
Knowing there must be a cure for me  
At therapy.  
Self-acceptance finally came to me;  
Free from guilt and shame and self-pity;  
There I found A.A. serenity,  
At therapy.

#### I Can Sing of Your Love Two Minutes

(Sing to the tune *I Can Sing of Your Love Forever*.)

I can sing of your love two minutes  
(repeat 25 times).

#### Just As I Ask

(Sing to the tune *Just As I Am*.)

Just as I ask, I make this plea,  
For health and wealth, prosperity,  
And for all the promises on TV,  
O Lamb of God, I ask, I ask.

#### I Love to Give to Missions

(Sing to the tune *I Love to Tell the Story*.)

I love to give to missions  
It soothes my guilty soul,  
Of Jesus’ commission,  
Of Jesus’ call to “go.”  
I love to give to missions,  
Because I know it’s true;  
It satisfies my calling  
To stay and send out you.

Other possibilities include *Sweet Minute of Prayer*, *The Gold-Plated Cross*, and *Lord, I Lift Your Name in Vain*.

— JAMES N. WATKINS, Upland, Indiana



## AGWM Postpones Final Decision on Partnership With Wycliffe

AG World Missions has postponed its final decision concerning its working relationship with Wycliffe Bible Translators until recommendations from a review panel appointed by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) are made known. Earlier this year, the Assemblies



of God World Missions Executive Committee set a May 15 deadline to determine whether to continue its partnership with Wycliffe after the organization announced that, in some instances, other terms would be used for “Father,” “Son” and “Son of God” in an effort to make Scripture more easily understood

by Muslims. AGWM openly disagreed with Wycliffe’s stated and publicized decision and met twice with Wycliffe representatives in hopes of resolving the issue. “If, after the WEA panel review is complete, Wycliffe’s position concerning familial language is compatible with AGWM’s,” states AGWM Executive Director Greg Mundis, “we will gratefully continue what has been a long-standing and effective partnership.” However, Mundis emphasizes that AGWM’s position on using the terms “Father,” “Son” and “Son of God” will not change. The AGWM Executive Committee states, “AGWM is steadfastly committed to the divinely chosen terms of Father and Son and their clearly intended meanings as revealed pervasively in the inspired text of the Old and New Testaments.”

“We have given much thought and prayer in this process, and we continue to trust the Lord for a mutually acceptable resolution with Wycliffe,” says Mundis. To read a position paper concerning familial language written by AG scholars and missiologists, and an AGWM executive summary statement, visit: <http://fatherson.ag.org/>.

— RANDY HURST, Springfield, Missouri

## AG HELPLINE

# Must a Moral Struggle Become a Moral Failure?

**T**he prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty” (Proverbs 22:3).

One of my most unpleasant duties is dealing with ministerial failure due to infidelity, spousal abuse, sexual abuse, pornography, alcohol and gambling addictions, extortion, and even embezzlement.

When a minister confesses a moral failure, he must immediately surrender his credential card. That card, nestled in his wallet and untouched except for annual replacement, contains important information that could prevent a sinful mudslide. On the back is printed: “AG HelpLine. For anonymous and confidential counseling or referral for Assemblies of God ministers and their family members.” **The HelpLine number is 1-800-867-4011.**

I often ask a minister as he surrenders his card, “Did you ever reach out through this confidential helpline?” I have never had a person say he sought this help, let alone at the point of a major moral failure.

It is difficult for ministers to turn to their leadership when they are struggling. They value complete confidentiality, which is not always possible. Most feel vulnerable and ashamed. However, considering that a minister’s moral failure usually jeopardizes his livelihood, his family’s security, his ability to work in future ministry, and even his retirement benefits, should not he at least consult an anonymous, confidential, and free counseling help?

“A Helping Hand,” a brochure produced by the Assemblies of God Pastoral Care Office reads: “The 800 counseling helpline number for ministers and their family members will enable you to get quick, professional, Christian help in your time of crisis or concern. With the ability to remain anonymous, you will be able to openly share whatever you need, without fear. The counselor will offer advice, referral, or specific direction. Not only will this phone service help with crisis intervention, but it will also help you deal with your situation before it becomes long lasting.”

Whatever the burden, problem, or temptation pestering you, make that anonymous call. It could make all the difference between your struggle and a moral failure.

— CARL COLLETTI, superintendent, New Jersey District of the Assemblies of God



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## Churches Retain Firing Capabilities in Supreme Court Ruling

**T**he U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that religious employees cannot sue for job discrimination. The unanimous January ruling in *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC* marks the high court's first venture into the legal realm of "ministerial exemption" regarding work discrimination.



“

Such an order would have plainly violated the Church's freedom under the Religion Clauses to select its own ministers.

”

— Chief Justice John Roberts

The decision affirms the First Amendment freedom of religion in that churches, rather than the government, ultimately have control over whom they can hire or fire. If the court had allowed an opinion from the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals to stand, it might have resulted in religious organizations throughout the country being forced by the government to hire employees holding religious beliefs at odds with the organization's doctrines.

“By requiring the Church to accept a minister it did not want, such an order would have plainly violated the Church's freedom under the Religion Clauses to select its own ministers,” wrote Chief Justice John Roberts.

The case stems from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission suing a Redford, Michigan, church school on behalf of Cheryl Perich after her dismissal. Although teaching regular fourth-grade subjects comprised most of her duties at the 84-student Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod school, she spent 45 minutes a day in religious instruction, including leading devotional exercises and chapel services.

But Perich went on disability leave with what doctors eventually diagnosed as narcolepsy. The small school hired a replacement teacher and paid wages and full benefits to Perich for the 7 months she missed work. Perich sought to return to teaching, but Hosanna-Tabor asked for her voluntary resignation over concerns that she could no longer adequately perform her teaching duties. After Perich refused, the congregation rescinded her call. Perich filed a federal wrongful termination complaint with the EEOC to regain her job.

Although this marked the first Supreme Court determination in such a matter, lower courts have upheld exemptions for religious organizations regarding employee treatment for 40 years. Lower courts consistently have ruled that the government has no business determining the qualifications or performances of those who carry out religious functions such as preaching or leading worship.

“If ministers were allowed to sue for employment discrimination, judges and juries would wind up deciding who is a good minister, worthy of retention, and who is not,” said University of Virginia law professor Douglas Laycock, who represented Hosanna-Tabor on behalf of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.



## MOST PASTORS BELIEVE IN A LITERAL ADAM AND EVE

**W**hile an overwhelming majority of Protestant pastors believe that God created Adam and Eve as literal people and did not use evolution to create humans, there is a fairly even divide over the view that the earth is 6,000 years old, according to a recent survey by LifeWay Research.

The survey showed that of the 1,000 U.S. ministers polled, 73 percent disagreed with the statement, “I believe God used evolution to create people.”

A larger portion of Protestant pastors, 82 percent, concurred with, “I believe that Adam and Eve were literal people.”

A 2010 Gallup poll indicates that pastors are more likely to be creationist — believing that all things were created substantially as they now exist as detailed in the first chapter of Genesis rather than gradually evolved — compared to the American public at large.

## PREACHING ON FINANCES NOT A TURNOFF



**A** new study of pastors by AG Financial Solutions in conjunction with the Barna Group shows that 40 percent of pastors who preached about giving during a one-year stretch saw an uptick in donations to their churches. Yet the same survey says that 20 percent of ministers were reluctant to bring up the topic from the pulpit.

“Pastors are often afraid to discuss this subject because they think it's either unnecessary or too painful for a down economy,” Gregg Hood, senior vice president at AG Financial Solutions in Springfield, Missouri, told *Enrichment*. “But the real key is to know how to bring up financial issues. We actually see very little pushback when the preaching is



Forty percent of Americans think God created humans in their present form, 38 percent say God used evolution to develop humans, and 16 percent believe God had no role in the process.

In the LifeWay study, only one in five pastors thinks that most of his or her congregation gives credence to evolution.

Slightly more than one in three pastors teaches on creation and evolution more than once a year. About the same number say they rarely or never approach the topics. As expected, mainline pastors (25 percent) are evolution supporters more often than evangelical pastors (8 percent).

Interestingly, those leading larger congregations are less likely to consider evolution as factual compared to small-church pastors. Just 4 percent of pastors heading congregations of 250 or more are evolution backers, versus 13 percent of those with a flock under 50.

Evangelical preachers are also more prone to adhere to the view that Adam and Eve were literal people as opposed to mainline expositors (82 percent to 50 percent). Pastors with the highest level of education being a bachelor's degree strongly agreed with Adam and Eve's literal biblical existence compared to those who have attained an advanced degree (65 percent).

Protestant pastors are almost evenly split on the statement, "I believe the earth is approximately 6,000 years old." Overall, 46 percent agree and 43 percent disagree.

## REPORT GIVES INTRIGUING GLIMPSE INTO AG CHURCHES

**A** comprehensive once-a-decade **Faith Communities Today** survey gives a fascinating portrait of what is going on in Assemblies of God houses of worship across the nation. Beyond the most-often reported annual statistics of baptisms, membership, and salvations, the facts and figures compiled by Statistician Sherri Doty provide insight into exactly who is involved and what kind of programs are happening in the Fellowship.



More than one in five services (21 percent) in the Fellowship is preached in a language other than English. Spanish is spoken in just more than 15 percent of AG churches services in the United States, but sermons also are preached in Korean, Russian, French, Portuguese, Swahili, Vietnamese, and several other tongues.

Communion is observed every week in 15.5 percent of AG churches, often in 54.6 percent, sometimes in 26 percent, and seldom in 2 percent.

Support groups, such as divorce recovery or a 12-step addiction program, receive a lot of emphasis at 12.7 percent of AG churches, and some emphasis at 23.1 percent. While 62.9 percent report having no such groups, 1.3 percent indicate they are a specialty.

Just under 30 percent of congregations report no activities or programs for young adults, while 13.6 percent indicate there are no youth or teen programs or activities.

In a benevolence outreach, 43.2 percent of AG churches are directly involved in operating a food pantry or soup kitchen while another 22.9 percent engage in those efforts with another group. One in 10 churches operates a day-care center, preschool, or before- and after-school program on its own while 2.3 percent do so in conjunction with another organization. Regarding elderly or homebound programs, 24.1 percent provide it directly, and 5.4 percent do so with another group. Around one in 10 AG congregations is involved in programs for migrants or immigrants.

Technologically speaking, 94.2 percent of AG churches use e-mail, 54.6 percent have a Facebook (or other social media) presence, 47.8 percent have a website, 23.4 percent use podcasts, and 21.3 percent post blogs.

In assessing the theological outlook of regular participants, 78.2 percent of pastors pegged them primarily as very or somewhat conservative, 16.8 percent moderate and 2.3 percent very or somewhat liberal.

The report indicates that the majority of AG congregations (54 percent) are located in villages, towns, or cities of less than 50,000 people. The rest of the sites are virtually evenly divided between rural areas, suburbs, and large cities each with around 15 percent.

Note: The statistics represented in this article represent survey data. For official Fellowship data, visit <http://www.ag.org>.

done with warmth, sensitivity, and practicality."

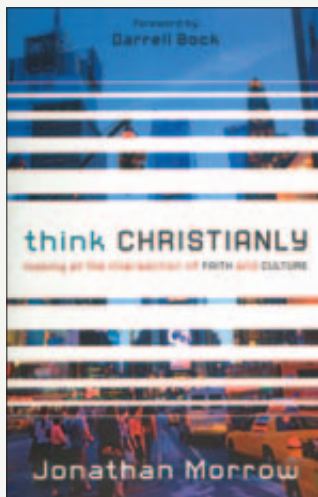
Nearly a quarter of pastors surveyed had not preached about giving in the previous year. However, Hood — who travels extensively around the country to speak at churches — says pastors who focus on stewardship usually see giving increase by as much as one-third.

Overall, 40 percent of pastors who talked about giving in a one-year period yielded tangible results in increased offerings, including 58 percent of those leading congregations of more than 250 members. Statistically, less than 1 percent of pastors said giving went down because they mentioned it.

Among those who did not teach about money, 41 percent said they did not believe it was necessary, 22 percent indicated they did not believe it was as important as other topics, and 19 percent said they did not feel led to do so. Others explained that congregants already gave what they could, that giving comes naturally to mature Christians, and that it is actually God who provides the money or directs people to give. Some pastors said they simply do not like to talk about money, they do not sense God wanting them to preach about it, or are not comfortable "hitting people up" for funds, especially in a tough economy.

## THINK CHRISTIANLY: Looking at the Intersection of Faith and Culture

JONATHAN MORROW (*Zondervan, 304 pp., paperback*)



**I**n seminary I took a course titled, “Theology and Popular Culture.” If *Think Christianly* had been available, it would have been required reading.

Jonathan Morrow’s book creatively explores the intersections of faith and culture for ways the church can engage the world with a more compelling and effective witness. Morrow structures his work in three sections. Part one describes the intersection and urges the church toward active engagement with the culture. Here Morrow carefully constructs the foundations of witness, staying true to evangelical doctrine rather than elevating “relevance” to gospel significance.

Part two encourages thinking theologically about all aspects of life with emphasis on imitating the example of Jesus. Part three applies this critical engagement with culture and Christian thinking about life to specific “areas we must engage,” which include the nature of truth, sexuality, media, social injustice, politics, faith and science, and creation care.

Morrow fearlessly addresses touchy subjects and pressing issues with a rare blend of openness, civility, and conviction. One may not agree with all of his positions, but the theological process he employs can benefit many Christians as they seek

to engage cultural intersections thoughtfully, constructively, and Christianly.

Morrow adds a unique touch to the book by including personal interviews with Christian leaders at the close of each chapter (as well as bibliographies for further study). These interviews help this largely philosophical book remain immensely practical, providing readers with real-life examples of faith engaging the culture. *Think Christianly* offers a church absorbed with sentimentalism and isolationism a path toward theological thinking and active engagement of the world to the glory of God.

— Reviewed by Nathaniel Rhoads, pastor, Word of Life Fellowship (Assemblies of God), Winnemucca, Nevada.



MORROW

## The Wonder of the Universe: Hints of God in Our Fine-Tuned World

KARL W. GIBERSON (*InterVarsity Press, 216 pp., paperback*)

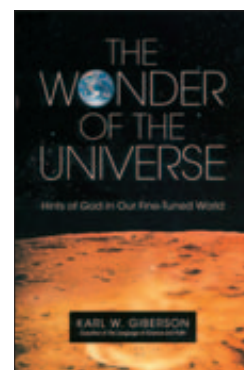
**I**n *The Wonder of the Universe*, Karl W. Giberson shows how mainstream scientific views can be compatible with a belief in God. He begins the book with the story of Anthony Flew (1923–2010), a British philosopher who was a notorious atheist. Flew, the son of a Methodist minister, was raised as a Christian, and in his youth attended a school founded by John Wesley. Yet, at age 15, Flew became an atheist. After a lifetime championing atheism, his willingness to “follow the argument wherever it leads” led him to believe in the existence of God while stopping short of returning to the Christianity of his youth.

In the first part of the book, encompassing chapters 1–6, Giberson provides an informative history of crucial scientific discoveries about the universe while pointing out examples of the fine-tuning that makes human life possible. In an interlude between book sections, he addresses the question of whether or not we can get from science to religion. In the second part of the book, chapters 7–10, Giberson notes the limits of science in answering questions about purpose and meaning while urging caution in employing arguments about the fine-tuning of the universe to “prove” the existence of God.

In chapter 10, Giberson steps beyond the scientific approach to understanding the world to consider the possibilities of “realities that transcend science rather than simply enlarge it.” He finds that if we move beyond looking for gaps in science that make room for God, we will find boundaries in scientific understanding that allow compatibility between faith and science.

As accurately portrayed in the title, Giberson finds hints of God in our fine-tuned world, rather than compelling proof for a Creator. His restraint in writing the first nine chapters of the book “through the single lens of a scientist sifting evidence” makes the book a useful resource for pastors to recommend to seekers with scientific backgrounds.

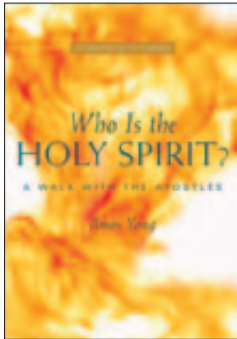
— Reviewed by Christina M.H. Powell, Ph.D., Boston, Massachusetts.





## Who Is the Holy Spirit? A Walk With the Apostles

AMOS YONG (Paraclete Press, 224 pp., paperback)



In his new book, *Who is the Holy Spirit? A Walk With the Apostles*, Amos Yong, J. Rodman Williams Professor of Theology at Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach, Virginia, suggests that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world in a much wider way than most Christians think. Historically, Christians, including Pentecostals, have viewed the work of the Holy Spirit in almost entirely individualistic and ecclesiastical terms.

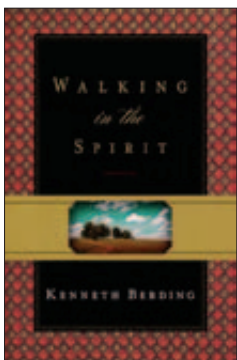
For instance, we conceived the Holy Spirit as the Spirit who regenerates, sanctifies, empowers, and guides Christians in their individual and corporate lives. Yong, however, focusing his attention on the writings of Luke in his Gospel and Acts, exhorts his readers to take a broader look. According to Yong, the Spirit is active in the world, seeking to bring about renewal in the wider public square — including the societal, economic, and political realms. Jesus' empowering of His followers to announce the arrival of the kingdom of God, according to Yong, has profound political, economic, and social ramifications.

Yong's book is indeed a welcomed addition to the field of Lukan studies, reminding us that the Spirit is at work in the world in ways we may not have previously imagined. This book can be a valuable resource for those wanting to stretch their thinking concerning the work of the Spirit in the world today. Nonetheless, while recognizing the broader ramifications of the Spirit's work in the world, the church must remain focused on Luke's evident purpose in writing his two-volume work revealed in Jesus' dominical promise of Acts 1:8 to be His Spirit-empowered witnesses at home and to the ends of the earth.

— Reviewed by Denzil R. (Denny) Miller, D.Min., AGWM missionary and director of the Acts in Africa Initiative.

## Walking in the Spirit

KEN BERDING (Crossway Books, 128 pp., paperback)



*Walking in the Spirit* is a tightly focused work about a life led by the Spirit. Berding specifically draws his points from Romans 8:1–24.

With seven chapters and two appendices, one of which addresses academic issues in the passage (i.e., Old Testament usage in the New Testament and the use of the Law), the author encourages readers to engage each reference to the Holy Spirit in the passage. Each chapter

addresses a different element of the work of the Spirit following the flow of the text. Chapter one addresses walking in the Spirit. Chapter two focuses on what it means to set one's mind on the things of the Spirit. Chapter three details what it means to put to death the misdeeds of the body by the Spirit. Chapter four covers being led by the Spirit, chapter five what it means to know God as our Father by the Spirit (no, Abba does not mean "daddy"), and chapter six about what it means to hope in the Spirit.

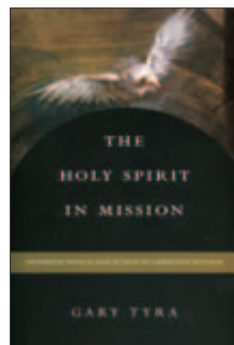
For Pentecostals, chapter seven on praying in the Spirit might be disappointing. The author does not see this as praying in tongues, but to pray in accordance with the leading of the Spirit. Instead of automatically praying that someone gets better from an illness or an accident, our prayers should pay closer attention to how the Holy Spirit may lead us to pray. Instead of praying for healing, perhaps our prayers should be for strength during a difficult time, etc.

The book reads like a seven-part sermon series on the Holy Spirit. Each chapter is highly anecdotal and abounds with application. Study questions are at the end of each chapter. This book will be useful in guiding a sermon series on the Holy Spirit or for use in a small group or home Bible study.

— Reviewed by Brian Fulthorp, M.Div., Assemblies of God minister, Phoenix, Arizona.

## The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness

GARY TYRA (InterVarsity Academic, 206 pp., paperback)



Gary Tyra's book, *The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness*, is a welcomed addition to the field of pneumatology. His stated purpose in writing is to provide "a practical theology of the Spirit to guide pastors and church leaders in forming biblically informed, Spirit-empowered, missionally faithful churches." Standing on the shoulders of Pentecostal scholars of the

last three decades, Tyra, associate professor of biblical and practical theology at Vanguard University, uses the Gospel of Luke and Acts to clearly and convincingly unwrap Luke's missional pneumatology. Writing as an "evangelical with a Pentecostal-charismatic heritage" to "fellow evangelicals," he calls the church in America to a prophetic-missional view of ministry. According to Tyra, a biblically based, missional pneumatology is the way forward for any church wanting to effectively engage the postmodern, post-Christian culture of the West. In doing this, Tyra calls on the church to embrace three missional paradigms: prophetic evangelism, prophetic edification, and prophetic equipping.

Tyra's missional approach to the work of the Spirit in the church and in the life of the believer is a sorely needed correction to the self-centered teaching on the Holy Spirit that has pervaded much

## Books

of the Christian market in the last few decades. His book further speaks to many classical Pentecostals who have become disillusioned with what they perceive to be a narrow, self-serving Pentecostalism in the world today. My one disappointment is that Tyra makes no attempt to present a clear, comprehensive treatment of the biblical experience of Spirit baptism the empowering experience that Luke clearly showcases as the indispensable prerequisite to Spirit-enabled, prophetic ministry. While speaking eloquently about the empowering role of the Spirit in prophetic and missional ministry, Tyra fails to offer his readers an adequate explanation of that essential experience that initiates one into such a ministry. Notwithstanding, Tyra's book is a must read for any leader wishing to lead his or her church into authentic New Testament ministry.

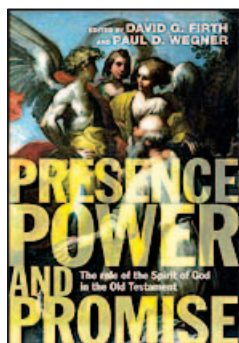


TYRA

— Reviewed by Denzil R. (Denny) Miller, D.Min.,  
AGWM missionary and director of the Acts in Africa Initiative.

### Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament

DAVID G. FIRTH AND PAUL D. WEGNER, eds.  
(*InterVarsity*, 414 pp., paperback)



**This volume contains 21 essays** by various scholars covering a broad swath of the Old Testament context and literature regarding the role of the Spirit of God. The editors partitioned this book into eight sections covering the role of the Spirit in ancient Near East context, creation, wisdom, creativity, prophecy, leadership, the future, and even a final chapter on Qumran.

While the editors do not cover every Old Testament text that pertains to usage of the Hebrew term *rûah* in this volume, it still offers a wide perspective on the more prominent and substantial usage. Some of the contributors have proposed lesser continuity between the two Testaments with regard to the Spirit (John Walton), while others see a far greater continuity (Robert Hubbard). There are a number of varying interpretations of *rûah* that attempt to demonstrate the wide semantic range of meaning and significance from wind, breath, disposition, spirit and Spirit, and at times its intentional ambiguity in Scripture.

A number of the more helpful articles include the contributions of John Walton (ANE context), Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (creation), Daniel J. Estes (Psalm 51), Richard S. Hess (Bezalel and Oholiab), David G. Firth (leadership), Daniel I. Block (in the

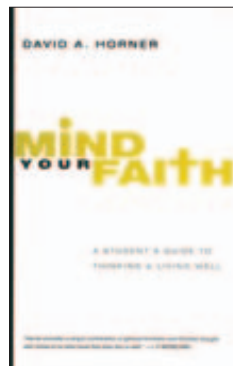
Prophets), and Geert W. Lorein (Qumran).

Altogether this collection of essays is inestimably significant for continuing studies on the person and work of the Spirit, particularly pertaining to the Old Testament. While many of the contributions are technical, they remain largely accessible to laypeople, pastors, and scholars. Thus, any person wanting to pursue further investigation into this topic should avail himself or herself of this volume. The editors hope the numerous contributions serve to generate further research in the study of the Spirit of God.

— Reviewed by Rick Wadholm, Jr., M.Div.,  
pastor, Karlstad Assembly of God, Karlstad, Minnesota.

### Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well

DAVID A. HORNER (*InterVarsity Academic*, 272 pp., paperback)



**With the alarming trend** of young adults leaving the church, *Mind Your Faith* is a must-read for every student or young professional. Written with young adults in mind, David Horner attacks the undertow of ideas about reason, belief, faith, and truth in a compelling look at how faith and reason come together to create a dynamic life based on sound truth. His main premise is hard to miss: "Ideas have consequences: what we believe determines how we behave, and ultimately who we become."

Giving a thorough discourse on beliefs and truth, logic, common worldviews, and the proper roles of faith and reason, the author empowers readers to think more comprehensively about whether their beliefs line up with reality and affect how they live. Horner thoughtfully critiques the common mindsets and misconceptions in the arena of the university today and provides a sound rebuttal for the necessity and credibility of faith in all areas of life.

This book does not end as only a brilliant outline of basic apologetics, it also reveals how beliefs shape behavior and encourages the outworking of reason and faith in a lifestyle of compassion and character. Horner encourages young adults to follow through on their faith by combining it with wisdom and a community to work out all that it means to *think, believe, and live well*.

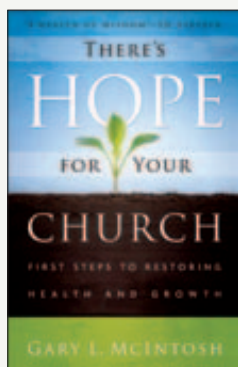
*Mind Your Faith* is an excellent resource for any pastor or campus minister seeking to help their students understand why their faith is reasonable and can be trusted to guide their lives. Although written with the young Christian in mind, this book is applicable to any age, stage of life, or belief system. Wherever you stand, this book will have a profound impact on your understanding of faith and its impact on your life.

— Reviewed by Lindy Tilus, missionary personnel and records  
coordinator, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, Springfield, Missouri.



## There's Hope For Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth

GARY MCINTOSH (Baker Books, 208 pp., paperback)



*There's Hope For Your Church* offers pastors and church leaders a 12-step journey for revitalizing or reinvigorating a local congregation. McIntosh, author of numerous church-health texts, especially focusing on the plight of the smaller congregation, delivers yet again with practical insights for the “roughly three-fourths of established churches in North America that are either declining or on a long-term plateau.”

McIntosh's most valuable insights include recognizing how pastoral leadership styles impact revitalization success and the critical need for rebuilding a church's outward focus. He also offers an accurate and helpful description of the morale that typically emerges in a struggling church.

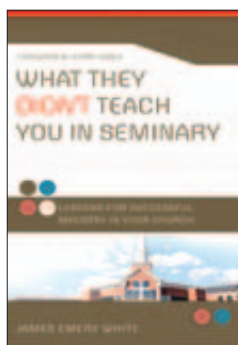
But McIntosh does not limit his focus to defining the problems these churches face. The bulk of this book seeks to chart a straightforward and practical series of steps back to effectiveness. A strong believer in the potential of smaller churches, McIntosh describes the commitment it takes to lead them effectively. Along the way, he offers a process for identifying God's unique vision for the congregation, steps for building a healthy leadership coalition, advice on decision-making processes, and ways to deal with the inevitable resistance that accompanies change.

McIntosh's experience, gleaned from consulting directly with more than a thousand churches, will convince small-church pastors that they have a friend who understands the road before them, and one that will coach them through the twists and turns they will face. *There's Hope For Your Church* is one book smaller-church pastors will find themselves returning to again and again.

— Reviewed by Michael Clarensau, D.Min., senior director, Healthy Church Network, Springfield, Missouri

## What They Didn't Teach You in Seminary: 25 Lessons for Successful Ministry in Your Church

JAMES EMERY WHITE (Baker Books, 188 pp., paperback)



**Unfortunate title. Good read.**

When the forward (by Perry Noble) and the author's introduction spend the bulk of their words insisting they do not hate seminary, it is time to rethink the title. It is an unnecessary and unfortunate swipe at education. White simply contends that he did not learn all of the important things in a classroom. That will not surprise any ministry leader.

Other than the cheap-shot title, the content of the book is excellent. White writes in a readable, enjoyable style, illustrating his points with interesting anecdotes and transparent personal history from planting Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. His breadth of experience will speak to everyone from the novice to the seasoned leader. In fact, the book provides a quality option for staff development material — enough content for your melancholies and choleries, enough entertainment for your sanguines.

Although White's examples come primarily from a multistaff, megachurch setting, they are eminently transferable to various church and other ministry demographics. Primarily focused on the leader, the subjects range from personal integrity to conflict resolution to vision casting.

White also tackles several of the ugly temptations of ministry

leadership, such as jealousy and narcissism.

The 25 wonderfully concise chapters do more than point out problems, however. White also offers suggestions for preventing problems and implementing strong leadership. He gives solid scriptural documentation throughout. The book is practical, encouraging, and honest. You will walk away with some great illustrations and better yet, sound advice.

— Reviewed by Lori O'Dea, D.Min., lead pastor, New Life Assembly of God, Grand Ledge, Michigan.

## Amplified Leadership: 5 Practices to Establish Influence, Build People, and Impact Others for a Lifetime

DAN REILAND (Charisma House, 240 pp., paperback)



*Amplified Leadership* is Dan Reiland's newest offering on church and leadership. It's a keeper. Buy it. Read it. Underline it. Keep it on the shelf. The subtitle says it all, “Five practices to establish influence, build people, and impact others for a lifetime.”

*Amplified Leadership* is an uncomplicated read, easy to follow, and written with application in mind. This book is an excellent reminder for longtime leaders and

a superb guide and map for those just beginning the leadership journey. This book is not just about skills but the character of the

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## Books

leader — a healthy self versus the self-protecting self.

As a leader and reader of leadership material, I appreciate his first tenant of leadership: Establish a Relationship. This inaugural practice befits what ministry leadership is all about — relationships. Reiland has grasped the nuance of 21st-century leadership founded on permission of the follower and not the position of the leader. He points out that part of the character and skill set of the ministry leader is not only to connect with others but also to appreciate people for who they are.

Reiland's five practices are: Establish a Relationship, Engage a Follower, Embrace a Team Member, Coach an Apprentice, and Mentor a New Leader. With examples to back up his practices, Reiland offers a salient pathway for the leader in any setting. Here is one gem to note:

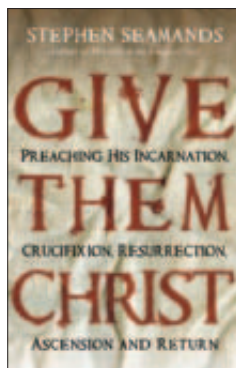
"The process of equipping would help a person become an excellent ... leader. The process of developing would help the person in all areas of life. Equipping changes the ministry. Developing changes the person."



— Reviewed by Jim Risner, director of Crossroads America, facilitating healthy small groups and congregations, Springfield, Missouri.

### Give Them Christ: Preaching His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Return

STEPHEN SEAMANDS (*InterVarsity*, 192 pp., paperback)



Is it possible that many of those called to preach the Word have lost their way? In *Give Them Christ*, Stephen Seamands suggests this may be the case. He argues that today's pulpit practitioners may have lost their way by preaching primarily to satisfy the Western individualism of their hearers, or by sermonizing about Christ in an unskilled manner so contemporary listeners have difficulty seeing how fundamental Christological themes have relevance for practical life.

Seamands offers this text to assist preachers in helping their hearers understand the significance of the five major movements of Jesus' life and ministry for their worship, fellowship, and mission. These major movements include: Christ's Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Return. Each chapter offers substan-

tive theological reflection on each theme as well as insights into how to communicate their importance to a contemporary audience.

While some may question Seamands' assertion that pastors infrequently address these Christological themes from American pulpits, I do agree pastors often proclaim them in a shallow depth of theological reflection. Seamands provides substantive insights on how to present critical Christological themes in such a way to explore the depths of their theological significance while inspirationally conveying their practical implications for everyday life. Seamands reminds me of the importance of making Christ central to my preaching, and offers personal spiritual refreshment as I ponder once again the wealth of blessing brought to creation through the Savior's past, present, and future work of redemption.

The inspiration I received from this book influenced my preparation of my Holy Week sermons, in which a half dozen people accepted Christ as Savior.

— Reviewed by Rich Coffelt, D.Min., lead pastor,  
North County Christian Center, Castroville, California  
and adjunct professor, Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia.



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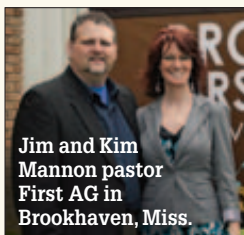
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First Assembly of God, Brookhaven, Miss., has doubled its average attendance in the past 2 years due to participation in the Acts 2 Journey.

## Churches See Transformation on Acts 2 Journey



Jim and Kim Mannon pastor First AG in Brookhaven, Miss.



**F**irst Assembly of God in Brookhaven, Miss., is a 73-year-old congregation that doubled its attendance during the past 2 years. Pastor Jim Mannon attributes this increase to the church's participation in the Acts 2 Journey, sponsored by AG Healthy Church Network in partnership with Assemblies of God Trust.

Nearly 200 Assemblies of God churches in several districts are participating in the yearlong Acts 2 Journey. Some smaller congregations cannot afford the \$3,000 cost, but through the help of Assemblies of God Trust, those churches can apply for and receive scholarships.

The Acts 2 Journey incorporates five foundations of Acts 2:42–47 — worship, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and evangelism — to assist pastors, leadership teams, and congregations in their commitment to Christ. During the yearlong process, churches receive ministry assistance and resources to help them go to the next level of church health. They learn how to identify their God-given vision, initiate an expansive prayer focus, and implement

Holy Spirit directive strategies to move outward into their communities.

"Brookhaven was the first pastorate for my wife, Kim, and me," says Pastor Mannon, "and after a few years I felt the church had plateaued. We had less than 80 people. New people were coming in, but they were not staying. I attended several conferences to find help, but nothing seemed to offer what our church needed. Because of the Acts 2 Journey's biblical emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and the Early Church, our congregation was more open to embrace the process. As we began the journey, our core team grew closer in unity and deeper in faith. We were able to cast a vision that our church believes in today and feels called to achieve for the kingdom of God."

"We believe AG Trust's initiative to help our struggling churches is one more way we can impact future generations for Christ," says Dr. George O. Wood, AG general superintendent and AG Trust chairman.

## CHURCH WELCOME FOLDER AVAILABLE

**AG Healthy Church has created a welcome folder** specifically for Assemblies of God churches. Some pastors place these near entry areas for first-time visitors. Others use the folders for new members,

leadership teams, and church-wide meetings.



The folder features two inside pockets — one pocket is die cut for business card placement. The

inside features 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (NIV). The packet, measuring 6 by 9 inches, also includes the official Assemblies of God logo. Order item # 085550 at [www.AGHealthyChurch.com](http://www.AGHealthyChurch.com).

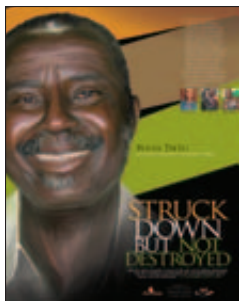
## KEEP UP ON THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD WITH AG NEWS

**Pastors, leaders, and laypeople** interested in receiving the latest news concerning the Assemblies of God can take advantage of the free *AG News* service. Featuring breaking news on subjects such as disaster response and positions taken by the Fellowship, *AG News* also offers articles on upcoming national events, effective church outreaches, AG members in the national spotlight, news about AG-endorsed colleges and universities, missions efforts, national ministries, new programs, and much more. The news is sent out three times each week to e-mail subscribers and to those electing to receive an RSS feed. To subscribe to *AG News* for free, send an e-mail to [news@ag.org](mailto:news@ag.org) with the word "subscribe" in the subject line. To receive the RSS feed, point your RSS feed reader to [rss.ag.org/feeds/1034.xml](http://rss.ag.org/feeds/1034.xml). Information about RSS feeds can be found at [www.whatissrss.com](http://www.whatissrss.com).



## DECEMBER 9 IS BIBLE SUNDAY

**Every year Assemblies of God churches celebrate Bible Sunday** on the second Sunday in December. On that day, churches partner with Assemblies of God Bible Alliance to provide the *Fire Bible*, a Pentecostal study Bible, for overseas pastors and laypersons. The *Fire Bible*, available in 38 language editions, is the most widely translated and distributed study Bible ever produced, according to international Bible societies.



The 2012 Bible Sunday theme is “Struck Down, But Not Destroyed.” The goal of Bible Alliance on Dec. 9 is to raise enough funds to provide the *Fire Bible* in three urgently needed languages for countries where believers are being persecuted for their faith: 1) Farsi *Fire Bible* for Iran, 2) Urdu *Fire Bible* for Pakistan, and 3) the *Fire Bible* for a country that cannot be named without endangering the missions work there.

The Bible Alliance theme DVD and brochures share stories of Christians overseas who have been martyred for their faith — “Struck Down.”

The stories show how believers’ contributions to the churches — “But Not Destroyed” — in their countries have caused the churches to grow and thrive today.

The *Fire Bible* is a testament to all who receive it. Though we may be struck down, the work of God and His Word will not be destroyed.

Plan now for your church to participate in Bible Sunday. Join other churches and Assemblies of God Bible Alliance in providing the *Fire Bible* for persecuted believers. Every \$10 gift makes a *Fire Bible* available for an overseas pastor or a layperson in a language they can read and understand.

To order your free Bible Sunday theme DVD and other materials, visit [www.BibleAlliance.org](http://www.BibleAlliance.org) or call 1-800-532-0440.

## U.S. MISSIONS REACHES A MILESTONE



**U.S. Missions reaches a milestone** in 2012 — 75 years of taking the gospel to those who are hurting and perishing in the United States.

U.S. Missions was born at the 1937 General Council as leaders felt the need to strengthen the work of the gospel on the home front, being certain this domestic focus would directly impact the work on foreign fields. History has proven that strategy to be true. Through the years, U.S. Missions has expanded to the Seven Windows to America: Chaplaincy Ministries; Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, U.S.A.; Intercultural Ministries; Missionary Church Planters and Developers; U.S. MAPS; Teen Challenge International, U.S.A.; and Youth Alive.

Today this missionary team numbers 977 appointed missionaries and spouses as well as 603 endorsed chaplains, serving under the leadership of Executive Director Zollie L. Smith, Jr.

## Life Publishers Helps Provide *Discovery Series* for Africa

“**The *Discovery Series* for Africa** is one of the most urgent projects Life Publishers is helping to produce,” says Guy Highfill, former director of Life Publishers International. “Our goal is to finish the curriculum by 2014, with the help of U.S. supporting churches and individuals.”

This Bible school diploma-level curriculum is written specifically for ministry training in the African context. Currently, 21 *Discovery Series* courses have been completed and funds are needed to complete the 16 additional courses in development.

Tremendous church growth in Africa over the past two decades has created a severe shortage of trained pastors. Missionaries and educators say the *Discovery Series* is a key tool in meeting this critical need. Bible schools and extension



**Jimmy Kuoh, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Liberia, looks over a shipment of *Discovery Series* courses.**

training centers in Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and many more countries are already using the 21 *Discovery Series* courses.

In Malawi, the Assemblies of God has grown from 190 AG churches in 1990 to more than 3,000 in 2012. Missionary Bill Johnston says, “We have started 37 extension training centers, and the *Discovery Series* is

the primary teaching material.”

In Kenya, the *Discovery Series* is considered the backbone of a diploma curriculum for the AG Bible school extension program, according to missionary Jeff Nelson, vice chancellor at East Africa School of Theology in Nairobi.

In Namibia, Missionary Mark Turney says the national church started an extension Bible school program 2 years ago using the *Discovery Series*. “We eagerly await every new course made available to us.”

Life Publishers International, a ministry of Assemblies of God World Missions, helps publish foreign-language Christian literature and resources for missionaries and national churches overseas to use in evangelism, discipleship, and training. Life Publishers also publishes the *Fire Bible*, currently available in about 40 language editions.

For more information visit [www.LifePublishers.org](http://www.LifePublishers.org).

## Faith Case™: **Armor of God**



**Gospel Publishing House releases *Faith Case: Armor of God***, the newest installment in the exciting, DVD-driven children's church series. Like its predecessors, *Faith Case: Armor of God* is part of a strategy by the Assemblies of God Executive Leadership Team to emphasize Pentecostal truths throughout the Fellowship.

Alton Garrison, assistant general superintendent, says, "The goal is to intentionally pass on Pentecostal doctrine and experience to children. *Faith Case* curriculum strategically helps churches achieve that goal."

Sponsored by the AG Trust, *Faith Case* children's church resources have grown out of field-driven needs. Rod Loy, pastor of First Assembly of God in North Little Rock, Ark., along with children's ministry leaders from across the nation, planned the resources in answer to churches' stated wishes.

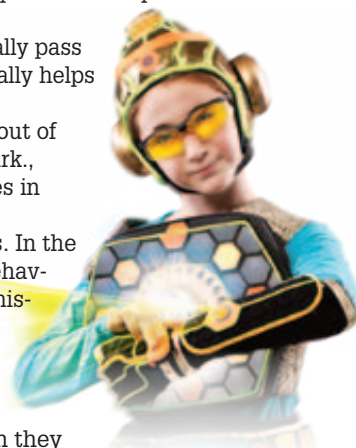
*Faith Case: Armor of God* features familiar characters as well as some new faces. In the story, something strange is going on at the local school. More and more kids are behaving badly. It looks like the work of the Faith Case nemesis ... the Spoiler. The Commissioner sends Faith Case Agent Regina undercover to find out what's going on. She meets up with Mr. Venture, the top inventor at Faith Case, and his quirky assistant, Maxwell. Venture creates the high-tech armor Regina uses to save the school.

*Faith Case: Armor of God* offers 10 fast-paced sessions to help kids learn to

rely on God's strength and protection when they face spiritual battles. In addition, object lessons, games, and prayer times make the learning fun and allow kids to internalize the sessions' truths. Sessions require just one leader, a practical benefit for small churches.

Laura Schroeder, a user from Wisconsin, says, "I am the children's pastor at a small church, and my teachers love *Faith Case* curriculum because it is so easy to use and keeps the kids' attention throughout the entire service without sacrificing great biblical content. I've never seen anything like it."

For more information, visit [www.faithcase.com](http://www.faithcase.com). To order, call 1.855.642.2011.



## DUNAMIS 2: Chasing the Spirit's Power for Global Evangelism Conference

**The Dunamis 2 conference will be a clarion call** to invigorate our passion for the Holy Spirit and to deepen our burden to reach the world for Jesus Christ. Dunamis 2 starts on Nov. 14, 15, 2012, at Stone Church, Chicago, Ill., and continues in Jerusalem during the Day of Pentecost week May 13–22, 2013.

**Dunamis 2 Chicago** will celebrate the General Council statement made in 1914 at Stone Church, "We commit ourselves and the Movement to Him for the greatest evangelism that the world has ever seen." The goal of Dunamis 2 is to highlight the relationship between the baptism in the Holy Spirit and global evangelism. Attendees will examine the Scriptures, worship in a concert of prayer,

hear from our missions leaders (Dr. Greg Mundis, Zollie Smith), learn from top theologians (Dr. Robert Menzies, Dr. Roger Stonstad), be inspired by key church leaders (Randy Valmont, Rick DuBose), and interact on vital issues with the speakers panel.

Dr. George M. Flattery, president and founder of Network211, states, "The emphasis on the power of the Spirit and global evangelism reaped a harvest of over 64 million Assemblies of God adherents worldwide during the first 100 years, and we refer to it as Dunamis 1.

As the Assemblies of God faces its second century, Dunamis 2 gives opportunity to remember that Jesus identified the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a baptism in the Holy Spirit. This baptism in the Spirit empowers us to be witnesses. We believe we will reach millions

worldwide with the gospel as a result of this event."

Due to limited seating, it is essential that attendees preregister at [www.Dunamis2.com](http://www.Dunamis2.com). Those who register early will receive a copy of Dr. Flattery's new book, *The Holy Spirit in Your Life: A Systematic Approach to a Vibrant Relationship*, monthly e-mails from Dr. Flattery to prepare them for Dunamis 2, along with an opportunity to submit their questions in advance for the speakers' panel sessions.

Dunamis 2 Jerusalem will meet

at the Kings of Kings church and includes a tour of Israel (May 13–22, 2013). Dunamis 2 will connect Peter and Paul's

**The goal of Dunamis 2 is to highlight the relationship between the baptism in the Holy Spirit and global evangelism.**

teaching on the Holy Spirit with global evangelism. Visit [www.Dunamis2.com](http://www.Dunamis2.com) for registration and more information.





## NETWORK211 INTERNET EVANGELISM

**Every 17.5 seconds, someone, somewhere in the world views the gospel** via Network211 Internet evangelism outreach. Every day 5,678 people visit one of our evangelism websites. Four hundred fifteen of them click a response button and 124 submit their name and e-mail to begin a discipleship relationship. These individuals come from 239 countries and territories.

God gave a vision to Dr. George M. Flattery, president, Network211, to use 21st-century technology to reach 10 million people for Christ. Some told him the vision was too large; others, too small. Network211 launched project 10Million on October 15, 2008. With the Lord's help, Network211 will have reached 5 million people with the gospel by September 2012, half the way to our vision.

Network211 proclaims the gospel in many languages:

- English: **JourneyAnswers.com** and **WhoJesusIs.com**
- Farsi: **pasokhha.com**
- Chinese: **renshengdaan.com**

- Spanish: **respuestasdelavida.com**
- Indonesian: **teranghidup.com**
- Vietnamese: **buochyvong.com**
- Arabic: **nedaaal-ragah.com**
- Deaf (soon to come)

Network211's online-discipleship system enables volunteers to build an online relationship with each person who inquires. These volunteers respond electronically in many different languages to people from every continent. GlobalChristianCenter.com is the digital repository of discipleship materials available to anyone, anywhere in the world. If you would like to become a volunteer, sign up at **connector.team10million.com**.

Visit Network211.com to read the vision, mission, and strategy Network211 uses to reach our world via the Internet. You can also partner with Network211 to access evangelism and discipleship content for your website. The challenge is to use all possible means to bring as many people into the kingdom of God.

Network211's mission is to advance the first-century gospel using 21st-century technology. The words of Jesus constantly ring in our heart: "Wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest" (John 4:35, NLT).

For more information, contact Network211 at **info@network211.com**.

## INAUGURAL FAITH & SCIENCE CONFERENCE PAPERS AVAILABLE



**Papers from the inaugural Faith & Science Conference** are now available in PDF format. Scientists, theologians, pastors, teachers, and others from across the United States

attended the conference, held at Evangel University in summer 2011. General Secretary James Bradford, who holds a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering, hosted this conference.

Among the presenters were Scott Rae of Biola University; Jennifer Wiseman of NASA; John Mark Reynolds of Houston Baptist University; Amos Yong of Regent University; and Hugh Ross of Reasons to Believe.

Three chief purposes of the conference were:

1. Delve into the connections between faith and science.
2. Explore the ethical and theological issues behind that discussion.
3. Equip teachers and spiritual leaders to better evangelize and disciple followers of Christ who are increasingly scientifically savvy.

More information is available at **www.faithandscience.ag.org**.

The next Faith and Science Conference will be held June 23-25, 2014, in Springfield, Mo. The theme is Genesis and Genetics. More details will be announced in future issues of *Enrichment*.

## AdIndex

### Assemblies of God

- Bible Alliance ..... inside front cover, 141
- Credit Union ..... 2
- Faith & Science Conference ..... 56, 62, 143
- Family Services Agency ... 36
- Financial Services .... inside back / outside back cover
- Gospel Publishing House ... 4, 7, 14, 15, 31, 63, 140, 142
- HelpLine (phone counseling for ministers) ..... 24, 131
- Holy Lands Studies ..... 85
- U.S. Missions ..... 108, 141
- Jacob's Hope ..... 120
- World Missions
  - Africa AG Care ..... 68
  - Embrace ..... 68
  - World Missions Summit ..... 8, 9
  - Eurasia Experience ... 138
- Enrichment back issues ..... 27
- Evangel University ..... 1
- Global University ..... 60
  - Network211 ..... 143
- MyHealthyChurch
  - Amazing Faith ..... 31
  - Books ..... 7, 14, 15, 31, 63
  - Dancing With My Daddy ..... 7
  - Dictionary of Hermeneutics ..... 14, 15
  - Faith Case curriculum 4, 142
  - Welcome folder ..... 140
  - Welcome to Holsum ..... 63

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## A Pentecostal Way Forward Through the Challenges of Science

**E**very day, it seems, scientists uncover new wonders — both large and small — in our world. These

wonders redound to God's glory, for He created

them all. And among those wonders, surely the human mind ranks high. Aside from the angels, only humans are able to perceive God's handiwork and praise Him for it.

Yet many humans do not. Instead, they "suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Romans 1:18). Consequently, "although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (1:21). By *they*, of course, I mean *we*. Ingratitude for God's gracious gifts mars every human heart.

Because creation is wonderful and the human heart wicked, I am ambivalent about science. On the one hand, I benefit from advances in science. For example, I use Enbrel — a TNF inhibitor drug — to treat my ankylosing spondylitis. My iPhone, iPad, and laptop are indispensable tools in my work and my graduate studies. Their apps and programs make use of complex mathematical algorithms to produce, store, and communicate information. Energy efficient air conditioning and heating keeps me and my family cool in the summer and warm in the winter, at low cost. I could go on with more examples, but you get the point: Science has its benefits.

On the other hand, advances in science seem to portend retreats in faith. A 2009 Pew Forum poll of members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science found that "scientists are roughly half as likely as the general public to believe in God or a higher power." According to David Kinnaman, 25 percent of "18- to 29-year olds who have a Christian background"

indicate that the belief, "Christianity is antisience," is "completely or most true of me."

I don't believe Christianity is antisience. How can God's Word and His world contradict one another? But many people — including many Pentecostals — believe Christianity is antisience. How, then, should we as Christians live between the benefits of science and the challenges it seems to pose to our faith?

First, *we must be filled with the Spirit*. One of Pentecostalism's greatest strengths is its empirical quality. For us, God is not a concept we ponder or a historical Actor whose past deeds are interesting to archive (though pondering Him is wonderful and recounting His past deeds is encouraging). Rather, God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is a living Person who invites us into fellowship with Him, changes our character at deep levels, and empowers us supernaturally to speak and to act on His behalf. Our experience is evidence — proof, even — of the realities our faith lays hold of. Perhaps that is why Psalm 34:8 says, "*Taste and see that the Lord is good.*" If you find your faith questioned by science or anything else, the answer always begins with a prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit, I need You."

Second, a focus on Pentecostalism's empirical quality does not mean that arguments are unimportant. We are people of the Spirit, yes, but we are also people of the Word. Jesus Christ is the *Logos* of God (John 1:1–3,14), His Word, Reason, and Logic. If science or anything else challenges our faith, *we must mount a tough-minded apologetic*. Paul's ministry is exemplary in this regard: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Since God exists, any scientific or philosophical argument that denies He exists is a *bad* argument, and we should be able to demonstrate this through close reasoning. Paul did not merely *evangelize* the lost, he *reasoned*, *explained*, and *proved* Christ's vicarious death and victorious resurrection to them (Acts 17:2,3).

Third, *we must interpret both Scripture and nature humbly*. Scripture and nature are God's self-revelation (2 Timothy 3:16; Romans 1:20). Theology is primarily our interpretation of God's revelation in Scripture, while science is primarily our interpretation of God's revelation in nature. God is infinite, we are "the grass [that] withers and the flowers [that] fall" (1 Peter 1:24). God is all knowing, "we know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9). God is all good, our "heart is deceitful above all things" (Jeremiah 17:9). Given the distance between God's perfection and our imperfection, we need to interpret both His Word and His world humbly, always ready to learn more about Him through them.

A new baptism in the Holy Spirit, confidence in the truth of Jesus Christ, and humility in the light of our limitations is a Pentecostal way forward through the challenges that science seems to pose to faith, even as we enjoy the many benefits it confers. ■

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