

The Challenge of the Evil One:
Articles by Ralph D. Winter
in Chronological Order

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Editorial Comment on Are We Losing the Battle? How to Kill Vision with Statistics

(1992) (*Mission Frontiers*, May-June)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment86>

I am profoundly disturbed.

Why can't a simple question be given a simple answer--that is ACCURATE?

Are we winning or losing?

Is the Christian cause mounting or waning?

Is the cause of missions gaining?

Are Bible-believing Christians gaining on the world population?

Are they gaining on the growth of the world Muslim population?

Do Bible-believing Christians—every day that goes by—become a higher percentage of the world's population?

Are they gaining in India, in America, in England, practically everywhere?

These are all basically the same questions.

THE ANSWER TO ALL THESE QUESTIONS IS "YES, YES, A 1,000 TIMES YES."

Then why do people say otherwise? Even quality Christian publications?

What set me off this time? Here is what happened.

A technical newsletter¹ made an unguarded statement. Sure enough it was misinterpreted by a much more widely distributed and truly superb newsletter², then it was read by a respected mission executive, who proceeded to write a full-page editorial in a widely influential mission house organ.

All in vain! The original statement, once stripped from its context, became a truly false and alarming statement. Readers no longer had the data to interpret it correctly. Inevitably it sent ripples of poisonous falsehood throughout the whole world of missions! In one of many cases, no doubt, an unsuspecting mission executive tried to digest the alarming "fact" optimistically, but with statistics like that, all he could do is to suppose that if we try harder we may reverse a downward trend.

There are two problems: 1) technical skills, and 2) psychological mood.

The first is easy: don't compare a number composed of births minus deaths with another birthrate from which deaths are not subtracted.

The latter--the psychological mood--betrays a widespread loss of hope. I see all kinds of valiant people grabbing up the worst stories and trying to muster the spiritual force to live with them--and in many cases the stories themselves are not quite right.

OK, look at pages 40-43 if you want to see a full-dress review of one of the most astounding examples I have seen yet of the use of statistics negatively. Again, this was done in good faith by a godly, upbeat well-meaning leader!

Editorial Comment on GCOWE 1997, Missionary Families Serving the Kingdom of God

(1997) (*Mission Frontiers* July-August)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment61>

No time to read this whole bulletin right now? Set it aside for a few quiet moments later on when you can give it some serious thought! Why? Because this unremarkable periodical reports some truly remarkable events!

You will also recognize some on-going themes in this issue. See the three articles on radical de-Westernization beginning on page 19, involving both Muslims and Hindus. However, this issue is mainly a “Post GCOWE” issue, and stories of that thrilling meeting are here in force.

#1. The “Story After” is always more exciting. What really happened in South Africa?

First of all, Americans did not pay for this meeting. Out of nearly 4,000 delegates, only a handful needed their way paid!

Even more importantly, the central justification for this enormous meeting of globally conscious leaders can be highlighted by the very existence of the amazingly small list of “172 Unclaimed Peoples” on page 29.

Where did that number come from? Out of a total of maybe 8,000 specific doors to be opened by cross-cultural outreach, only 1739 are larger than 10,000 souls and many of the smaller groups are “kissing cousins” of the 1739 adopted by the Joshua Project. We’ve said all this before.

But now, at South Africa it was reported (after receiving 25,000 inputs from 80 countries) that only 579 of the 1739 groups did not yet have a church planting effort!

Then, during the meeting 407 of those 579 remaining were claimed by an agency pledging some form of church planting by the end of the century! That left the 172 groups listed on pages 29 and 30.

But, the picture is even brighter than that. Due to the nature of “obtainable data” as one researcher put it, all of these smaller lists are even smaller when you realize that they are what are called “country specific.”

Looking closely at this list we see that 13 of the languages mentioned are spoken by more than one group, usually a second or third group “across the border in an adjacent country.” In fact, a total of 29 groups (of the 172) list one or another of these same 13 languages. The groups listed twice in this way may be sufficiently different to require a new, pioneer beachhead—but may be not!

Furthermore, I would guess that quite a few more of these 172 are “kissing cousins” to much larger, groups in other countries where strong Christian movements already exist. Note the presence of major languages like Eastern Panjabi, Bengali, and Mandarin Chinese. What does this mean?

Well, take the case of the Anuaks (listed under Sudan), the essential, initial missionary beachhead already exists for the much larger number of Anuaks across the

border in Ethiopia. That means this group of Anuaks in Sudan can be reached by the evangelistic outreach of other Anuaks who are already strong believers!

This is the difference between missions and evangelism. When we finally finish the task of missions, there will still be the never ending task of evangelizing and re-evangelizing every generation. But, the mission task, strictly speaking, will be over! That will be when there is a church for every people, the rallying cry of the 1980 Edinburgh meeting, and now the AD2000 movement!

#2. Are we harvesting nickels in missions today? Are most people giving to missions just “playing missions”? Is this good enough? Why would we print another “Nickel Scheme” in this issue?

One unusual feature in this issue is actually a new gimmick. Are we in favor of gimmicks?

The gimmicks often used to raise money for missions are classically illustrated by the need over 100 years ago in China for rural people to be enabled to raise their own pigs. This is when the “Piggy Bank” was invented by American women mission enthusiasts back home.

Also, women missionaries started women’s fellowships on the field which in turn encouraged both young people to pick up sticks for sale as firewood and mothers to set aside “a handful of rice” at each meal for mission outreach on the part of their own Asian churches.

This handful-of-rice pattern is now seen all the way from India throughout South East Asia, Indonesia, the Philippines, clear up to Japan and Korea in North Asia.

In the U.S.A. many new gimmicks have been invented, including our own promotion of the Daily Prayer Guide and its related “Loose Change Fellowship,” the latter being a direct attempt to parallel the Asian women’s handful of rice, which was, note, a small DAILY sacrifice. We feel the daily reminder is one of the most important ingredients for anyone who wants to keep global mission central in their lives.

World Vision came up with its annual “Love loaf” idea for congregations and the “planned famine” idea for young people.

But now we tell you (p. 40) about a coalition of younger mission executives (seven well-known agencies so far) who are launching an “Opening Gateways” campaign which will simultaneously emphasize a month of “praying through the 10/40 Window” along with collecting a small amount of money each day. Half of the funds families collect in little cardboard banks will go to the agency of choice of that congregation, the other half will go to the pool of agencies which will focus exclusively upon the 143 “Gateway Clusters” of peoples, groups which include the entire “1739” of the AD2000 Movement’s Joshua Project list—as well as the 172 “unclaimed peoples” mentioned just above.

Why don’t you get your congregation to try this for the one month of the campaign this year? It is right upon you, so act fast.

OK, but what do I personally think about using gimmicks to “harvest nickels”... to collect small amounts of money?

It is not the only thing we should do. But, if this sort of thing can be done effectively, well, money certainly is needed in virtually every sphere of the mission enterprise. This I especially like: gimmicks like this in a local church attract the part-time

attention of droves of people who would not normally be caught up in the mission cause. This, in turn, may lead in some cases to something more solid and long-term.

After all, “short-term missions” are a gimmick in a one sense. They are awfully expensive for what is actually accomplished on the field, but are justifiable for the interest and education they create among young people and home churches.

However, as in any cause, the real backbone of mission promotion at home will be those who eat, sleep and drink missions 24 hours a day. They themselves give more than nickels; they give vision. Since I have now tipped my hat to various kinds of nickel-harvesting activities, let me make a case for you, dear reader (if you have gotten this far) for your participation on a much more serious level. That is my next point:

#3. Would you and your family be willing to consider becoming a “missionary family”? What precisely does that mean? Does God really value your time more than your money?

What I will describe is not an alternative to “planned famines,” short terms and all that. It involves an additional, profound personal transformation that should often come along in life naturally as families continue to make steps of faith in the right direction—in the Kingdom of God. Yes, the whole family has to be involved—which is a great bonus right there.

What I am talking about, therefore, is not how much money you are giving to missions, or how you could give more, but how much of your heart and time and your whole family is committed to specialized mission mobilization. It is precisely because we need more missionaries that we need more mobilizers. This is the only way thousands who now lack the necessary support will ever be able get to the field.

Ask yourself the fundamental question: Is my whole family focused on the most crucial effort it could possibly make in the Kingdom of God? This is not a matter of how much you earn or how much you give but who you are and what is the condition of your heart as reflected by where your earthly “treasure” lies. By treasure I don’t refer just to money but to the things for which you spend your time and money.

Ideally—and certainly if possible—God would want us all to find the kind of job that will not merely keep our families alive but can maximize the meaning of our earthly existence in God’s Kingdom. But, at this point in your life what is realistically possible for you and your family?

A family usually becomes a missionary family by doing two things:

1. It joins a society of other highly committed families, willingly accepting a modest income based on need (so that more workers can be supported with the available amount of money), and

2. It plunges into learning an exotic, tongue-twisting language all the while fighting cockroaches and strange diseases.

Your family may not be able now or ever to leave your present employment. Missionary vision, and thus support, is too scarce to stretch to underwrite all the thousands who would be willing to go if their churches would back them.

But why not take just the first step? No mission society will take you if you cannot make that first step (which nicely reduces financial motivation to zero while enabling more missionaries to go). Are there no insurmountable reasons why you cannot make that step without the second “step” to a foreign field?

Would it be helpful to take just that first step? It just might be a profound transformation whether or not the way opens later on to get a so-called “full-time” job in Christian service.

Suppose you and your family were invited to stay where you are and yet become an active member family of the Frontier Mission Fellowship (the organization behind the Center and the university here). Members of the FMF, whatever their wealth, whatever their income, inheritance, whatever, adopt the missionary lifestyle, being content with the necessary food, shelter and tools to work with.

For example, my wife and I draw a maximum of \$2,232 per month. We don’t use more than that to live on. This fact alone contributes much to the simplification and focus of our lives.

Of course, we handle a lot more money than that. We work every day in a major institution that spends thousands turning people and churches upside down, so to speak. But even our organization is run as a missionary institution. That means we try extra hard to spend nothing more than we have to.

Yesterday I was given a tour through the spacious, bustling headquarters of the Gospel Light Press in Ventura, California. Only one room in that vast complex is air conditioned! For 17 years they have been saving \$6,000 a month by taking advantage of Southern California climate. That’s a lot of money saved.

In our complex in Pasadena, which is a lot larger, we save even more by using very little refrigerated air conditioning. Refrigerated air makes sense in muggy climates but not where you have dry, desert type air. The main reason there is a lot of conventional refrigeration in Southern California is simply cultural, not technical. “It is the thing to do.”

But, this is not a lecture on air conditioning, it is an attempt to persuade a few hardy, healthy, dedicated families to become “missionary” in the sense of living on a specific, spartan level and using all the rest of their time and money to the best advantage in the Kingdom.

If your family were to be invited to become a member family of the Frontier Mission Fellowship a great deal of mutual understanding would have to precede even that first step. It would involve the approval and participation of every member of your family. It would involve spiritual and even educational discipline—we have high standards. Interested? Start with page 47.

4. Okay, there’s now no problem in recognizing “intelligent design,” What about the evidence of “destructive” intelligent design? That is, both “intelligent love” and “intelligent hate”? And what should we do about it? Does this have anything to do with missions?

Thanks to Michael Behe and his marvelous book, *Darwin’s Black Box* (he took his career in his hands to write it), believers now can dare to say that our immune cells are intelligently designed for good. Okay. Isn’t it equally possible, then, that we can observe that, say, the tuberculosis bacillus is intelligently EVIL?

The August 22 *Los Angeles Times* reported that researchers...finally discovered how the tuberculosis bacterium and its cousin leprosy invade cells...The bacteria hijack one component of the immune system and use it like a Trojan horse to sneak into immune cells...which they then destroy.

Hmm. Intelligent! Hmm. How dangerous is TB? The article mentions that tuberculosis infects an estimated one-third of the world's population. Who would design something like that? Not God!

Funny, isn't it, how reluctant "politically correct" thinking is to recognize inherent evil in nature. An example: *Science* (August 1, p. 635ff.) tells of modern explorations of earlier man, and how difficult it has been for scientists to accept the fact that cannibalism has been found in virtually all cases—and not just in the case of ancient man. This story includes the Aztecs and the recent ancestors of today's Pueblo Indians. A 1970 paper was greeted with "total disbelief" at a time when supposedly earlier "Indians...were all peaceful and happy." But now "30 years and 15,000 skeletons later," the evidence is overwhelming. Why is EVIL so pervasive?

Take smallpox: one of the most horrible diseases in the history of life on earth. For the millions and millions who died agonizing deaths it was too late to penetrate its mysteries. But a tiny handful of far-seeing souls did seek a way to work intelligently against the incredible EVIL of this (intelligent) scourge.

As we suggested in an earlier issue: consider the theology of Jonathan Edwards, that godly, brilliant genius of a man, that earnest colonial revivalist, that valiant Calvinist. He did not blame all this agony on God's will somehow, and then simply go around preaching repentance. Edwards died young, trying out on himself an experimental vaccine against the evil of smallpox.

Are Evangelicals today too "spiritual" to fight this kind of evil at this level? Who knows? Probably quite a few individuals here and there are actually involved. But I don't read about them. Are pastors recruiting young people for this kind of a mission? Does the National Association of Evangelicals include a division that helps coordinate Evangelical efforts in this sphere?

What ARE Evangelicals busy doing? We believe, well—here is our principle article of faith—that all we need to do is to call individuals to "a personal decision for Christ." And, God will do the rest?

Do our Christian colleges and seminaries fight malevolent microbes? Is there room for a Christian organization that will galvanize efforts to fight evil at tiny levels? Note that a former missionary to Africa co-directed the team discovering the gene that produces cystic fibrosis!

Please tell me if there is anyone reading this who knows of an association of microbe hunters or cell-level researchers who, under God, are at those levels straining to beat back the ingenious evil of the Evil One. I will gladly highlight such activity in these pages and try to reinforce those efforts. In fact, to highlight the crucial need for that kind of mission may be one reason my wife, specifically, has a very resistant form of cancer.

Editorial on “hideous strength”; cancer

(1997) (*Mission Frontiers*, March-April)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-editorial>

Dear Reader,

This issue is full of news of things past and things soon to come. The future includes our cover story, “Countdown to 2000.” And that year 2000 is not very far in the future! What CAN be done by then?

On my heart at this point: both the mysterious, far-flung and incredibly potent work of God in the world today, and yet, the fact that the overall picture is not very beautiful.

Why? An evil “hideous strength” is still loose at every level. Kill- or-be-killed prevails at the level of the dinosaurs, at the level of the tiniest insects, and even at the level of the 24-hours-per-day wars out of sight in the world of the microbes.

Whence all this conflict, this destruction and distortion of life?

I cannot believe God once upon a time set out to create a world in which life forms of all kinds, large and small, would be “at each others’ throats.” Rather, the ominous, omnipresent murder and destruction we see at every level is clearly the work of the “god of this world,” the ruler of the darkness of this earth, who roams around as a man-eating lion, seeking whom he may devour.

However, the Bible describes events as recent as 4,000 years ago which appear to be the beginning of a divine counter-offensive. It explains (Gen 12:1-3) that through Abraham the darkness will be wrestled to the mat in all peoples. The world’s peoples will be re-inherited as God’s own possession. This is what the key word “blessing” implies—inheritance, adoption.

So, are our missionaries really supposed to roll back the darkness “over there” somewhere, where it is “darker” than “here?” Is that the purpose of missions—crossing culture barriers to all peoples, and then evangelizing within those peoples once the missionary breakthroughs have taken place? Yes...

But, do we think that if our missionaries get “over there” and gather people together on Sunday to “worship,” that will banish evil over there? Will it keep young folks from bunching up in gangs to brutalize and rape and spread harm, dope and disease to other people—while an individualized Gospel does not prevent that very well here in our inner cities where actual church attendance is often higher than it is the suburbs?

No, not really. Even “back here” in our own Bible-saturated country our most perfect church services consist of people sitting there distracted from this world for a few moments while battles are raging for their souls “at every level.”

When they emerge from the church they re-immense themselves in a world at war “at every level.” Even before they leave church—while they are still singing "Majesty"—they harbor in their blood-streams, in their hair follicles, even on the surface of their freshly brushed teeth, millions of good and bad bacteria battling to the death. Every person present carries diseases of one sort or another, truly gruesome diseases hardly mentionable in a nice Christian publication like this.

Yes, you recall, all of us carry little cancer cells zipping around like terrorists, victimizing healthy cells while multiplying their own number. Perhaps in your body the good guys are beating off the bad guys for the present. My doctor tentatively diagnosed two kinds of cancer for me. Further tests showed nothing. Great, I might have a few more days to live! But, don't we still “speak as dying men to dying men?” (Not so good for Roberta. Her bone-cancer lab symptoms are still climbing).

In other words, realistically, with God's help we are not out to end evil in all its forms. In God's army we are definitely “beating down” but not “beating out” all evil. For thousands of years all forms of life, human and otherwise, have existed enshrouded in fear and inspired by hate. The United Nations—whatever its vote—is not going to end that ghastly reality.

What DO We Look For?

What we are looking forward to at some time in the future, in His timing, is the awesome, resplendent return of Christ. He will at that time “wipe away every tear” (Rev 21:4). That will then be the final judgment against “that hideous strength” which has been ravaging at every level for thousands of years the beauty of God's creation .

How long has “that hideous strength” been around? The newspaper's list of all nine films that have ever sucked in over \$100 million in the first two weeks of their release is a list of films which highlight the massive struggle of good and evil. Is there no “other” subject? Is Spielberg likely to point out the Satanic factor in this pervasive, all-out war?

Dinosaurs and Missions

His two films right at the top explore the most luridly violent of all life forms: the dinosaurs. Yes, the presence—the puzzle—of total violence in all of life and all of earth's history is ever with us. Satan is not given the credit he deserves!

Another case, in the same May 30th issue of the *L.A. Times* reporting on these films, we read of a new discovery of vastly earlier evidence of hominids. And, sure enough, it notes:

One unusual aspect of the fossils is that the bones show tool marks, indicating that flesh had been scraped away just as with animals killed for meat. Such markings are normally associated with cannibalism.

Actually, this is not really unusual at all. The oldest skulls have often displayed blows to the skull.

So will all this change by the end of the year 2000? Our cover refers to “Countdown,” but to what?

I was overjoyed when the *Promise Keepers Magazine* recently came out with an article on global Christian mission. But then I was sorry to see how rather fuzzily it treated the subject of the countdown to A.D. 2000. The generally newsworthy article was given (perhaps by an editor) a pessimistic title and a lead-in sentence, as follows:

Mission Impossible. A decade ago, missions groups targeted the year 2000 as the completion date for the Great Commission. Will it be a mission accomplished?

First, I know of no reputable mission agency which has ever spoken officially of completing the Great Commission by any particular date. The Great Commission is an undefined concept, although agencies may refer to some one aspect of the Great Commission, usually to the complete outworking of some ministry in which they are involved.

But, secondly, I will admit people have talked about “world evangelization” by the year 2000, a phrase which is even more difficult: Not only is there no widely-accepted definition for the phrase, but if it means evangelizing every individual PERSON by a particular date, it will be an achievement immediately undone one single second later as more children grow into the age of accountability, thus needing to be evangelized. That is, you can't “finish” evangelization in this sense, ever.

Well, WHAT CAN BE FINISHED BY THE END OF THIS CENTURY?

Missions! In today's terminology, “getting a beach head in every pocket of mankind.” Missions in the classical sense is the Apostle Paul formulating a Gospel which was intelligible to Greeks and employing it in leading whole households to Christ within that new cultural tradition. This key reformulation of Paul's faith took him three years in Arabia.

His resulting “missiological breakthrough” was for him a double blessing: 1) It stripped him of the legalism which he had deeply imbibed--the false idea that true religion is a matter of religious activity: and 2) It flooded his soul with a passionate, personal knowledge of a Christ who had uniquely demonstrated in the flesh the dynamic meaning of the law, the rule of God.

As with all good missionaries, Paul went beyond that key achievement (the formulation, the “missiological breakthrough” to the Greeks) and went on tirelessly to implement the amazing and powerful significance of a truly Greek way of comprehending the Gospel. That is, he also evangelized whole households, acting out what Dawson Trotman in our day taught the Navigators, Campus Crusade, and Billy Graham—that converted souls need follow-through and fellowship.

But, the inherently pioneer, breakthrough activity of missions fades automatically into relevant, powerful evangelism, which, remember, is never ending, which by definition cannot be completed once for all.

So what is the most important, barely possible goal for the end of the year 2000? I don't want to be dogmatic, but I'll certainly continue to suggest that the end of missions is worth shooting for. It would mean a "missiological breakthrough" to every group in the world. That would in turn mean that every person in the world could hear the Word from someone within his own group, on the wavelength of his own culture.

Meanwhile, stepping down from the ivory tower of speculation, we can stand awed by the immense, magnificent AD2000 Movement spawning new hope and energies all over the globe, focusing on every aspect of the specific outreach necessary. Once the dark powers are decisively confronted within every human people...that's something concrete and worth shooting for! But is that really within reach during the next three and a half years--maybe even if you and I do nothing?

How We May Succeed

- The first stage goal is the "1739 Joshua Project Peoples." Pioneer work already exists in two-thirds of these groups. Many of these groups are actually the same groups from a mission standpoint: they got on this' list twice because they just happened to be cut into two or more pieces by a political border between two countries, and thus only one "missiological breakthrough" may be necessary.
- Virtually all of these groups have "kissing cousins in similar, smaller groups.
- More than at any time in history, bi-lingual/bi-cultural abound. (These are people like Paul who had roots in both Jewish and Hellenistic culture.) It is both fun and folly to try to figure out if a short-term team can make it to the doorway of every remaining group by 2000. That's fine, but that is not the usual way the Gospel spreads. The New Testament is very clear on this. Not the Peter and James types but the Paul and Barnabas types (bi-cultural) are especially essential in working out the new shape of faith in the new culture. But note that in both cases some "Peter" or "James" or some other person went after these bi-cultural and recruited them to the specific cross-cultural task. Can we do that?
- Furthermore, we can expect advance assistance from God Himself. Don Richardson's *Eternity In Their Hearts* describes over two-dozen examples of groups where it is clear that God had already been at work before the missionary arrived. Missionaries may mainly be helping God keep His promise where He said, "Seek me and you shall find me when you search for me with all your heart." Can you believe that there are true seekers in every remaining people? Why not?

How We May Fail

Disturbingly, the greatest assistance we need right now is to re-read the New Testament and discover the fact that the missionary crossing of cultural boundaries has almost always produced new church movements distastefully foreign to those who stay home and pray. And, one of the biggest battles rages between 1) those who insist on an extension of the sending culture in order "to make sure" the Gospel is really understood,

and 2) those who would work within a new group for the freedom of God's will from the sending church's way of life, sensing that inappropriate cultural carry-overs are the essence of legalism, whether they are handed down from the past or imported from afar.

In Poland today, I am told, thousands of young people—perhaps hundreds of thousands—are “too Evangelical” to be acceptable to Catholics, and “too Catholic” to be acceptable to Evangelicals. Is this not to be expected? Doesn't the New Testament prepare us for this?

Greek followers of Christ resulting from Paul's ministry were, sadly, uneasy and disdainful of the Jewishness of Jewish followers of Christ. That's why Paul in Romans 14 had to insist that the Jewish tradition was still perfectly legitimate. Equally, he insisted that the Greek followers of Christ were legitimate. Probably he did not convince very many on either side. Early Christianity soon became non-Jewish or anti-Jewish, and vice versa.

Today, missionaries in Indonesia are hoping to develop a Muslim way of life which will be fully Christian, or, we might say, fully Biblical (the word Christian in most of the world today implies all kinds of negative things, and was never employed by the New Testament believers in Christ). Of course, there is difficulty with this on both sides! Will the missionaries' supporters back home refuse to support that kind of missionary work? Similar breakthroughs are being attempted all over the world.

Would you like to hear a 45-minute testimony of an Evangelical missionary working in France who through 18 years of earnest struggles with the real situation has developed a ministry which is “too Catholic” for some? He spoke to our staff last week. This is a moving, powerful story. (See response page.)

This story holds the key, I feel, to a massive, unexpected, and astonishingly different “Second Front” to the non-Christian world in which we really do find that we are “giving our faith away.”

But, while mature mission leaders in the Navigators, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Campus Crusade, Evangelical Covenant Church, the Missionary Church, SIM International etc., are thinking along these lines—in some cases for years—these are not things that are easily explained to the folks back home for whom often the slightest difference between denominations is too much to swallow.

Indeed, as I see it, the new, younger generation of missionaries may perpetuate much of what has failed in the past. Indeed, the greatest mission mobilization activity today seems to be focused on “more of the same” —Westernizing methods that have never really worked with the “major religions” of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. Drumming up more of the same is not a solution.

However, this is another subject—are these new forces up to date? We'll deal with it in our next issue. Right now we only have space to mention one or two more things.

- Current international news brings up some interesting developments affecting missions: The most extensive impact of the West on the rest of the world is not

the extensive penetration of the Gospel. It is the glitter of Western freedoms. Zaire has chosen a new name embodying “democracy.” Indonesia has turned away from the stridently Muslim political party to a more Western path. Iran has tenuously voted a landslide for a more Westernized leader.

Do the millions behind these massive yearnings for the glitter of the West really want a society like ours, in which pre-marital sex encompasses over half of all teenagers, and 360,000 per month contract venereal disease? What a treacherous glitter! These ugly facts are brushed aside by both Americans and the rest of the world. Curious. But, is this why devout Hindu families are afraid of Western Christianity?

- The United World Mission recently hosted a conference of over a dozen agencies which are moving toward a joint effort in pre-field training. This may expand into training for mission pastors. This is terrific.
- Along the same line, one of the very largest global mission operations—that of the Southern Baptist Convention—is making remarkable strides in the direction of field studies, taking full advantage of the many new “off-campus” methods of education.
- June 30–July 5: Ten global consultations are meeting simultaneously in Pretoria, South Africa. One will be the first global meeting of exclusively mission executives since Edinburgh 1980. It is only the second since Edinburgh 1910 and it is sponsored by the AD2000 Movement. Read about all ten tracks in this issue.

Editorial Comment on Evil

(1998) (*Mission Frontiers*, Jan.-Feb)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment59>

Here are some background thoughts mixed into the editorial comments which will follow:

Acts of Satan?

Mike Huckabee, the governor of Arkansas, refused to sign a bill referring to tornados as “acts of God.” I wonder, had he been thinking about Job 1:19 which attributes a tragically destructive “great wind” to the “power” (v. 12) which God allowed Satan to exercise? Would the legislature change the wording to “acts of Satan?” Some Evangelicals oppose his refusal. They think it is better to attribute good and bad things to God.

Cannibals, again. Hugh Ross refers in his recent newsletter to the same amazing new book we mentioned last fall—which verifies the existence of cannibalism everywhere in ancient times. He comments with sage insight that secular scholars had been reluctant, he suspects, to acknowledge such widespread cannibalism because “belief in Satan is even more politically incorrect than belief in God.” Now, that is a significant observation!

Will there be a Next Millennium? *National Geographic* for January 1998 steps back to take in a huge view of the last 1,000 years and to muse about what’s next. There are some awesome realities just ahead, ominous things that have never happened in all history—what does population explosion really mean?

Revising the Revolution! The recent 6-hour TV special on the American Revolution (called Liberty) combined marvelous technical expertise with extensive historical research. But, alas, it drops out totally the very extensive and crucial role of the Evangelical Awakening and the vibrant, inter-colonial Evangelical movement without which there would not have been a revolution nor a successful one. The result? A caricature that is both shocking and misleading. But, how many in the nationwide audience noticed?

Wait a minute! Are the tobacco interests now buying off the state governments the way the riverboat casinos are buying off the Mississippi river city governments? Is the practice now of cutting the states in on tobacco’s assured profits from mass addiction something that will decrease or prolong addiction? As soon as those profits become addicting to the state governments, will the fight against nicotine be replaced by the need for continued flow of money? Are we already feeding a monster that is devouring our people?

Thousands of teens per day start into addiction to nicotine. Well, that’s not all. Twelve thousand also daily contract STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). Oh, God, who is devouring our people?

Who is Devouring Our People? Satan's greatest achievement is to cover his tracks. Evangelicals today may read Peretti books but those stories don't deal with the half of what Satan is up to.

This issue arose poignantly in the TV debate last Saturday: Both Philip Johnson and Michael Behe (as well as Buckley) were arrayed against some nice people who feel evolution is necessarily explained by purely natural processes.

At a key point during those two hours a pleasant Canadian professor/philosopher (Michael Ruse) asked the question, "Does your God create parasites?"

Neither Johnson nor Behe were quite prepared for that. For them it is enough right now just to prove that only a guiding Hand can explain the "irreducible complexity" we see in the micro-world of the human cell, which is "the evidence of intelligent design," and the startling and mysterious "gaps" in the record of the rocks.

I asked Phillip Johnson myself, face to face, four weeks ago at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society if it were not necessary to go beyond the recognition of "intelligent design" to "intelligent good and evil design." He said, "I'll have to think about that." (I had suggested that it is very common to attribute computer viruses to the existence of malevolent souls who are out to destroy everyone's computer memory; why not attribute the real viruses that assail us to the malevolence of Satan?)

I came away from watching that two-hour TV debate feeling that a major reason why some very honest and thinking people find it hard to believe a Creator God is in charge of things is precisely due to the unacknowledged factor of Satanic, destructive opposition to God's creative benevolent design. Only the presence of Satanic efforts in the constant damaging of God's creative intent can explain the pervasive, insidious, painful horror of the destructive parasites of our world.

World Population and Sin Stepping back for a second, consider the truly amazing fact that for many, many centuries due to hatred, unrestrained bloodshed, and microbial assaults the incredible potential of population growth on a world level simply did not happen.

Let me explain that. We are now ending the second millennium AD, aren't we? For the entire first millennium world population didn't go anywhere. Only in the Christian West did it even begin a tiny expansion. According to the National Geographic issue mentioned above the growth was then only one tenth of one percent per year until 1700 AD. But, as hygiene and increased food production began to batter down the destructive forces, and colonial expansion put an end to hundreds of local wars in Africa and Asia, world population began to explode.

To get perspective, if the population of the entire globe in Abraham's day (estimated to be 27 million in 2000 BC) had grown at the present rate of world population growth (1.7 percent per year), world population would have shot up from 27 million to 6 billion in just the next 321 years.

A second example: if the 2 million population of England in 440 AD (at the time of the withdrawal of the Roman legions) had grown at the current rate of world population growth, England would have multiplied 38,275 times in the next six centuries to become 76 billion people by the time of the invasion of William the Conqueror in 1066 AD! That's over ten times the present world population—in England alone.

But no growth took place during those hundreds of turbulent years between 440 and 1066 AD. Why? Unending tragedy of war and bloodshed and pestilence—first the invasion of the pagan Anglo Saxons and later the invasion of the pagan Vikings. Once those illiterate invading savages (ancestors of some of us) became Christians things began to settle down. And the population began to grow, albeit slowly...

...slowly until Satan's insidious inroads at the microbial level were intelligently and specifically resisted. Then disease was reduced and growth picked up speed. Yes, evil was dramatically unmasked when the very existence of microbes was discovered. Who would have thought that tiny little things smaller than you could see with the naked eye (20,000 on the face of a smooth, clean front tooth) would be a source of such staggering global suffering and tragedy? People were as confused about how to fight these evil bugs as we are about how to fight nicotine and STDs which are devouring our people today

Did God create these evil bugs? That is what some of the evolutionists are wondering about. (Are the grisly predations of life against life on this planet His ideal?) That is why some of them cannot believe in a divine creator—they are as unaware of Satan as we are. Have we gotten accustomed to rampaging evil within God's creation? as mentioned above, Hugh Ross says in his latest newsletter, *Reasons to Believe*, "belief in Satan is even more politically incorrect than belief in God." (4th Q, 1997, page 8—better yet, write for this superb resource, Box 5978, Pasadena, CA 91117).

So we began to fight the microbes that were designed to destroy. Some specialists just a few years ago thought that all disease could be shortly eliminated from this planet. No one apparently realize that Satan's evil, dark angels would continue to invent new ways to penetrate our body's defenses. The wonder drugs of sulfa and penicillin and a myriad of antibiotics were for a time another optimistic marvel.

But the true scope of microbial evil was, and is, underestimated. Just as once we thought we could do nothing to fight the plagues at their source, we now continue to give up easily with the newest species of tuberculosis, malaria, and many other maladies that distress and destroy and hold the world captive to torturing pain.

Where is Missions in all this? Don't we know now where we stand? Can't we realize that merely sending out friendly missionaries is not enough...that God is expecting us to fight Satan back at every level? What does "Thy Kingdom come...deliver us from evil" mean? How can people around the world convert to a God Who appears not to care and/or does not understand how to deal with malaria? Or who Himself tweaked the DNA to produce ingenious parasites? What sort of good news is that? If God's missionaries don't toss a penny into a fundamental assault on malaria, how can anyone believe that an omnipotent God cares? Even the winsome Canadian philosopher, Michael Ruse, on Buckley's show?

[I know of only one small mission hospital in Zimbabwe with just two doctors who are researching the elimination of the cause of malaria. Meanwhile, the global secular world is doing essentially nothing. And, meanwhile, the Christian world is sending out a half billion dollars a year to help children stay alive long enough to die of malaria—four children die every sixty seconds from malaria.]

Now we know—or we should know by now—that the mysteries of viral illnesses can be combatted, and that God is expecting us to not just lie down and let the plagues roll over us.

Can we in good conscience go around the world with a gospel for everyone that tells people about a loving God but does not identify Him as being willing and able to fight the Satanically inspired diseases that are killing people right and left? Can we tell people to “be warmed and filled and believe in Jesus as you die?”

I have a hunch that somewhere along the line we got off the track of glorifying God by fighting Satan and his perversions, and got more interested in bailing out of this world, getting ourselves and our friends to.

I have been reading some of the detailed accounts of plagues in our own past history. They were generally assumed to be the scourges of God, and that could be true. We today are surely suffering a lot of scourges that may be permitted by God. This does not mean God is happy for us to endure scourges.

In the Middle Ages people had not the foggiest notion of the source of these plagues, and did not stop long enough to pursue it; and thus their attempts to avoid the plague are today whimsical and tragic. Do you recall as a child the rhyme going around... Ring around the rosie, pockets full of posie, ashes, ashes, all fall down.

This ditty reflects the fact that flowers in the hair and in the pocket, and ashes on the head were thought to ward off the plague. But, in the end, “all fall down,” was the grisly result. Desperation, despair, darkness of heart and confusion of mind, even civil disorder were all part of the picture.

Robbers would wait a couple of days and break into a barred quarantined home and loot it while the occupants looked on, too weak to resist them. Then, the robbers would come down with the plague and their homes in turn would be boarded up, and presently other robbers would break in and loot them and their loot, and on and on. Stolen goods would change hands all through a town like that.

Hyper-Calvinists may think the Arkansas governor’s theology (page 2) is lacking. Hyper-Calvinists are people who so highly respect Calvin’s incredible insights that they may go beyond what Calvin himself might say.

I have received letters objecting to my attributing the evil of malarial parasites to the “intelligent and malevolent design” of Satan rather than God.

Even Olasky’s column in *World*, Dec 20, 1997 objects to the Arkansas governor on this point. He says there are psychological disadvantages to thinking God’s sovereignty does

not imply that He controls everything. Possibly. However, the Bible portrays God as the one who conceded certain powers to Satan in the first place (Job 1:12), just as He does to humans.

But a more weighty psychological distortion, I feel, is to confuse direct and indirect sovereignty. I have no problem believing that God is the Prime Mover. I have no problem believing that God often uses “for good” that which is meant “for evil,” whether the evil intentions involved belong to Satan or to human beings. Otherwise no one can be accused of evil motives if all motives are God’s.

Thus, to ignore the alarming connection between human (and/or Satanic) responsibility and the evil that permeates this world is to plunge headlong into a type of Hindu fatalism.

But not to be too hard on the Hindus, Take the case of a devout Christian woman in the Middle Ages who considered a worm growing in her forehead something God had “sent” to her to keep her humble. One day, leaning over, she noticed that the “God-sent” worm fell out on the floor. She hurriedly restored it to the open sore in her forehead—not wishing to frustrate the purposes of God.

Is this not similar to a Hindu family grieving over the death of a child from the fangs of a cobra well-known to have made its abode in a clump of bamboo in the back yard? Even after the boy’s tragic and much mourned death the cobra continues on un-assailed since the family earnestly seeks to “consent” to God’s will. God obviously placed that cobra in the clump of bamboo? Thus, the family feels it is not their place to eliminate that evil. Is this the best way to look at what is going on?

Or, finally, if you are ready for this, my wife and I hear from all kinds of wonderful loving people who are willing to pray for my wife whose cancer is steadily eating its way throughout all her bones. We deeply value and appreciate those prayers. We devoutly hope they help. But we think that there comes a time when the worm must die, and the cobra must go.

To talk as if God’s direct initiative accounts for these evil things, even the tornado, is a misleading way of putting things—I agree with the governor—however correct it might be from a technical hyper-calvinistic perspective.

See, no one that I know of has suggested that we, the Evangelical world, have a responsibility to get up and “kill the worm” or “kill the cobra” when it comes to malaria or cancer. That is, no one has suggested that either I or Evangelicals in general set out resolutely with the millions of dollars at our disposal to combat the source of malaria or cancer. (And very little is going to either—about one tenth of one percent of the total cost of treatments.)

In fact, you might imagine someone saying to me, “Sit down old man. If God wants to kill off malarial parasites in India or your wife he will do it without your help or ours.” Compare this to how young William Carey was treated—on page 30. To those fine Baptist pastors the evils tormenting India’s millions were none of their business. If God wanted to torment the peoples of India that was His business? Do you believe that?

Is not our faith easier to share, and our God easier to understand, if we decline to use the phraseology of hyper-calvinistic fatalism in favor of the Bible's nuanced descriptions which allow for a Satan who is walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? Doesn't this put the blame where it belongs, tracing motivations and intentions more clearly?

God creates and restores. Satan destroys and perverts. That's it. Let's not let children and adult seekers be confused.

More important still, let's not confuse ourselves about what God allows indirectly and what He initiates directly.

To die at all is obviously part of the "original design": we have a living and learning and loving life-span. Stop and think. All life has a life-span. From tiny pillow mites, and even smaller microbes, to hairy mammoths, dinosaurs and sequoia trees. They all are born, grow, serve, live, and pass from the scene.

Back to us. We will either die suddenly, "before our time," or go gradually throughout our lifetime from diapers to diapers, from helplessness to helplessness, with many wonderful years of helpfulness in between—hopefully!

But why do I have to say hopefully? Because there is another way to die. (And every form of life is subject to what could be called premature death.)

There is a "man-eating lion" that goes about seeking human prey. He—that "hideous strength"—will kill you if you don't watch out. Maybe even if you do watch out. You may prematurely lose your life even more readily if all you do is to worry about dying.

Okay, dying is good. It is part of God's "original design." We would not study if we did not have a term paper deadline, a final exam, or grades coming up. Life is a test, an extravagant opportunity—for most Americans. Most people in the world, by contrast, have no word in their vocabulary for leisure. The pressures under which they live are so bitter, so relentless, that life is just one long imprisonment in despair and hopelessness.

Meanwhile, for most Americans leisure is often merely opportunity to waste their talents in trivia.

Dear friend in Christ, how are you living your life? How much of each day do you "dwell in distraction?" Is your daily experience a moment-by-moment, more-and-more discovery of the person, the purposes and the glory of the Living God? Or is it messy survival, a life of meaningless, mindless struggle 99 percent of the time?

Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life and life more abundantly." He didn't say "life more lengthily."

And, why has war and pestilence been so hideously widespread for the vast majority of the many, many centuries of human experience? Why do we find cannibalism in every evidence of ancient man? The *National Geographic* article sanitarily skirts these factors.

The grisly reality of the very slow human population growth on this planet fairly shouts at us: there is an evil principle (person) at work at every level of life, from the world of good microbes and cell structures in our bodies battling for survival against assailing destructive microbes to the grim world of combat by tooth and talon. No doubt about it, evil was unleashed and has been stalking the world unchecked until, until, until, what? ...until another principle took hold—at the time God set in motion a corrective, conquering Kingdom in Abraham’s mandate (Gen 12:1-3).

No question about it—except to those who may not have thought it through—our modern, relatively safer, healthier, explosively growing, relatively less warlike world of today is due to the quiet, 4,000 year-old impact of the work of God in collaboration with His people. Things are coming to an end.

The world is now already in a permanently unstable situation that cannot last long. See Ehrlich et al in “No Middle Way” (*Atlantic Monthly*, Dec 1997). This is precisely due to the massive reversal of evil—that bitter cocktail of suffering that has suppressed world population for many centuries.

But this does not at all mean that all evil will be conquered before the end of history. At the end there will still be tears to wipe away (Rev 21:3). No, sorry, history may end in a global conflagration of atomic warfare. That, in fact, could happen tomorrow. But, meanwhile our task is to honor and glorify God and to lead all peoples to “declare His glory.” That is the over-arching task of the believers. It is a lot more, not less, than winning people to Jesus Christ. It is called Missions.

What now? The theme of this issue is the need for strong, enlightened home-church backing of the cause of missions by highlighting John Piper’s superb ministry at the Bethlehem Church in Minneapolis and his far-reaching Desiring God Ministries. See the interview on page 8 and his pungent statement on page 12: “Duty is good but delight is better!”

Other voices join his. In particular Robert Alderman tells of the radically new perspective of his congregation. Don’t miss that (on page 29).

At the same time you will find an arresting, passionate, critical treatment of the dangers which simultaneously lurk in the enthusiastic “Rush to the Frontiers.” This is tough thinking. See page 40.

What did William Buckley’s two-hour Firing Line panel have to do with the cause of God’s mission in this world? Was it just another debate on evolution? What does this have to do with missions? See the editorial here and on page four.

Horizon Seven: Microscopic Spiritual Warfare Massive Blind Spot

(1998) (*Mission Frontiers*, Sept.-Dec.).

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/horizon-sevenmicroscopic-spiritual-warfare-massive-blind-spot>

Some “New Horizons” we took to the EFMA conference are not “new and emerging trends” but old problems that are simply blind spots. Puzzling! Are there really “blind spots”? How could there be when so many people are thinking and praying and pouring themselves out to carry Christ’s mission to the world? But, stop and think: Satan is in the business of causing blind spots. We are not just carrying a pleasant Gospel to the ends of the earth. We are engaging in an all-out battle with “the god of this world, against principalities and powers.” Of course we have blind spots! One is so complex we left it out at the last minute.

My editorial on page two also talks about this major but mysterious “new horizon”—which is so complex that when we got to Atlanta I decided the last minute we ought to leave it out.

However, our steady readers will recognize that it is not entirely new to these pages. In the last year-and-a-half, and sprinkled throughout many of my editorials, you will have seen an idea creeping in that is totally new to me. It involves a much larger understanding of God and His mission.

What? Can you get big new ideas at the age of 73? Actually, it seems like age speeds up discovery. Like finishing up a jig saw puzzle. The more pieces you get in, the faster it goes.

You may be surprised or puzzled or disturbed at what I am going to say. But my thoughts are no more spectacular or provocative than the revolutionary idea that God wants us to represent to people the full spectrum of His love by involvement in the entire battlefield of His conquering Kingdom. This pits us against the strategems of the prince of darkness on a wider front. It is more and more clear to me that He is expecting us to work along with Him in that wider front, at His side, fighting back against Satan in every area and every level of Satan's destructive invasion of creation.

Are you and I culturally blind to certain realms of Satan's deadly activity? Take the realm of tiny microbes. Are Evangelicals duped into considering plagues merely a secular or scientific problem, not a Satanic problem, not a mission problem? If so, unknown to us the people we go out around the world to bless may respond,

"If your God is so smart, why can't He prevent my children dying from malaria?"

As we fumble and stumble for an answer to a question like that, our reply may sound flippant, like:

“As missionaries we do lots of things, but we don’t do suffering. We can only put your kids on a bed while they swell up grotesquely and die an agonizing death. We don’t think it is up to us to completely eradicate the malarial plasmodium. Satan might get discouraged! After all, that evil bug is his pride and joy. He’s killed more of God’s people with that missile than any other weapon in his arsenal.”

We apparently don't see malaria as our problem, as a mission problem. We don't know what to do about it. The pills are of less and less value. So?

Can we actually eradicate that brilliant, malicious little monster called a plasmodium? Are we washing our hands of something we don't understand without trying seriously to understand it? Can we feed children but not in Christ’s name wield scientific knowledge to eliminate something that kills four children every sixty seconds—in an excruciating death? Maybe we could, but we aren’t. Does this glorify God?

You may well guess that I got dragged into this line of thinking by discovering that even though 1,500 people die daily in the U.S. from cancer, all forty funded projects of the U.S. National Cancer Institute budget are merely evaluations of radiation and chemo treatments for cancer. Treatment, yes, is a very big business, one which would suffer massively if cancer were eliminated. But, foundational research into the nature of cancer is a very small business, and it is still awkward for me to think that Satan has covered his tracks so well.

What I am saying may thus seem to be a wacky tangent. Dear reader, Satan will rejoice if you draw that conclusion.

A brand new book, *The Gospel of Germs*, tells the social impact of the discovery of germs in Europe. Yet not all of us take germs seriously. Satan is quite happy with that. He may hope that most people will conclude that God's good creation has been seriously flawed from the beginning.

This, brothers and sisters, is a new horizon: there is more to do than we thought. I propose we roll up our sleeves and do the trench work, risk our very lives working to completely eradicate Satan’s handiwork—in the area of global disease. “The Son of God appeared for this purpose: that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Now, are you still willing to follow Him?

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A Blindspot in Western Christianity?

Transcription of a talk given on June 23, 1999

Foundations Reader, 319-22

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/45_a_blindspot.pdf

I will not be discussing a major correction in one particular stream of Christianity, but rather an urgent Biblical insight lacking in virtually all forms of Western Christianity.

One reason for a correction is that our theological structure of interpretation of the meaning of the Biblical witness took place centuries before we had any inkling of the dark intelligence invested in the micro world of disease germs, and our current theological sensitivities have, amazingly, not yet adjusted to this new information. We do not commonly attribute the origin of destructive germs to an intelligent evil being. We have no theology of mission for destroying such germs!

A Staggering Thought

In the five years of the gradual progress of bone marrow cancer in my wife's physical being, we were both pressed to ask some unusual questions, and have begun to develop some unusual answers.

First came an arresting and even staggering thought that looks upon the need for theological correction as long ago as the fourth century AD. That was the first public and political century of Christianity. It was the kind of mix in which syncretism is often spawned. According to this theory it was the time when a virulent form of pagan syncretism lodged itself deeply into our Western Christian theological tradition. A detailed exposition of this amazing proposal can be found in Gregory Boyd's book entitled *God at War*. Some of the flavor of the entire book can be caught in these few words:

We see...[someone with] polio...and piously shake our heads...saying "It is the will of God...hard to understand...we have to wait to get to heaven [to understand it]"...[By contrast] Jesus looked at [sickness] and in crystal clear terms called it the work of the devil, and not the will of God—[something to be fought, not something to which we should simply resign ourselves.] (Boyd 1997:183)

This contrast, Boyd contends, reveals a pagan neo-Platonist strand in our theology coming through Augustine. It was absorbed further through Boethius and his winsome and incredibly influential *Consolations of Philosophy*. In this line of thinking is an emphasis on a "mysterious good" which stands behind all evil, rather than simply a recognition of the good which God may indeed faithfully work "following" evil. What it then does is distract us and prevent us from turning decisively against and crushing the source of that evil. While pagan, it is imposed on us as an attitude of noble resignation in the midst of suffering. It works itself out as a curious passivity in the presence of evil. It takes the Biblical phrase, "all things work together for good" to mean that God—who does in fact work good out of evil—is somehow the author of the evil itself.

How has this syncretistic element in our theological tradition surfaced on a practical level? In accord with our by-now instinctive Augustinian neo-Platonism, we cannot be totally surprised that when a godly young preacher in Puritan Massachusetts sought to fight smallpox, the other pastors with one voice opposed him and formed an “anti-vaccination society.” In the perspective of their Augustinian/Calvinist theology this saintly young pastor was, and I quote, “interfering with Divine Providence.” No wonder that when that young man died in the process of trying out a smallpox vaccine on himself, it was assumed that God killed him. Strangely, that comparatively young man attempting to spare the suffering of the Indians at his mission outpost is known today for his philosophy, not for in the form of a virus. I speak of Jonathan Edwards.

But, in actual fact, the problem was that Edwards’ keen thinking challenged a seriously syncretistic element in our theological tradition. By Edward’s day the syncretized Christian tradition was so durable and so impervious to change that not for two hundred years did any individual or group decide to eliminate smallpox. And when that campaign finally occurred, it was not this time to the credit of a preacher, a missionary, or a Christian theologian. That eradication effort took place only 21 years ago!

Edwards’ insight could and should have displaced that particular pagan element in our theology—the passive acceptance of disease as being God’s direct will which we are therefore not to fight against. Edwards’ insight could have replaced the pagan element with a theology informing and guiding a serious attack on what the Bible calls simply “the works of the devil.”

But, that insight died with Edwards. I have concluded with profound sadness that had that insight not died with him, our form of faith might have regained a Biblical zeal to set out deliberately to vanquish the works of the devil—all forms of conquerable evil.

Are We Really Passive before Evil?

You may quite readily wonder if I am unaware of “enormous research” that is going on. Several years ago, when my wife was first diagnosed with cancer, I had the idea that surely a lot of money in this country and around the world was flowing into *foundational* cancer research. Having had since then reason to look into this supposition, I am astounded that actually very little goes into foundational cancer research compared to what we spend on cancer *treatment*—after this deadly malady attaches itself to us. My best estimate is that to *understand and eradicate cancer* we spend less than one thousandth of what we pay for cancer *treatments*. Indeed, it may even be less than that. The truth is actually scandalous—are we living with a deception about this?

However, the main point here is not how little goes to understand disease compared to the perfectly enormous amount we frantically spend for treatments once we are individually attacked. That huge imbalance is, of course, curious and puzzling.

The more significant point is that there is absolutely no evidence I know of in all the world of any *theologically driven* interest in combatting disease at its origins. Not only have I not found any work of theology, any chapter, any paragraph, nor to my knowledge any sermon urging us—whether in the pew or in professional missions—to go to battle against the many diseases we now know to be eradicable. Jimmy Carter, our former president, is the only Christian leader I know of who has set out (in his phrase) “to wipe Guinea worm from the face of the earth.” Note that his insight did not come from a

seminary experience, but, perhaps, from being a Sunday school teacher. The Carter Center set out to eradicate two horrible diseases with which missionaries in Africa have had to live for 100 years. They have now done it, and have chosen three more. Apparently, Carter cannot expect to fund this operation from Christian sources. He gets money from secular corporations.

Christian missions spend literally millions of dollars around the world taking care of sick people. And we nourish hundreds of thousands of children in one program or another, raising them up so they can die of malaria. (Every sixty seconds four children die of malaria.) Yet in all the earth I know of only one very small clinic in Zimbabwe where two ill-equipped missionary doctors are working toward the actual elimination of the astonishingly intelligent malarial parasite that is called a plasmodium. And in secular circles the outwitting of that ingeniously evil bug is not being pursued by the World Health Organization nor the US National Institutes of Health nor even the Atlanta Center for Disease Control. Only the U.S. Navy, amazingly, is seriously involved.

Note that I am not talking about efforts to *avoid* disease but efforts to eradicate the very source of a disease. Thus, I am not talking about contributory environmental factors or nutritional factors. All such good things are *defensive* measures. We recall that people tried their best for centuries to avoid smallpox. But it was better finally to exterminate the virus that was the source cause. We can be glad that destructive virus is behind us, but *we have to admit that its eradication was not because of Christian initiative, much less theological insight.*

Defensive measures are good, but notice our strange theological (and pagan) reluctance to set out to *destroy the disease germs themselves*. To do that would be to go on the offense. We don't do that. Yet isn't it Biblical to *destroy the works of the devil*? In 1 John 3:8 we read very simply, "The Son of God came into the world that He might destroy the works of the devil." We don't hear much of that verse, partly because *we yield in our every day consciousness to a secular mindset that implicitly denies the very possibility of an intelligent evil destroyer of God's good creation.*

Is There an Active Satan? When Did He Get Started and What Is He Doing?

But an additional reason we don't hear much of that verse is because our theological tradition does not illuminate for us exactly what the works of the devil really are. The respected Dutch theologian Berkouwer made the rare comment that "You cannot have a proper theology without a sound demonology." Another theologian dared to suggest that Satan's greatest achievement is "to cover his tracks." Note that if, in fact, Satan has skillfully "covered his tracks" all of us are likely extensively *unaware* of his deeds. Isn't that logical? Paul suggested that we are not to be ignorant of his devices. We are told that Satan and his angels once worked for God. If so, then precisely what kind of destruction and perversion did Satan set out to achieve when he turned against God? Where would we see evidence of his works? Would he employ powers of deception so that we would get accustomed to evil and no longer connect an intelligent evil power with evil and suffering? Would Satan even successfully tempt us to think that God is somehow behind all evil—and that we must therefore not attempt to eradicate things like smallpox lest we "interfere with Divine Providence"?

In the last 20 years paleontologists have dug up more evidences of earlier life forms than in all previous history. One of their thought-provoking discoveries is that the

pre-Cambrian forms of life *revealed no predators*. Then, at a very distinct juncture destructive forms of life suddenly appeared at all levels, from large creatures to destructive forms of life at the smallest microbiological level.

Is this what Satan set out to do from the time he rebelled against the Creator—that is, he set about to pervert and distort all forms of life so as to transform all nature into the arena of tooth and claw that reigns today? Recent lab results indicate that retroviruses are smart enough to carry with them short pieces of pre-coded DNA which they insert into the chromosome of a cell so as to distort the very nature of an organism. Can a lion that would lie down with a lamb become vicious by such DNA tinkering? We do know that many diseases reflect defective genes. Very recent literature indicates that in the case of the major chronic diseases *infections* are now seriously thought to underlie everything from heart disease to cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and even schizophrenia.

A Double Enigma

But we confront a second and separate mystery here that is beyond mere scientific facts. Speaking in colloquial terms, we face a “double whammy.” We are not only suddenly aware that our medical people have been looking in the wrong direction. That may actually be true if, as is now reported, tooth infections are related to heart disease no matter how low-fat your diet is. Finnish scientists are the ones who are aware of this, and are sure of this.

But a second and more ominous fact confronts us. We must be aware that some force is *delaying that awareness*. For example, it has been two decades since it was clearly proven that 95% of duodenal ulcers are caused by a bacterial infection, yet today half the doctors in the state of Colorado still do not employ the necessary three days of tetracycline. Is this not a clear case of demonic *cultural* delusion piled on top of a demonic *physical* distortion?

Will we now see a similarly ominous and tragic lag in the application of knowledge with regard to the relation between infectious agents and the major killer diseases I just mentioned? Can and should the church speak out on these twin problem areas? *Where are our theologians when we need them?*

The Proposed Institute¹

The proposed *Institute for the Study of the Origins of Disease* will have to confine itself in its early days of severely limited funding to the collection and dissemination of information about what is and is not being done at the roots of disease. It will endeavor to attract serious attention to this sphere. It will use both secular and theological weaponry, especially the latter. It will try to upgrade our desire to bring glory to God by ending our apparently neoplatonist truce with Satan in the realm of all his ingenious and destructive works. Our global mission agencies, which already have to their credit the discovery of the nature of leprosy, will declare war on all sources of disease instead of merely being kind to sick people and preaching resignation amidst suffering.

Our actions (which often speak louder than our words) will no longer proclaim loudly and embarrassingly that our God can get you a hospital bed to lie on plus a ticket to heaven, but that He is either ignorant, uncaring, or impotent to do anything effective about the origins of your disease. We cannot blame Augustine or Calvin or Luther for not knowing anything about germs or the enormous complexities of microbiology. But can

we repentantly accept blame for the continuing fact that three-fourths of all Americans die prematurely from major chronic diseases which are now suddenly more defeatable than ever?

The least we can do is set something in motion that may rectify our understanding of a God who is not the author of the destructive violence in nature and who has long sought our help in bringing His kingdom and His will on earth.

I read a true story in *Readers Digest* about a family of three children who lost their oldest child, a daughter, through terrible suffering with cancer. Then, the father, fund raising to raise money to fight cancer among children in general collapsed and died ten feet short of the goal in a marathon race. I do not believe that God was the author of that double tragedy, but I do believe he used it to speed up the fund-raising campaign then carried on by the wife. However, what fairly sprang out at me in this story was the statement of one of the younger children at the news of the father's collapse. This little boy had already learned well our syncretized theology. He said, "God would not do two bad things to us in one year." Isn't it too bad that this innocent little boy was unaware that destructive things are the very hallmark of an intelligent evil person, not the initiative of a loving God? When will this become clearer? When will there be a significant glimmer within Christendom to act accordingly? When will we arise to work with God to destroy the works of the devil?

What is it that allows us to simplify the growing issue of homosexuality—that is, the question of whether it is an organic or cultural distortion—without taking into account the recent research that declares it to be a physical distortion resulting from an infectious agent, perhaps even curable by laboratory insights? We are left to two undesirable alternatives: to think that homosexuality must be perfectly normal or to think that homosexuality is entirely cultural, not stopping to think that it may be the result of a disease.

Christians champion singers, basketball players, pole vaulters. Do we find theological reason to champion those rare few who are at the front line in the fight against disease? And, I don't refer to those who *treat illness* but those who scout the very *origins of disease*. The answer is a thunderous NO which can only be explained as a blind spot in our theological tradition, a fact which is itself one of the diabolic delusions classifying as a work of the devil.

Demonic delusions:

1. When we get sick all we need to do is to pray and inquire of God what his reason is for allowing this kind of thing.
2. In case we did something unwise that caused or invited the sickness we don't need to feel responsible to roll up our sleeves and fight the source of the disease. God is content to use disease to teach us.

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Endnote

1 The article was written before the founding of the Roberta Winter Institute which seeks to address the issue of the war against evil. For more information, see <http://www.robertawinterinstitute.org/>.

Basic Concepts

(2000) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 26-27)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

- There is no more impressive measure of the impact of Christ on this planet than the nearly global celebration of the year 2000.

To Understand the Role of Our Faith

- The understanding of the last 4,000 years as a single story of the expansion of the Kingdom of God, the progressive conquest of the earth and evil is highly nourishing to our faith. The very acceleration of global population growth reflects extensive progress in reducing both war and pestilence.

- It is not Christianity we are trying to spread in the world but Christian faith. That can be done without duplicating or extending our present concept of church-going activity, of “churchianity.”

- The renewal of faith in the West must include a fundamental restructuring of Church life in favor of recognition of Christian faith in the home.

- Home-based faith in Christ is the bedrock goal of our concern. Therefore, the kind of church activity which takes the place of worship in the home is not even good as a second best.

- A detailed knowledge of our Christological formulations has never been essential to the kind of fellowship with God the Bible portrays as available to those who diligently seek Him, although even this seeking assumes and builds upon at least a Biblical knowledge of God’s existence.

To quote Karen Armstrong:

Increasingly, Western Christians would come to equate faith with belief in official doctrine. Even though Luther did not see faith in this way, an obsession with intellectual conformity would become one of the legacies of the Reformation and is peculiar to Reformed Christianity. In traditions such as Judaism, Islam or Buddhism, religion is not about believing obligatory propositions but about behaving differently. The emphasis on doctrinal correctness has been experienced by many as intellectually damaging and as a reason for Christianity's decline in Europe.

- The “man of peace”—the people of faith—whom we seek will not necessarily be open to Jesus Christ at first, especially if they have a Jewish background, but that does not mean that they have nothing to gain from Biblical, New Testament witness.

- The history of the Jews reflects the presence of both legalistic futility and an element of true faith, obedience, and righteousness. This is true both before and after Christ.

- In general it is neither wise nor to be expected or desired that a believing Muslim would adopt the name “Christian.” Thus, the often referred to category of “Muslim Background Believers” represents, generally, an undesirable evangelistic achievement. We need to be able to conceive of “Muslim Foreground Believers.”

- The same is true of Hindus who have put away their idols, revere and study the Bible, and revere and worship Jesus Christ as the Son of the Living God—whether or not they identify with any of the current traditions of Christianity in their land.

- Extolling the glory of God is the most basic endeavor in missions compared with efforts to assure individuals of their salvation, which at best are a means to that end.

To Understand the Phenomenon of Life

- Since the Christ Event, the strongest new evidence of the very nature of God’s glory is the immense insight into His handiwork revealed only recently by microbiological studies. By comparison, astronomy does not so much reveal the role of His intelligence as the vastness of His creation.

- There is evidence in the record of the rocks that at one point predatory forms of life suddenly appeared—that is, there appeared forms of life that are life-destroying, whether microbiological in size or visible forms of life. Prior to that time life forms were not dangerous to each other—in the so-called Ediacaran period just before the Cambrian explosion of life.

- It is also true that Genesis portrays the existence of an Evil One prior to the temptation of Adam. The rest of the Bible makes clear that this Evil One did not always exist but formerly served God and then rebelled at a given point in time.

- The thought therefore occurs that the time of Satan’s rebellion may coincide with, and explain, the appearance of life-destroying forms of life, such that nature—not just man—from that point on has become a vast scene of constant violence in which we see life destroying life. The number of life forms being driven extinct today is on the order of 30,000 per year. The number of life-forms now in existence is about 1,000th of all that have existed. More than half of two million existing life forms are destructive (parasitic).

- Thus, the “works of the devil” would seem to include the perversion of the very structure of life at DNA levels. The discovery of thousands of defective genes in the human genome is possibly evidence of demonic activity at the DNA level. Even the violent traits of animals and man may exhibit the same kind of distorting influence at that level.

- To do this we may understand the possibility that Satan’s angels of darkness, some of them, may be so small as to be capable of tinkering directly with the DNA molecule.

- Disease is thus a result of hereditary factors as well as external assaults of destructive microbes, and often both working in coordination.

- That is, 1) we inherit genetic defects—defects that are both accidental such as would be caused by cosmic rays or radiation but also defects which seem to be highly intelligent distortions.

- We also, 2) “contract” diseases coming from outside our bodies, like flu or colds or pneumonia or tuberculosis or malaria. Not only that but some of the specific perversions of our genetic inheritance are preyed upon by external disease factors with considerable, obvious intelligence.

- Promoting God’s glory is inextricably related to destroying the works of the devil— “The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8.

- The Garden of Eden is portrayed in Genesis as a locality which differed from the disorder of the surrounding world and that the evil outside the Garden existed prior to the creation of man.

- The Genesis mandate to man to care for life would thus seem to include serious human efforts in collaboration with God to work with Him to restore (to redeem) all perversions of disease or violence in the various forms of life. In this activity we can “Let our light so shine among men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16). This is part of “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:9-13)

To Understand the Nature of Society

- The multilevel family—where a child growing up can witness an obedient relationship between his parents and his parents’ parents—is an element essential to social stability. No amount of focus on the monogenerational, or nuclear, family can enable it to be an ideal environment for children to be raised or for even parents to properly mature. This state of affairs is all the more difficult to attain when the marriage ceremony itself does not define which set of parents is to have the primary continuing parental role.

- The society that has banished young people from the work force is thus forced to reassign children’s work to adults. This, in turn, misuses and abuses both adults and children, and it cuts the natural bond within families and between generations in favor of an age-stratification which destroys the normal function of learning passing from older to younger.

- In the light of the latter point, the comparatively recent achievement of a large proportion of U.S. population becoming involved in the phenomenon of a seventeen-year tunnel in non-productive school experience represents the largest and most stubborn obstacle to the normal maturation of young people as well as the maintenance of cohesive families and a cohesive society.

- The arrangement by which each husband and wife pursue different careers independently in separate social environments must be considered a dubious attainment which puts great strain upon the marriage and further distances the children from the parents.

Editorial on confronting evil

(2001) (*Mission Frontiers*, June)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment45>

Few Christian thinkers today write with the penetration and boldness of Philip Yancey. His experience contemplating a beautiful young bride suddenly devastated by a fatal illness is where this editorial begins.

It does not end there.

Our mission in this world is not yet so perfectly obvious that we can consign it to a marginal place in our daily lives, our wallets, our awareness.

Claudia, a beautiful young bride only a year into a glorious marriage, is now suddenly confined to a hospital bed, her beauty rapidly fading, her body sinking into unexpected and yet certain death from Hodgkin's disease.

This we hear from Philip Yancey. But his (true) story only begins there.

Now six kinds of visitors show up.

One is a deacon. He solemnly and earnestly "reminds" Claudia that our God would not "do such a thing to her" unless He had some good reason, unless there was some sin, some lesson for her to learn. Search for that in faith, he said. But, in her weakness she could not think of anything she had done wrong. And, anyway, why such a violent punishment?

Another visitor is an ebullient, cheerful woman. She arrives with flowers and flowery words to cheer. She insists on changing the subject every time Claudia refers to her illness. She overflows with exciting stories. She does not come back. She has done her duty.

Another woman arrives with great confidence in the power of faith.

When she learns about the first visitor, she reacts instantly with, "Sickness is never God's will! Haven't you read the Bible? The devil stalks like a roaring lion, but God will deliver you if you can muster up enough faith to believe you will be healed ... Simply name your promise, in faith, and then claim the victory." Claudia was exhausted and confused.

A fourth visitor "brought along some books about praising God for everything that happens." This very spiritual woman told Claudia, "You need to come to the place where you can say, 'God, I love you for making me suffer like this.'" This repulsed Claudia. Is God really like that? What kind of glory of God is that?

On and on. You must get Yancey's book—*Where Is God When It Hurts* (Zondervan, 1990).

This is not just an intellectual problem. It has a great deal to do with Who and how we worship.

What is the connection between worship and a day by day deeper awareness of the true glory of God? If worship hinges on our sense of His "worth-ship" we can't go on singing again and again "Majesty, Worship His Majesty" and expect the mere repetition of those words alone to deepen our awareness of His Glory. Jack Hayford did not write that magnificent song so much to gain or procure a sense of God's majesty as to express his awareness of it—and to allow us to do so along with him.

But the power of his marvelous song hinges on the degree of whatever true sense we have, what true awareness we have, of God's majesty. Otherwise those words can become no more than a Hindu mantra.

Thus, if our awareness of God's glory is confused or distorted by the puzzling issues of Claudia's visitors, our worship is going to be limited to our actual experience of that glory.

Yet we commonly hear people wondering out loud why would God have "done" this or that dastardly deed, as though there is no other power working to tear down His Glory.

I would not give you a dime for the idea that God's sovereignty is limited by His "inability" to know what choices His created beings will make in the future, or the reverse extreme that nothing really happens that is dead wrong or truly evil. Apparently a handful of "openness" theologians are being accused of the first extreme. And Christianity Today (April 23, p. 103) gives a whole page to let us hear them stoutly deny this.

But I would give you far more than a dime to know more about that "other" person in this world whose sole occupation is incessantly to pervert and despoil God's goodness and creation, and to twist our understanding of what in this world God does or doesn't do.

Yancey is right to bring this puzzle before us. Why are our usual hospital "visitors" so confused about the virtually omnipresent pain, suffering, premature death, and the myriad examples in our world of the distortion of God's intent—in a word, evil? Or, why are we so illiterate—so seldom discussing—what precisely are "the works of the devil" which "the Son of God appeared to destroy" (1 Jn. 3:8)?

As a matter of fact, how in this world of universal pain and violence, can anyone for a moment question the existence of a Satanic campaign to reduce and distort the true glory of God? How can we be content if we do not learn more of the details and how to fight back?

Frontier mission is that activity which focuses on precisely the confused edge of our active awareness of Satan's domain of global destruction.

This bulletin is focused on mission frontiers, not on what is already clear and widely accepted. Like Yancey, our thinking is intended to probe the borders, the frontiers of our understanding of God's Mandate.

Many interpret the Great Commission to be merely the global extension of knowledge, the "all things I (Jesus) have taught you." Look again. The text clearly says something far more than that. It has Jesus requiring us to make certain that that knowledge is "obeyed," that is, acted on. A colossal difference. Merely 1) to know Jesus healed people, and 2) to both know and "obey" that knowledge, is the difference between, say, 1) a casual intellectual reflection on the existence of disease germs and parasites and 2) an active sense of duty to eliminate them in the Name of Christ.

This is why mission is more (although not less) than sending Bibles. We cannot—now that we know oodles more than we ever have about what can be done to eliminate and totally exterminate various disease pathogens—we cannot go on just praying for people. We worship a God who urges us to do what we are able to do to fight back against the works of Satan which harass and ravage not only millions of precious children

and believing families in the Sudan but invade and plague our own people in the USA with rampant heart disease and diverse cancers.

How long will our pre-scientific theologies allow us to go on believing naively that if we will just “live right” and “eat the right thing” that we will not succumb to any of the virulent viruses, bacteria, parasites, and many other violences that pervade our sad world?

In other words, what may well be “all to the good” is definitely not always good enough. Urging sick and dying people to “praise the Lord” becomes much more inspirational if we and they understand that our faithful God is not only mindful of the nature of evil but He is, with our help, in the process of conquering it. Only in that process of conquest can the full meaning be glimpsed in John’s brief statement that “the Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8).”

We can ask, “Where were our theologians when one of the most outstanding theologians of all time, Jonathan Edwards, sought—against theological opposition—to do away with smallpox?” Massachusetts pastors back then condemned him for “interfering with Divine Providence.” What kind of Satan-favoring, God-distorting theology is that?

Why did it take another 200 years for any concerted effort to eliminate smallpox from the face of the earth? And why, when it did happen, was it not any kind of direct result of Christian initiative?

Can we not better worship and glorify a God who is pleased by the ending of the horrible annual toll of two million people dying by smallpox, that most terrible of all deaths?

Why is our mission to this evil-ridden world not more strategically obedient to God’s concern to triumph over that evil? Maybe it is, as my pastor (Gordon Kirk, Lake Avenue Church, Pasadena) put it, “Satan’s greatest achievement is to cover his tracks.”

What happens to the quality of our worship if we only go around the world making plain by “actions that speak louder than words” that the God we worship is able merely to offer malarial ridden sufferers a bed on which to die? Does this not mean He does not know or care, or even with our help is unable to do anything, to eliminate malaria once and for all?

Or, does it not affect our worship if we worship a God that does not ask us to do anything about the fact that four children die every sixty seconds from the work of that devious, ingenious, metamorphing parasite called malaria? At the minimum, are we not shouting to the world that the God we worship has not enlisted us on His side in this endeavor?

Don’t blame Calvin. He did not have the faintest idea about germs and he only faintly understood the evil intelligence embodied in the masses of parasites that inflict us. With greater knowledge comes new responsibility.

And, worse by far, it may very well be that Calvin, along with Thomas Aquinas, Luther, etc., were infected by an Augustinian pagan syncretism from neo-Platonism that conceived of God as actually orchestrating evil for good—not after the fact, but in its very initiation! The idea is, we must not fight evil but simply resign ourselves to it, knowing that a good God would never have anything but good in mind for us in “doing these harmful things to us.”

How much more logical to believe what the Bible clearly assures us, that God is able to use for good—and with our help ultimately triumph over—the evil deeds of Satan after they happen, but that He does not guide Satan or “put him up to” evil.

I personally don’t put great stock in mere philosophizing, but I am very concerned that so very, very little of the vast energies of the world’s millions upon millions of followers of Christ are so marginal and distantly related to the major matter of eliminatable evil. And I believe that to many intelligent observers of Christianity our integrity and credibility are at stake.

In many spheres of international mission, even among non-literate (but intelligent) people, the very viability and impact of our preaching is gravely blunted. Are we misrepresenting a zealous and loving God in stopping short of the true depth of His mission?

Editorial on wife's last illness

(2001) (*Mission Frontiers*, November-December)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-other-terrorists>

My wife's final ordeal (see p. 37) right in the middle of all this consternation about the new global war on terrorism has meant a double upheaval for me. At times the panic on the TV screen (in the waiting room at the Intensive Care Unit) could hardly distract me from another very different kind of "distraction."

"Things would never again be the same." Right: in my case, for two reasons.

I found myself during the first 28 days of October, every day almost all day in that Intensive Care Unit, thinking, praying, consternating, as my wife of almost 50 years steadily passed out of this life. I could not avoid pondering two different kinds of terrorists, big and very small, the latter being far more dangerous.

The "big" terrorists, the human-sized terrorists, thanks to September 11, are well-known by now. They are apparently sincere but aggrieved and deadly-dangerous Muslims. Passions are now inflamed on both sides. You need to be careful as you read the articles in this issue. Most of them effectively try not to see only evil within Islam. Yet few bother to make comparisons with similar historical evil on the Christian side of the fence.

The actual facts on both sides are not well-known to the average American. But as with Pearl Harbor, Americans are in for a crash course, this time a course on Islam (and maybe a parallel course on a comparably-mixed Christian record).

But while the world is now shocked into consternation about the "big" terrorists, I wish there could be as lurid an awareness of the far greater danger of another kind of "terrorists" too small to see with the naked eye. Yes, our Center in Pasadena, this bulletin, my life, the life of the new Roberta Winter Institute will all be radically different, irretrievably.

In my case I am now in the early stages of a new and major activity I want to tell you about, that is, what may now happen as a result of my wife's five-year ordeal—I am very sure she did not die in vain. First, it may be helpful to the reader to note some of my earlier "major projects."

Project One

I gave several years to developing, with others, the global movement called Theological Education by Extension, which has been aimed at the plight of at least two million "functional pastors" in mission lands being neglected while 4000 mission schools train young, untried youth to replace them.

Project Two

I gave a hunk of time to developing, with others, a major center in Pasadena (from which this bulletin derives) designed to focus on the frontiers of missions, that is, to discover and to tackle major dimensions of need in the mission movement. The most prominent need we recognized was to refocus missions from working in countries to work specifically with "peoples."

A second need was to reclaim in people's minds the Old Testament as the starting point of missions, the Abrahamic Covenant to be seen as the beginning of the Great

Commission. A spin-off of that idea has been the now large network for the course called Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. (See pp. 38, 39.)

Basic to this period was not only the establishment of the Center and the acquisition of related property but the founding of a mission society which would be the owner and operator of the entire project—now a highly dedicated community of 56 families in some ways more important than the Center itself.

Project Three

However, once the Center in Pasadena was established, my next ten years were mostly invested, with others, in the rewriting of the content of the entire liberal arts and seminary curricula into a single, integrated 4,000- year story. This novel new curriculum employs 100 textbooks and hundreds of additional chapters and articles, but is essentially a single picture putting together the jigsaw puzzle pieces of what is otherwise a long list of “courses” which are unintegrated fragments of that picture. This new way of being educated, designed to be a more efficient way forward for national leaders around the world, is now already in use by various colleges and universities in this country and abroad as an M.A. degree, an undergraduate final two years, and in a reduced form as a first college year. Very exciting.

Final Project?

I’m getting old. My 50-year companion is gone. My perhaps “final” task is to tackle the most difficult-to- explain problem of all, and to explain the reasons for the Roberta Winter Institute.

This is where my wife’s long- drawn-out illness and suffering has played a major role. Even before she was waylaid by a mysterious bone- marrow cancer, I had puzzled over the artificial separation in our theological and missionary heritage of the “natural” world from the “spiritual” world, and especially our dulled senses to the truly horrifying amount of violence which is seen at every point in nature. That violence comes home to human beings, and particularly on the mission field, in the form of crime and terrorism, but especially in the form of the tiny terrorists of rampant and dangerous disease.

Sure, Christians along with others have been wonderfully active in curing or treating disease, even in the prevention of disease. But our theological heritage begins to stumble at the question of our declaring war, in the Name of Christ, on all disease, and seeking the total eradication of all disease-causing pathogens. Why? Yet, along with a widely acknowledged new understanding (of DNA and all that) we have now inherited vast new opportunity and unacknowledged new responsibility.

This has been long in coming. Certain scholars have recently pointed out that Augustine, 1600 years ago, was the one who prominently failed to understand disease and violence as something 1) not only within God’s sovereignty, since “He has not ceased to rule from the galaxies to the atom,” but 2) essentially the initiative of a superhuman, evil person.

Reacting against Manicheanism, Augustine went too far in theologizing that it is good enough to think merely of a sovereign God who in some sense sends all harm and suffering, and not also to fight against the works of a Biblical Satan whose destructive intelligence differently explains violence and suffering in nature.

It makes a difference. When the famous theologian, Jonathan Edwards, sought to defeat smallpox, the pastors of Massachusetts warned him that in doing so he would be “interfering with Divine Providence.” When he tragically killed himself tinkering with the newly- developed vaccine, they assumed that he was fighting against God, who thus had to kill him.

To condense a long story

I have come to believe that my wife might not have died of cancer, Robertson McQuilkin’s wife might not have been knocked out by Alzheimer’s disease for the last twenty years, John Wimber might not have died of heart disease, if if if if!!!! Christian believers had properly and biblically taken seriously a search-and-destroy mission for the pathogens producing these diseases.

God could have healed these dear people, but maybe He has expected us to draw some conclusions and “declare a war” on tiny terrorists as well as big ones. The small/invisible terrorists attack and kill more people every day of the week than were put to death by the collapse of those New York city towers. In a year they torture and kill 365 times as many.

But Calvin and Luther were unaware of germs. We know things they did not know. Yet, we Christians, we missionaries have not sought to engage this enormous enemy with anything like the vigor with which we teach our young people to throw balls through hoops and our retired people to bat little balls across meadows.

Thus, the Roberta Winter Institute

Twenty thousand dollars has already come in to get it started. Roberta and I pledged a \$5,000 prize we received three years ago. Christy Wilson on his death-bed urged a \$5,000 gift in his memory be given to this project. A staff member here wrote out a personal check for \$1,000.

Well, of course, we do not yet spend sufficient time to know exactly what to do with certain tiny global terrorists, like malaria. Missions spend at least \$500 million per year raising children up, only to see four die of malaria every sixty seconds. Why not raise an extra \$5 or \$10 million for an all-out war against the source of this pathogen which terrorizes 300 million new people each year, and is lapping at our doorstep in the United States. Would this not glorify God? Is our God properly described as unaware of these tiny terrorists?

Many friendly people have implied to me and to my wife, before she died, that Jesus could heal any disease and that it only takes faith to make it happen. Okay. Why did Jesus heal? One missionary reminded me that healing people does not get them into heaven. But what can attract people to heaven is preaching a God who was, and still is, deeply concerned about physical deformities and disease and suffering, and is not simply in the business— perish the thought—of inflicting people with pain to deepen their spiritual lives. If that is God’s initiative, why did His Son go around relieving people of pain?

The primary focus of this new institute will not be laboratory science but public and mission awareness of the need for a new theological sensitivity for destroying the works of the devil.

It is truly astonishing how much greater we can make the impact of our missionary evangelism if the true spectrum of concern of our loving God is made clear and is backed up by serious attention not only to treating illness but to eradicating the evil causes, the works of the devil.

If it is true that “the works of God are to declare His glory”, then every missionary needs to carry with him both a telescope and a microscope!

For example, missionaries in West Africa for a hundred years have merely “lived with” an evil microbe called Guinea Worm. This pathogen starts out as a tiny bundle in your drinking water, too small to see with the naked eye. Within your body it grows destructively into a 32-inch snake, eventually breaking the skin and winding out slowly over a period of weeks. You can’t pull it out or it may break off and kill you. You must gradually “spool” it out, winding it on a stick. Did God design this?

Honestly, has anyone ever identified this pathogen as a work of the devil to be destroyed in the Name of Christ?

Apparently not. Our passivity declares that God doesn’t know or care or is unable to do anything about such things! All we normally offer to our followers around the world is 1) sympathy, 2) a suspension of criticism of a good God for the evil in this world, 3) admonitions to be resigned to the pain and suffering while awaiting God’s making some good out of the evil, and 4) a way out of this world into eternity.

However, in the case of Guinea Worm, 600,000 people were afflicted twenty years ago. Yet the number now is almost down to zero. Why? Because one Christian layman visiting in West Africa — not a missionary, not a pastor, not a theologian — decided to return to the U.S. and muster efforts to eradicate this pathogen, “to wipe it from the face of the earth.” That was Jimmy Carter.

This new challenge for missions could lead to a drastic reduction in our annual outlay to care for diseased people (it being the chief factor in poverty). And it may radically add power and beauty to the very concept of the God we preach, and thus become a new and vital means of glorifying God among the nations.

Let’s be realistic

Many honest souls, both on the mission field and also in our secularized world, are not dramatically impressed by a God that cannot be bothered to conquer and exterminate the evil bugs that cause disease, but can mainly only offer a ticket to heaven. Declaring war on disease may be the only way to restore the full power of true evangelism.

Why? It may readily be that young people on the mission field (and here at home) will grow up and ask the embarrassing questions, “Why don’t Christians have a theology for attacking the very roots of disease?” Why merely give intravenous liquids to babies dying from dysentery without dealing with a contaminated water supply? Why deal with water contamination and not concern ourselves with eradicating the pathogens that constitute the contamination? Why, now that we know what to do, are we not doing it, in the Name of Christ?”

Oh God, when will we be as involved in glorifying Your Name as we are in attracting people to eternal life? How can we go on believing that all the pestilence and disease and suffering in the world “is exactly the way God wants it to be,” as some have told me? Is Your reputation at risk as long as Your people pay little attention to

“destroying the works of the devil” (I Jn 3:8)? Can we launch an even more powerful form of evangelism if we actively identify with Your concern for banishing diabolic pathogens?

Satan triumphs in the presence of unawareness of his presence, of his deeds. His greatest achievement, according to my pastor, “is to cover his tracks.” He has apparently done that so successfully that, to my knowledge, no pastor, no TV evangelist, no theologian has ever spoken of believers everywhere declaring a global war against Satanically-devised disease pathogens.

No one is going to solve such problems overnight, or perhaps ever, before the return of Christ. But what if in the meantime God’s reputation is at stake in the absence of our publicly declaring His concern and identifying with that concern to conquer and eradicate evil parasites and bacteria and viruses in His Name?

The Most Prominent and Yet Unresolved Issue in Western Civilization in the Last Two Centuries: Its Meaning for Mission

(2001) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 217-19)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

Chadwick Hanson makes the truly upsetting case that in 1692 in Salem, Massachusetts, unlike three centuries of ensuing conventional interpretations, it was not the preachers but the town's businessmen who instigated the hysteria about witches leading to the death of 19 people. The preachers, he points out, trained in science at Yale, insisted on an evaluation of objective evidence in a court trial which put an end to the killings. Furthermore—and even more significant—the example of what was done in Salem then so impressed Europeans that a century-long orgy of witch burning on the Continent that put 250,000 women to death considerably came to a halt.

Ominously, then, this often-referred-to event (long referred to in our public and private school texts as “what happens when religious people get control of a community”) was actually an example of what happens when Biblically informed people lose control of a community. However, ironically and tragically, it marked a major milestone in the decline of belief in America in the existence and activity of Satan. In fact, only a few years later when Jonathan Edwards attempted to protect the Indians at his mission outpost from almost annual plagues of smallpox he was warned by the pastors of Massachusetts against “interfering with Divine Providence.” Why did they conclude that smallpox was of God not of Satan? Was it their non-Biblical theological training?

Alexander Kalomiros, a scholar within Eastern Orthodox Christianity, would answer ‘yes’ to that question. He bluntly states that the Devil himself has made men believe that God does not really love us but punishes us with disease, and that these switched roles for Satan and God represent a view which has gained ground mainly within Catholic and Protestant Christianity. He says,

What was the instrument of the devil's slandering of God? What means did he use to convince humanity (of this slander) ... He used “theology.” He first introduced a slight alteration in theology which, once it was accepted, he managed to increase more and more ... This is what we call “Western Theology” ... its principal characteristic is that it considers God as the real cause of all evil.

Ronald Numbers is the William Coleman Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He grew up in the family of a Seventh-Day Adventist preacher who firmly believed and often preached that paleontologists have it all wrong because, according to the well-established view within Seventh-Day Adventism, the world is no more than ten thousand years old, and all of the fossil evidence can be explained by a universal flood. Implicit in this view is the idea that all evil, all suffering, all violence in nature (reflected by the gigantic teeth in the fossils) is the result of Adam's sin and “Fall” (not an earlier “Fall” of Satan).

Alarmingly, this view, the “evolution” of which Numbers handles with great fairness and respect, now mainly resides in the Homeschooling movement. The view understands that creation was good, was created in six days, very recently, and was at that

point, and due to Adam's sin, corrupted in various unspecified ways. That is, in this view, we need to explain all violence in nature in all of earth's history including what is perhaps the pervasive and systematic distortion of the DNA of all peculiarly life-destroying forms of life, whether present or now-extinct, and explain all of this as resulting from Adam's sin. This view has the main function of allowing people to believe that the fossil record does not conflict with a literal interpretation of Genesis One (even though the animals in Genesis One are not carnivorous, as would seem to be the animals represented by the "old" bones we are digging up). And it attributes all of the evil in nature to the result of Adam's "fall," not Satan's fall (rebellion). Indeed it confuses the two events. It is more concerned with preserving belief in what some understand the Bible to say than it was concerned to explain the problem of evil, that is, the evidence of violence in nature. See also **Brown**, 2001.

A book which truly takes the bull by the horns is **Andrew Delbanco's** *Death of Satan, How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*. This man is the Julian Clarence Levi Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University in New York "writing intellectual history with the scholarly erudition of a Perry Miller," according to a technical reviewer. His book gives a detailed, blow by blow account of the gradual loss and trivialization in American life and literature of the concept of Satan. It describes the increasing concern about violence and evil in American life and yet the decreasing connection in our minds of this evil with any kind of an overarching evil person or power.

Michael Behe, Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University in Eastern Pennsylvania, dramatically proves in the opinion of many, including myself, the impossibility of explaining incredible microbiological complexity as the result of an unguided, chance process. His book is, almost singlehandedly, the principle stake in the growing movement insisting on intelligent design in nature in place of Darwin's mechanism of the survival of the fittest. But Behe, Johnson, and Demsky make no attempt to explain how the gruesome violence got into the picture. Thus, in a TV debate sponsored by William F. Buckley, called Cross-fire, neither Behe nor any member of his team debating against the other team which was upholding unguided evolution was able to answer the question posed by a Canadian philosopher, "Does your God create parasites?" Ironically, parasites represent perhaps the most ingenious, intelligent (evil) design to be found in nature.

Curiously and puzzlingly, **Deborah Ajulu's** book, published by World Vision MARC, which is focused exclusively on combatting poverty in the Third World, says absolutely nothing about combatting parasites and disease as one of the truly major factors in poverty. Instead, and certainly very effectively, she points out that social and political factors not just material aid are important. Yet an enormous amount of poverty, perhaps in Africa the majority, is the direct result of rampant disease which often pulls down into sickness, suffering and death as many as four fifths of the members of a family.

But then, **Cornelius Hunter's** book startlingly points out that Darwin himself was highly concerned about the presence of disease and violence in a world created by a good God. Publishers Weekly describes it as

Rather than an assault on God's existence, evolution was for Darwin and many of his contemporaries a defense of God's goodness, a strategy for disassociating God

from the often unsavory details of nature by introducing a blind process of natural selection.

What a switch! I have always understood evolutionists to be totally unconcerned about violence in nature, not at all concerned to protect God's reputation by dreaming up an automatic process the results of which cannot be blamed on God. Well, evolutionists in general today are in fact the last to worry about any kind of a creator God. But apparently Darwin did.

The irony here is that when spiritually minded creationists insist that God created all things, then the problem Darwin was apparently worried about is back in the fire. What could possibly be the explanation for evidence that seems to shout out at us of a nature shot through and through with a huge and horrifying amount of carnage and evil long before the appearance of man in the picture, evil which has existed at least since the Cambrian period (before that we know of no predatory forms of life).

Mitchell Stevens a professor of sociology at Hamilton College, ups the ante by giving us an up-to-date view of the burgeoning homeschooling movement, the very movement forming a significant number of future Evangelical leaders. This Princeton University Pressbook takes this homeschooling movement very seriously, delivering in minute detail its struggle for legality, and the various state and national associations which promote, serve, and defend home schooling parents.

The book apparently deserved four full pages of a review by **Margaret Talbot** in the November 2001 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. This movement is so significant in her eyes that she labels her review "A New Counterculture." Once again, this is the powerful movement which is rearing millions of serious Evangelical young people in a worldview of creation which does not effectively confront the enormously threatening and ugly facts of disease and violence in nature.

In total contrast is the glossy, oversized and truly impressive work of **Carl Zimmer**, who with incredible erudition produced an oversized book which brilliantly accompanies the recent eight-hour PBS series on evolution. If anyone can convince you of a chance, random process creating complexity he can. And for most people he no doubt succeeds. In the final chapter of the book he turns confidently to the question, "What about God?" and boldly visits Wheaton College finding even Evangelicals willing to believe in his kind of Evolution. He then adds Southern Baptists and even the Pope to his cause. In sweeping terms he dismisses the Creation Science movement.

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Origins, Evil, and Mission

(2001) *Frontiers in Mission*, 195-234

(*This is a group of articles*)

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A Larger Worldview?

Missiology Hour USCWM, Tuesday, October 20, 2001

(*Frontiers in Mission*, 197-99)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

The concept of a *worldview* ranges from the very comprehensive to the fairly narrow, from ideas about the origin of the entire universe to merely the complex of cultural norms which seem to urge children to do things differently from mainstream society.

There are limits also to what I will fly here as a trial balloon. I don't have any interest at the moment in the idea that the universe once sprang from a tiny speck of concentrated matter. I would rather concentrate merely on a worldview which would explain at least hypothetically the origin and development of life on this planet from the simplest and earliest forms of life to the most complex, whether large or small. (Complexity and size do not seem to be related. For example, the eyes of a housefly are said to be much more complex than the eyes of human beings.)

Furthermore, I would like for the moment to try to avoid "accepted" religious terminology about a supreme being. The current English word God derives from the forests of northern Europe not from the Bible. It might be possible to proceed here with this exercise without using any traditional religious terms. Concepts yes. Terms no.

I will not limit myself by the need to talk only of the proven existence of this or that. Although I am unaware of anything which could be called an infallible proof of the Big Bang origin of the universe the concept is talked about freely. So it is with the so-called "Record of the Rocks." I am aware of various ways of interpreting that evidence. However, for this experiment in worldview I will address those who accept it at face-value. I will not try to validate it. At the same time, I don't feel it necessary or helpful to yield to a blanket assumption that there are not or cannot be intelligent beings other than the forms of life seen on earth, nor that such beings cannot be more than spectators of what goes on.

Also, I do not feel obligated to assign any special meaning to the two words *evolution* and *creation*, both of which are widely used quite casually with a vast range of differing definitions. I, thus, have no trouble calling the 20th Century development of the automobile either the "*evolution* of the automobile or the *creation* of the automobile," since neither phrase in itself requires or excludes a Darwinian mechanism of selection—

even though it would be preposterous to propose that the development of the automobile came about without intelligent guidance at every point.

Evolution can imply, for at least some people, many different things. *Creation* can imply instant original creation, sporadic intervention, or continuous or “progressive” creation. However, since both terms are often heavily loaded, I would prefer simply to speak of *development*.

Finally, I don’t wish to be bothered by a distinction between a *natural* explanation and a *theological* explanation. Even Darwin was thinking theologically, apparently, when he felt moved to protect the idea of a good God by postulating a purely automatic hands-off process of evolution to account for the evil in nature:

There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the [parasitic wasp] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that the cat should play with mice (Darwin, 1860).

I would prefer to be as free (as Darwin seemed to be) to live with the idea of an intelligent supreme being existing outside of the sphere of life on earth. That seems to me to be as intelligent an assumption as, for example, the seemingly arbitrary insistence on there being no such a thing.

With these terminological qualifications behind us, then let us speculate with as much evidence as possible and be willing to go beyond present evidence where it seems necessary.

Thus, we begin with a roughly five-billion-year-old planet and a roughly four-billion-year record of life. Two things are curious about this record (in case it happened that way!).

1. The “Delay” in the Development of Life

First, there is the apparent evidence that multi-celled or even single-celled life appeared quite late in the story. Perhaps, however, that seems strange to us only because our common knowledge understands so very little of the unimaginable complexity of the so-called “simpler forms of life.” If we draw a parallel here between the development of life and the development of the automobile several things pop out.

Practically every component of the early automobiles was originally developed with something else in mind. Indeed, the history of the automobile is relatively short compared to the previous long period in the development of understanding of things like the electromotive force essential for spark plugs to work. In current evolutionary terminology the Model T evolved by “co-opting” things made for something else. Nevertheless, such previous creations and the novel arrangement and adaptation of them in the Model T demanded a great many intelligent workers for many years.

It might also be postulated that just as thousands of intelligent engineers and workers were necessary in the development of the automobile, so thousands of non-human beings have been involved in the development of life, and that these intelligent beings could learn as they went, and that a superior being was pleased with their learning progress.

2. The Sudden Emergence of Violence

Second, and even more fascinating, we are told that for almost three and a half billion years the development of increasingly complex forms of life went on in the absence of predatory or life-destroying forms of life (Fortey 1997, xx). The earlier *absence* of predatory forms of life is not the surprising thing--if we postulate a good superior being with loyal workers doing his bidding. But the fact that suddenly in this conjectured record there appeared incredible predation and violence is a huge puzzle unless we recognize that rebellion and opposition to original intent must have come into the process at that precise point (3.5 billion years along in the process, and at about 500 million years ago).

That is, it would seem to be reasonable to postulate that after the Cambrian extinction event, and after lengthy familiarity with the entire DNA process, a new, profoundly antagonistic non-human being (along with many knowledgeable and skilled workers) apparently set to work to undo, to distort, and to destroy all that they had earlier assisted into being.

Overnight, so to speak, every form of life at every level of complexity was either transformed into viciousness or left as prey or both, all the way from the size of bacteria to that of large animals. New species in vast profusion ("the Cambrian explosion") also appeared. Those workers that did not rebel had now evidently to develop forms of life with defenses. Crustaceans now first appear, and animals with defensive spines, like porcupines, etc. Immune systems were apparently developed since they would not have been necessary had not attacking pathogens appeared.

But life went on, and a variety of new species were being constantly developed, some workers employing their intelligence for good, others for distortion and destruction. The inherent beauty and complexity of much of life would continue to be evident, but the novel new element would be the additional presence of absolutely pervasive and destructive evil. It is said that two-thirds of all life forms now in existence are parasitic. The destructive forces could even tinker with DNA to transform a lion that would lie down with a lamb into a highly destructive, but still beautiful beast.

Major asteroidal collisions continued, each time much of life was extinguished, with enormous coal deposits resulting from huge amounts of vegetation being suddenly killed off, and parallel oil deposits resulting from massive amounts of animal life suddenly being engulfed. It would appear that only one out of a thousand different species appearing in earlier times exists today.

The most recent major collision of an asteroid is reported to be 60 million years ago and is widely believed now to be the cause of the demise of the dinosaur era. If you can imagine a Super Being having control over asteroids, you can well imagine that the grim and savage violence that characterized the dinosaur era was cut short for that very reason.

Coming closer to the present, hominids appear in the record as long as several million years ago, and manlike creatures such as the Neanderthals very much more recently like 60 thousand years ago, but DNA studies now indicate that the Neanderthals were neither human nor an antecedent of homo sapiens.

What seems quite possible is that a smaller asteroid collided with the earth about 10 thousand years ago, and that the events of Genesis record the immediate results as well as what followed as various forms of life appeared and, specifically, homo sapiens.

The immediate result of such a collision would have been formlessness and darkness (due to the immense dust clouds hurled into the air from the impact). Gradually the dust would settle and it would eventually be possible to tell the day from the night but not to see the sun itself. Finally the dust canopy would thin to the point that the sun and the moon would appear as visible bodies (and actual rays of light would enable rainbows). Meanwhile various kinds of animals would be redeveloped.

This could have been when a brand new and radically different form of life appeared, *homo sapiens*, but only in a unique garden spot intended to enable a new counterthrust to the previous 500 million years of rampant evil and destruction. Genesis 1:1-2 actually permits this interpretation, namely “When God began His work of rehabilitation He had to deal with a battered, formless and darkened earth ...” Note the text in the NRSV for Genesis 1:1, which is in the margins of other translations. As C. S. Lewis puts it:

It seems to me ... a reasonable supposition, that some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on ...planet Earth, before ever man came on the scene ... If there is such a power, as I myself believe, it may well have corrupted the animal creation before man appeared (Lewis 1940, 87).

But no sooner did this Eden experiment begin than the non-human Evil Being appeared—“some mighty created power”—and, having a 500 million year “crime record” behind him, ever since his own rebellion, seduced this new human couple, thus reintroducing violence into the picture, such as fratricide between their own children. Things became so bad that it would not have been unreasonable for the good Supreme Being to arrange a flood that would destroy perverted humanity, and that following this flood, the dust canopy would be completely gone, actual rays of light finally appearing, permitting a rainbow for the first time since that particular asteroidal collision.

Here is where in Genesis the Bible may begin its story: the redevelopment and “replenishing” of things after the most recent asteroidal impact, after the early failure of the Edenic experiment. Thus, the compromised result immersed the unique, new form of life, humans, now already in significant rebellion, into the rest of the planet which had been undergoing plundering and distortion for 500 million years.

Out of all this coldness and chaos, this darkness and hopeless evil, one man is now selected and commissioned in a fight-back plan which was intended to expand the beachhead of those who are a special part of the family of the good Supreme Being. In Genesis 12 a “covenant” is introduced which becomes the theme of the entire remainder of the Bible.

Empire after empire appeared and collapsed. The Sumerian was in decline at the time Abraham departed. The Old Babylonian empire came next, then the Assyrian, the New Babylonian, the much more high-minded Persian next, with its Zoroastrian and Hebrew sub-populations, then finally the Roman Empire, harsh and cruel yet ruled by law and considerably more impartial in its justice (eventually even conceding special recognition to the Jewish nation within its boundaries). There was the astounding flash-in-the-pan of the Alexandrian extension of what was to be mainly inherited by the Roman sphere. In Alexander’s Greek language very wisely and carefully selected Hebrew scriptures found an unprecedented voice and acceptance. Here was the first major crosscultural impact of the Abrahamic plan. From this Greek document (called the Septuagint) translations were then made into many other languages. The Hebrew

originals were not brought together for an additional 800 years). Eventually, after another 700 years, the Hebrew came into its own mainly due to the breakaway movement of the Germans, when Luther chose to work from the Hebrew in order to avoid both the Greek and the Latin scriptures, whose interpretations had already been set in concrete by the Orthodox and Catholic traditions, respectively.

However, all of this is simply a quick synopsis of the backdrop of the current ongoing and all-out conflict between warring powers as seen in every aspect of life on earth. Since Abraham the gradually increasing insight of humans into the nature of nature has enabled the incrementally accelerated reconquest of evil which the Abrahamic Covenant set in motion.

Curiously, the most basic evidence of the waning of the influence of the non-human, angelic Evil Being is the gradual net increase in population. For much of the earlier part of the human story the destructive perversions of “war and pestilence” held population growth virtually to a standstill. By 2002, however, it was estimated that victims of war on a global level were only one-fourth the number of people killed in traffic accidents.

It was not always so. It is estimated that world population was roughly 28 million in Abraham’s day. Had it increased at the present rate from that point on it would have reached six billion only 321 years later. However, the fact that world population only reached about 200 million (not six billion) in the next two thousand years (not 321 years), betrays the ghastly toll of war and pestilence in the unfolding drama of human history.

Or, for example, when the Roman legions withdrew from British soil early in the fifth century (in order to go and protect the city of Rome from Gothic invaders), the one million population of the British Isles failed to increase in the slightest for the next six centuries. Why? War and pestilence.

The Christian faith had brought a certain amount of order to Britain, but it was not until 1066 that local warfare and the unremitting Viking invasions markedly diminished and the overall population began to creep up. Creep, I say, because nearly constant pestilence was still a major factor. When Napoleon marched toward Russia with a huge army of 600,000 he had no idea that pestilence alone would be the major factor in his return with less than one out of twenty of his men.

In Luther’s day life expectancy averaged 25 years. But, in Germany today it is almost three times that.

Meanwhile, however, new and more virulent forms of age-old pathogens continue to be invented before our eyes. We tend to think that the times of great plagues are now history, yet if you stop and think about the number of Americans who are cut down prematurely by cancer and heart disease alone, you confront the very definition of a major plague, and the actual proportion of our population affected is clearly higher than in the case of a medieval plague.

At about the time my wife was in the City of Hope’s Intensive Care Unit with a minor infection (causing special difficulties due to her simultaneous cancer) and was rendered totally hopeless by contracting the dread “Hospital Sepsis,” another Lake Avenue couple, the husband perfectly healthy, going in for merely a prostate biopsy, also contracted the same disease and died in 17 hours. “Hospital sepsis” has increased ten-fold in ten years.

Now that we are nearing what is perhaps the end of time, we can more clearly discern the existence of a basic struggle between darkness and light. The war between the dominion of an evil power and the existence of a good Supreme Being is more evident than ever, even though in public forums such beings are less talked of than ever. This huge gap between the reality of this pervasive struggle and the awareness thereof by contemporary man provides us with the arena in which our mission must take place.

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A Blindspot in Western Christianity?

Transcription of a talk given on June 23, 1999

Foundations Reader, 319-22

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/45_a_blindspot.pdf

I will not be discussing a major correction in one particular stream of Christianity, but rather an urgent Biblical insight lacking in virtually all forms of Western Christianity.

One reason for a correction is that our theological structure of interpretation of the meaning of the Biblical witness took place centuries before we had any inkling of the dark intelligence invested in the micro world of disease germs, and our current theological sensitivities have, amazingly, not yet adjusted to this new information. We do not commonly attribute the origin of destructive germs to an intelligent evil being. We have no theology of mission for destroying such germs!

A Staggering Thought

In the five years of the gradual progress of bone marrow cancer in my wife's physical being, we were both pressed to ask some unusual questions, and have begun to develop some unusual answers.

First came an arresting and even staggering thought that looks upon the need for theological correction as long ago as the fourth century AD. That was the first public and political century of Christianity. It was the kind of mix in which syncretism is often spawned. According to this theory it was the time when a virulent form of pagan syncretism lodged itself deeply into our Western Christian theological tradition. A detailed exposition of this amazing proposal can be found in Gregory Boyd's book entitled *God at War*. Some of the flavor of the entire book can be caught in these few words:

We see...[someone with] polio...and piously shake our heads...saying "It is the will of God...hard to understand...we have to wait to get to heaven [to understand it]"...[By contrast] Jesus looked at [sickness] and in crystal clear terms called it the work of the devil, and not the will of God—[something to be fought, not something to which we should simply resign ourselves.] (Boyd 1997:183)

This contrast, Boyd contends, reveals a pagan neo-Platonist strand in our theology coming through Augustine. It was absorbed further through Boethius and his winsome and incredibly influential *Consolations of Philosophy*. In this line of thinking is an emphasis on a "mysterious good" which stands behind all evil, rather than simply a recognition of the good which God may indeed faithfully work "following" evil. What it then does is distract us and prevent us from turning decisively against and crushing the source of that evil. While pagan, it is imposed on us as an attitude of noble resignation in the midst of suffering. It works itself out as a curious passivity in the presence of evil. It

takes the Biblical phrase, “all things work together for good” to mean that God—who does in fact work good out of evil—is somehow the author of the evil itself.

How has this syncretistic element in our theological tradition surfaced on a practical level? In accord with our by-now instinctive Augustinian neo-Platonism, we cannot be totally surprised that when a godly young preacher in Puritan Massachusetts sought to fight smallpox, the other pastors with one voice opposed him and formed an “anti-vaccination society.” In the perspective of their Augustinian/Calvinist theology this saintly young pastor was, and I quote, “interfering with Divine Providence.” No wonder that when that young man died in the process of trying out a smallpox vaccine on himself, it was assumed that God killed him. Strangely, that comparatively young man attempting to spare the suffering of the Indians at his mission outpost is known today for his philosophy, not for fighting evil in the form of a virus. I speak of Jonathan Edwards.

But, in actual fact, the problem was that Edwards’ keen thinking challenged a seriously syncretistic element in our theological tradition. By Edward’s day the syncretized Christian tradition was so durable and so impervious to change that not for two hundred years did any individual or group decide to eliminate smallpox. And when that campaign finally occurred, it was not this time to the credit of a preacher, a missionary, or a Christian theologian. That eradication effort took place only 21 years ago!

Edwards’ insight could and should have displaced that particular pagan element in our theology—the passive acceptance of disease as being God’s direct will which we are therefore not to fight against. Edwards’ insight could have replaced the pagan element with a theology informing and guiding a serious attack on what the Bible calls simply “the works of the devil.”

But, that insight died with Edwards. I have concluded with profound sadness that had that insight not died with him, our form of faith might have regained a Biblical zeal to set out deliberately to vanquish the works of the devil—all forms of conquerable evil.

Are We Really Passive before Evil?

You may quite readily wonder if I am unaware of “enormous research” that is going on. Several years ago, when my wife was first diagnosed with cancer, I had the idea that surely a lot of money in this country and around the world was flowing into *foundational* cancer research. Having had since then reason to look into this supposition, I am astounded that actually very little goes into foundational cancer research compared to what we spend on cancer *treatment*—after this deadly malady attaches itself to us. My best estimate is that to *understand and eradicate cancer* we spend less than one thousandth of what we pay for cancer *treatments*. Indeed, it may even be less than that. The truth is actually scandalous—are we living with a deception about this?

However, the main point here is not how little goes to understand disease compared to the perfectly enormous amount we frantically spend for treatments once we are individually attacked. That huge imbalance is, of course, curious and puzzling.

The more significant point is that there is absolutely no evidence I know of in all the world of any *theologically driven* interest in combatting disease at its origins. Not only have I not found any work of theology, any chapter, any paragraph, nor to my knowledge any sermon urging us—whether in the pew or in professional missions—to go to battle against the many diseases we now know to be eradicable. Jimmy Carter, our

former president, is the only Christian leader I know of who has set out (in his phrase) “to wipe Guinea worm from the face of the earth.” Note that his insight did not come from a seminary experience, but, perhaps, from being a Sunday school teacher. The Carter Center set out to eradicate two horrible diseases with which missionaries in Africa have had to live for 100 years. They have now done it, and have chosen three more. Apparently, Carter cannot expect to fund this operation from Christian sources. He gets money from secular corporations.

Christian missions spend literally millions of dollars around the world taking care of sick people. And we nourish hundreds of thousands of children in one program or another, raising them up so they can die of malaria. (Every sixty seconds four children die of malaria.) Yet in all the earth I know of only one very small clinic in Zimbabwe where two ill-equipped missionary doctors are working toward the actual elimination of the astonishingly intelligent malarial parasite that is called a plasmodium. And in secular circles the outwitting of that ingeniously evil bug is not being pursued by the World Health Organization nor the US National Institutes of Health nor even the Atlanta Center for Disease Control. Only the U.S. Navy, amazingly, is seriously involved.

Note that I am not talking about efforts to *avoid* disease but efforts to eradicate the very source of a disease. Thus, I am not talking about contributory environmental factors or nutritional factors. All such good things are *defensive* measures. We recall that people tried their best for centuries to avoid smallpox. But it was better finally to exterminate the virus that was the source cause. We can be glad that destructive virus is behind us, but *we have to admit that its eradication was not because of Christian initiative, much less theological insight.*

Defensive measures are good, but notice our strange theological (and pagan) reluctance to set out to *destroy the disease germs themselves*. To do that would be to go on the offense. We don't do that. Yet isn't it Biblical to *destroy the works of the devil*? In 1 John 3:8 we read very simply, “The Son of God came into the world that He might destroy the works of the devil.” We don't hear much of that verse, partly because *we yield in our every day consciousness to a secular mindset that implicitly denies the very possibility of an intelligent evil destroyer of God's good creation.*

Is There an Active Satan? When Did He Get Started and What Is He Doing?

But an additional reason we don't hear much of that verse is because our theological tradition does not illuminate for us exactly what the works of the devil really are. The respected Dutch theologian Berkouer made the rare comment that “You cannot have a proper theology without a sound demonology.” Another theologian dared to suggest that Satan's greatest achievement is “to cover his tracks.” Note that if, in fact, Satan has skillfully “covered his tracks” all of us are likely extensively *unaware* of his deeds. Isn't that logical? Paul suggested that we are not to be ignorant of his devices. We are told that Satan and his angels once worked for God. If so, then precisely what kind of destruction and perversion did Satan set out to achieve when he turned against God? Where would we see evidence of his works? Would he employ powers of deception so that we would get accustomed to evil and no longer connect an intelligent evil power with evil and suffering? Would Satan even successfully tempt us to think that God is somehow behind all evil—and that we must therefore not attempt to eradicate things like smallpox lest we “interfere with Divine Providence”?

In the last 20 years paleontologists have dug up more evidences of earlier life forms than in all previous history. One of their thought-provoking discoveries is that the pre-Cambrian forms of life *revealed no predators*. Then, at a very distinct juncture destructive forms of life suddenly appeared at all levels, from large creatures to destructive forms of life at the smallest microbiological level.

Is this what Satan set out to do from the time he rebelled against the Creator—that is, he set about to pervert and distort all forms of life so as to transform all nature into the arena of tooth and claw that reigns today? Recent lab results indicate that retroviruses are smart enough to carry with them short pieces of pre-coded DNA which they insert into the chromosome of a cell so as to distort the very nature of an organism. Can a lion that would lie down with a lamb become vicious by such DNA tinkering? We do know that many diseases reflect defective genes. Very recent literature indicates that in the case of the major chronic diseases *infections* are now seriously thought to underlie everything from heart disease to cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and even schizophrenia.

A Double Enigma

But we confront a second and separate mystery here that is beyond mere scientific facts. Speaking in colloquial terms, we face a “double whammy.” We are not only suddenly aware that our medical people have been looking in the wrong direction. That may actually be true if, as is now reported, tooth infections are related to heart disease no matter how low-fat your diet is. Finnish scientists are the ones who are aware of this, and are sure of this.

But a second and more ominous fact confronts us. We must be aware that some force is *delaying that awareness*. For example, it has been two decades since it was clearly proven that 95% of duodenal ulcers are caused by a bacterial infection, yet today half the doctors in the state of Colorado still do not employ the necessary three days of tetracycline. Is this not a clear case of demonic *cultural* delusion piled on top of a demonic *physical* distortion?

Will we now see a similarly ominous and tragic lag in the application of knowledge with regard to the relation between infectious agents and the major killer diseases I just mentioned? Can and should the church speak out on these twin problem areas? *Where are our theologians when we need them?*

The Proposed Institute¹

The proposed *Institute for the Study of the Origins of Disease* will have to confine itself in its early days of severely limited funding to the collection and dissemination of information about what is and is not being done at the roots of disease. It will endeavor to attract serious attention to this sphere. It will use both secular and theological weaponry, especially the latter. It will try to upgrade our desire to bring glory to God by ending our apparently neoplatonist truce with Satan in the realm of all his ingenious and destructive works. Our global mission agencies, which already have to their credit the discovery of the nature of leprosy, will declare war on all sources of disease instead of merely being kind to sick people and preaching resignation amidst suffering.

Our actions (which often speak louder than our words) will no longer proclaim loudly and embarrassingly that our God can get you a hospital bed to lie on plus a ticket to heaven, but that He is either ignorant, uncaring, or impotent to do anything effective

about the origins of your disease. We cannot blame Augustine or Calvin or Luther for not knowing anything about germs or the enormous complexities of microbiology. But can we repentantly accept blame for the continuing fact that three-fourths of all Americans die prematurely from major chronic diseases which are now suddenly more defeatable than ever?

The least we can do is set something in motion that may rectify our understanding of a God who is not the author of the destructive violence in nature and who has long sought our help in bringing His kingdom and His will on earth.

I read a true story in *Readers Digest* about a family of three children who lost their oldest child, a daughter, through terrible suffering with cancer. Then, the father, fund raising to raise money to fight cancer among children in general collapsed and died ten feet short of the goal in a marathon race. I do not believe that God was the author of that double tragedy, but I do believe he used it to speed up the fund-raising campaign then carried on by the wife. However, what fairly sprang out at me in this story was the statement of one of the younger children at the news of the father's collapse. This little boy had already learned well our syncretized theology. He said, "God would not do two bad things to us in one year." Isn't it too bad that this innocent little boy was unaware that destructive things are the very hallmark of an intelligent evil person, not the initiative of a loving God? When will this become clearer? When will there be a significant glimmer within Christendom to act accordingly? When will we arise to work with God to destroy the works of the devil?

What is it that allows us to simplify the growing issue of homosexuality—that is, the question of whether it is an organic or cultural distortion—without taking into account the recent research that declares it to be a physical distortion resulting from an infectious agent, perhaps even curable by laboratory insights? We are left to two undesirable alternatives: to think that homosexuality must be perfectly normal or to think that homosexuality is entirely cultural, not stopping to think that it may be the result of a disease.

Christians champion singers, basketball players, pole vaulters. Do we find theological reason to champion those rare few who are at the front line in the fight against disease? And, I don't refer to those who *treat illness* but those who scout the very *origins of disease*. The answer is a thunderous NO which can only be explained as a blind spot in our theological tradition, a fact which is itself one of the diabolic delusions classifying as a work of the devil.

Demonic delusions:

1. When we get sick all we need to do is to pray and inquire of God what his reason is for allowing this kind of thing.

2. In case we did something unwise that caused or invited the sickness we don't need to feel responsible to roll up our sleeves and fight the source of the disease. God is content to use disease to teach us.

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Endnote

1 The article was written before the founding of the Roberta Winter Institute which seeks to address the issue of the war against evil. For more information, see <http://www.robertawinterinstitute.org/>.

Theologizing the Microbiological World: Implications for Mission

(2001) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 202ff)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

“For half a millennium the engine driving our society has been science. Sure, politics and philosophy, religious insight and artistic expression have helped out in their way, but even the efficacy of those things has had its pace measured and set by hard knowledge, *our burgeoning comprehension of our material universe*; it’s no accident that the dethroning of kings and cardinals followed the dethroning of the Earth from the center of the sky” (Italics added). So says a science writer in the *LA Times* last Sunday, and so much for the post-modern inclination to pooh pooh the accumulation of concrete scientific insights.

However, whether well understood or not, it is difficult to deny the fact that at no time in the history of science, or in the history of the world for that matter, has there ever been anything remotely comparable to the incredible explosion of scientific knowledge in the past twenty years. The massive, global involvement in the study of *what God made, called science*, is an activity far more elaborate and inherently awe-inspiring than the study of the works of man, which is called art.

In the process of this enormous pursuit of the work of what obviously must be an intelligent Creator, one might expect breakdowns of relationship between researchers representing the various global cultural traditions. To some extent that has been true, but even this has not been able to throttle the immense, now global, “gold rush” in many scientific fields ranging from 1) the zealous examination of outer space to 2) the exploration of the enormous land mass under Antarctica (which happens to be twice the size of the 48 States)—explorations performed by magnetic resonance through an ice layer three miles deep.

In any case, nothing, absolutely no probe of scientific inquiry, has suddenly opened a door into so vast, and totally undreamed-of a new world as the historically recent penetration of the cell. There, in this newly revealed microscopic universe, are mysteries that have infinitely more to do with our future, our mission and our theology than any new insight into the cosmos—the panoply of stars—where we are mere observers, not intimate participants who are crucially affected by the conclusions of the astronomers and cosmologists.

On the other hand, our theologies, that is, *our formalized ways of attempting to think Biblically*, were hammered out during centuries that were totally blind to the microscopic world. As a result, to this day our religious impulses and purposes, neither our hymns nor our theologies, yet throb with any of the new insights in this huge new sphere, even though the everyday existence of all life is intimately tuned and doomed by

these tiny forces. Rather, in place of that new knowledge we have until recently been ignorantly offering a vast range of pseudo explanations which still rule our thinking in many ways.

Six Enigmas

In fact, the whole of this new reality is laced by several enigmas which are puzzling, debilitating, and ominous. I will take them up one by one.

1. *Anthropomorphisms in science writings.* Curiously, scientific writers, in contrast to their formal and official anti-supernatural bias, often unconsciously describe viruses, bacteria, or parasites with words such as *ingenious*, *clever*, or *malicious*. I have not seen the word *intelligent*, but you frequently encounter these anthropomorphisms in scientific writings dealing with the extravagant wilderness of the destructive forms of life. This fact would seem to give unintended insight into the intuitive appreciation these specialists have, even if not admitted, for the apparent intelligence and ingenuity underlying the vast array of disease pathogens.

Evangelicals have recently stressed the inevitable *intelligence* and *design* in nature, but they have not, to my knowledge, attempted to suggest that there is evidence of any evil intelligence and design. This is perhaps due to a theological tradition which does not understand demonic powers to have the ability to distort DNA. Our Evangelical theological tradition is so old that it also would not conceive of good angels working at the DNA level. In other words, we have no explicit theology for intentional modification of either good or bad bacteria. However, the evidence of anthropomorphisms in science writings clearly implies the presence of intelligence at that level.

2. *The concept of inappropriate prayer.* This is seldom discussed in Evangelical circles. As a result, we fail frequently to distinguish between what part God wants us to play and what part only He can play. Confusion in this area is clearly in Satan's favor. He is glad when he can get us to ask God to do something God expects us to do.

This has come about since it is only natural for man to pray when there would seem to be nothing more he can do. But massive changes have occurred since the time little or nothing was known about the causes of disease. Now, amidst the wealth of new knowledge we cannot logically go on merely praying when a whole array of options to act are before us.

3. *Erroneous perspectives about disease origins.* Let us ponder the settled and accepted, but incorrect, explanations for the causes of disease which mysteriously live on quite durably. This is a major factor in retarding the progress of overcoming the march of disease pathogens. For example, how easily can a half century of increasingly successful heart by-pass, heart-replacement surgery and mechanical replacement pumps yield to the new awareness of the basic role of infection in heart disease? That is, the assumption that many of the related characteristics or *symptoms* of heart disease are also *causes* of heart disease postpones the effort to isolate the prime causal infection that destroys the heart muscle even where there are no conventional symptoms. This is like the finally outmoded theories that dampness causes tuberculosis, that a chill creates a cold infection, or that stress causes ulcers. And especially when an opposing *intelligence* may be involved it is like carefully washing the decks of a ship thinking this will prevent a submarine attack.

4. *Unusual accidents of insight.* There is a very surprising and extensive factor of serendipity in the conquest of disease. This can be seen again and again. Four times in the 35-year saga of Judah Folkman's so-called "War Against Cancer" beneficial things occurred that were apparently total accidents. This may be a fascinating clue to the way and the wind of the Holy Spirit. Pasteur's famous statement that discoveries in the lab favor the prepared mind do not by any means fully explain the prominent role of serendipity in medical research. God would seem to be on the side of those who pursue the origins of disease.

5. *Unseemly opposition.* Equally surprising and harmful are the many factors of opposition to such discovery. The whole process of research is constantly enshrouded with the fog of political factors, commercial factors, personal factors, and technical factors, in addition to the major setbacks caused by the vast social turmoil of wars large and small and the role of pestilence itself. It has been said that the Second World War was the first war in history during which there was not far greater loss of life due to disease than the brutality of the war itself. That is, many are killed, but many more are injured, and the injured in the past have usually then died of disease complications. These various obstacles to foundational research are so great that often fundamental improvements in insight would logically seem to be the very last thing that could happen.

Consider one of these dimensions alone: the commercial factors. Commerce is extensively driven by what makes money. Billions of dollars are harvested annually by companies which sell products that don't really work, while billions are not spent to prove the value of things that may be commonly reported to work. Take heart disease alone, and only in the USA. It costs our people \$300 billion per year. That's \$34 million per hour, or \$570,000 per minute.

6. *Massive imbalance in funding.* Unfortunately most nutritional supplements fall into the category of what does not really work, or that which does not work as well as a judicious choice of foods. One report is that 75% of the food supplements you buy don't even contain the assumed active ingredients, and for that matter, the same unreliability factor is true for pharmaceuticals in many other parts of the world.

But more stubborn still is the simple fact that funds are not readily generated in a commercial situation, whenever substantial sales income is not available for something that is either too inexpensive to sell or cannot be patented. Thus, anything too inexpensive to produce, with a low potential sales income, can never expect to be the subject of serious testing to prove if it works. Commercial dynamics are in our favor only when the service being purchased can cover the cost of that service.

For example, no commercial firm will ever run an FDA test on selenium as a cancer suppressant. Why? Because it would be too inexpensive to sell later for a compensatory profit. FDA approval once cost about \$1 million. Now it is well over \$300 million. This bars all inexpensive substances from substantiation!

Nevertheless forces other than a promise of commercial gain either are or ought to be available. Smallpox would have never been defeated had it been up to commercial processes. The early efforts of a small but highly opposed group of clergymen in New England were not carried forward until 200 years later by the UN. Thus, much of the world's ills cannot be resolved by commercial dynamics. Jimmy Carter's Carter Center led the way in confronting the growing list of diseases which *we know how to eradicate but haven't taken the trouble to eradicate.* The William Gates foundation has picked up

on that lead, and is funding some work. But the entire global summation of all non-commercial efforts is only a teaspoon compared to the amount of cash paid out by people in the Western world after they get sick.

Thus, it is not as though everyone is working together to understand the nature of disease. Either 99-to-one, or more likely (as with cancer) 999-to-one, is the ratio of the financial outlay for curative services—where people who are already by disease pay for help—compared to the relatively tiny resources focused on the roots of the problem, the very nature of disease.

Again, this is like spending so much energy repairing ships damaged by torpedoes that we do not take time to perfect the sonar equipment necessary to detect and destroy the submarines that are sending the torpedoes.

Is There a Conclusion?

At this point it is time to ask the question why it is that the mounting muscle of the very considerable movement of all those globally who are moved by Jesus Christ has not weighed in either theologically or practically in the area of working to correct distortions of nature and of God's will *by going to the roots of the problem*. In a way this is the most ominous fact of all.

I know of no theological tradition, no denomination, no Christian school—or hospital for that matter—that has seriously accepted the roots of the challenge of the enormous and continuing and growing factor of disease in this world of ours.

Meanwhile constantly both believers and nonbelievers are stumbling about wondering over the amount, the harshness, and the unpredictability of evil in our world. Indeed, the credibility of an all-powerful and loving God is constantly being called into question by people who are no longer content to suppose “that God has His reasons.” We may indeed not know all His reasons. But do we have *reasons* for our inaction? Really, has He asked us not to eradicate disease pathogens but to let them alone? Do we, like Orthodox Jews expect Gentiles to turn the lights on for us? To expect secular powers to be concerned but not our own college young people? Do those college students have to leave the Christian community in order to work against disease? Does God intend for us to protect these “ingenious” disease pathogens along with all the rest of “the good earth”? Fundamentalist Sikhs would say yes. Evangelical Christians are saying yes by their apparent deafness to this simple question.

The patterns of our actual, functional theology are thus observable in our common language when we hear people say, “*God took my wife, my granddaughter, etc.*” Or when we wonder “Why did God allow THAT to happen?” when in fact the only really logical question is, Why did God allow Satan to exist? Once Satan is in the picture (if we believe he is) no amount or kind of harsh or heartless evil should be unexpected in any quarter. But apparently *Satan really isn't any kind of a major factor in our normal perspective*. This absence of awareness of Satan happens to be exactly what would be the case if pastor Gordon Kirk's statement were true that “Satan's greatest achievement is to cover his tracks.”

We may not be seriously disturbed by such theological talk. Yet certain obvious conclusions at least logically push their way forward should such a statement be true—namely, that Satan is doing far more than we are aware of.

One conclusion might be to recognize that our understanding of our mission under God has been truncated down to a certain limited sphere, in spite of God's earnest desire to enlist our efforts on a wider front.

Another conclusion is the reverse, that we need to recognize and ponder more seriously the kind and degree of harm Satan is able to cause. We need to unmask the works of Satan and not go on thinking that he, as a spirit being, cannot be held responsible for causing any intelligent damage to our DNA codes, our genetic distortions being labeled "defects" instead of "intelligent distortions." Granted that our forefathers who were the caretakers and creators of our theology were unaware of the microscopic world and its myriad evidences of Satanic distortion, cannot we now in the much clearer light of dawn come to more extensive theological thinking that allows us to notice, to applaud, and even to join in with those limited and scattered efforts across the world to fight back (along with the good angels constantly enhancing our bodily immune systems) to counteract the truly monstrous head start Satan already has in this troubled world of ours?

To destroy the works of the devil is one major way in which our testimony of word and deed can glorify the true nature of our living God, our heavenly father. It is not an alternative to evangelism, it will make our evangelism more credible. It is to rectify our God's damaged reputation. It is to avoid extending the implicit and embarrassing policy of almost constantly misrepresenting Him in our mission work around the world. Attacking the roots of disease is part and parcel of our basic mandate to glorify God in all the earth.

To that end I raise, once more, the proposal for the establishment of an Institute for the Study of the Origins of Disease. If the cold reception of earlier efforts to move in this direction are any prediction of the future we cannot expect wide acclaim, at least not from the formal Evangelical tradition. Like Paul, like Jimmy Carter, we may be forced "to go to the Gentiles" for a warm reception. Some will scoff. Some will believe.

Theologizing Prehistory: Implications for Mission

(2001) (Foundations Reader, 323-28)

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We talk casually about the Copernican Revolution, which was basically a massive and arresting readjustment of understanding about the nature of the universe. Somewhere in Europe Copernicus proposed a major new understanding which rearranged the position of known celestial objects, as though rearranging the furniture in one corner of a vast room such that we who were in that corner could see the larger room.

A second Copernican Revolution, if you will, took place when Hubble employed the latest telescope to explode the size of that already larger Copernican room by proposing that all those little lights out there in the sky were actually enormous universes of their own.

More recently, still more Copernican Revolutions have continued to take place as our cosmologists puzzle their way more deeply almost daily into increased complexities and unfathomed mysteries of an ever-larger phenomenon.

We are less likely to speak of the Keplerian Revolution, which, in developing the *mathematical* description of planetary motion, was basically an astounding leap forward in awareness of the orderliness of nature. No one had ever captured nature's laws in mathematical equations. Soon after, the revolutionary thinking embodied in the Newtonian breakthrough added details to Kepler's already orderly nature.

Standing upon Newton's additional insights godly men such as Faraday dramatically furthered our awareness not only of the very existence of "laws" of nature but of the astonishing ways in which a knowledge of those laws could be harnessed for human use. He was in one sense not only a scientist but an engineer, not only penetrating some of the mysterious phenomena we call magnetism and electricity but coming up with—among many other things—the electric motor and its reverse, the electric generator.

On the heels of these excitements and rearrangements of our thinking about nature a doorway then opened into a new dimension of complexity, a tiny world totally invisible to the naked eye. In many respects all of the earlier breakthroughs of additional human apprehension of nature have been almost totally eclipsed by the historically recent further awareness of the seemingly unending complexities at the small end of the scale.

This new dimension of reality includes not only the imponderables of the molecular and yet inert realities, but the infinitely more complex phenomenon of life itself, DNA, viruses, bacteria, cells, and parasites.

This new dimension of reality has been every bit as Copernican in its demands for intellectual rearrangement. The somewhat simplistic Darwinian scheme of ever more complex forms of life has been forced to give way to the awareness that neither largeness nor lateness in history necessarily coordinate with complexity. The housefly has eyes that are incredibly more elaborate than humans. Certain very small forms of life navigate by use of celestial data. Other tiny insects have a sense of smell that allows them to detect floating molecules a mile away. Even honey bees have navigation systems that have long been puzzling. Human sensory apparatus is clumsy by comparison to such examples. Yet

humans do things that even the most advanced primates could not possibly do. Managing the words on this page, let alone the thinking behind these words or even the computer-generated forms on my screen, is totally beyond any other form of life.

Amidst all this recent explosion of both complexity and attendant confusion, we are in some ways much closer to an overall understanding of things. Indeed I do not believe it is too early to launch theories about the development of life forms which are undergirded with theology, if you understand theology to mean thinking that makes room for an awareness of intention and intelligence behind natural realities.

One of the most fully explored realities in the past 50 years has been what is commonly referred to as the Record of the Rocks. Here we see life forms in a somewhat regular progression of size. Yet the size of dinosaurs does not correlate with intelligence, and neither does smallness coordinate with simplicity. Nevertheless the earliest evidences of life are in fact both smaller and simpler than later forms. For this apparent progression Darwin has his theory, around which much of the secular world has rallied. Christians do not have a similarly concrete consensus about how it all happened. Some continue to insist that it all happened in an instant. I do not question that it is a perfectly reasonable idea—that God could have created our planet in an instant replete with rock layers that would give the impression of gradual formation over immense lengths of time. That God could have done this, however, is not the same as believing that this is the way God did it. Other Evangelicals back away entirely from conjecturing any details at all about how it happened, they simply insist that God, not Darwin, did it.

At least we can recognize that among Evangelicals great strides have been seen lately along the lines of the evidence of intelligent design in nature. Yet, neither Michael Behe nor Philip Johnson were able to answer the question posed by a Canadian philosopher in a TV debate, “Does your God make parasites?” That is, evidences for evil design are not heard among Christians as yet, despite the very evident violence-drenched nature that is perfectly visible to a small child.

Let us ask, for the sake of discussion, what might it mean theologically if the so-called Record of the Rocks were taken at face value, and the fourteen current different methods of estimating age were regarded as true.

For one thing, the now enormous mass of information that has been gathered does at least indicate that forms of life that are destructive to other forms of life appeared late in the record. And, when that kind of evil appeared, it appeared pervasively. At every level of life, from small forms to large, predatory forms suddenly appeared. Current thinking puts this curious event, an aspect of which is often referred to as the Cambrian Explosion, at about 550 million years ago. From that point until this moment, there has been such constant and pervasive violence in nature that it is common to assume that this is the way it was intended to be, that this is simply “the way it is,” not going into any detail as to the when or the why of how it happened.

Yet, all of this cries out for an explanation. Perhaps multiple trial explanations are possible. One that comes to my mind takes seriously the idea that there is a supreme, personal intelligence (whom we have called God), and that this person has created beings often called heavenly messengers (angels), but actually much more than messengers—workers, if you will. It is possible to think of such heavenly assistants as intelligent, able to learn and to please God, but apparently also being given true free will that has allowed

a considerable number of them to be in revolt while at the same time not being confronted with old age.

This is all you really need, then, to conceive of such beings as working for God at the DNA level, many of them being able to tamper with the DNA molecule at least as skillfully as our contemporary scientists, whose enormous disadvantage, for one thing, is the size of human beings in comparison to the size of the nucleotides which make up the binary helix molecule which is the basic code for all of life forms.

The astonishing discovery that a mouse, an elephant, and a man have DNA that is roughly 95% the same gives us insight into the vast complexity of the constituent elements of cells and their amazing contents, and at the same time an understanding of why it took so long for these workers for God to learn to do more than arrive at the cellular level, apparently laboring four billion years or so before anything very much larger than single-cell life appeared possible. It is likely a measure of our limited and recent education about tiny things that allows us to wonder why it took so long for bigger forms of life to appear.

We can readily imagine a sequence something like this:

1. We don't really know much about the appearance of the universe itself. To believe that the whole universe suddenly exploded from a very tiny object requires more faith by far than any of the Christian claims about the miracles of Jesus. We do know that the phenomena to which we refer as "material" is consistent with that found on our planet and also outer space, and that somehow the laws of gravitation, light, magnetism, etc. are also continuous with what we know of outer space. This knowledge lasts us long enough to understand at least partially the reality and orderliness of the periodic table of elements—the fantastic array of larger and larger atoms that underlie all that we call material.
2. But apparently atoms and molecules of the kind which compose what is technically called "the inorganic universe" are the basis not only of all such forms of matter but are specifically the building blocks from which has been derived, somehow, that other far more unimaginable "organic universe." Curiously all life utilizes the ubiquitous carbon atom. Not all molecules built of carbon are "organic," but all organic chemicals are built around carbon.
3. Only fairly recently in history have human beings discovered that all forms of life are apparently built up from and defined by an amazing coded molecule called DNA, a "double helix" involving millions and millions of atoms. Note that an additional intelligence is apparently required for a phenomenon which thus far seems to be unique to our planet, namely life forms. The DNA itself does not create life unless it is coded intelligently. It is like having on our hands a computer "language" like the widely familiar BASIC. All computer programs are built from what are called languages, but the language itself, like the English language, does not automatically create literature. It is a useful code to employ for that purpose but a grammar book does not create literature. Intelligence does. The very tiniest life forms are enormously larger than the underlying DNA code which defines their nature and function.
4. Thus, not only is the DNA molecule itself an incredibly complex reality, its endless potential for defining life is unimaginably more complex, and would seem to require even very intelligent angels a long time to master.

5. In fact, a major milestone was achieved when the angels, no doubt following God's blueprints, created the first cell, each one containing in its nucleus an essential coded DNA molecule, but also an enormous assortment of other highly integrated activity which, if enlarged, would resemble a large city in complexity.
6. Once the cell was achieved, then building larger life out of cells became a new challenge, one which could and did accelerate far more rapidly. After four and a half billion years, at roughly 550 million years ago, in the so-called Ediacaran era, we see both radially symmetrical (like a starfish) and bipolar symmetry, where you have a front and a back. What you do not see is any predatory forms of life. Nowhere are defensive measures like shells, spines, or offensive devices like destructive teeth. Up to this point the angels were laboring to create new forms of life. They were learning from their task and from each other, and in different parts of the planet were producing different results.
7. But then, a major asteroidal collision wiped out a great deal of the life at that point—not the angels, not their knowledge and skills but their handiwork. Apparently, the angels immediately went back to work, and a lavish new array of life forms now appeared in what is called the Cambrian Explosion. Something totally new also appeared.
8. At precisely that moment a revolt must have occurred, which immediately pitted the loyal workers against rebels, launching a see-saw contest which would generate not only new forms of life, but new forms of destructive life at every level. Rebel workers who had long known how to make DNA and proteins and so on could now both twist and distort existing forms of life so as to make them carnivorous. They could also devise destructive retroviruses that carry in a backpack, so to speak, replacement spans of DNA precisely designed to invade cells and distort the original DNA code in life forms large and small. Thus, from the Cambrian period until now nature is a mad, wild, violent cauldron of killing and being killed, at every level.

Was this revolt due to discouragement on the part of some of the angels? We have no idea whatsoever how and why a leading supervisor and one-third of the angels defected. It is enough to deal with the what this time and not puzzle about the why.

The story after the Cambrian Explosion, estimated at 550 million years ago, followed both the routine continuation of the school of workers ever building larger and larger forms of life of all kinds, sea dwellers, land dwellers and air borne forms of life. More and more defense mechanisms were born. Thus, unique in the post-Ediacaran era (that is, the Cambrian and following) has been the appearance of defensive shells, spines, poisons, protective scales, and fight-back capabilities. It seems that every form of life had its particular predators. Many forms of life were driven to extinction. Today only one tenth of one percent of the various forms of life seen in the Record of the Rocks still exist. And, yes, the loyal workers have not only put together new forms of life on schedule, but have been forced simultaneously to adapt them skillfully to defend themselves against opposing forms of life. *These adaptations can most easily be understood as intelligent modifications, not just accidental or fortuitous mutations.*

In fact, if you reflect on the 100-year story of the development of the automobile in the twentieth century, you must take into account the millions of large and small, but intelligent modifications during that period performed by thousands of keen designers

and engineers, and by hundreds of thousands of workers. This amazing process, moving from the Model T Ford to the contemporary Lincoln Continental, produced today in the same place by the same company of workers, could be described as the “Evolution of the American Automobile,” to employ that disputed term evolution in this case as a *guided, intelligent* process.

In a parallel way, loyal angel workers may well have been busy across the years developing not only new forms of life but newly defense-capable forms in view of the relentless onslaught of life-destroying varieties which have been the labor and intelligence of the rebel workers.

More than once this gruesome contest got so bad that, perhaps it was helpful for another asteroid from outer space to collide with the earth and destroy a great deal of both good and destructive forms of life. It is now widely believed that dinosaurs disappeared as the result of a very large asteroid colliding with what we know today as the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico. Note well that our contemporary insanely increasing exhaustion of fossil fuels is both allowed and limited distinctly by the creation of fossil fuels through sudden mass extinction: oil results from fossilize animal life, coal results from fossilized plant life.

Many studies of impact phenomena have been done since the Moon landing and its upsetting revelation about asteroidal activity. By now it is pretty well settled in scientific circles that the explosive impact of a large asteroid generates a global canopy of dust lasting for years, obscuring the sun and moon, and only gradually thinning so as to allow an awareness of dark and light periods caused by Earth’s rotation with respect to the Sun. Finally, it can be understood that a collapse of the remaining canopy would allow suddenly the direct rays of Sun and Moon, and, of course, the possibility of a rainbow, which requires unobstructed rays of light to appear. This is a sequence, by the way, that is eerily reminiscent of the events early in the biblical book of Genesis.

At the same time, following a collision, the loyal workers would set about replacing forms of life extinguished in a collision. Indeed new and different designs would be possible. The sudden flourishing of new forms of life following major asteroidal collisions has always puzzled Darwinian thinkers, and clearly favors a theory of design over chance.

At some point, the Supreme Being may have decided to launch a new and more effective counterattack. This seems to have occurred immediately following a major collision. Now we are approaching what could be called the Edenic experiment, which in geologic time is very recent. For the first time an enormously significantly different kind of life was now formed. In many respects similar to earlier models, the *homo sapiens* would be much more capable of assisting the loyal workers in the necessary defense and counterattack against the destructive forces. But even in this Edenic beachhead things went wrong, the arch rival succeeding in corrupting the divine design. The arch rival had “fallen” long before, at the onset of the Cambrian period. And during the next half billion years the existence of warring, antagonistic forms of life become the norm, all of that preceding Eden or the events of Genesis One. Genesis 1:1 in the Hebrew implies not creation out of nothing—the word *bara* being the same word a potter uses in creating a pot—but rather the rehabilitation of a planet extensively damaged by an asteroid (“without form and void, darkness upon the deep”).

An asteroidal collision does not usually kill all forms of life. When Eden was created there were no doubt many forms of life in existence outside of the garden, among which the characteristic constant, all-out war was taking place.

The new experiment was the hope, but now *homo sapiens* also “fell” and slowed the reconquest of a plundered planet. Inside Eden as well as outside, counterforces to Creative Design existed and took their toll. For many years, not only destructive external forces against *homo sapiens* existed, but rampant aggression of man against man prevailed. The replenishing of the earth was drastically slowed by homicidal violence and pervasive disease pathogens. The most ancient evidences of *homo sapiens* display, characteristically, skulls crushed by human instrumentality, widespread cannibalism, as well as corruption by disease. Only recently and reluctantly has this morbid evidence been recognized widely in scholarly circles.

For many centuries human population grew only very slightly. For example, had our modern degree of conquest over disease and war been in force in Abraham’s day, human population of an estimated 28 million could have grown to 6 billion in only 123 years. Such explosive growth of population has been impossible until recently, most of the story being one of nearly total ignorance of the nature and mechanisms of disease.

Incidentally, the advent of *homo sapiens* brought literacy into the picture, and with literacy came documents which in turn have given rise to the study of history (often defined as the period during which writing was in existence), thus ending the Prehistory period. However, it is perfectly obvious that much of the story of life is in the prehistory period. (If the five-billion- year history of this planet were to be represented by a five-foot-long bar on a blackboard, the history period would only be the last 1/100,000 of an inch.) Thus, by the time *homo sapiens* appears, and writing appears, most of the story, in one sense, is over, or at least well-established. Furthermore it is questionable whether the official “history” period can be well understood without the backdrop of prehistory.

For one thing, only prehistory records a period prior to the existence of warring life forms. Therefore, if all we do is to trace history we do not encounter the sudden appearance of violence, and thus we may very typically be blind to the existence of rampant evil and antagonism on a large scale. We may further be blind to the existence of an arch rival and, worst of all, we may thus impute to the Supreme Being blame for evil and suffering, which is exactly what the Old Testament seems to do.

Rather, however, than to blame God for the origin of evil or to blame the Bible for portraying Him in that light, it seems to me better to understand the Old Testament perspective as being an overall perspective, while the New Testament’s constant references to Satan are simply a more specific perspective. The best example is the dual reference to David’s numbering the people as found both in 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 24:1.

Thus the story of prehistory continues essentially into the final moments of the story of life on earth. The main new factor is the existence of an incredibly more intelligent species, its “fall” and the unique corrective of the “Second Adam” further pressing the claims of God’s rule, His Kingdom right down to the present moment.

For us today the challenge is to understand the gigantic conflict which continues unabated, but which is rapidly being modified as both disease and war are relatively diminished, and as human awareness of Satanic opposition to and distortion of creation increases. Much of the history of medicine is the relatively blind but helpful opposition to

Satanic corruption, which has enormously accelerated in the last few years. Modern gen-splicing illuminates the way the very nature of otherwise violent forms of life can be restored to peaceful coexistence. That is, against the backdrop of progressive insight into nature is the rather sudden and totally unexpected appearance of the complexity of the world of microbiology. I have already spoken of the need to theologize this new and enormous world of microbiology. The further task is to theologize the entire story of prehistory.

Missiological Implications

I have stipulated before that the ideas presented in this article are highly speculative. However, when we try to evangelize the 160,000 highly educated scientists in Hyderabad, India, for example, we must have at least a theologically sound “speculation” about *what they think they know* about the main events of earth history. India is highly industrialized, and the millions of Western-educated Hindus have something like an intellectual dual personality. If we can’t win this cutting-edge sphere, we falter desperately in our sharing of the Gospel with the 600 million Hindus. But Evangelicals also have a tough time dealing with and digesting the world of science.

Scientists in Hyderabad will likely have a Hindu predisposition to believe that all evil is of God (ominously similar to Augustine’s neo-Platonism bequeathed to Aquinas, Calvin, and contemporary pastors), and thus, will have no initial interest in the Christian understanding of Satan. However, I don’t feel Evangelical theology defines very much in detail for Satan to be doing either. The hardest thing for the theistic position that we hold (in contrast to Hindu thought) is our ambiguous theological inheritance in regard to the origin of what I would call “deformed” life. To rehabilitate Satan, so to speak, and begin to put the blame on him for widespread distortion of God-created life forms, is to me the most satisfying (speculative) way to confront the pervasive violence and evil in nature, the existence of deadly bacteria, incredibly intelligent parasites, etc. I think this perspective (albeit speculation) can be electrifying to keen intellects with a Hindu background, because in that background lies at least dormant and unresolved the sweeping conviction that all life is sacred, and, of course, the resulting paradox that so much of it is deadly, violent and life-destroying.

Furthermore, our evangelism of Hindus is blunted and weakened seriously, it would seem, by our own unresolved inheritance in regard to evil. We find it difficult, yet logical, given Augustine’s input, that the pastors of Massachusetts ganged up on Jonathan Edwards to condemn him for “interfering with Divine Providence” when he set out to protect his mission-field Indians from that very deadly pathogen (by now eliminated) smallpox. We cannot and do not normally in our evangelism claim that God is not the author of smallpox, malaria, etc. We leave it to our hearers to suppose that our God either does not know of the ravages of malaria, does not care, or does not have the ability to do anything to eliminate this kind of suffering and death. My speculation is that our Gospel would carry far greater conviction if we allied our God on the side of planned opposition to these deadly pathogens, rather than letting this be the exclusive domain of the new gods, “the scientists.” I have speculated, as you can see, that these deadly pathogens are Satan’s work, specifically the result of his dark angels’ tinkering with DNA. Would our usual evangelism do well to contain that thought, clearly absolving our God from such blatant evil?

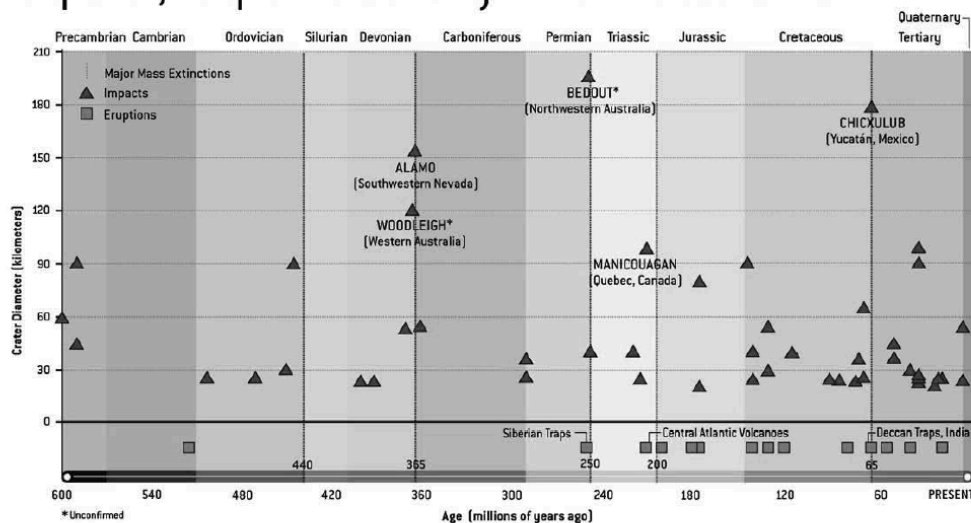
The Significance of Pre-Adamic Evil

(2002) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 223-27)

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The Significance of Pre-Adamic Evil

Impacts, Eruptions and Major Mass Extinctions



In this diagram, taken from the March 2002 issue of *Scientific American*, the forty-five small dark triangles represent collisions that have been detected in various parts of the earth from huge rocks from outer space.

These shown only represent rocks large enough to be *three miles in diameter*, leaving remnant craters 15 or more miles across, mostly larger. Thousands of smaller impacts, unrecorded here, have taken place, which are much harder to trace. The Arizona meteor crater is plain to see, however, and it is only a mile wide.

The vertical height of the little triangles represents the size of the craters resulting, indirectly the size of the object from outer space.

The largest one, which eliminated 90% of all life forms, took place 250 million years ago, and is here shown just to the right of center. More recently, the collision extinction of the dinosaurs, only 65 million years ago, hit Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, leaving clear evidences of a crater 110 miles in diameter, estimated to have been caused

by an object 30 miles in diameter.

What is the meaning of all this? This is the period in which predatory forms of life first appeared. This is the evidence of the emergence of evil prior to Adam. Was it when Satan fell?

(Incidentally, it would appear that life has again and again been wiped out or nearly wiped out. Is this parallel to the phenomenon of the biblical flood closer to our time?)

Many of the dinosaurs were really atrocious ferocious creatures—God designed? They were done in by the major collision 65 million years ago. Mammals came into their own since then.

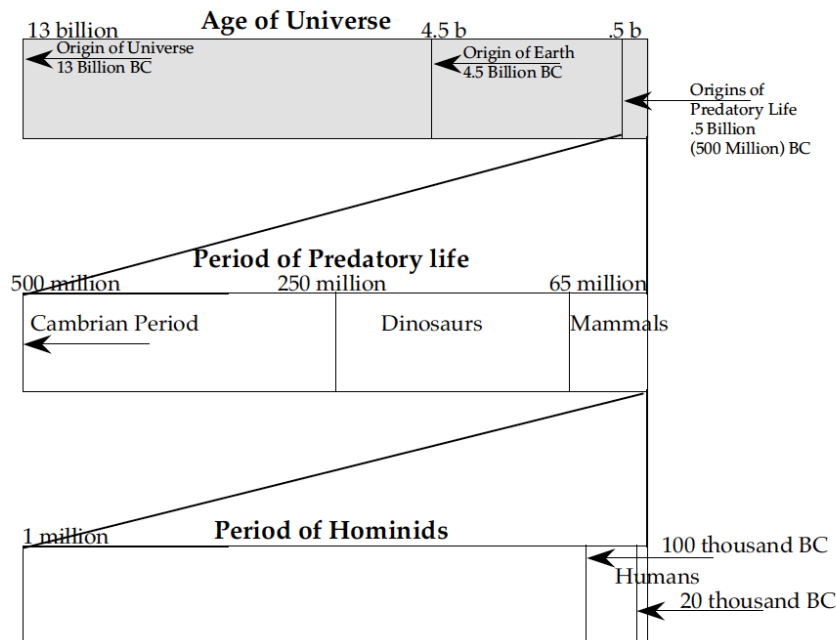
Homo Sapiens appeared so late in this picture that the length of the period would be represented at the far right by less than the thickness of a piece of paper (actually 3 ten-thousands of an inch).

It would appear that at the present time we are in the middle of a 22,000-year "interglacial" period. Also, that the enormous collision in the middle of the past 500 million years, was related to the breakup of the continents and the plate tectonic drift which allowed the location of

the continents today.

At 1.5 ten-thousands of an inch the asteroid that carved out the chaos described in Genesis 1:1 may have hit, providing the opportunity for an "Edenic" sphere in which a new variety of human created "in God's image" first appeared along with many animals none of which were carnivorous (1:29,30) as was apparently the case before the Cambrian Period.

Ominously, the last-minute appearance and gradual domination of this planet by humans displays an unnerving violence of human against human which is not characteristic of any other form of life. War plus pestilence held down world population for a long time before Christ, and now relatively suddenly poses the opposite problem of *over-population* as both war and disease have been partially conquered.



In recent times enormous research energies in many nations have produced an unusual consensus about most of the picture above, to which our school children and college students are now routinely exposed.

Sunday schools generally confine themselves to the events of the Bible, ignoring the spectacular 2,000 years since Bible times and thus the Bible's own remarkable formative influence on all subsequent history. Sunday school materials also take little notice of the increasing evidences for an "old earth," and the vast reaches of time prior to the appearance of human beings on earth.

In the early 1800s the gradual discovery of ancient bones of ancient and violent creatures no longer in existence did not trouble Evangelicals. It was widely assumed that all this took place before Genesis and before the Garden of Eden. The Scofield study Bible incorporated this perspective. Darwin, however, had been profoundly perturbed by the evidences of the pervasive violence in nature and had proposed a (wacky) scheme of unaided, unguided evolution as a means of protecting a good God from the accusation of creating evil and violence. Secular thinkers grabbed his idea and went further to suggest the

drastic idea that no God was then needed to explain life at all.

Then, in the late 1800s the prophetess of the Seventh Day Adventists, Ellen White, came up with the "young earth" idea that the entire record of life on earth was created all at once, even if the record looked old. Her view gradually won its way in certain Evangelical circles to the point that now the growing Christian "home school" movement is dominated by this view which is commonly called *creationism* or Creation Science.

However, a new and different major force has also appeared in the form of an "intelligent design" movement, which persuasively suggests that no accidental process could possibly account for the design and ingenuity in life forms (the "irreducible complexity") especially in the newly discovered microbiological realities. But this movement (promoted by Behe, Johnson, Demski and others), while it accepts an old earth, makes no comment about the peculiar and horrifying violence, suffering and cruelty all through nature, thus leaving us again with Darwin's problem of a God of love being the perpetrator of all evil in nature.

The difficulty in all this, whether we

speak of Darwin, the Creationists and their young earth, or the Intelligent Design people, is the curious reluctance of all three to suggest the existence of an evil counterforce that has intelligently set out to corrupt, destroy, and pervert a good creation. Yet this is exactly the Biblical presentation of Satan rebelling against God and taking one-third of the angels with him.

Gordon Kirk's observation that "Satan's greatest achievement has been to cover his tracks" urges us to recognize that we are extensively unaware of diabolic activity in the world.

From the record above it seems impelling that the appearance of predatory forms of life would be a likely time for the fall of Satan and the ensuing efforts of his cohorts to twist, pervert, and defile creation.

In scripture we see the prominence of the emphasis on the coming of God's Kingdom, and note that "the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the Devil (1 Jn 3:8)." What if all disease pathogens as well as all violent forms of life are the work of Satan? How would that amplify and refocus our global mission? We will take this question up next.

Once we reflect on these diagrams, and on the possibility of vast corruption of creation prior to the events of the Garden of Eden, we can more properly assess what is involved in praying "Our Father in Heaven, honored be your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Thus, we can conceive not only of Adam as "falling" but of an earlier "falling" which resulted in extensive distortion of all life for a very long time prior to the appearance of human beings on this planet. That is, when Satan appears in the Garden of Eden, he has already achieved a very long crime record.

This, then, throws into a new light just what the full scope may be of redemptive efforts. It highlights what may be inferred from the statement that “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of Satan” (1 John 3:8).

We do well to notice that our human reflections are so readily human centered and humanistic, that it may be a bit shocking to realize that Jesus did not just come to save sinners, to rescue human beings from evil, but that His death is somehow tied in with the task of restoring all creation. Yet that is the clear, blunt picture as we look back into the New Testament.

It may well be that when Paul before Agrippa declared that his purpose was to “*open people’s eyes, to deliver them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God,*” he included opening our eyes to this larger redemptive task. After all, Paul is the one who in writing to the Romans spoke of “the whole creation groaning and straining waiting for the redemption of the Sons of God” (Rom 8:22-23). Indeed the NT often speaks of the “eyes of our understanding being enlightened.” Mere insight into God’s intentions is of exceeding importance.

Almost every week Barbara Jones, in the Voyagers Class calls up as part of the prayer chain to relate some additional news about another soldier or two, or three, who have been wounded or have fallen on the battlefield of life. People even today are so very likely to be attacked and dragged down by disease that the very idea of natural rather than *premature death* has only recently been *under discussion*. In *Luther’s day so many* infants died the average life span was under 30. John Wesley was the 15th birth in his family and his brother Charles was number 17, and yet there were never more than five children in his family.

In this light it seems reasonable to give credit to good angels, working at God’s bidding through the centuries, to have made such great progress in the development of the human immune system, as it is called. Basically, all it is, is an incredible system of defenses in our blood stream against invading pathogens. It is estimated that our immune systems are capable of detecting 3 million million different attacking pathogens and destroying them before they get a fatal foothold within our bodies.

Only relatively recently has medicine increasingly recognized that the chief way in which disease can be fought is by doing whatever will allow our immune systems to cope with both old and new dangers. A vaccine, for example, is merely a tiny advance warning to our systems, allowing the development of antibodies in advance of a major attack. A smaller intake of food and a low sugar diet, for example, may unburden our system thus allowing it to cope more effectively with cold germs. By contrast, chemotherapy and radiation kills both good entities as well as bad, and is not by anyone considered an ideal treatment.

But we have been slow to recognize the *battlefield* in all of this. We don’t really feel there is much we can do to fight the sources of these attacks. If all heart disease and cancer could be attributed to street muggers we would be doubling and tripling our police force. But in the case of tiny pathogens we pretty much wait until we get sick and then go and see a doctor. We focus, thus, on treatment *after the damage appears*, or look for the best methods of avoiding damage, that is, prevention. But we focus mysteriously little on destroying the very source of a disease, as we have in the case of smallpox and polio. Companies cannot get paid for that activity.

And, only recently have we even conceived of correcting genetic defects which lower our defenses against certain pathogens. We call them, notice, “genetic defects,” when we would, in battlefield perspective, call them “genetic distortions” planted by an evil intelligence at war with the goodness and beauty of God’s creation.

Thus, the principal concern in all of this is the distortion we can see in many people’s ideas of God. Pause and consider Tozer’s statement that “*The most important thing about you is what comes to your mind when you think of God.*” Our theological inheritance was hammered out before germs were known of. A full awareness of the larger scope of the battle against God is not yet ours. In regard to horrifying violence in nature, people have become so used to it, so accustomed to it, so hardened to it, so calloused about it that they have drifted into suppositions that this must be the way God created things. (Only Satan is happy about that.) And, people get to thinking that a God who does not mind violence, cruelty and suffering, whether among animals or man, is not the most appealing kind of a God when we set out to win people to Christ, His Son.

Karl Marx jeered, “Christians only speak of pie in the sky after you die” because Christians did not seem to be arrayed effectively in any kind of an all-out war against evil in this world. And, of course, in his day the very thought of Satanic ingenuity behind disease pathogens was nowhere in sight.

It is commonplace as you think about pagan gods to find them capricious and cruel. That is understood as a scary warning to those who do not behave. But in those pagan gods there is little consistency, and there is no sympathy or love, much less forgiveness. Nothing like the tender love of a father for his children, or the compassion of a nursing mother for her infant, of which Paul speaks in his letter to the Thessalonians.

What often happens, then, is that instead of our winning people to Christ and through Him to His Father in Heaven by glorifying God, we turn instead to an activity we call “getting people saved.” True enough, to save people from punishment is easier to sell than to portray God as the Father who rushes out to welcome a wayward son. Why easier? Because people’s picture of our Father in Heaven continues to be mixed up in the paradoxes reflected by the pervasive presence in all nature of pain and suffering.

Our theologies, of course, have tortured explanations for why God allows suffering. We assume too easily that God is the immediate instigator of all that happens, forgetting the constant Biblical stress on the diabolical, destructive forces arrayed against the will and purposes of God.

Least of all are we and our resources to any really serious extent enlisted in fighting this evil. We pay our money to doctors to cure us but we don’t pay very much at all, or pay much attention to the basic task of eradicating the disease pathogens themselves in the Name of Christ.

I will repeat what I have said many times about my own discovery that the enormous efforts we invest in curing heart problems and cancer invasions amounts to about 100, or maybe even 1,000 to one the effort we are making to *understand the origins* of either.

Last Sunday’s *LA Times* Book Review section gives a two page review of a new book called, *Scientific Fictions*” which details the distressing amount of personal rivalry and pride that haunts much of scientific discovery. You would think that researchers would eagerly share their findings and work together for solutions. That is by no means the actual situation. It turns out that the very head of the National Cancer Institute, the

world's largest institution focusing on cancer, is the one this book portrays as grossly violating ethics in falsifying inputs from French scientists.

Isn't it time that Evangelicals rally to war against Satan and his works? Can we begin to bolster, praise and participate in an otherwise mixed picture in the war on disease which *National Geographic* speaks about in its lead article February 2002? It says in title-sized letters, "We concluded that microbes were no competition for our big human brains. We were wrong." Do we have to wait for *National Geographic* to interpret the Bible?

At this point it is quite possible that some will say, "What in the world could microbes have to do with the Kingdom of God or global evangelism?" The answer is simple. Distorted microbes war against the Kingdom of God. Distorted genes make animals violent and destructive. Destructive parasites kill off many varieties of plant and animal life, and as well as, by the malarial parasite, 1.2 million people a year, most of them children, four of whom die every minute from malaria alone. All this massive damage to the purposes of the Kingdom of God amounts to noise so loud that people can't hear what we are preaching to them.

We are acquainted with venomous snakes. We are not so well acquainted with venomous and ingenious *parasites* we can't see, or still smaller but equally venomous *bacteria*, or still smaller but equally venomous killer *viruses*. And, unfortunately, all too often "what is out of sight is out of mind" due to our all-too-present human limitations of consciousness.

But prayer is what can make the invisible visible, the unaware to become aware, the irresolute to be resolved, the fuzzy to be sharp, the darkened to be light, the confusing to be crystal clear, the marginal to be central, the undervalued to be highly prized.

First the Good News

We commonly talk in positive terms about the story of man since the time of Abraham, and rightly so. During these amazing 4,000 years many marvelous gains have been made in knowledge, and also in conquests of disease and even war, to which rising world population is indirect testimony. This, if you will, is "the Good News."

There is also bad news. Satan tackled the new creation of human beings and new animal life with a virulence which induced the fall of Adam, the curse of Adam, and new and unprecedented evil to contend with. The new creation thus joined the already corrupted creation which had begun much earlier—at the time of the fall of Satan himself. And now, as Paul says, "the whole creation groans and suffers awaiting the redemption of the sons of God" (Rom 8). Note that the redemption of all creation somehow depends on the redemption of man.

The Good News Came to Abraham

So, let's try to recapitulate the good news beginning with Abraham before focusing upon the evil still remaining 4,000 years later and still to be conquered.

If we look closely at the story of this planet in these last forty centuries we find that we know so much more than we know about any previous period that we can easily be drowned in detail, covered by an avalanche of fact so that it is hard to see the overall won in the name of God, in the name of Christ. But to see the overall picture we need to focus on truly explosive developments.

First of all, reflect for a second on our dichotomy between Pre-Adamic events and Post-Adamic events. Note that this essentially divides the whole of the story of this planet into pre-human events and human-period events.

The story since Abraham then becomes the unusually positive part of the Post-Adamic period, namely, the post Abrahamic period, occurring in just the past 40 centuries. In the Post-Adamic period before Abraham the new, brilliantly endowed form of life we call human had produced only a very checkered record. The earliest human skulls found anywhere are bashed in, clustered in ancient cooking holes. Even professors of early life in North America have reluctantly concluded that recently discovered evidence betrays the fact that the earliest known inhabitants were cannibals. Recent deciphering of Central American glyphs and other evidences has clarified that both Mayas and Aztecs were brilliant but violent civilizations, which in their later stages sacrificed thousands of human beings annually.

While much of this corruption is post-Abraham chronologically, it all represents human behavior prior to the influence of the new factor at work in the lineage of Abraham and his children by faith.

And, while Genesis indicates that one purpose of human beings was to care for and name the animals, the record of homo sapiens is precisely the opposite. Humans prior to Abraham already had destroyed virtually all larger mammals (such as one-ton flightless birds in Australia, or hairy mammoths in northern climes), and to this day continue in the process of destroying all life, as well as being dangerous to the survival of human beings themselves.

A significant counterforce, however, was announced to Abraham. Abraham in his genetic lineage and in his lineage of faith as well would be blessed (meaning inherited) of God, and would become active in the blessing or re-inheritance of all creation, human beings in particular.

Five Major “Explosions”

In the forty centuries since Abraham, countless small “explosions” of God’s reign, God’s Kingdom, have taken place, in individuals’ lives, in the life of families, in nations and regions, and now globally. But five absolutely major “redemptive explosions” can be discerned, which, in particular extended the faith into new cultural clothing

Only some of these explosions coincide with the “Five Renaissances” which I have long pointed out as being roughly spaced by 400-year intervals in the last 2,000 years (where I was trying to establish the value of a grid). While all five of those “flourishings” of redemption actually took place, and serve to give structure to the 2,000-year period, they would not all classify with the magnitude or strategic significance of the five I would like now to identify.

Enter: The Greek Bible (the Septuagint) and the Classical Explosion

The first took place before Christ was born. It was induced by a series of revivals in “the old testament,” but was definitively initiated (or “detonated”) by a unique selection-and-translation project which created the Bible of the early church, a body of literature which we improperly call “the old testament” (less deceptively the *Septuagint*) a document more influential in human history than any other. It is a document in Greek—

which became the most widely employed language of the ancient world, thanks to Alexander the Great, who died in 323 BC.

By Jesus' day this document was what was most likely read out loud in 10,000 synagogues within and beyond the Roman Empire. God had seen for his people to move or be moved to the ends of the earth, and this Greek document became the unique driving force that emblazoned the Spirit of God within these thousands of widely scattered fellowships. Not surprisingly these thousands of communities (synagogues) attracted onlookers and fringe participants, called *God-fearers or devout persons*. A much smaller number of those attracted went over all the way, circumcision and all, to become outright converts, which were called *proselytes*.

When Jesus and Paul appeared on the scene their combined influence was instrumental in engineering the extension of God's full-fledged blessing to these sincere, worshipping "onlookers" who had stopped short of outright cultural conversion. These million or so "God fearers" and "devout persons," that is, the serious "onlookers" who are so frequently referred to in the book of Acts no doubt became the vast bulk of Paul's followers, followers of God who were now vibrantly disabused of the notion that they would have to become Jews in order to be first-class citizens in God's Kingdom.

These people may not for the most part have needed to repent and turn to God. They had done that. They needed now to be saved from a misunderstanding. They needed a renewal and legitimization of the faith they already had. In Christ they discovered a once-for-all sacrifice that released them from the time-honored sacrificial system which had for many centuries led devout Jews in merely a symbolic sense. As Paul expounded truths of the Bible that dated back to Deuteronomy, such as the fact that "true circumcision" had always been a matter of heart not of the flesh, these God-fearing Gentiles were able to take confident steps of faith into a new and closer fellowship with the living God.

Correspondingly, in the case of the devout Jews in these 10,000 synagogues, they too had much to gain by believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If they had ever not fully understood the meaning of "true circumcision" (as mentioned in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah) they could hear it plain now, and could examine their hearts and find new depths of meaning to their faith.

Some no doubt were very disturbed by the of the God fearers, and the resulting new and separate fellowship of Gentiles together as first-class citizens in the Kingdom. Yet some of the Jews actually went with those Gentiles and ended up sensing now their own second-class status which we see reflected in Romans 14, where gentile believers, relishing their new cultural freedom in Christ looked down their nose at Jewish believers in Christ who continued with certain purely Jewish customs.

In any case, the result of all this was what I am calling the First Major Redemptive Explosion. In this event the true faith of Israel became seeded within all the cultures surrounding Israel, prominently the Greek and the Roman, but also the Armenian, the Aramaic, the Syriac, etc.. This Biblical faith took over like a spark in a tinder box virtually the entire constituency of the God-fearers, who may have numbered a million alongside the ten million Jews and their ten thousand synagogues.

However, this Biblical faith, this worship of the one true God eventually became entangled with the political and military machinery of Rome (for example when Christianity was pronounced Rome's official religion in the late fourth century) and it

then became more and more inevitable that true worshipers within or near the empire's sphere, but disliking that influence, would not forever yield to the cultural hegemony of the Roman empire nor to a faith officially representing that power.

Number Two: The Celtic Explosion

Meanwhile, a quiet but exceedingly influential “explosion” was taking place among Celtic peoples, mainly beyond the extension of the Roman empire. These people constituted a “Celtic belt” that ranged from Ireland, Scotland, northern and western England, the peninsula of Brittany in France, Galicia in Spain, across the northern frontier of the Roman empire clear over into “Galatia” in modern-day Turkey, the Celtic sphere to which Paul wrote his letter the *Galatians*, a word in Greek which is *galatoi* and specifically referred to Celtic peoples (note the similarity in the first three consonants).

These peoples were won mainly by influences from the east end of the Mediterranean, and thus diverged from the Roman influences which eventually made their way into their territory.

They responded avidly in Patrick's day, in the fifth century, but were already aware of the faith possibly as early as Paul's work among the *galatoi*.

In any case their example of vigorous in-depth grasp of the Bible and scholarship as well as missionary work is absolutely unique in the first millennium since Christ. They sent at Charlemagne's request three thousand teachers over to the continent to staff his schools, and were in demand to teach Latin in Rome. They provided the alphabet which (except for capital letters) is theirs not “Roman” as we often think. Many other features of Western Christianity derived from the Celtic explosion.

Thomas Cahill is quite fairly entitled his book, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. It would be very hard to overstate the contribution of the Celtic saints.

Number Three: The Semitic Explosion

The next major additional “explosion,” or split-off began in the cultural basin southeast of the central Roman empire, namely the Semitic. An intelligent, mystical and somewhat unbalanced man named Mohammed was both attracted by the Biblical faith as it was manifested by Roman Christians and yet was also was puzzled and turned away by the cultic “tri-theism” of the particular form of Christianity with which he came in contact. He liked many things, including praying many times a day at set hours.

Nevertheless, *on valid grounds*, both ethnic and theological, he started a separate movement today called Islam, which in size is second only to “Christianity” (to use the political term adopted by the Roman empire) among the various manifestations of faith inspired by the canonical scriptures. However, Islam's chief handicap has been its limited access to the entire Bible for its roots and guidance. Only the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Gospels are quoted in the Quran. By his day no translations had been made into Arabic.

But, in any case, Islam expanded rapidly, taking over, like a spark in a tinder box, many former “Christians” who were glad now to embrace a form of the faith that was not politically tied to the cultural traditions of the Roman Empire. This rapid development was parallel, then, to the rapid growth of the early church which took over many former “God fearers” who were glad to embrace a form of the faith that was not culturally bound to the Jewish tradition.

The result was clearly a Third Major Redemptive Explosion in that it not only took over former believers, it eventually endeared itself to millions of people in many other cultures as well, today more than a billion souls, and encompassing mainly populations with a significant biological growth rate—significant in the sense that it is a faster rate than is seen among culturally advanced Christian nations, even though it is a rate that is much, much slower than the pace of the kind of evangelism for which the Christian movement is well known.

Number Four: The Protestant Withdrawal

The Fourth Major Redemptive Explosion was also a non-Roman and anti-Roman breakaway movement, this time not to the southeast, but to the northwest. To the extent that the Biblical faith won the hearts of people to the north and northwest whose lands had never been, or had only briefly been, conquered by the Romans, to that extent tinder box conditions existed that might easily have predicted another major breakaway movement.

In this fourth case, a well-known agent of change was Martin Luther. It is hardly necessary to explain in detail the events of the Protestant Reformation/Rebellion, which broke away from the Greek and Latin Mediterranean cultural vehicle for Biblical faith. But it is necessary to point out that it was once again the impact of the Bible, now greatly aided by the Gutenberg mass-copying technology that catapulted canonical scripture into greater and wider use than had ever before been the case. It is as if all of human history speeded up. Unlike Islam, which had limited access to the whole Bible, Protestantism and Catholicism in the 16th century now came into amazing new, even grass roots, access.

It is unfortunate that Islam failed at this key juncture to exploit either the printing press or the Bible. Was it because Arabic script did not as easily lend itself to moveable type? Was it because the Qur'an has irretrievably replace the Bible? (Somewhat like the Book of Mormon tends to replace the Bible in the Mormon tradition?)

In any case, at this time in history Islam was the larger and exceedingly better educated movement. Its geographical spread was not its only achievement. Having closer access to the eastern half of the Roman empire, which had itself taken over the entire Greek philosophical and scientific tradition, Islam's courts and palaces teamed with collaborating Jewish, Christian and Islamic scholars. Islamic libraries were immense by any comparison to the libraries carefully amassed by the western monastic movement in northern Europe—which were again and again destroyed by the extensive instability of seemingly unending tribal warfare.

Nevertheless, the Biblical faith in the West, once loosed in Luther's day from Latin cultural bondage fairly exploded in vitality, essentially jerking secular medieval society into modernity. The scientific revolution, the industrial revolution, the democratic revolution, the high-tech revolution and more recently the microbiological revolutions have all built upon the Biblical conviction that the one true God is a stable, orderly lawgiver whose creation also follows laws and is thus amenable to mathematical description and prediction and is thus harness-able for human purposes, as well as constituting a new and vibrant source of understanding of a creator God.

In fact, one of the enduring puzzles for all secular scholars is exactly why and how in the world backward forest dwellers of northern Europe so suddenly blossomed into global conquerors. True the West has by now recently relinquished its long held

political control over the rest of the world, but the cultural impact of the West outranks all other international forces, and is the durable basis today of the emerging and apparently irreversible phenomenon called globalization.

Number Five: Faith Beyond Christianity

But, in order to bring the story up to today, we need to take into account a current, developing Fifth Major Redemptive Explosion. It is not well known. It consists, once more, of the breakaway of believing people from the cultural vehicle which brought them the Biblical faith in the first place. It is simply the seed of the word of God once more taking root in strange soil and generating a vital new crop of believers who cannot see themselves readily as part of either the Roman, Greek, Celtic, Semitic, Germanic or Anglo version of the faith. Curiously but not unexpectedly, even some elements within Christianity, such as the “Black Muslims,” have opted for a mildly Islamic vehicle of opposition to Christianity of any variety. Just as the tension between Roman and Protestant Christianity has over four centuries refined both, so Christianity in general and Islam will now more and more be refining each other as they are in more and more direct contact. Christian k-12 schools in America can no doubt find many parallels to the task set out for themselves by the increasing number of Islamic K-12 schools in this country.

Furthermore, at this very moment in Africa, India, and China, *it would appear that there are more devout believers in the God of the Bible—whose glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ—than there are devout believers in those spheres which are identifiably “Christians.”* Remember, that as in the West, many Christians in the mission lands are by now nominal, cultural followers of an overtly Western religion not necessarily devout believers in the Biblical sense.

Note this fact in three major spheres.

Take Africa

In Africa, 52 million people identify with 12,000 denominations owing nothing at all in their origin to any direct missionary work. This is in addition to 400 brands of Western Christianity which are identifiably “Christian” and which enfold an equally large number, but among which many are purely nominal, enabling the reasonable guess that there are more “devout” believers in Jesus Christ outside of the formally Christian sphere than among the standard Christian denominations

Take India

In India, similarly, there are large numbers of formally identifiably Christian believers constituting a fairly substantial movement of, say, 30 million people, much of which is nominal. At the same time estimates range from 14 to more than 20 million individuals (and extended families) who remain culturally Hindu but who are nevertheless devout daily Bible-reading followers of Jesus Christ. It would seem, once more, that in India as in Africa, there are more “devout” believers in Jesus Christ outside of the formally Christian sphere than within it.

Take China

In China, less than one-fourth of the estimated 90 million “Christians” would fall readily into a “standard” Protestant Christian category, and there much smaller numbers

in the Roman Catholic sphere. Slightly larger than the Protestant sphere (20 million) would be the Muslim sphere (25 million) who are mainly nominal compared to the Christians of China. However, the non-standard believers constitute roughly 60 million, which is far more than the recognizably Christians. Thus, our Fifth Redemptive

Explosion is a massive, growing reality, but yet is growing distinctly outside the bounds of what we recognize as the direct fruits of any of the first four Redemptive Explosions. And, as we have seen, this reality may well include *a larger number of devout believers* than *the total number of devout believers* within the 1) Catholic/ Eastern, 2) Muslim, or 3) standard Protestant Christian categories, which are the direct fruits of the first four Redemptive Explosions to which we have referred.

It is not as though new and better cultural versions of faith are appearing, nor that they invalidate, as they appear, the reality of any of the previous versions. All of them represent the conquest of evil in significant dimensions.

To the nature of that evil in the Post-Adamic era we will now turn.

Now the Bad News

Inseparably linked to all evidence of explosive growth of the Kingdom which we have overviewed in the “Five Explosions,” is the enduring evidence of active, rampaging, intelligent warfare against the saints and indeed against all creation. Worse still, among the vast majority of believers there is the simultaneous and enervating unawareness of what we have called our *battlefield* situation—one in which the saints are not consciously at war, but are mainly oblivious thereof, not even alert spectators of that cosmic battle. The pattern is to be “resigned” to evil, even to presume that God is behind all things rather than that God is in front of all things, turning Satanic evil into good, but by no means initiating the evil, much less suggesting that we do nothing about it.

In the past two centuries God has enabled human beings to uncover gradually the evidences of giant bones from the past, reflecting a degree of violence almost more blatant than anything today. Darwin, a seminary drop out, zealously studied life forms more thoroughly and systematically than almost any other person in his day. Curiously his writings indicate his conviction that the degree of violence, suffering and egregious cruelty pervasively seen in nature could not possibly have been the work of a Benevolent Deity, and therefore had to be explained somehow as a natural, spontaneous evolutionary development of all life if we were to protect the character of the God of the Bible. He was not necessarily a deist except in the sense that he wanted to believe that God had nothing to do with pervasive natural evil.

Others came along and sprang on his hypothesis about the origin of species not as a defense of the benevolence of God but of the total absence of God. Thus Darwin was succeeded by a Darwinism which has been seen to emphasize a “godless” universe.

However, most Western Christians remained confused about the “problem of evil.” Meanwhile the long shadow of Augustine had all along proposed very influentially that God Himself is the perpetrator of all evil in order somehow to do good. This tragically erroneous perspective has affected much of the thinking of Christian leaders despite the prominence of intelligent evil more clearly seen today than ever due to the incredible revelations served up in the microbiological revolution.

The active agency of the Holy Spirit, along with the heavenly host of faithful angels, has nevertheless waged a major counterattack in the form of enlisting human

participation in astoundingly increased insight into the mysteries of microbiology, the very arena of distortion and disease in which Satan has wielded his most deadly weapons.

Huge setbacks have occurred in the midst of overly optimistic progress in this war on disease. New and resistant strains are rapidly being developed by what would appear to be diabolic intelligence. New and powerful defenses are being developed by what must be divine forces. But it is an uneven contest as long as the overall perspective of Christendom is that this is an area of mere random evolutionary innovation of evil and not an area of a keen but destructive intellectual development of evil.

God, we know, invites us to bind up the wounds we can see with our eyes and to ward off evil which is large enough to see without a microscope, but He also has seemed to want to await human collaboration in fighting the microbiological roots of evil for some reason we may not fully understand

Is there any valid reason to suppose that what we can see with more and more powerful microscopes is a battlefield we need not recognize and a war in which we do not need to show up? Or, is it that God expects only secular institutions to hit the line at this level of the contest?

It would seem that everyone from Bill Gates, the world's richest man, to the pages of *National Geographic* (Feb 02 issue) are now more than ever aware of "the war against disease."

Obviously every ordinary believer cannot be a research scientist any more than every ordinary citizen can be guiding a helicopter gun ship on the front line of a war between our large human forms of life. But Evangelicals and their theologians cannot continue to remain on the sidelines in the global contest in this micro world.

Millions of "retired" Americans, including millions of Evangelicals, are living lives of simply coping with mundane necessities and engaging in world tours. They whistle in the dark regarding their own fragile health. They hope that they are not "next" to get cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, although an increasing number of their friends are continually falling by the wayside.

It is not as though this vast multitude of "retired" saints is like a bunch of picnickers marching placidly off into the sunset. It is actually more like a bunch of elderly folks madly running down a road followed by sharp-toothed hyenas that are every few minutes dragging down another victim and tearing him to pieces.

Rather than crossing our fingers and hoping to be spared a bit longer, it seems to me logical that the substantial resources of this older group of believers might actually allow them to turn their intelligence and extensive experience to mount an offensive counterattack to eradicable disease.

The Roberta Winter Institute of the Frontier Mission Fellowship, and the associated WCIU university department, the Institute for the Study of the Origins of Disease, are quite open to any and all suggestions about how to go about alerting both distracted and confused Evangelicals and also non-Christians to a better recognition of the nature of the problem.

One can imagine authors like Frank Peretti or Tim LaHaye lending their considerable talents to weaving this new perspective into fiction novels which would portray decisive opposition to the vast array of disease pathogens against which we are only fighting with pathetically little resources and resolve.

But, rather than to try to duplicate the secular world's laboratory equipment and direct research it would seem reasonable in the early days at least to focus upon raising awareness and championing the kind of efforts which are already going on to a limited extent.

Vitally important is the recognition that it is a false hope to expect the vast industry of medical treatment of the already-diseased to lead the way to the eradication of disease pathogens themselves. Neither curing nor preventing disease necessarily has anything effective to offer the question of the original sources of disease, the pathogens themselves.

The recent film, *The Beautiful Mind*, graphically portrays in sympathetic light the struggles of those who are afflicted with schizophrenia, but it makes not the slightest mention and gives not the slightest hint about recent research which indicates that an infection is involved in this malady, much less highlights the thinking and efforts of those who are working at the root of the problem. No amount of sympathy and care for those inflicted with this brain disease will of itself illuminate the source of the problem. In Europe (but not in the United States) a great deal of attention is being paid to infection as a source of schizophrenia.

Basic (Recent) Insights

Autobiographically

(2002) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 237-38)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

The following are some tentative observations and thoughts which we may do well to take into account at least hypothetically in the attempt to form an overall understanding of the story of life on this planet and the stridently apparent contradictions to that development, thus finding an answer to the common perspective that God, not Satan, is the author of disease and suffering. Some of these thoughts are secular hypotheses. Others are distinctly Biblical and/or theological convictions. They are by no means all equally credible or substantial. Yet they are here because they all seem to contribute in some way to a single integrated understanding of earth history, divine initiative, the diabolical factors, and the meaning of all this for our mission in this life.

√ The sheer physical extent of the marvels and glory of God’s Creation has fairly recently at least doubled with the discovery of the incredible complexity of the microbiological world. While the Hubble telescope has also “doubled” our awareness of the vastness of outer space, in that area we do not see the same sort of creative ingenuity as in our own planet’s record of the development of life and the intricacies of the microbiological world.

One function of this supposition is that it buttresses the idea of “intelligent design” and thus the existence of a Creator God.

√ One can imagine the existence of angelic workers for God, created by Him, possessing free will (thus enabling revolt), learning over the eons of time and working under God as His primary means of developing life forms on earth.

One function of this supposition is to offer an explanation for the very lengthy period of the development of life: it has taken as long as it has not because God is slow to work but because He has been eagerly following the progressive accumulation of the knowledge and skills of His finite angelic creatures.

√ Then, there is now the widely held scientific conclusion that predatory life forms first appeared at a certain, specific historical moment (the Cambrian Period, about 550 million years ago).

One function of this supposition is to suggest that this is the point at which a highly placed angelic worker and many angels turned against God and began the systematic despoiling of His creation.

- That is, this is when “the Evil One” rebelled and “fell” and he and his angelic followers (now called demons not angels) set about to tear down and destroy the work of God.
- Meanwhile, the remaining faithful angels immediately were pressed to develop defensive forms of life—crustaceans, porcupines with bristling quills. An immune

system was developed to fight off the newly devised invading forms of life developed by demonic forces for the purpose of distorting and destroying every form of life and defaming the God of creation. These destructive forms of life include not only large predatory animals visible to the unaided eye, but also destructive viruses, bacteria, and tiny parasites which can only be seen with the use of special instruments.

√ May we then understand the creation of *homo sapiens* as soldiers to be allied with the good angels in the battle against the Adversary and his demonic angels?

One function of this supposition is the idea that, (coming after eons of distortion and destruction of a good creation), the Garden of Eden scenario might thus be seen as one in which this “human” new life form was seduced by that same Adversary through diabolic delusion. The result has been a human being that is seriously hampered in, and diverted from, its potential role as an ally against that Adversary.

Another corollary is that the result has then become that of our theological focus tending to block out all other concerns of God beyond the salvation of man, the restoration of human original vitality. It is as though man’s restoration is now God’s central concern rather than *homo sapiens* being a significant ally against the works of the devil.

√ What if Genesis 1:1 does not refer to the origin of the universe but can just as correctly refer to the beginning of God’s restoration of the earth following a major asteroidal collision?

Genesis events may thus describe a new “young earth” period following an immensely long “old earth” period, thus underscoring the existence of two different “falls,” Satan’s original rebellion and Adam’s tempted disobedience.

√ But, are we too calloused to be adequately aware of the apparently intentional destruction saturating all nature, the truly major violence, evil, such that practically all deaths are *premature*, even of humans (e.g., mainly through war and pestilence—see Chapter 39, “Causes of Death in America”)?

√ Is the development of resistant strains of dangerous pathogens an unguided evolutionary process or the result of intelligent evil design, and are genetic “defects” often actually intelligent *distortions* not *defects*?

√ Is it not also true that, in addition to the pervasive distortion of creation by the activity of diabolically violent and predatory forms of life, creation destruction has been accomplished perhaps even more by means of “diabolic delusions”? Take some examples.

- The delusion that widows can achieve a higher-level reincarnation through self-immolation on the funeral pyre of a deceased husband
- The delusion that one can achieve a virginal maiden-filled paradise by means of self-bombing in the midst of non-Muslims
- The delusion that a man can achieve a cure for AIDS by means of intercourse with a virgin
- The delusion that certain diseases can be avoided merely by altering conditions of environment, such as cold and dampness (tuberculosis), stress (duodenal ulcers), fatty

foods (heart disease). The delusion that these are not the result of infections.

√ There is to be considered the theory that a serious syncretism became part of Western theology, through Augustine, to the effect that all evil is actually of God and, though we may not understand its meaning, is nevertheless part of His purpose.

Thus, if evil pathogens are of God, this tends to blind us to the need to work to destroy them.

Augustine was enveloped for a while in Manichaeism, a strong, Mormon-like form of Christianity. This group believed there were two equal Gods, one good, one evil. In his eventual reaction against this concept he virtually rendered Satan unemployed, while God, for often mysterious reasons, was thus the author of all evil.

Ironically, New Testament writers, over 300 years before Augustine had not wholly rejected the new insights they gained from their time in the land of Mani—where Zoroastrianism had afforded them a better insight into the prominence of Satan’s role in life. They now recognized the role of a powerful fallen angel as an Adversary to God’s good creation. Augustine’s delayed reaction, however, was to throw it all out in favor of the Old Testament’s consistent framing of all events as of God, with no room for an active NT Satan (except in I Chron 21:1 where, after returning from the Captivity, the writer acknowledges that 2 Sam 24:1 could more precisely have stated that Satan was the one tempting David to sin rather than God).

√ There would seem to be very little awareness among Christians today that the Christian life is that of a soldier in a war—a war to conquer evil and destroy the works of the evil one. Most Evangelicals believe somewhat anthropocentrically (humanistically) that the rescue of man—not the defeat of Satan—is God’s chief concern. Thus, to Evangelicals, saving souls is paramount rather than glorifying God, and therefore the Christian life is one of survival not really a battle against “the works of the Devil.”

Thus, it would appear that deliberate attempts to glorify God are actions of war, and will likely involve conflict, deception, struggle, injury, and premature death.

√ There is the explosive impact of the emergence of printed Bibles. This suddenly (in three centuries) drew the northern European civilization up to the level of, and finally way ahead of, the Islamic. It is also true that the Arabic language is not easily printed with moveable type, and that the Quran would not have the transforming effect of the Bible even if it had become widely translated and printed. In fact, its wide distribution might heighten appreciation for the Bible.

√ The unexpected discovery, with our moon landing, that the moon craters are not volcanic but impact craters and the subsequent rush to discover on earth similar impact craters and hence “extinction events.”

This is an insight which makes the Darwinian theory of gradual and unguided evolution much more difficult to hold.

√ To understand the comparison already mentioned as the “Rosetta Stone” of Biblical interpretation, namely the comparison between II Sam 24:1 and I Chron 21:1—the evidence of two distinctly different ways of describing evil, a part of God’s sovereignty but also the initiative of Satan. ■

How Should We Deal with the Phenomenon of Disease?

(Dec. 8, 2002) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 173-74)

[The following is an entry in the prayer log at the U.S. Center for World Mission during the 6 am to 10 am shift.]

Sunday, 8 December 2002

0600–1000 Ralph Winter This is a great place to start out on a birthday, even though I will only be able to go to the 11 O’Clock service and not Sunday School. Today I’m 78 and feel like 60. It is hard to believe that the tests last week showed the telltale signs of bone marrow cancer (myeloma) continuing steadily to increase. It means that no matter how fine I feel now I may not be able to count on very many more months of that. It’s funny. We all know that life is uncertain and that in a bike accident like Dan Eddy’s we could actually break our necks, etc., but in my case a fairly likely date has been set, so to speak, not too far in the future. This allows and indeed encourages pinchpenny use of time almost like never before. Of course I have not for many years been regarding my time much differently simple because of the thrill and excitement of making every day and hour count for the work of Christ.

It really is thrilling to be my age and in my health. I feel I have learned the most important things of my life since I was 70! The more you know the easier it is to attach new information to what you already know. This is true in the realm of the spiritual, in regard to historical information, as well as science.

At the same time knowing things that the average citizen may not know is unhandy because it separates you off into some kind of isolation. Most of what I have “learned” since I was 70 has to do with the nature of God and His Word. I have been especially fascinated by praying and meditating about the glory of God. I have come to the place where I am doubtful that by singing over and over again “glory, glory” we are learning more about His glory. Suppose you were separated from your earthly father at birth and at the age of 30 met him for the first time. If you were to raise your hands and sing “wonderful father” over and over again it would not expand your knowledge of him at all.

I don’t mean people are trying to avoid God by their worship songs. I believe all of that is quite sincere. What I am thinking is that most people don’t know what to do to know God better. Or, take another example. Suppose you get engaged to a girl who lives in a distant city. Every letter you get enlightens you more about her. And going over older letters may even give a bit of additional knowledge about this person. But pure mediation would have distinct limitations in providing you with new and additional information about her.

I am the one who pushed for a TV set in here, and specifically because of the amazing video by R. C. Sproul on the holiness of God. I don’t see that video here anymore but I continue to believe that a weekly or biweekly four-hour time of prayer and meditation here can be best served if we have input not merely output. One of the last things prayer is, is talking to God. Listening to Him is more important and learning about Him is also important. If you called up someone to whom you are engaged and did all the talking you would not learn much about her or him.

So how do we find out more about God? Through His words and deeds, not by talking to Him or even singing about Him (unless the song or hymn reveals new things not just generalities). His words and deeds are seen preeminently in the Bible. His deeds are also and magnificently seen in His Creation. Thus we have two books to consult: the Book of Creation (nature) and the Book of Revelation (the Bible). Note that the Book of Creation came first and that “there is no speech or language where (its) voice is not heard (Ps 19:1-3). In Romans 1:20 we read “Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen.”

\Scientists peer into the one book often with sincerity and genuine awe. Religious people peer into the other book often with sincerity and awe. But the religious people have become alienated from the Book of Creation by some of the scientists who have misread and misinterpreted it. They tell all the scientists that their book is no good. And, of course, many scientists say the book of the religious is no good. But God meant us to read both books! It is our obligation to read, study, and worship Him as we learn of the true glory of God that can be seen in both books. Thus, not only prayer but worship is seen in a new light. Prayer and worship thus also consist of witnessing and digesting and learning about God. That is why prayerful and worshipful reading of the Bible is itself a form of prayer and worship (here in the prayer room). But if I brought in a text on microbiology I would guess a few of our good people here would be shocked.

I wonder if we cannot learn something from the way we treat the fabulous video we are widely promoting, “Unlocking the Mystery of Life.” We all enjoyed it in part because it tears down Darwinism and bolsters our faith in God as the Intelligent Designer. But note, it is combative in some ways. It pours scorn (courteously of course) on enemies of the Gospel. We do not use it as a worship tape, however. No one I know is putting some of the awesome glory of God in the small world of microbiological world into worship songs. There we simply go on and on praising God “generically.” Is it not obvious that there is something dreadfully wrong with our relationship to the Book of Creation?

OK, take me. Here I am a few months away from my own death by an apparently irreversible destruction of my bone marrow. My daughter Linda in this very log sincerely presents the idea “that many of our sinful responses to life (fear, anxiety, unforgiveness, bitterness etc.) have negative consequences in our physical bodies.” (Incidentally, wrongly understood this is a veritable recipe for morbid introspection.) Well, I certainly have no problem believing this.

I know that Linda also believes “devoutly” (yes that’s the right word!) in fighting cancer by proper nutrition. Oh yes, exercise, too. And all of this I devoutly believe. But I ask, Does nutrition, exercise, banishing anxiety, etc. protect you or cure you of Malaria? Are our immune systems normally capable of defeating Malaria, Tuberculosis, Smallpox, Anthrax, etc.? No, not normally. And, if the latest thinking is correct slow-acting viruses underlie heart disease as well as cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and Schizophrenia.. And perfectly healthy people like Jeff Brom are keeling over every day from heart disease, So, do we go on just praying in addition to making sure we heed these other things (nutrition, exercise, peace of soul and mind, etc.)?

Note that all of those things are mere defenses against disease. However, surprising recent insights are that all of the listed diseases are all basically caused by outside invaders which we need to fight in the same sense as we fight the crime of visible

terrorists. It is understandable, of course, that we would not automatically think about going beyond prayer and taking concrete measures to quell the source of these destructive diseases if we did not know that they are caused by attacking pathogens which our immune systems, no matter how healthy, cannot always overcome.

Here is where closer study is needed of the Book of Creation to discern the difference between the beauty God put there and the violence and gruesome cruelty Satan has put there. Here is where we cannot leave this to secular scientists. Do you realize that we have not even kept a list of our own staff and immediate relations that have died of heart attacks, cancer etc.!

Why? Because we continue to assume that there is nothing you can do but hope and pray it does not happen to you! OK, there WAS nothing we could do (beyond the many reasonable defensive measures mentioned earlier). There is not NOW nothing that can be done. And this massive change is the result of a relative handful of (mainly secular) people studying the Book of Creation and discerning therein that God is not the author of the twisting and distortions of that Creation, but that there is a whole array of intelligent pathogens to be fought and exterminated. Meanwhile Evangelicals often believe by default that it must be God that is destroying his own creation. (Sort of like the opposite where the Pharisees resorted to the position that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan!). Jesus healed diseases. He did not blame God for them. Peter described Jesus' ministry as "healing all those oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). He recognized an outside enemy, not a lack of proper nutrition, exercise, etc. although it is obvious that an outside attack is more likely to succeed if we ignore those defensive measures.

So what does this all lead to? It seems likely to mean that now that we have new knowledge about the outside sources of several massive diseases problems that we cannot in good conscience fail to do what we can to mount new offensive warfare with those attacking sources.

My time is running out on this shift. A week ago I spent a couple of hours prayerfully perusing a book that patiently, detailedly, describes how over 200 years of missionary work went down the drain. The word, *Florida*, in the 16th century included not only our present state by that name but also the entire southeast of the USA, in the triangle from Virginia to Alabama to Miami. In that area lived literally hundreds of thousands of Indians (native Americans). Well, between about 1530 and 1800 primarily Spanish work was undertaken employing both soldiers and missionaries, the latter very faithfully. Lots of good things and unwise things happened, but eventually "missions" (outposts) of the kind we see still standing in California, 150 of them, were planted. Each one was a worship center, an educational center, and an industrial center.

However, today there is not a physical trace of a single one of those painstakingly established missions. Worse still the entire Indian population, as in Cuba, has totally vanished, dying primarily of European diseases. All of those hundreds of thousands of people! Their religion certainly did not save them, at least not in this life. Neither did ours. Are we to send missionaries around the world simultaneously to implant disease and offer eternal salvation? You will say no, not intentionally. But what about the diseases they already have? Are we to help them to eradicate those diseases (not just be kind to those who get sick)?

It is not obvious how we can help, if in fact virtually no one is trying to figure out how to eradicate pathogens, especially those pathogens whose existence we have not even thought about. But few realize how little attention is given to the ultimate causes of disease, or how confused we have been as to what the causes of, say, heart disease are. Last week's TIME and NEWSWEEK both reported that the percentage of people who die of heart disease but who do not have high cholesterol, etc. is now finally admitted to be 50%. We have a lot of learning to do and as a nation we don't seem well prepared to do that study. But that is another story.

The Instrumentalities of God

(2002) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 239)

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We all believe that the Holy Spirit guides and enables us to do things we would not on our own have done. We, in this sense are an instrumentality of God. There is nothing He cannot do without us, but He has apparently chosen us to do things for Him. It is not that He is in need. He apparently has chosen to create finite beings who can think, choose, learn, uphold or betray His goals.

The most spectacular single characteristic of this universe is that in even a single galaxy of a known 50 billion, in even a single solar system within that vast galaxy we call the Milky Way (because its enormous swath so dominates our skies), on a single planet orbiting that sun, we find all kinds of creatures which to all appearances have a will of their own, and whose behavior therefore is not completely predictable.

Is free will inherently contradictory to the purposes of God? May we assume safely that God may have had a good reason to create finite beings with freewill? I think we must.

In Iraq all kinds of bad things are going on. Most of them are attributed rightly to Saddam Hussein, even though he personally is not always involved. Oh, he can on occasion strangle an assistant in the sight of others in order to make a point, but it is likely that he usually employs others to do such things. Yet we say, "Hussein did this and did that", whenever it would appear to be his will in operation.

In the White House all kinds of good things are going on. But, again, Bush does not personally do everything. It would appear that Condoleezza Rice often does things and says things for him. But our newspapers say, "Bush did this and did that ..."

Does God work this way? When an Evangelical is elected to high office we may say "God put an Evangelical in the White House," or something like that, even though in fact the Holy Spirit may have moved the hearts of thousands of voters to elect that person.

In the same way we may rightly attribute to God many things which in fact are done by unseen beings which are rather vaguely called "messengers," when in fact such beings may do far more than deliver messages.

Popular views of God have Him doing everything that happens. One pastor told me that the power with which a gnat bats its wings is the power of God. That may be true in some sense, but we must resist the perspective which gives so much direct credit to God that even Satan is unemployed.

We seem to be content to think that the vast panoply of life forms on earth were created by God in some mysterious direct manner, without the help of intermediate created beings.

In many mysterious situations today, where perhaps someone is lingering on death, we assume that God can may choose to heal a diseased spleen, erase a tumor, etc. without any thought at all about the possible involvement of intermediate created beings.

The reason I am pursuing this, incidentally, is because I am concerned that we not expect God to do things which either angels or men are supposed to do. It would be tragic if we are confused about what He will get done through His unseen instrumentalities and what He expects human beings to do

Let's pause for a moment and take a close look at the Bible and its use of certain words for intermediate created beings that are neither divine nor human.

[NOTE: Here introduce the distinction between words and terms, the latter being defined words. Use angels and adversaries as examples, and point out how the use of each changes throughout the Bible.]

Making Sense to Today's Scientists

(2003) (Foundations Reader, 303-07).

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Part I: Could This Have Happened?

The Universe

Many scientists believe that about 14 billion years ago the utterly amazing and puzzling “universe” exploded into being. Such estimates also indicate that almost five billion years ago our planet Earth came into existence as a part of a relatively minor solar system which in turn was part of an exceedingly larger galaxy, which in turn was one of billions of galaxies in the whole universe.

Planet Earth

When the planet Earth came into existence, all there was at that time, so far as we know, was what is called “the inorganic” world, that is, no life forms. Inorganic matter is itself an amazing world of complexity, consisting of an array of more than a hundred different and internally complex “atoms” and combinations thereof (molecules) plus electromagnetic radiation of many sorts (radio waves, infrared rays, visible light, cosmic rays), as well as mysterious forces such as gravitation and magnetism.

Life

However, to this already highly complex reality something new would be added: life, that is, the “organic” world. Most paleontologists believe that the first tiny life forms began to appear on this planet about three or four billion years ago but these forms were so tiny and “boneless” that fossils of their existence are of no help in clarifying their time of origin.

Apparently, however, during the next three billion years, larger and increasingly complex forms of life did appear, although not until close to the end of that period were they large enough (measurable in inches) and of such a character to leave fossil evidences. Meanwhile, disturbingly, during the entire period of Earth's history the planet has been pummeled massively due to weather, plate tectonics (continental drift), volcanic activity, earthquakes and collisions of asteroidal bodies from outer space. (It has been estimated that about fifty tons is added to the earth's weight each day from outer space objects and dust from such objects that burn up in our atmosphere before striking the earth.) The larger of these collisions have been very destructive of life forms.

The Cambrian Explosion/Predators

Then, relatively suddenly, a little over 500 million years ago the so-called “Cambrian Explosion” took place when, puzzlingly, a vast profusion of new forms of life appeared. Even more strangely *and now distressingly*, paleontologists widely believe, *life-destroying* forms of life (predators) appeared for the first time. This sudden appearance of a destructive—you might say, evil—force has constituted something that, from that point on, has become an absolutely major and horrifying feature of the natural world drastically affecting all forms of life including the human being.

Asteroids!

Scientists were shocked when the first moon landing reported back that the pock-marked surface of the moon was not due to volcanic craters but to *impact* craters. This discovery set off a gold rush on earth to find the equivalent battering from outer space. As a result, *Scientific American* in May of 2002 published a diagram pin-pointing sixty impact craters since the Cambrian Explosion, for each their date and size—all of them larger than fifteen miles in diameter—and all of them having significant effect on life forms at the time of their impact. Today we are aware that millions of tons of the earth's surface (inevitably including life forms) have landed on Mars, and vice versa, due to asteroidal collisions that typically splash up matter which goes into orbit, eventually (potentially) landing elsewhere.

Thus, the development of life forms both before and after the Cambrian Explosion has had a checkered career. One of the most distinctive periods of post-Cambrian life was the one dominated by the thousands of different species of what are popularly called Dinosaurs. This form of life followed the largest of all the asteroidal collisions about 250 million years ago. Most scientists today believe that the Dinosaur type of life was extinguished by another major impact from outer space sixty-five million years ago—the evidence being a 100-mile-in-diameter crater in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

Mammals

Apparently, mammals really came into their own once the dinosaurs were out of the picture. Then, very recently mammals have mainly been driven to extinction—virtually all mammals over 100 pounds have been killed off by humans in the last few moments of Earth's history.

What Does This Mean?

If what has been said thus far actually happened, we clearly have an amazing story crying out for interpretation. Was there a supreme being behind all of this? If so, was he only temporarily involved or does he continue to be involved? If no supreme intelligence was there, how did the entire inorganic universe pop into being, and how did the organic universe pop into being? What is the rhyme or reason behind all of this?

Quite frankly, for instance, outer space does not strike one as a very intelligible work of a god of love and peace. Neither does the pockmarked physical history of this planet—with all of its violence of wind, shifting continents, volcanic explosions and deadly collisions from outer space, which could reappear at any moment.

Then, too, in regard to the organic world, there could have been no life of any sort without the inorganic world, that is, if it had not already been true that hundreds of different "atoms," all structurally ordered, had not already existed, not to mention the incredible complexity within the nucleus of each atom—as well as all those rays and forces. Thus, it would appear that there is no great gain in assuming that life itself developed by a random process if the basic components of that life, awesomely complex, remain totally unexplained.

A Supreme Intelligence?

One theory might be that a supreme intelligence had reasons known only to himself for creating the universe and our planet the way they are. Yet, from a purely human point of view the significance of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and asteroidal collisions, etc., is understandably negative. It is all very prejudicial to the survival of life forms. Thus, it is hard to understand why life would have been created on this planet in view of these flagrant dangers.

However, to try to understand the involvement of a supreme intelligence in the long story of the appearance of life forms is even more difficult. Why would an omniscient being take so long, with so many apparent false starts and dead-end streets? And most difficult of all, why would such a being have introduced the Cambrian profusion of predatory, life-destroying life forms?

Trying to understand the apparently inhospitable universe or even the formidable natural dangers of this planet is one thing. Let us focus more precisely on the meaning of the presence of life combined with life-destroying forms of life.

Intermediate Beings, Good and Bad?

Suppose a supreme being intentionally created some intermediate beings with human-like free will, creatures that do not grow old but do learn and grow wiser, and with their free will are able to do lots of things, such as carry out the will of their creator, even rebel against the supreme being and seek to overturn his work.

If these less-than-infinite intermediate beings were the ones from the beginning employed in the development of life forms, then suddenly both the length of time involved and the occasional shortcomings of their work would be understandable. Most important, their capacity to turn against their creator would enable an understanding of the appearance of destructive forms of life in the Cambrian Explosion and a nature which since that time has been “red in tooth and claw.”

Meanwhile, the sudden appearance of *homo sapiens* in the final few minutes of this story presents both a marvelous and ugly picture. Marvelous, because no other form of life has exhibited anything near the same intelligence. Ugly, because no other form of life has been as cruel and dangerous to its own kind or as devastating to virtually all other forms of life. If we build on this point of view it would appear that a rebellious and destructive type of intermediate beings has corrupted and transformed *homo sapiens* from its first appearance.

The Jewish Bible

The Jewish Bible comes into the picture here. It would seem to begin with stories of the emergence of *homo sapiens* and seems to describe the various stages following a particular mass extinction in the region of what today we call the Fertile Crescent. An asteroidal collision would seem to explain that this particular region, or “known world,” became “formless and void,” the challenge to new forms of life being that of replenishing that particular “known world” with both animal and human life.

It is important to note that the Hebrew language of Genesis 1:1 allows it to read, “When God began to renovate things, the (local) earth was formless and void.” (Is it not reasonable that an ancient document would refer specifically to the world with which its hearers were acquainted? They did not know of a planetary spheroid, a solar system,

much less a universe. Do we not read anachronistically when we assume Genesis 1:1 refers to the universe?)

Curiously, what is typical in Earth's history of smaller, regionally-significant asteroidal collisions is the throwing up of masses of dust which does become a global phenomenon. The Sun and the Moon disappear totally. Gradually, as the dust settles, there is a faintly lightened period in each 24 hours. Later, rays of light get through to the surface of the earth and with those rays rainbows become possible, etc.

Homo Sapiens

But the greatest novelty of the series of events described in Genesis is the appearance on this planet for the first time of a form of life (*homo sapiens*) that has apparently been intelligent enough and capable enough either to rebuild the planet or destroy it.

When did *homo sapiens* appear? It may be possible to avoid a great deal of discussion about the exact time of the first appearance of *homo sapiens* if we don't bother too much with *fossils* but look rather at the first appearances of what can be called *cultural sophistication*. This is, in fact, a recent scholarly trend.

If we do that, two major evidences of distinctively human sophistication stand out. One is the first appearance of the selective breeding of plants, producing the wholly artificial major foods of wheat, corn, and rice. The other would be the appearance of the similar genetic alteration of animal life in the taming of wild animals, such as dogs from wolves. Both of these major events are calculated to have begun about eleven thousand years ago, just as the last great ice age receded, and both require an intelligence far beyond that of any of the so-called hominids.

In addition to these two "advances" of human achievement, of course, we have many other examples of truly amazing human tinkering with nature, such as the harnessing of electricity and radiation in a thousand ways, or the discovery of germs and the attempt to eradicate or suppress the most dangerous types thereof, etc.

Setbacks

Nevertheless, "war and pestilence" more than anything else have greatly postponed the replenishment of the earth by humans. World War II was the first war in history, it is thought, in which more people died of war activity than by disease. A gradual understanding and considerable conquest of disease has by now allowed the precipitous skyrocketing of population. How can we explain the meaning of this partial human success against war and disease creating a problem?

We have already supposed that a supreme being may have created intermediate beings which have been constantly at work over billions of years in the development of life (similar perhaps to thousands of intelligent engineers being constantly at work during the 100-year evolution of the American automobile). Also, we have supposed that there came a time (the Cambrian Explosion, 500 million years ago) when some of these intermediate beings broke loose and began to sabotage the very work to which they had so long contributed. This destructive conflict could have gone on at the DNA level, since these intermediate beings had already gained the intelligence necessary to tinker with genetic formulae, producing not only vicious and destructive new versions of animal life but also pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, and parasites with their deadly toll. The

overarching “war” has been that between these evil intelligent beings and humans, not between humans and humans.

Adapting to the Onslaught

Under such wartime circumstances, with 80 to 90 percent of all babies dying in infancy during much of human history, it would not be illogical to suppose that the intermediate beings still loyal to the supreme being would have defensively altered the animal and human DNA so as to become artificially prolific. Our recent dilemma of exploding population has thus become one of artificially coping (e.g. birth control, abortion, infanticide) with an equally artificial highly prolific species of human.

Missions?

Furthermore, such wartime circumstances give quite a different twist to the conventional outlook on Christian mission activity. Missions usually focus on rescuing humans from this world rather than restoring creation, or, to employ a biblical phrase, “destroying the works of the devil.”

We may quite often speak glibly of glorifying God in all the earth, and wishing to see all peoples worship Him when, in fact, to do that is an uphill climb, all of nature being distorted, life forms becoming vicious and deadly. If no evil intelligence is involved or recognized and the supreme being is supposed to be the one mysteriously authoring even the most tragic evils, how are we to rescue that supreme being from gaining a reputation of mysterious indifference to human suffering? Thus, it would seem reasonable to believe that he has never been indifferent but has, for example, from the creation of *homo sapiens* been encouraging and expecting his human followers (as well as his still-loyal intermediate beings) to ally themselves with him in the conquest of all sources of suffering, distortion, destruction and evil, in a biblical phrase, destroying the works of the devil.

If, however, all that is what it takes to glorify God, is that what missions are doing?

Part II: Restating These Ideas As a Very Brief Scenario

God created intelligent angels with free will who, following his guidance over a long period of time (since they are finite), put together an immense variety of life forms with successively greater free will and less instinctive guidance.

One day about 500 million years ago, by which time angels in general had acquired a very advanced understanding of life, of DNA, RNA, protein structures, etc., a leading angel turned against God and lead many angels to rebel with him. As a result, in the Cambrian Period, life forms began to display for the first time genetically altered life-destroying characteristics at every size-level from viruses to larger animal life.

The good angels, with God’s guidance, simultaneously fought back with all their acquired insight into the nature of life forms, designing and altering genetically as many as possible with never-before-seen defensive features such as speed, horns, quills, shells and scales to enable defense against animals of similar size. Then, in order to defend the larger life forms from smaller life forms such as viruses, bacteria and parasites, the good angels had to develop internal defenses, such as what we call “the immune system.” This defensive system alone in the case of the human species can detect and demobilize three

thousand billion different attacking pathogens. The awesome extent of these defenses readily confers an idea of the scope of evil in nature, that is, the ingenuity of Satan and his forces in distorting and destroying God's good creation and in the process tearing down His glory.

Good angels continued to develop new forms of life but they have often been distorted into destructiveness by the evil angels.

God again and again stamped out many or even nearly all forms of life through sixty major asteroidal collisions in the last 500 million years (since the fall of Satan), the most recent large collision 65 million years ago ending the reign of terror of the truly atrocious violence of the thousands of different predatory "dinosaurs."

The "Edenic Plan" was launched, perhaps eleven thousand years ago, in precisely the area where a much smaller asteroid impacted the Middle East, reducing that region of the earth into a "formlessness and void" condition (Gen 1:2) and at the same time engulfing the entire globe with an impenetrable canopy of dust in the atmosphere. Outside that area diseased and predatory animals continued to exist. As this dust settled, night and day became vaguely visible, then eventually rays of light and thus rainbows. In that area, good angels under God painstakingly recreated life forms in their original non-carnivorous state (as explicitly stated in Gen 1: 29 and 30), and went on to create a radically different form of life, the human being "in His image" which is variously called *homo sapiens* and *homo sapiens sapiens*.

This new form of life was intended to be an ally of the good angels fighting against Satan and his works, but the entire Edenic project fell prey to Satan, animal life and human life became carnivorous (Gen 9:3), man himself being seduced by Satan to become more a survivor than a soldier, preoccupied with his own salvation far more than the defeat of Satan.

As part of this onslaught humans have been deceived into believing that the distressing violence and suffering in nature is God's initiative not Satan's. Thus, we do not even see disease germs as the work of Satan. As a result, we are not fighting against the whole range of deadly pathogens in the Name of Christ even though the New Testament clearly states that "the Son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of Satan" (1 John 3:8).

Our earthly mission begins to appear more clearly as we recognize as best we can the full extent of the "works of Satan" (shifting the blame to Satan and thus glorifying God), and as we ally ourselves with the good angels in destroying the works of Satan. "Without God we can't and without us He won't." Our mission is clarified as we learn more and more about the DNA-level mechanisms of distortion which account for most of the suffering in this world.

This approach, note well, removes for millions of thinking intellectuals the largest single intellectual barrier to belief—the question of "Why does a good, all-powerful God do evil?"

The story of man has quite apparently been that of groping back into mission, very gradually and progressively subduing both war and pestilence, the evidence being the recently staggering population explosion and, temporarily, the problem of overpopulation. This explosion has weakened resistance to disease and even the war against disease. The secular world in so far as it is seeded with basic Christian cosmology and world view is very slowly but steadily groping its way in a war against disease

germs, but is neither encouraged nor heavily backed by Bible believers, either theologically or literally.

This is where we are. Billions of dollars are spent on dealing with the results of disease but mere pennies go to the eradication of disease pathogens. Ominously, Evangelical mission forces are almost totally blind to this major dimension of mission.

Roberta Winter Institute Explanation

(2003)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5be334332b6a284b1f2f45ed/1541616691623/RWI+explanation.pdf>

*Compiled and condensed by Beth Snodderly from the writings and speeches of Ralph D. Winter. February, 2003. He included this in his *Frontiers in Mission* book, pp. 177-80).*

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

The Roberta Winter Institute will try to upgrade our desire to bring glory to God by ending our apparently neo-platonist truce with Satan in the realm of all his ingenious and destructive works.

Our global mission agencies, which already have to their credit the discovery of the nature of leprosy, will declare war on other sources of disease in addition to being kind helpfully to sick people and preaching resignation amidst suffering.

Mobilized Christian response did not come soon enough to materially help my wife, and may not help you or yours. But the least we can do is set something in motion that may rectify our understanding of a God who is not the author of the destructive violence in nature and who has long sought our help in bringing His kingdom and His will on earth.

We are in a war against an intelligent enemy

What I am trying to do, groping into it gradually but as fast as I can, is to try to undo a huge and diabolical complex of misunderstandings which enervates and destroys any resistance we might offer to the distorting works of the Devil.

My pastor (Gordon Kirk, Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena, California) who is a former theology professor at Biola has observed that “Satan’s greatest achievement has been to cover his tracks.” This urges us to recognize that we are extensively unaware of diabolic activity in the world.

In scripture we see the prominence of the emphasis on the coming of God’s Kingdom, and note that “the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8).” What if all disease pathogens as well as all violent forms of life are the work of Satan? How would that amplify and refocus our global mission?

When Satan turned against God precisely what kind of destruction and perversion did he set out to achieve? Where would we see evidence of his works? Would he set out to pervert the DNA of originally tame animals? Would he employ powers of deception so that we would get accustomed to pervasive violence in nature and no longer connect an intelligent evil power with evil and suffering? Worse still, would Satan even successfully tempt us to think that God is somehow behind all evil—and that we must therefore not attempt to eradicate things like smallpox lest we “interfere with Divine Providence”?

In the last 20 years paleontologists have dug up more evidences of earlier life forms than in all previous history. One of their thought-provoking discoveries is that pre-

Cambrian forms of life *revealed no predators*. Then, at that juncture destructive forms of life suddenly appeared at all levels, from large creatures to destructive forms of life at the smallest microbiological level.

Is this what Satan set out to do from the time he fell out with the Creator—that is, did he set about to pervert and distort all forms of life so as to transform all nature into an arena “red in tooth and claw” that reigns today?

We need to recognize and ponder more seriously the kind and degree of harm Satan is able to cause. We need to unmask the works of Satan.

Are we fellowships of survivors or of soldiers? We are all enlisted to war against the works of Satan.

Attributing evil to God/distortion of God’s character

There are very many people, even Bible-believing Christians not just non-Christians, who are profoundly puzzled, perplexed, and certainly confused by the extensive presence of outrageous evil in the created world of all-powerful, benevolent God. In coping with this, they may frequently attribute to God what is actually the work of an evil intelligence, and thus fatalistically give not the slightest thought to fighting back.

The assumption that all evil comes from God is pagan, coming from neo-Platonism which taught there is one God who is the source of both evil & good. We have inherited this thinking in our view of Romans 8:28.

The Intelligent Design people don’t take into account that they are attributing the creation of evil to God. Darwin did not do this. Instead he invented the wacky theory of unaided evolution. But Darwin at least recognized the presence of evil if not intelligent evil, and even the need to protect the reputation of a benevolent God. In that he scored higher than what we see in the written materials of Intelligent Design.

The corollary to this mistaken assumption that all evil comes from God is that we can’t go after evil because we’d be going after God. The pattern is to be “resigned” to evil, even to presume that God is behind all things rather than that God is in front of all things, turning Satanic evil into good, but by no means initiating the evil, much less suggesting that we do nothing about it.

Free Will/God works through intermediaries

We need to recognize the very radical and significant decision of God to create beings, angelic and human, with true free will and to work through those intermediaries.

We may frequently ask God to do things which He has been expecting us as intermediaries to do. Our mission then may need to include things for which we ordinarily only pray.

The concept of inappropriate prayer. This is seldom discussed in Evangelical circles. As a result, we fail frequently to distinguish between what part God wants us to play and what part only He can play. Confusion in this area is clearly in Satan’s favor. He is glad when he can get us to ask God to do something God expects us to do. But it must be true that God empowers those who seek him and want to do His will.

We don’t ask God to paint the back fence.

We don’t ask God to evangelize the heathen (as they did in William Carey’s day).

We should not ask God to take care of disease.

God, we know, invites us to bind up the wounds we can see with our eyes and to ward off evil which is large enough to see without a microscope, but He also has seemed to want to await human collaboration in fighting the microbiological roots of evil for some reason we may not fully understand.

We have an un-updated theology, thinking that we aren't responsible to do something about something we can't see (microbes). But we CAN see these now and do something. We are casting aside a whole arena of responsibility.

Un-updated theology that doesn't take new knowledge about microbiology into account

It seems likely that now that we have new knowledge about the outside sources of several massive diseases that we cannot in good conscience fail to do what we can to mount new offensive warfare with those attacking sources.

From "Theologizing the Microbiological World": Our theologies, that is, *our formalized ways of attempting to think Biblically*, were hammered out during centuries that were totally blind to the microscopic world.

Evangelicals have recently stressed the inevitable *intelligence* and *design* in nature, but they have not, to my knowledge, attempted to suggest that there is evidence of any evil intelligence and design.

This is perhaps due to a theological tradition which does not understand demonic powers to have the ability to distort DNA. Our Evangelical theological tradition is so old that it also would not conceive of good angels working at the DNA level. In other words, we have no explicit theology for intentional modification of either good or bad bacteria. Our current theological literature, to my knowledge, does not seriously consider disease pathogens from a theological point of view—that is, are they the work of God or Satan? Much less does this literature ask the question, "Does God mandate us to eliminate pathogens?"

Discover and eradicate the origins of disease rather than treatment and prevention

Surprising recent insights show that many diseases are basically caused by outside invaders which we need to fight in the same sense as we fight the crime of visible terrorists. Does nutrition, exercise, banishing anxiety, etc. protect you or cure you of Malaria? Are our immune systems normally capable of defeating Malaria, Tuberculosis, Smallpox, Anthrax, etc.? No, not normally. And, if the latest thinking is correct slow-acting viruses underlie heart disease as well as cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, and Schizophrenia. So, do we go on just praying in addition to making sure we heed these other things (nutrition, exercise, peace of soul and mind, etc.)? It is understandable, of course, that we would not automatically think about going beyond prayer and taking concrete measures to quell the source of these destructive diseases if we did not know that they are caused by attacking pathogens which our immune systems, no matter how healthy, cannot always overcome.

I spent a couple of hours [recently] prayerfully perusing a book that patiently, detailedly, describes how over 200 years of missionary work went down the drain. The word Florida in the 16th century included not only our present state by that name but also the entire southeast of the USA, in the triangle from Virginia to Alabama to Miami. In that area lived literally hundreds of thousands of Indians (native Americans). Well,

between about 1530 and 1800 primarily Spanish work was undertaken employing both soldiers and missionaries, the latter very faithfully. Lots of good things and unwise things happened, but eventually “missions” (outposts) of the kind we see still standing in California, 150 of them, were planted. Each one was a worship center, an educational center, and an industrial center. However, today there is not a physical trace of a single one of those painstakingly established missions. Worse still the entire Indian population, as in Cuba, has totally vanished, dying primarily of European diseases. All of those hundreds of thousands of people! Their religion certainly did not save them, at least not in this life. ... I admit that I cannot easily shake off the sensation of strangeness and tragedy hovering over those 250 years during which Spanish, French, and British fought each other and in some cases Indian uprisings, without realizing that their real and common enemy was Satanically devised pathogens.

Missions implications/bringing glory to God

Are we to send missionaries around the world simultaneously to implant disease and offer eternal salvation? You will say no, not intentionally. But what about the diseases they already have? Are we to help them to eradicate those diseases (not just be kind to those who get sick)?

To destroy the works of the devil is one major way in which our testimony of word and deed can glorify the true nature of our living God, our heavenly father. It is not an alternative to evangelism, it will make our evangelism more credible. It is to *rectify our God's damaged reputation*. It is to avoid extending the implicit and embarrassing policy of almost constantly misrepresenting Him in our mission work around the world. Attacking the roots of disease is part and parcel of our basic mandate to glorify God in all the earth.

The principal concern in all of this is the distortion we can see in many people's ideas of God. Pause and consider Tozer's statement that "*The most important thing about you is what comes to your mind when you think of God.*" Our theological inheritance was hammered out before germs were known of. A full awareness of the larger scope of the battle against God is not yet ours. In regard to horrifying violence in nature, people have become so used to it, so accustomed to it, so hardened to it, so calloused about it that they have drifted into suppositions that this must be the way God created things. (Only Satan is happy about that.) And, people get to thinking that a God who does not mind violence, cruelty and suffering, whether among animals or man, is not the most appealing kind of a God when we set out to win people to Christ, His Son.

The Purpose for the Roberta Winter Institute

At this point it is time to ask the question why it is that the mounting muscle of the very considerable movement of all those globally who are moved by Jesus Christ has not weighed in either theologically or practically in the area of working to correct distortions of nature and of God's will *by going to the roots of the problem*. In a way this is the most ominous fact of all.

I know of no theological tradition, no denomination, no Christian school—or hospital for that matter—that has seriously accepted the roots of the challenge of the enormous and continuing and growing factor of disease in this world of ours.

Meanwhile constantly both believers and non- believers are stumbling about wondering over the amount, the harshness, and the unpredictability of evil in our world. Indeed, the credibility of an all- powerful and loving God is constantly being called into question by people who are no longer content to suppose “that God has His reasons.” We may indeed not know all His reasons. But do we have reasons for our inaction?

It is truly astonishing how much greater we can make the impact of our missionary evangelism if the true spectrum of concern of our loving God is made clear and is backed up by serious attention not only to treating illness but to eradicating the evil causes, the works of the devil.

Gordon Kirk says that “Satan’s greatest achievement is to cover his tracks.” That, surely, is why we get out of practice speaking of him or recognizing his works or even recognizing his existence. Yet, when we reinstate his existence as an evil intelligence loose in God’s creation only then do a lot of things become clear and reasonable. Otherwise God gets blamed for all kinds of evil: “God took my wife,” etc.

I find it difficult, after making this switch, not to conclude that Satan's angels are the source of life-destroying forms of life, vicious animals, bacteria, viruses. Not that he created them but that he tampered with their DNA to distort them. To “destroy his works” means thus to take it as part of our efforts, our mission, to glorify God to restore, with God's help, what Satan has distorted. Thus, you see the rationale for establishing the Roberta Winter Institute.

The primary focus of this new institute will not be laboratory science but public and mission awareness of the need for a new theological sensitivity for destroying the works of the devil.

Where Darwin Scores Higher than Intelligent Design

IJFM Volume 20:4 (2003)

http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/20_4_PDFs/113_Darwin.pdf

According to Deborah Cadbury's book entitled *The Terrible Lizard*, which tells us about early dinosaur hunters, the tumble of new bones being dug up right in England soon became a significant factor in a vast and widespread shift away from what came to be called a "bondage to Moses," that is, bondage to the Bible.

Cornelius Hunter's book, *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*, demonstrates conclusively that even Darwin, only a little later, was still concerned about the Christian faith in that he was pained until the day he died by the intellectual task of explaining how a good and all-powerful God could have authored the cruelty which he saw so pervasively in nature, and which many of the discoveries of dinosaur bones dramatically highlighted.

Both Hunter and Cadbury show that in the 1820s Biblical perspectives were major factors filtering interpretations of the bones being discovered of earlier life forms. This was true at Oxford University, for example, which was in that era a citadel of defense of the literal text of the Bible, somewhat of a Moody Bible Institute.

Today we have the wonderful and effective work of the Evangelical pioneers in the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, a perspective portrayed magnificently in the Illustra Media video, *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*. But neither the writings of these pioneer ID people nor this magnificent video reflect any stated concern whatsoever for the perplexing presence of pervasive evil, suffering and cruelty throughout all of nature. Strange, because the lurid presence of evil ("Nature red in tooth and claw") was a major factor in Darwin's thinking and the thinking of quite a few other key people who in his day were confused about how the existence of violent forms of life could be congruent with the concept of a benevolent Creator.

Thus, it would appear that some of our present-day creationists are so eager to give God all the credit for all of creation that the virtually unavoidable presence of evil to be seen there has become strangely less important than it was in Darwin's day and even to Darwin himself. Would it not be very ironic if the man we usually accuse of destroying faith in a Creator God were to turn out to be more interested in preserving the good reputation of that God than are we?

In saying that some of our creationists are glossing over the surprisingly prominent reality of intelligent evil in nature, I don't mean that any of these ID people really deep down are unwilling to confront the enigmatic reality of evil. I just mean that, from the current discussion as seen in their written materials that would appear to be the case.

As a matter of fact, I myself have all my life believed in what C. S. Lewis called "that hideous strength." Yet only recently have I begun to reflect on the possibility that this hideous and intelligent evil must not reasonably be dealt with among us any longer merely by superficial references to the philosophical concept of sin and to a *fall of man*. Why? Because the mere idea of sin is not personify-able. Sin as an abstraction is defined by some as the departure from what is right. In that case the concept itself does not necessarily imply the potent and powerful existence of a diabolical personality any more

than would a wrong score on a third-grade arithmetic test. The key question is, “Does it make any practical difference if we conceive of ourselves, on the one hand, as tempted by the freedom to sin or, on the other hand, fighting against an evil one who tempts us intelligently?”

Note, for example, the huge difference, back in the days of the Second World War, between, on the one hand, the often nearly invisible icebergs that sent many ships to the bottom of the ocean and, on the other hand, the stealthy, intelligent submarines which caused far greater damage. What if the sinking of thousands of ships had been conceived of as merely the result of inanimate forces? What if scientists had not figured out a way to bounce underwater sound off steel-hulled submarines in such a way as to distinguish the difference between an iceberg and a submarine? This technique, to be called sonar, came late in the war, and implementing it took even longer. By that time not a thousand ships had been sunk, not two thousand, but six thousand ships crossing the Atlantic, loaded with food and war material, had gone to the bottom. It may be hard to believe but the outcome of that enormous war turned on the subsequent success of fighting these *intelligent* submarines.

It could be alleged that I am missing a main point. A conversation I had with Philip Johnson several years ago brought this forcibly to my attention. I began by congratulating him (and Michael Behe) on the potent logic of the ID movement, but I said, “When you look at your computer screen and if it says suddenly, ‘I just wiped out your hard disk,’ you have not the slightest difficulty in concluding that you have suffered the onslaught of a computer virus concocted by an *intelligent, real person*. Curiously, then, when we contemplate a real biological virus which, though only a tiny assemblage, assails the health of an enormously larger human being, why do we have trouble concluding that we are dealing with an intelligent EVIL design?”

His answer, essentially, was, “Ralph, in my writings and public appearances I can’t even mention God much less Satan. I have a very specific battle to fight, namely, to take apart the logic of unaided evolution. That is all I am trying to do.” Okay, I have respected that response. I have not pestered him further. In fact, I am not even now endeavoring to fault the ID movement and its objectives.

Rather, I would ask a larger question. There are very many people, even Bible-believing Christians (not just non-Christians), who are to this day profoundly puzzled, perplexed, and certainly confused by the extensive presence in the created world of outrageous evil, created apparently by what we believe to be a God who is both all-powerful and benevolent. In coping with this, they may frequently attribute to God what is actually the work of an evil intelligence, and thus fatalistically give not the slightest thought to fighting back.

- When my wife died in 2001 more than one person tried to console me by observing that, and I quote, “God knows what He is doing.”
- When Chuck Colson’s daughter concluded that her brain-damaged son was, and I quote, “exactly the way God wanted him to be,” the impressively intelligent and influential Colson actually applauded her conclusion.
- When Jonathan Edwards fatally contracted smallpox in his effort to try out a vaccine that might protect the Indians in Western Massachusetts, the vast majority of the hyper-calvinistically trained pastors of Massachusetts concluded that God

killed him because, to quote them, “he was interfering with Divine Providence.” These pastors went on to organize an anti-vaccination society.

- Going further back in time, a Mother Superior in Spain woke up one morning and detected a small lump in her forehead. She concluded that it must be God who was doing something to her presumably to deepen her devotion and nourish her character. When it finally turned out that a worm was burrowing there, and had broken the surface so you could see exactly what it was, she concluded that it was God’s worm. When she would stoop over to pick something up, and it would occasionally fall out, she would replace it so as not to obstruct the will of God.

These are, however, only a few examples compared to the thousands of times a day among even modern Evangelicals that some blatant evil goes unattacked because it is resignedly if not fatalistically assumed to be the initiative of God. I am not so much interested in the philosophical or theological aspects of this situation as I am in the resulting passivity before eradicable evil, the practical fatalism.

I will go one step further. If we are dealing with an intelligent evil, even our thinking about that fact may likely be opposed and confused by that same evil force, that evil power, that evil personality. Is there any evidence of this additional complexity? In what form would it appear? How could we identify it?

The human period of history is paper thin when compared to the vast expanse of the previous story of the development of life on earth. But even in the few thousands of years of the existence of homo sapiens, it would seem clear that the growth of human population is directly related to the degree of acquired human knowledge of, and intentional resistance to, microbiological pathogens. A whole flood of books have appeared in recent years commenting on the plagues of history and on the general conquest of disease through medicine. Both war and pestilence have long been noted to be an impediment to population growth. But pestilence appears to be the greater problem.

The Second World War, we understand, was the first war in history during which more people died from military action than from war-introduced disease. Progress has been slow and even today, as antibiotics seem to be running their course, it has been a story of reverses and plateaus, not just triumphs. But the calibration of our conquest simply and crassly by population growth (or non-growth) is roughly workable. The phenomenon of population growth, however, is not widely understood or easily measured.

If the estimated 27 million world population in Abraham’s day 4,000 years ago had grown at the present rate of the world population, there would have been six billion people only 321 years later. Had it grown at the rate of Egypt’s current rate the six billion would have been reached in only 123 years. What actually happened was a growth so slow that 2,000 years later, at the time of Christ, world population was not six billion but only one thirtieth of that.

Again after three centuries of literacy during Roman occupation of south-ern England, the Roman legions were withdrawn to protect the city of Rome itself. Soon Britain lapsed back into illiteracy and into horrendous war and pestilence to the extent that its population did not increase in the slightest for the next 600 years (from 440 AD to 1066 AD).

At that point the tribal backwater that was Europe began gradually to crawl into conquest of both war and disease. The rest of the story of cascading increase in Western

populations, as well as colonially affected global populations, is common knowledge. This increase, as already noted, is a rough and ready measure of the conquest of disease, a story which, as I say, is documented very clearly in a recent flood of books on plagues and the history of medicine.

Curiously, what is perhaps the most enduring characteristic in this conquest is the removal of false ideas about the nature of disease. The very discovery of unbelievably small pathogens was long in coming. Our major western theologians, whether Thomas Aquinas or John Calvin, knew absolutely nothing about the vast world of microbiology. They, in turn had been influenced by Augustine, who is credited with giving God the credit for much of what Satan does.

Thus, even our current theological literature, to my knowledge, does not seriously consider disease pathogens from a theological point of view—that is, are they the work of God or Satan? Much less does this literature ask the question, “Does God mandate us to eliminate pathogens?”

The recurrent pattern of attempts at discovery is disturbingly often a matter of looking for the wrong solution. A parallel would be looking for icebergs not intelligent submarines. Again and again medical authorities have confidently defined the causes of certain diseases as passive conditions rather than intelligently devised (and constantly revised) pathogens. For example, again and again it was “discovered” that stomach ulcers were caused by an infection, not stress. This happened in the 1880s, again in 1945, again in 1981 (in Australia) but the wrong solutions held sway unquestioned in this country for ten more years until the New York tabloid, the *National Enquirer*, ran a cover story on ulcers and infection describing the Australian break-through. Even so, after ten more years a survey of medical doctors in the state of Colorado revealed that less than 50% had yielded to the right solution.

A similar history is displayed in the case of tuberculosis, a major global killer. It was long thought that chilly and damp conditions were the cause. Eventually it became clear that the cause is a very clever pathogen that has recently been modified to become even more difficult to defeat.

But this pervasive and curious confusion about causes is not just a matter of past history. In February of 1999, *Atlantic Monthly* published a lengthy cover story confidently presenting the theory that heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimers, and even schizophrenia are the result of infections, not the usual “passive” factors such as diets high in fat or salt or whatever. Evidently in Europe such perspectives have been more widely pursued.

Now, you would think that so prominent an exposure of an idea so enormously significant would have reverberated back in 1999 in newspapers and other periodicals. But there was nothing in the *LA Times* for another month, and then only about three inches that did not recognize even remotely the import of the theory. Three months later a fairly long article on the subject appeared in the *LA Times*, although it did not mention the *Atlantic Monthly* article nor any of the researchers to which it referred.

Then there was mainly silence—for three years. Finally, in May of 2002, *Scientific American* sported a cover story that calmly and boldly declared that the passive factors in heart disease and the normal explanation of the progressive build-up of plaque in arteries is little related to our nation’s biggest killer. There is a totally different mechanism, which, it says, has been known for 20 years. It points out that gradual

reduction of arterial channels would presumably produce gradual weakening in the person afflicted, and that heart attacks are characteristically most often sudden, and 50% of the time occur in people whose bodies do not display the usual symptoms. For the record, heart disease is not only the biggest killer but the most costly. At \$1 billion per day the cost of dealing with people afflicted with heart disease could rebuild the New York towers every three days.

Note that this new perspective is a total upset of long-standing assumptions (similar to the idea that stress causes ulcers), namely that *passive conditions of life, diet, exercise, salt intake, etc. produce heart attacks*. Now we hear that the actual explanation is not within the arteries but from within the walls of the arteries, namely, inflammations producing sudden and unpredictable eruptions that instantly block an artery totally. These inflammations are, furthermore, now feared to be the result not of inanimate, passive conditions, but of intelligent pathogens. Not icebergs but intelligent submarines.

The same general story, but far more complicated, could be described for the sphere of cancer. Very gradually, with uphill opposition again, the recognition of viral causes has gained steam.

We can ask why is it so hard for intelligent evil to be recognized. We can also ask why it is that almost all attention to cancer is focused on treatments of the results of cancer and less than one tenth of one percent of the billions ploughed into cancer goes toward understanding the nature of cancer, and even there the theory of intelligent pathogens is slighted and even resisted.

Everything I have said sums up as the problem of the failure to recognize intelligent evil. It is by no means simply a philosophical or theological issue. By far the largest human effort in America today relates directly or indirectly to the presence of disease and of the distortion of Creative Intent in the area of human life. It is a major error to look in the wrong direction for the cause of a disease. It would seem to me to be an even more serious error not to notice the existence of intelligent evil at all, which the published materials of the Intelligent Design group uniformly ignore. Darwin did not do that. Instead, he invented the wacky theory of *unaided* evolution. But Darwin at least recognized the presence of evil if not intelligent evil, and even the need to protect the reputation of a benevolent God. In that sense he scored higher than what we see in the written materials of Intelligent Design.

Beyond Unreached Peoples

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 186-87)

One of our recent publications states the following for the general public:

We're glad you're here! Our purpose in meeting each Thursday night is to celebrate what God is doing around the world and to learn how we can better participate in His purposes for the nations. In particular, we come to give special attention to frontier mission among 10,000 unreached peoples without strong, culturally relevant church movements in their midst. Let's seek God together for how we should respond to what we hear.

Note the fact that the phrase by itself, Unreached Peoples, could easily be misunderstood by visitors apart from the additional defining phrase, "without strong, culturally relevant church movements in their midst." It is very good for that to be added. The need for that additional phrase, incidentally, explains why, as an institution, we had earlier objected to the phrase, Unreached Peoples, preferring our own phrase, Hidden Peoples, as well as a different definition.

Thus, I approve of the helpful "appositional" phrase that explains to the general public very accurately what Unreached Peoples means to us.

Here is a statement from another document that attempts to state what we are all about:

The over-arching vision within the Frontier Mission Fellowship group of projects is to see all unreached peoples reached with the gospel and the kingdom to come among them. In evangelical terms we would know when a group was reached when there was an indigenous church planting movement among them.

I would like to see if we can go beyond these statements to something more.

If we think of the remaining unreached peoples as enemy occupied territories, rather than merely unenlightened areas, "reaching" them with "a viable, evangelizing, indigenous church movement" could seem to assume the possibility that the problem of unreached peoples is merely the absence of good news.

I continue to believe that "reaching unreached peoples" with a viable, evangelizing, indigenous church movement is a most worthy and important thing to do. However, it may involve unexpected, perplexing opposition and danger. In that case is it fair to prospective missionaries to talk as though it is merely a communication problem? And, is it fair to the people within the group we are trying to reach, for them to think that we see no use for the significant knowledge we in fact possess that could enable many of them not to become victims of disease?

Otherwise it would seem to be sort of like telling willing recruits that they need merely to walk into Falouja thinking that the only thing they need to do is inform the people that democracy is the answer to all their problems. In other words after we make the missiological breakthrough and see a people movement to Christ, what do we do with the fact that most of the new believers will die very, very prematurely because of pathogens about which neither Jesus or Calvin said a word, but pathogens about which we now know a great deal?

Jesus extensively demonstrated God's concern for the sick. Are we today under any obligation to demonstrate even more cogent ways of fighting off illness, due to the additional insight God has allowed us to gain? Or is it no longer important for people to know that sickness is very definitely a concern of God? Are those who hear our words and witness our work and our concerns supposed to think that our God is just the God of the next world?

This morning Gordon Kirk at Lake Avenue delivered a powerful sermon in effect galvanizing believers to shape up, quit quibbling over peripherals, regain their faith and joy and demonstrate unity. It was all to the good.

However, it was somewhat like giving a rousing charge during wartime to the individuals in an army to stop quarrelling, vying for leadership, grumbling, living with disunity in the ranks, etc. without mentioning the crucial additional truth that there is a war to fight. What unifies disparate, normally quarrelsome men is precisely the unity of fighting the same war. No wonder so many veterans groups emerge from a war, groups of men who are astounding disparate otherwise.

Churches that are riven by internal disunity may often be plagued in part by the lack the unifying power of a significant external goal. Even if that goal is merely getting pamphlets to Iraq it will certainly help unify the church. However, if the goal is to confront a hideous, invisible enemy that has infiltrated the bloodstream of every member of the church and will be causing pain and suffering and premature death, that unity might come much more quickly and solidly.

I had similar concerns recently as I listened to Greg Livingstone share his experiences with several key Muslims who were apparently glad to talk to him but did not appear to be seeking God. They are Muslims, perhaps, only in the sense that they may be caught up in a cultural tradition they felt they could not abandon. I wonder what would have happened if he had shared with them his awe for the glory of God? How would he have done that and how would these men have reacted? Maybe their disinterest would have turned them away and he would then have had to spend time with others whose hearts toward God were more tender?

The average missionary in a Muslim village does not share with the people many similar goals. The one common denominator which might possibly draw both missionary and Muslim together could be to share, positively and humbly, genuine awe for the glory of God as seen in a microscope, and negatively, to share genuine awe and fear for the additional evidence in that same microscope of an intelligent, malicious enemy of them both. The missionary and the Muslim can both be awed (and worship) as they contemplate God's glory together, and they can together be gripped by the urgent, crucial task of fighting a common enemy that is constantly tearing down that glory. Isn't that what Jesus' extensive healing ministry would teach us to do?

The Comprehensive Story—a Brief Statement of a Trial Perspective

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 244)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

God created intelligent angels with free will who, following his guidance over a long period of time (since they are finite), put together an immense variety of life forms with successively greater free will and less instinctive guidance.

One day about 500 million years ago, by which time angels in general had acquired a very advanced understanding of life, of DNA, RNA, protein structures, etc., a leading angel turned against God and led many angels to rebel with him. As a result, in the Cambrian Period, life forms began to display for the first time genetically altered life-destroying characteristics at every size-level from viruses to larger animal life.

The good angels, with God's guidance, simultaneously fought back with all their acquired insight into the nature of life forms, designing and altering genetically as many as possible with never-before-seen defensive features such as speed, horns, quills, shells and scales to enable defense against animals of similar size. Then, in order to defend the larger life forms from smaller life forms such as viruses, bacteria and parasites, the good angels had to develop internal defenses, such as what we call "the immune system." This defensive system alone in the case of the human species can detect and demobilize three thousand billion different attacking pathogens. The awesome extent of these defenses readily confers an idea of the scope of evil in nature, that is, the ingenuity of Satan and his forces in distorting and destroying God's good creation and, in the process, tearing down His glory.

Good angels continued to develop new forms of life but those same forms have often been distorted into destructiveness by the evil angels.

God again and again stamped out many or nearly all forms of life through sixty major "extinction events" (including 45 asteroidal collisions) in the last 500 million years (since the fall of Satan), the most recent large impact being 65 million years ago ending the reign of terror of the truly atrocious violence of the thousands of different predatory "dinosaurs."

The "Edenic Plan" was launched, within the last eleven thousand years, in precisely the area where a much smaller asteroid impacted the Middle East, reducing that region of the earth into a "formlessness and void" condition (Gen 1:2) and at the same time engulfing the entire globe with an impenetrable canopy of dust in the atmosphere. Outside that area diseased and predatory animals continued to exist. As this dust settled, night and day became vaguely visible, then eventually rays of light and thus rainbows. In that area, good angels under God, painstakingly recreated life forms in their original non-carnivorous state (as explicitly stated in Gen 1: 29 and 30), and went on to create a radically different form of life, the human being "in His image," different from earlier humans which is variously called homo sapiens and *homo sapiens sapiens*.

This new form of life was intended to be an ally of the good angels fighting against Satan and his works, but the entire Edenic project fell prey to Satan, animal life and human life again becoming carnivorous (Gen 9:3), man himself being seduced by Satan to become more a survivor than a soldier, preoccupied with his own salvation far more than the defeat of Satan.

As part of this onslaught humans have been deceived into believing that the distressing violence and suffering in nature is God's initiative not Satan's. Thus, we do not even understand disease germs as the work of Satan (of course, Calvin did not know germs existed). As a result we are not fighting against the whole range of deadly pathogens in the Name of Christ even though the New Testament clearly states that "the Son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of Satan (I John 3:8)."

Our earthly mission begins to appear more clearly as we recognize as best we can the full extent of the "works of Satan" (shifting the blame to Satan and thus glorifying God), and as we ally ourselves with the good angels in destroying the works of Satan. "Without God we can't and without us He won't." Our mission is clarified as we learn more and more about the DNA-level mechanisms of distortion which account for most of the suffering in this world.

This approach, note well, removes for millions of thinking intellectuals the largest single intellectual barrier to belief--the question of "Why does a good, all-powerful God do, create, or allow evil?"

The fairly recent story of Edenic man has quite apparently been that of groping back into mission, very gradually and progressively subduing both war and pestilence, the evidence being the recently staggering population explosion and, temporarily, a reverse problem: overpopulation. This explosion has weakened resistance to disease and even the war against disease. The secular world in so far as it is seeded with basic Christian cosmology and world view is very slowly but steadily developing a war against disease germs, but is not encouraged nor heavily backed by Bible believers, either theologically or literally.

This is where we are. Billions of dollars today are spent dealing with the results of disease but pennies for the eradication of disease pathogens, and ominously, Evangelical mission forces are almost totally blind to this major dimension of mission, even though it is a massively destructive factor in their church constituencies both at home and abroad.

Editorial Comment on Evil/Disease as a Frontier in Mission

(Mission Frontiers January–February 2004).

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment32>

Dear Reader,

I would guess that a major reason you are holding this newsprint booklet in your hands is that it helps you in some ways to understand more clearly what God wants you to do.

In any case, nothing, nothing can be more important for any of us to know than what God wants us to do.

For us here at the Center it is crystal-clear that God's calling for all believers is for "Our Utmost for His Highest." The discernment of His Highest takes study. Much of what we do here in Pasadena is to keep our eye on every part of the world to see what God is doing and what obvious and strategic needs are there.

Dimensions, frontiers

Okay. Essentially that is the business the Center and the university here are in. It is also the major reason for the theme of this issue: What is God doing, what specifically is left to be done, and where can we help? Or, what is the best way we with our specific strengths and limitations might offer the most strategic help? That is, what are the dimensions of the unfinished task?

Here at the Center and university we are "24/7" focused on what is most strategic and most needed. We call these "Frontiers."

We started out by zeroing in on groups by-passed by existing missionary work, called "Hidden Peoples" or "Unreached Peoples." They fall into the major categories reviewed in this issue.

But in order to reach out effectively to these groups, we need to try to understand which methods and approaches are not really working, and if we are being slow to adopt new approaches which might enable us to reach out more intelligibly to strange populations. This describes another kind of frontier, which typically requires rethinking, ingenuity, and in-depth knowledge.

Other Frontiers?

One example of this other kind of frontier (especially among the increasingly educated leaders around the world) is what in my editorials I have been mentioning lately, namely, the horrifying divergence between those millions of intelligent people who trust in science and not religion and those millions who trust in religion and not science. Call this frontier "the Religion of Science." See excerpts from Professor Hammond's new book on pages 16-17.

A second frontier of this other type can be called "Fatalism about Evil." It is a common but debilitating "passivity" in the face of evil. In so far as we automatically attribute all misfortune, all disease, all sickness to the "mysterious" mind of God, that perspective cuts the nerve of any intense, intentional fighting back.

For example, Charles Colson is as brilliant and dedicated a Christian as they come. Yet, after his daughter had struggled for many years with an autistic son, call him

Alex, Colson praised her when she came to the conclusion that “Alex is exactly the way God wants him to be.”

First, the idea that God would want any child to be brain-damaged is inconceivable.

Even more important, this fatalistic perspective, no matter how brave and noble, cuts the nerve of anyone wanting to join the increasing number of parents who want to get to the bottom of why autism is skyrocketing. Colson’s immense influence would be a great help to those parents, such as my oldest daughter and son-in-law, whose own son’s autism has led them to do all they can to get to the roots of this mounting plague.

However, don’t assume that very many others are concerned. The enormous Medical/Pharmaceutical industrial complex gets 99% of its funds from treating people who are already sick. It does not have a lot of extra money to find out why people get sick.

Furthermore, if hyper-calvinistic theology leads nearly all Evangelicals to accept autism as “the mysterious hand of God”, we must count Evangelicals out of the efforts to find out not how to deal with autism after it appears, but why it is happening with increasing frequency.

What has this to do with missions? It means that if we set out to “declare His glory among the nations,” by revealing the true, penetrating love of Christ for sick and suffering people, as well as His hatred of evil, we must decide whether diseases are of God or not. The question is not merely about what Jesus actually did or said about disease, but what He would have said had those people back then known what we know about disease.

Should missions go on spending millions of scarce mission dollars on raising children up to the age where they can die of malaria (four die every sixty seconds) if they are not doing absolutely everything they can to ferret out the nature of the malarial parasite and how to eradicate it?

In other words, is it the whole gospel just to protect people from malaria and treat the sick? It would seem that our mission mandate includes portraying our God as One whose love extends beyond treating sick people to the actual eradication of the incredibly ingenious malarial parasite itself. With our increasing knowledge, do we not have proportionately broader responsibility?

Isn’t this a frontier? Isn’t it doubly difficult a frontier due to a twisted non-biblical theology that blames God for all illness?

Malaria is just about as bad a global plague as is the HIV virus. We see many Christians seeking to help the AIDS-orphaned children, and being kind to those writhing in the pains of malaria. But, do we see anywhere in the world any kind of a substantial Christian institution which in the Name of Christ is pursuing the total eradication of either HIV or malaria?

Thus, it may be that we are telling people around the world that our God does not care, does not know what to do, or worse still, is Himself the author of these evils (for our good, of course). Fortunately, the God of the Bible is different!

Evolved or Involved?

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 245-47)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

I feel very uneasy about the word evolution since it is so often employed to describe a progression of life that developed *without any intelligent guidance at any point*. While some Evangelicals may believe in that kind of “unguided evolution,” I would rather just stay away from the word because I certainly do not believe life could have arisen by a purely random process, even with the factor of “natural selection of the fittest” thrown in as a guiding mechanism.

By contrast, I think *develop* is a nicer word than *evolve* since it does not tend to push us to believe no guiding hand is involved. It clearly allows the involvement of intelligence in the process. Thus, for example I would prefer to speak of the development of the American automobile in the 20th century rather than the evolution of the American automobile in the 20th century. Since thousands of intelligent engineers were involved at every moment.

But this attitude toward evolution as a word is just my personal preference. I know that in the English language a secondary use of the word evolution is fairly common in processes where human beings are involved with guiding hands. People do speak of the evolution of the computer, for example, when it is not at all a case where computers evolved without guidance. And in this sense you could speak of the evolution of the American automobile.

However, one might read somewhere of “The *evolution* of dogs from wolves and wheat, corn, rice, and potatoes from almost inedible forms of plant life.” Such *developments* certainly took place all right, but it is irretrievably true that those derivations would not have happened had some very intelligent human beings not been *involved* in the process—a use of the word *evolution*, note, in the guided sense. Indeed those developments may actually peg the time human. But remember, this is not the usual use of the word *evolution*. Intelligent external involvement is not the most common usage of the word *evolution*.

Thus, if we recognize that *evolution* usually means specifically “unguided” development, we cannot then wisely speak of the evolution of either dogs or potatoes because these were developments that were definitely guided by intelligence, high intelligence, clearly not unguided evolution. Intelligence was certainly involved in the process.

Yet the ambiguity will continue to exist. When you hear that “the Pope believes in evolution” you really don’t know whether he is talking about a process that is guided or unguided. For example, an older denomination recently took a poll of its members and found that 1) 99% believe “The universe was created by God,” and 2) 92% believe that “Life is so complex that it has to be the outcome of intelligent design,” and yet 3) 85% believe that “Evolution theory is compatible with the idea of God as Creator.”

In this case I feel sure that the people who believe in *unguided* evolution, who are many, are not many in this poll. Quite likely most of the 85% are expecting intelligent guidance to be involved in the process.

So, next time someone asks me “Do you believe in evolution?” I am going to answer, “Do you mean *unguided* evolution?” If they say yes, I will say no. And I will also say that personally I am even uneasy about using the word due to the persistent ambiguity of the term *evolution* in any case of *guided* development.

Let’s go back to the dogs! At every point in that development from wolves to dogs you can be sure highly intelligent selective breeding was involved. It could even be called *genetic engineering*. New forms of life, at least slightly different from the originals, were developed by that intelligent involvement in selective breeding. In this sense virtually all of the foods we eat were genetically engineered long ago in many ways by the involvement of intelligent human design.

But a new factor has recently appeared. Human beings have by now learned quite a bit about DNA, genes, and chromosomes, and are helping people with genetic diseases to be healed. Really scary possibilities come to light. Are we playing “God” by selectively breeding cats of a certain type? Or, when a disease gene is replaced with a healthy one? In a sense, yes. We are doing God’s work. But we are also doing God’s work when we evangelize. We have God-given abilities to do right and to do wrong but no restriction forcing us to do nothing in the area of genetics.

In my theology, Satanic disruption, distortion, and destruction of God’s good creation is so extensive and pervasive that it even extends to what are often called “genetic defects.” I have a strong suspicion that these defects are often actually intelligently evil *distortions* by Satan not just things that went wrong accidentally. Why? Because, simply, some of these are so cleverly destructive. The same goes for destructive viruses, bacteria, and especially parasites. These represent incredibly ingenious evil. They represent, I am thinking, the *involvement* of intelligence. They are not just unguided evolution or, much less, errors in creation. It would seem that God sometimes makes use of such things as forms of punishment but that the evil distortions themselves are not of His direct initiative.

In fact, something here is very ominous to me. Today, I see many books and articles about the origin of evil, or about “Where is God When Things Go Wrong?” or “When God Doesn’t Make Sense.” But I can scarcely find any of them attributing all or even some of this disorder and evil to the intentions of a created, evil, counter-being that turned against God and has been for a long time distorting life forms throughout God’s good creation. Unbelievably, in view of that pervasive degradation, some authors actually insist that we should not ask “Why?” but simply trust that God has in mind our good—the theory of the “mysterious good.” For example, one pastor told me I ought to thank God for the cancer that killed my first wife and the same cancer that is now killing me! This I do not believe.

Thus, for me the evolutionary process which I would prefer to call *development* could easily have involved intelligent evil as well as on-going intelligent good. Thus, Satanic meddling with our DNA could likely have engineered many genetic distortions and authored many destructive forms of life—from brilliant viruses to monstrously destructive dinosaurs.

The good angels, meanwhile, have not been idle. With God’s guidance they have devised the human immune system and they have armed many creatures with all kinds of defenses such as hard shells, porcupine quills, changing color, etc.

Perhaps God does not want us either 1) simply to cage or kill all wild and dangerous animals, or 2) to let them do their predatory violence. Maybe it is closer to his desire for us to *restore them* genetically to their original, created, herbivorous state. Maybe that is why He has been waiting patiently for humans to find out what we now know about genetic processes.

But, note, amidst all this theorizing we are working quite blindly if we are unable basically to recognize the extensive existence of intelligently damaged and “violentized” forms of life, or we fail to understand that such pervasive distortions of God’s good creation are the work of an evil one.

The tendency to overlook this factor of an external, intelligent evil can readily be seen in the arena of health.

The more I think about it the more strange it seems to me that God would expect us to go through some secret, esoteric, spiritual hocus pocus in order to get well. Isn't that gnosticism? Even psychosomatic illness is not strictly speaking “spiritual.” What do you think?

Obviously from the time Roberta was attacked by cancer we have been deluged with cures. They are still coming. Most of them emphasize one and only one very specific panacea, like Barley Green, colloidal silver, MG3, Ambrotose, grape diet, coffee enema, exercise, sleep, sunlight, diet, prayer. Each thrust ignores or minimizes the others. None reflects on the possibility of an intelligent, external evil.

Here is an illustration in regard to the idea in one book that if you eat what the Bible tells you to it will defend you against all disease. Okay, suppose there are kids going around bashing in cars’ headlights. You can’t defend your car against that possibility of damage by going back to the owners’ manual and following it meticulously by putting in premium gas, highest quality transmission oil, proper antifreeze, etc.

Reason? To do all of that is all to the good and it will prevent many different kinds of breakdowns, but in this hypothetical case there is also *an outside, independent, intelligent evil to be dealt with*. That is my idea of the role of pathogen-induced disease.

The most repulsive example of overlooking an intelligent external evil is the true case of a comatose woman who after some months of total coma seemed to develop skin abrasions on her toes. Pretty soon the infection or whatever, despite medical attempts to stop it, actually exposed some of the bones. Finally, they realized rats at night were nibbling on her. In this case they did not assume a better diet would help, or exercise, or prayer. They at last discovered that an external intelligence was the problem.

Along this line something that truly caught my attention a couple of years ago was when I found out that quite a few secular paleontologists now believe—as part of their concept of lengthy development of life on earth—that there is an identifiable point when no previous form of life was either predator or prey. They contend that suddenly in the “Cambrian explosion” of new life forms (550 million BC) they now see forms of life that destroy life at every level, from viruses to dinosaurs. What came to my mind instantly when I encountered this is that this must have been the point at which Satan and his evil minions turned against God and began to use their long developed skills in the development of life now to systematically distort and corrupt His good creation. Just a thought.

Let’s return to the concept of unguided evolution vs. involved intelligence. We need a lot of wisdom here. For close to 200 years human beings have discovered old

bones which do not belong to any present-day creatures. During that period, many Christians duly concluded that life must have developed over a lengthy period of time. In my youth most Evangelical leaders believed that either the “days” of Genesis had to be long periods or that between Genesis verse 1:1 and 1:2 a huge period of time elapsed. Back then only the Seventh Day Adventists believed that no form of life on earth could be older than man. More recently a lot of Evangelicals have taken the position that the seeming age of the earth is a huge mistake, based on many false assumptions.

Ken Mulholland, for twelve years our board chair, before he died in 2003—of the same cancer I have—told me that at Columbia Bible College, seminary, university, etc. a good rule of thumb is that undergraduate faculty members tend to believe in a “young” earth while graduate faculty believe in an “old” earth. Perhaps this is true in other schools as well. There are thousands of Evangelical professors who make up the membership of the American Scientific Affiliation (which was started by an astronomy professor-member of Lake Avenue Church when I was a teenage-member). The entire Affiliation is holds the position that life on earth was developed over a period of time.

Admittedly, however, some Evangelicals who really know their science are on the other side of the fence.

I personally welcome open discussion of this question of the age of the earth. But, unfortunately, little *discussion* is going on compared to the amount of heated *debate*. The Navigator press publishes some of Hugh Ross’s books. His letters to the Institute of Creation Research go unanswered.

The October–December 2003 issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, which I edit at the moment, contains a range of views and articles, most of which plead for communication and mutual respect not debate and condemnation of one another. In these cases it is not that one party believes the Bible and the other doesn’t, but that the two parties differ in the way they interpret it. That is, we have an inerrant Bible but not necessarily inerrant interpretations.

I personally have no doubts whatsoever about the creation by God of the universe, our planetary system, and life on earth. But at the same time I have wondered whether such truths are presented in the Bible other places than in Genesis, and not in Genesis. In that case perhaps Genesis 1:1 refers exclusively to recent events, specifically the very recent creation of humans. Paleontologists are in general convinced that life on earth has been set back and redeveloped many times following massive asteroidal collisions with the earth. *Scientific American* in May of 2002 displayed a chart of 60 “extinction events,” 45 of which they have traced to impact craters that are 15 or more miles across. There are thousands of smaller ones.

Thus, to me it would be perfectly logical to understand that Genesis is an accurate description of one of many setbacks. That is, it describes what happened fairly recently following a large impact whose extinctions were mainly regional. Thus, in the very first verse in Genesis we are reading about recent and regional events not planet-wide catastrophe much less the creation of the universe. It is a fact that the Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 can be understood in that light. The NRSV for example has a significantly different translation from the King James. I don’t blame anyone, of course, for making the plausible assumption that the Bible might likely begin by describing the creation of the universe. The real question is not whether it might have done so but whether it did. It is not for us to decide what the Bible *ought to say*.

The main perspective, for me, in Genesis, is that it is at the very end of a lengthy history, when God created human beings. Of course, the paleontologists have discovered man-like animals as long ago as a million or more years. But even very recent man-like beings such as the Neanderthal are now believed on DNA evidence to be sub-human, unrelated to humans.

Recently scholars have indicated their belief that the intelligent cultivation and breeding of plants and animals could not be more than 11,000 years old. For me the Genesis account fits right into this period. The six days of creation described there seem to be a strikingly reasonable description of what would happen following a major, regional asteroidal collision, allowing for the new Edenic beginning in that region. Note that almost always asteroidal collisions throw massive dust into the air that blocks out all light, all over the earth, but as the dust settles first you see light and darkness and only later can you actually see the object-sources of light, the sun, the moon, and the stars, etc. And, in that region animal life was entirely wiped out.

Logically, one of the things God was then counting on is for human beings, created at that moment to be of help in replenishing the earth.

Of course, all this is speculation by one who certainly believes every verse of the Bible. My point is not to convince anyone, even myself, but to encourage generous discussion of what the Bible means. We do not do well to close our minds to the possibility that we have often simply misunderstood the Bible and in the process given it a bad reputation. That has been done.

For example, when both Calvin and Luther opposed the Copernican theory employing Bible verses, in those cases they simply did not understand the Bible. People have even “proven that the earth is flat” by quoting the Bible. We do not deny the inspiration of the Bible to question interpretations.

In other words, for many thinking Evangelicals the inspiration of the Bible is not the issue. The issue is what does the Bible really teach and on what matters is it silent, focusing on what it addresses readers at a time when they by no means yet knew everything about the planet, the solar system, etc. These would give exciting revelations of God’s glory later on.

To me it is important (as they teach you in seminary) to know what a passage “meant” before trying to understand what it “means” today. I also think it is important to go one step further and ask the question, “What would Jesus have said to his hearers if they had known what we know about germs?” Would He have warned them against perversions of their DNA by Satan? Would He have encouraged them to fight back and not to assume that destructive forms of life were made that way in the original creation by God? Would He have encouraged His hearers to master enough microbiology to be enabled to restore distorted forms of life to their original state? Or, would He have suggested that cancer is a perfectly normal and expectable evolution as a famed Anglican Priest/Scientist recently stated? Would not Jesus have urged His hearers to go all out to discover what Satan has done to produce cancer and to seek to conquer this dread disease that will invade half of all males in this country before they die?

Note that right now Evangelical theology says virtually nothing about all this. Thus, do we have a frontier of mission here which we could not have understood without recent discoveries? Even more important is the question, “In order properly to glorify God is it necessary to distinguish what Satan is doing in this arena and avoid attributing

all this evil to God?” Is our evangelism properly empowered if in a sense we are preaching about a God who is not concerned about our seeking out the origins of disease and is content with us mainly just treating the results of disease?

These are questions that come to mind

The Greatest Mistake in Missions

Talk at Kabul Reunion, Ralph D. Winter
Sunday, August 8, 2004

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(*Frontiers in Mission*, 164-66)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

Scripture: Genesis 20:1-11

Key text: Abraham replying to Abimilech who was outraged by Abraham's conduct: "I said to myself, 'There is no fear of God in this place.'"

Undoubtedly, the most unfortunate error of judgment a missionary can possibly make is to assume that none of the people to whom he is ministering have made any spiritual moves in the right direction. Perhaps most of them have not, just as in our own society most people have little awareness of God in their lives. *But some of them may have!*

On this point the Bible is very clear. God is at work in all parts of the world, and for us to seek out the "man of peace" and build on that foundation is terribly important. Many times mission outreach offers a host of desirable elements, such as the hope of getting out of that society, or going to the States, or getting a job or an education, or some other nonspiritual attraction. But that is not the best foundation to build on.

This was, in a way, what I felt Joe Richie was saying last night. He was insisting that there are Muslims and others in Afghanistan, even—or especially—in villages, who have genuine good will and substantial integrity, with whom we can deal to do real things even though our primary and ulterior motive is not to instruct them in the fine points of the trinity.

My personal pilgrimage in this sphere has led me again and again in recent years to trust the Bible—above things I have heard in church. Indeed, the entire history of missions is basically the history of the Bible. There is no other book like it. If you see a picture of someone going into some sort of religious building carrying a book it won't be a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Shintoist. No other major religion has a book comparable to the levelheaded coherence and compelling authority of our Bible.

My oldest daughter, living for years in the mountains of Morocco, found the women down the street would come over any time she promised to tell them more about Jesus. As a result, the Qur'an grows strangely dim in the bright, intelligible light of the New Testament Gospels.

In my pilgrimage with the Bible the most significant new understanding began in an all-too-brief fall term at Prairie Bible Institute, along with Maynard Eyestone. This was the fall of 1949. I went for only one semester because I wanted to see how they taught the Bible using "Search Questions."

[Digression: Maynard Eyestone and I had already been together two years before in '46-47 at Princeton Seminary when I had planted a tiny seed which grew into a stream of Americans teaching English at Habibia and later founding AIT. That earlier period included the first of the Urbana Conferences (although it was held in Toronto) where I originally heard of the tent-making strategy.]

At Prairie I first heard of the mission significance of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3). There I was exposed to Exodus 19 (“That all the earth may hear”). I already knew about Isaiah 49:6, “I want you to be my salvation to the ends of the earth.”

The situation with Abimilech began to grow on me. He was outside the covenant and may have had little or no contact with the Bible. Many times in the Bible we see evidence of God working outside of the box, so to speak.

Another phenomenally significant thing to me is what I now call “The Rosetta Stone” of Biblical interpretation. It has become clearer and clearer to me that the Bible employs two paradoxically different ways of explaining what happens. One, more typical of the OT, takes the point of view of the fulfillment of God’s purposes. The other, more often in the NT, speaks of human or natural causes.

The most dramatic example of both of these two apparently conflicting points of view can be found in the passages about Joseph in Egypt. It straightforwardly describes the evil intentions of his brothers who sent him into slavery. Later he himself tells them, “You did not send me. God sent me.” The Bible, here, is not contradicting itself but is portraying two strikingly different but equally legitimate and true explanations of the same event. One is from the point of view of instrumental causes. The other looks at the purposes of God in the event.

In this case the two explanatory perspectives are found in the same Biblical passage. More startling is the contrast in perspective as revealed in II Samuel and I Chronicles when David’s sin in counting the people comes up. The twenty-five verses describing this event are identical except for one word. In II Sam 24:1 it is God who instigates David to go wrong. In I Chron 21:1 it is Satan who instigates David to go wrong. One account derives from the sovereignty of God, the other from the on-going free will of intermediate beings to do evil.

Indeed, since the OT and the NT extensively side with each of these apparently contrary perspectives, we can at least recognize the importance of not merely attributing everything to God’s initiative. As long as intermediate beings, angels (good and bad) and men (good and bad) exist, the NT perspective must be taken seriously.

The plot thickens. If the Abimilech account verifies the work of God’s spirit beyond the bounds of His covenant people, then the question may fairly be asked if the Babylonian Captivity did not introduce Jewish theologians into a more ample understanding of causality—that is, the source of evil? Was this due to their exposure to the radical dualism of the Zoroastrian religious tradition, which envisioned two equal gods, one good and one evil?

The influence of Zoroastrianism on Christianity later on can easily be seen in the strong Christian movement called Manichaeism, a tradition in which Augustine first believed. But that kind of Christian dualism is not seen in the NT where Satan is in no way a god equal to the good God. Furthermore, for that very reason, Manichaeism was strongly rejected and suppressed once the Roman government sought to foment a single orthodox tradition and the NT came to the fore as the ultimate basis for doctrine.

Unfortunately, Augustine himself not only saw the error of Manichaeism but flipped to a more neoplatonic point of view in which there was no intelligent angelic opponent of God at all, or at least he did very little, all things being the initiative of God.

Augustine is merely the most influential theologian in history. Much of our present thinking derives not so much from the Bible as it does from doctrinal frameworks built out of Augustinian thinking.

For us today this Augustinian influence is very significant. It seems noble to attribute everything to God, and there is truth in that. But when it comes to our joining with God and His Son in fighting evil, such theology may tie our hands. 1 John 3:8 says “The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Neither Luther nor Calvin had the slightest hint about the existence of deadly viruses, bacteria and tiny parasites. Their theology does not address that issue. If they had they might have, following Augustine, decided that such dangerous entities are the work of God and thus we cannot fight against them.

Of course, we know we must help the sick. We are, in Augustine’s perspective left without a mandate to seek out and destroy dangerous germs. Thus, when Jonathan Edwards sought to use a primitive vaccine against the ravages of small pox among his native American congregation at Stockbridge, the pastors of Massachusetts formed an “anti-vaccination society” against him and declared that if he went ahead with his idea he would be “interfering with Divine Providence.” He went ahead, trying it out on his own wrists. As the pastors had predicted he died of small pox, which is the very most painful way to die. God killed him. That is the Augustinian perspective again.

As a matter of fact, our entire Evangelical theology today is not so much a theology of war against Satan and his works as it is a rationale for seeking to rescue Christians from that battle into “peace of mind” and assurance of salvation.

For some this, then, expands into a globally relevant Gospel emphasizing to men and nations salvation from the penalty of sin without serious and trenchant efforts literally to deliver them from the power of sin and evil.

This partial Gospel underlies the enduring tension between “evangelism and social action.” That tension is essentially the dichotomy between an intellectually framed Gospel of Eternal Salvation and the more Biblical intuition of many sincere Christian leaders (including many missionaries) in groping their way into the full meaning of the Biblical mandate.

That mandate is to restore the glory of God among all peoples by more adequately representing His character. We misrepresent Him if we talk only about getting to heaven. We must also reveal by our actions His concern for the conquest of evil and evil disease. Tiny pathogens right now globally drag down into pain, distorting suffering, and futility far more than half of all the people in the world alive today. True, humans since Calvin have made amazing progress in stamping out recurrent plagues. However, Christians have not been prominent in that effort. Here again we see God using people outside of the Covenant.

Today we must understand more clearly that neither Western Christianity nor Protestantism, nor even Evangelicalism is the only substantial cultural tradition stemming from the Bible. We must recognize a whole lot of derivations. Greeks developed a tradition (Orthodoxy) from the Bible which is different from the Latin (Roman Catholic) derivation, which is different from the Armenian, which is different from the Ethiopian Orthodox. Even more different are the Semitic derivation called Islam, and the Northern European derivations called Protestantism, Mennonite, Evangelicalism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Apostolic, etc.

All of these are substantially Biblical. All of them are flawed. All of them are cultural traditions—by now—whose formalized doctrines do not all fairly represent the Bible.

If we can recognize the Spirit of God at work with Abimilech, the Ninevites, Naaman the Syrian, Cornelius, etc. we need to be able to seek out and build upon such people within any of these flawed traditions, specifically Islam.

If we expect to find believing people in all societies we need to avoid calling just our followers “believers.” The Bible does not put as much emphasis on the extensiveness of our intellectual knowledge as the intensiveness of our heart-faith.

Furthermore, it is now reported for all to know that the incredible impact of the Bible on India, for example, has produced between 14 and 24 million daily Bible reading, believers in Jesus Christ who are still part of their Hindu communities. They do not call themselves Christians.

The same is true in more than one movement to Christ within the world’s Islamic traditions. In Afghanistan it may be common to demand that a spiritually seeking person distinctly recognize the divinity of Christ, thinking that that is the key point. Curiously, the millions of Ismaili Muslims (many in Afghanistan) already believe Jesus was the Son of God. But, since they still call themselves Muslims, we may demand that they learn and acknowledge still more of our “Christian” doctrinal tradition—and begin to call themselves Christian? Do we preach Christ or Christianity? If the latter, it may be the greatest mistake in missions today.

In Pursuit of the Full Gospel

(2004) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 167)

What is inadequate with this statement?

“The over-arching vision within the Frontier Mission Fellowship group of projects is to see all unreached peoples reached with the gospel and the kingdom to come among them. In evangelical terms we can know when a group is reached when there is an indigenous church planting movement among them.”

This paragraph fairly well describes the way we looked at things when we were in the founding period of the FMF. Things are now seen—by me anyway—as both simpler and more complex. We do not intend to give up the priority this statement express for those people groups which have no access to Christ. But we recall that to “reach” a people merely by eliciting a church planting movement among them has never been all that God might want accomplished. To add “and the Kingdom to come among them” is helpful but woefully unspecific.

Today, more than a quarter of a century after our founding, I would think we would speak of the four levels of strategy and purpose rather than one or two:

Level 1: Getting people “saved.”

Level 2: Winning them to the Lordship of Christ and into His family

Level 3: Glorifying God

Level 4: Distinguishing evil from God and fighting “the works of the Devil” as a means of glorifying God, that is, understanding the lordship of Christ as involving us in an all-out war against evil, disease, corruption, a war in which we can expect suffering, hardship and death.

The biggest change of perspective for me is the shift away from a picture of man vs. God, which is a polarization that enabled the commercialization of religion at the time of the Reformation, but before and after as well. The service being sold by religious functionaries in many societies is a service which allows, for a price, a better relationship with God or the gods.

The New Testament picture is much more a picture of two sides, the one, that of the god of this world, the other, God along with man working together to destroy the works of the Devil and reclaim the full glory of God. Currently, the “salvation of man” shoulders out a balanced view of the far more serious cleavage between Satan and God, in which dichotomy man was created to be on God’s side.

In so far as Satan has corrupted man and gained his help in opposing God it is true that man can be on both sides of the struggle. However, it is to Satan’s advantage for the whole conflict to be seen as one of Man vs. God.

A great deal of the conflict between man and man is due to the absence of a clear understanding of the larger conflict between Satan and man and Satan and God. What would immediately and dramatically unify the nations of man would be the sudden exposure of that great enemy Satan. If humans could wake up to the fact that their far greater enemy is rampant in the form of disease germs they might well rally around that common enemy rather than fight each other. In time of war you do not see so much fighting for status, for position, for fame—precisely due to the far greater looming common enemy.

Logically, then, Satan's most strategic influence on humans is lead them blindly to downplay and ridicule or at least misconstrue his very existence—that is, the existence of an intermediate being of awesome power who is an evil opponent of God (and man). Getting human beings to concentrate totally on their own waywardness toward God is very clever because that tactic easily monopolizes their consciousness and diminishes their awareness of the larger struggle. Indeed, the bulk of all theologizing has to do with “getting man right with God” rather than with restoring full glory to God by distinguishing His works from Satan's works. The final achievement of Satan is, indeed, the human delusion that evil is from God, and due to His “mysterious purposes.”

Beyond Transformation: An Ancient Syncretism as a Handicap to a “Public Theology,”

Chicago, American Society of Missiology, June 2005 (*Frontiers in Mission*, 279ff).

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

In mission circles we have harbored for many years a phobia of what we call syncretism. We have assumed syncretism can readily occur if we are not very careful whenever a church movement on a mission field is created and becomes autonomous. Less attention is given to the possibility of syncretism that may have long been part of our own religious tradition. I would like to address the latter.

Introduction

The reader may understand my train of thought better if I begin with some personal references.

In 1996 my first wife was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a somewhat rare form of cancer of the bone marrow. She lived for five more years, albeit with increasing difficulties. During her illness I experienced a crash course in cancer, disease in general, and the entire medical/pharmaceutical industry. Unexpectedly, all this converged to spark some serious new thinking in the area of theology and missiology. I doubt if all this intense thinking would have occurred had my wife’s disease not taken five long years. After marrying again I have been pressed into thinking even more deeply about these issues now that I, too, have been diagnosed with the same disease.

The first thing that came to my attention in this bedeviled period was the fact that almost all medical funds are focused on caring for the dying, curing the sick, and preventing disease—all worthwhile things, of course. However, virtually pennies make their way into efforts to combat and eradicate the causal germs of disease. Indeed, the whole history of medicine is, you might say, the slow and almost reluctant understanding that most diseases are not conditions, but infections. Germs themselves have been discovered fairly recently, speaking historically, and have been recognized only very reluctantly, speaking psychologically. Even today for many it is counter to all common sense that tiny organisms too small to see without a microscope could sicken, much less kill, human beings. Most people in the world still do not believe it.

Furthermore, only very recently have we had strong evidence for the infectious origins of heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and schizophrenia. In other words, it is scary but true that today only a pittance is focused on eradicating the pathogenic origins of disease. By contrast, a billion dollars a day goes to patching up people who have suffered heart failure or stroke. An ominous absence of attention?

The second thing I ran into is the curiously widespread absence in Western Christian circles of a corresponding theology of disease. Of course, until recently (historically speaking), virtually no one has puzzled over this gap in our theology, since Calvin and Luther had no idea of germs. Is it not time to call into question the carry-over today of many of our pre-germ theological assumptions? Those assumptions are what

seem to justify our attributing evil to God, saying again and again, in one way or another, “God in His mysterious ways orchestrates all disease and evil.”

When my wife finally died, sincere Christian friends urged me to recognize that “God knows what He is doing,” as if her premature death was obviously God’s mysterious initiative, not the result of an intelligent—and conquerable?—disease pathogen. Long before she died hundreds of friends assured me they were praying for her. I never said this, but I often wondered, “Is prayer all that can be done?”

Both Yancey’s famous book, *Where is God When it Hurts?* and James Dobson’s book, *When God Doesn’t Make Sense* echo the same point of view: we cannot fully know God’s mysterious purposes. So there would seem to be nothing to do but resign ourselves to unexpected tragedy and evil. In neither book is prayer advised, nor are we urged to deploy efforts to discover and eradicate attacking pathogens (whether viruses, bacteria or parasites) in the Name of Christ, as a logical result of our efforts for the Kingdom and His glory.

I am sure that neither Yancey nor Dobson would question the necessity for society to do something to rid our streets of muggers, attack dogs, and, in California, mountain lions. Intelligent enemies of the kind we can see with the naked eye, we should fight, of course. But apparently, if such dangers are too small to see—even if we can now see them in a microscope—they must be *ipso facto* part of God’s mysterious will! Isn’t this a theological hiatus? While we may try to avoid such pathogens, we have no theology—no reasoned or mandated mission—to *eradicate* them. Over the centuries the church has successfully primed the “world” to do many good things, an entire range of things (from hospitals to ramps for handicapped people). However, if “non-spiritual” efforts at eradication are pursued at all, we have loftily left that for the world to do.

Thus, as I see it, key elements of “the work of the church” are actually being done by the world—it is not a part of the articulated mission of church people. They are off singing hymns and dreaming about heaven. Calvin said nothing about germs, of course, and since his era we have developed and embraced no significant “public theology” in that sphere.

Somewhere along the line I ran into Gregory Boyd’s Intervarsity Press book, *God at War*, and was introduced to the idea that Augustine had incorporated a syncretic element into his thinking that has for sixteen centuries bedeviled Western theology, especially public theology.

Historical Background

However, before looking into the source of Augustine’s alleged syncretism, it may be helpful to generalize about the feasibility of public theology in the case of different Christian traditions in history.

For example, the type of Christianity that flourished among African slaves in America is noted for a hymnology of the next world. Similarly, the enormous, mainly lower-class movement brought into being by D. L. Moody focused for many years on dispensational and eschatological exegesis, not public theology. For slaves, theologizing about how governments should be run or even how civil society might be improved would have been of little practical value. In the same way, the Anabaptists in Reformation times had little or no possibility of effecting changes in this world at the social and political level of the ruling class.

By contrast, Calvin himself pushed through legislation requiring banisters on second-floor balconies in every house within his considerable political influence. Indeed, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, and, of course, Roman Catholics, historically, have all usually participated in—or even dominated—the ruling class.

In the United States the fruits of middle 19th century revivals energized a wide spectrum of social reforms precisely because the very subjects of revival included social and political leaders.

But when in the late 19th century the churches became flooded by a torrent of immigration representing older European Christian traditions (e.g., Presbyterian, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic), the weight of the newcomers tended to water down the earlier (often idealistic) revival distinctives that had so dramatically affected the public domain.

This explains how it is that two remnants of the revival ethos of the 1850s have survived without heavy European immigration: the Mormon and Adventist traditions. To this day they maintain what used to be advanced ideas about nutrition and education. They peeled off from the mainstream and were thus isolated from the influence of the new immigrants with their more traditional European and contrary pre-revival opinions. Thus, in some cultural features, the Mormon and Adventist traditions today are museum pieces of mid-19th century revival Evangelicalism.

Unlike the extensive social activism of the Wesleys and Whitefields of the Great Awakening of the 18th century, and the Charles Finneys of the 19th century revivals, the biggest negative impact on an awareness of public theology was that of D. L. Moody in the early 20th century. Millions of poorer and less-educated people got swept into church life, carrying with them their social distance from college education and the college educated. This made their participation in the professions and civil government very unlikely.

Furthermore, their schools—Moody Bible Institute faculty, for example—determinedly distanced themselves from the cultured proponents of the Social Gospel, emphasizing eschatology instead. They abandoned the school system of the civil order, preferring for more than a half century the newly developed Bible Institute model. However, despite a relatively isolationist social detour of 50 to 90 years, the 157 Bible institutes created in the Moody era gradually became Bible colleges, Christian colleges, and more recently, Christian universities. Only now in just the past few years have people whose background of faith originated in the Moody period begun to move into the professions, public life, Congress, and even the White House staff. This new visibility and influence is creating a renewed (and scary) symbiosis between faith and society, one which at least superficially is more open to public theology than at any time since the mid 19th century.

In this large sphere, then, public theology is now once more *feasible*. Unhappily, however feasible, the *clarity* of the “horizon of the coming Kingdom,” on which George Hunsberger has urged us to keep our eyes fixed, is, as I see it, mainly unimproved or maybe blurred or even invisible. Public theology, in order to become significant, needs to be both *feasible* and *visible*.

The Visibility of the Horizon

Speaking of our present horizon, an understandable range of perspectives has rippled through Western churches and missions over the past two centuries.

Many pastors and missionaries have continued to replace the Biblical agenda with one of the central (somewhat artificial?) issues of the Reformation, namely, mission that simply offers (sells) advice to people on the attractive subject of “how to get to heaven,” or “how to be assured of eternal salvation.”

Other missionaries, with better phraseology, seek to reconcile people into ongoing fellowship with God by “winning people to Christ.”

Still others have earnestly sensed the importance of “Kingdom Mission,” which implies much more (and many different things), especially the reevaluation of culture in the light of Christian perspective.

Recently the word “transformation” has been resurrected from the past and has now become a buzzword. This is good insofar as it helps us rise above a purely otherworldly concept of salvation. But the word itself is weak, implying no specific direction of transformation. The whole of society is, after all, constantly undergoing *transformation*, though not necessarily in the right direction. The word *transformation* is thus not an inherently positive term. A better one might be *restoration*, which is teleological and moves in a certain direction.

There is also the Biblical emphasis on glorifying God in all the earth. This is what we sing about all the time with little concrete reference. “Glorifying God” often sinks to the level of a meaningless, intangible catch phrase that is usually redefined in terms of whatever ministry is being promoted. Is any agency today mainly expounding the glory of God? It is hard to imagine a global educational enterprise focused exclusively on, say, the wonders of God’s Creation. That would be nice, and did indeed happen back in the 1930s–50s in the days of the Moody Institute of Science films.

However, what if the God of whom we speak is, by default, understood to be cruel and destructive, the sponsor of deadly germs and all of the violence in nature? What if God’s reputation, His glory, is severely tarnished and needs to be defended? What if God is thought to be the direct perpetrator of all that happens, good and evil (such that His purposes must be understood to be mysterious)? If these things are true, one can easily imagine the problem they pose for evangelism in the public sphere. Do not all these “ifs” cry out for any activity that could counteract them and more adequately defend and exposit the unmarred, unstained glory of God? And would that not be a valid definition of a larger “public” mission? That sounds reasonable, perhaps, but is still desperately platitudinous.

Are we in an improved position now in the 21st century to get a better handle on what our mission is supposed to be? I think so. I would hope so. To do so may have a lot to do with the difference between Shiite and Sunni Muslims. It may also be a problem made more difficult by Augustine’s flight from Manichaeism.

Another Rosetta Stone

A further factor in the picture: I feel it is important to acknowledge that our Christian Bibles reveal many evidences of having incorporated perspectives from outside the Abrahamic genetic lineage. Furthermore, it is plain that our Bibles display a

progressive unfolding of insight, such that while New Testament insights do not necessarily invalidate Old Testament insights, in some cases they clearly add to them.

Thus, without throwing out the entire OT as having been outmoded and superseded—as Marcion did—it is yet possible to discern significantly new features in the latter parts of the OT and especially in the NT.

To me one of the most striking contrasts between OT and NT insights is what I have playfully called “The Rosetta Stone of Biblical Hermeneutics.” I refer to the contrast (which is quite shocking at first glance) between the earlier 281 *Beyond Transformation: An Ancient Syncretism as a Handicap to a “Public Theology,”* page 4 Chapter 52 and later Biblical accounts of the famous event in which King David went wrong in numbering his people. The earlier account in II Samuel 24:1-25 (NIV) is repeated verbatim in I Chronicles chapter 21 (NIV), with the change of a single word. The earlier account says plainly that “God incited” David to do this wrong. The later version in I Chronicles replaces the word God with the word Satan. Now it says “Satan incited” David to do wrong.

A possible explanation of this seemingly monumental difference may be seen in the similarly paradoxical contrast between the initial straightforward account of Joseph’s being sold into slavery *by his brothers*, and then Joseph’s own declaration later (to his brothers), “*You did not send me to Egypt, God did*” (Genesis 45:8).

In the case of both Joseph and David, one of the two perspectives is that of God’s ultimate sovereignty, the other perspective is that of immediate instrumentality. Joseph’s brothers were the ones who—in the immediate, instrumental sense—sent him into slavery, even though God somehow in His sovereignty was involved. In the case of David, Satan “incited” him to do wrong in the immediate and instrumental sense in I Chronicles, but, in terms of God’s sovereignty, in II Samuel, God did it.

In fact, throughout the OT, the perspective of sovereignty is very common, almost pervasive, and, it would seem, easily misleading. This is where Augustine apparently got stuck. The word *satan* in most of the OT simply means “opponent,” or, “adversary.” God himself, in opposing a false prophet is said to be a “*satan*.” Even in the NT this earlier meaning, which is more typical of the OT, still lingers: when Peter objects to Jesus’ will, Jesus calls Peter an adversary; not Satan, but a *satan*.

Thus, in almost all cases the word *satan* in the OT means opponent or adversary while in most of the NT it almost always refers to an enormously powerful “god of this world,” a specific, personal, intelligent, intermediate being.

In this case, then, the difference between the OT outlook on things and what we find in the NT is decidedly different, and the implications for public theology are massive. Where did the Jews, specifically the NT authors, get this new insight?

Where Augustine Comes In

It seems possible that this new understanding of an opposing intelligent being is an insight picked up by Jewish scholars in captivity in Zoroastrian territory where followers of Zoroaster believed in an evil second god, thus two equal gods, one good and one evil. While the NT did not accept the full Zoroastrian dualism, the NT, as we have seen, is full of references to a Satan as a powerful *intermediate* being, and, in this case, not merely any “adversary” as in the OT.

Significantly, one of the early church traditions, Manichaeism, did retain the full Zoroastrian dualism. One of the substantial differences in the two main branches of Islam may be the continuing influence of Zoroastrianism in the Shiite branch. In the Christian sphere, as late as the latter part of the fourth century, Manichaeism was a strong stream encompassing Augustine in his initial entry into Christianity. It hung on clear into the fifteenth century in the form of the violently destroyed Cathari tradition in southern France.

Thus, while the NT does not reflect the entire Zoroastrian dualism, at least one of the church traditions did. Eventually, Manichaeism was mainly driven out of existence as a heresy. However, according to some modern scholars (such as Gregory Boyd), Augustine's eventual rejection of it swung him all the way over into a neo-Platonic view that imputed all or most Satanic initiatives to God as part of God's "mysterious purposes." The threat of Zoroastrian influences was durably difficult for the Roman church to root out entirely. Augustine's neo-Platonism may be equally durable.

I must pause here, so that I can apologize for appearing to presume the existence of "intermediate beings" such as Satan and his intelligent angelic accomplices. I don't want anyone to feel this idea is forced upon them, or that it is absolutely essential to what else I say. I realize that today in most of Western Christianity the idea of intermediate beings belongs in the category of Santa Claus and Harry Potter. I will say, however, that most of the ever-present discussion down through history of the so-called "problem of evil" seems to have been fueled and prolonged by ignoring or forgetting the possibility of evil, powerful, intermediate beings.

The Impact on Mission Strategy

In any case, the plot thickens, since Augustine is perhaps the most influential theologian in history. What he thought and wrote has gained far more significance than the writings of most other scholars, and both Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin leaned heavily on him. My main concern with this particular element of Augustinian neo-Platonism is that such a perspective tends to lead to a dysfunctional syndrome in which people tend automatically to identify evil with God and thus hesitate to engage in any human all-out mission aimed deliberately at countering evil. Why waste one's time fighting God?

Let's look at two examples of this syndrome. One of my seminary professors of church history told of a mother superior in a thirteenth-century convent who awakened one morning to find something moving under her skin in the center of her forehead. In a few days a worm broke the skin so as to become visible. This dear woman, perhaps with an Augustinian understanding of a micromanaging God, was so confident that the worm had been sent by God that whenever the worm fell out, she quickly replaced it.

A second example, a bit closer to our own day, would be the experience of Jonathan Edwards, who was for seven years exiled for his revivalist mutation to an artificial missionary village in the far west of Massachusetts. The village, Stockbridge, as it was named, was established to teach Indians who were hunters and gatherers how to be farmers (probably not a sound missiological idea). While pastor of that missionary congregation Edwards did some of his most advanced writing, but also was horrified by the annual toll of smallpox on his Indian charges, death by smallpox being possibly the most painful way to die.

However, when he sought to employ the then-recent Turkish idea of cowpox vaccine against smallpox, he faced the stern warning of many Massachusetts pastors that if he sought to destroy smallpox he would be “interfering with Divine Providence” (Clark 1995, 25). Those pastors actually formed an “Anti-vaccination Society.” Theologians and church historians may have conveniently forgotten this incident, but not the medical historians!

Despite some effort, I have not been able to determine what was going on in Edwards’ mind—perhaps someday an Edwardian scholar will discover this—but Edwards decided to try out the vaccine on himself just three months after being called to be president of what today is Princeton University. The experiment did not work. He died of smallpox. Quite likely the pastors concluded that God killed him for interfering with His mysterious workings.

Two centuries earlier neither Luther nor the younger Calvin were aware of the existence of germs—any more than was Augustine a millennium earlier still. However, even today we have no noticeable theology on the status of deadly germs to tell us whether they are of God’s direct initiative or not. No wonder then that thus far we have no substantial missiology of pathogens.

Reverberations Today

Missions have planted hospitals all over the world to deal with the effects of pathogens. There is, however, to my knowledge no Christian institution on the face of the earth that considers its mission to be the destruction of the pathogens themselves, whether those pathogens are viruses like smallpox, bacteria like staphylococcus, or parasites like malaria.

Are we doing any better at facing this attacking evil here in the USA? Here the facts are quite available. The perfectly enormous American medical/pharmaceutical industrial has such a voracious appetite for funds that it has now become the number one reason for bankruptcy in the USA. Each day Americans are called upon to spend over a half billion dollars for prescription drugs alone. They are also squeezed for a full billion dollars a day just to deal with heart and stroke problems. Our military efforts cost pennies by comparison.

Yet all of this is almost entirely “defensive” activity, whether it is caring for the sick or pursuing measures to prevent or avoid disease. These activities are called curative and preventive medicine, both *defensive* in nature. By comparison, perhaps less than 1% of the torrent of money that goes to the medical and pharmaceutical worlds is focused on an offensive action aimed specifically to eradicate the disease pathogens underlying most diseases. Infections are now recently suspected of being the cause of even heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s and schizophrenia (Hooper 1999).

Well, you may be thinking, is this a major matter, and is it really a theological problem? Consider these facts: less than one percent of the deaths in the USA per year are due to murder—7%. Twice as many people die from suicide—1.4%. More than five times as many people die of accidental deaths (mostly automobile accidents due to alcohol addiction)—4%. That’s a total of six percent. However, over 90 percent of Americans die prematurely because of the relentless attack of pathogens—viruses, bacteria, or parasites.

To get this into perspective, on the average ten Americans died every day in the Vietnam War. About the same is happening in Iraq. Ten a day. But in the USA alone just two diseases kill ten times that many? 50 times as many? No, 300 times that many per day. It is as though we are involved in 300 Iraq wars simultaneously because of just two diseases, cancer and cardio-vascular disease. The issue of disease is understandably even much larger in the non-Western world. Part of the problem is that many diseases have until fairly recently been assumed to be conditions, not infections, such as peptic ulcers.

The Larger, “Public” Mission

Thus, it seems clear to me that we have drastically underestimated the mission to which all followers of Jesus are called. You may not be prepared for what I am about to say, but you will have to admit that, if what I suggest turns out to be true, it will mean that current concepts of the Christian mission fall drastically short of what God is asking us to do.

If we can lift away from our thinking Augustine’s reluctance to recognize a large role for Satan, I believe our eyes will suddenly be opened to the pervasive distortions of an intelligent evil throughout all of nature. Many things will begin to appear differently.

The event portrayed by *The Passion* (motion picture), for example, will not mean the total defeat of Satan at that time, but simply a definitive conquest and *the turning point* in a battle against the Satanic campaign to tear down God’s glory. That gruesome event will also clearly exemplify the reality of an unspeakably cruel enemy, not merely a salvation from sin to be greeted with joy and praise.

The saving of souls will no longer be the central strategy of mission, but will in large part be merely a means, the means of the recruitment of human beings into the ongoing war against the distorting work of a formidable evil intelligence utterly opposed to the restoration of all creation and the re-glorification of God.

Glorifying God will become more than a worship exercise. It will require all-out war against all distortion of creation, including the carnivorous state of present-day destructive animal life (that is, all life forms except those like dogs and horses which have been deliberately and intelligently genetically restored). Yes, if wolves have been genetically altered through selective breeding we can begin to understand how that might be done even more efficiently through genesplicing with animals that are still violent. Feeding man-eating tigers grass won’t restore them to a non-carnivorous state, but genesplicing might. Humans going vegetarian may not change their carnivorous nature. Also, fighting pathogens at the molecular level, if possible, would seem to have to be added to limited understandings of the Christian mission.

If the “horizon” of the coming Kingdom is drawn from the Bible, it would appear that the horizon requires the restoration of all animal life from vicious and carnivorous states. Note this is not a case of elevating animals in God’s sight to the level of importance of human beings. It is to elevate neither one but to portray more accurately the nature and purposes of our Father in heaven. Our God is the one who, in Genesis 1, brought into being both animals and humans that were non-carnivorous. The lion must again lie down with the lamb.

Both Hindu and Muslim traditions in some ways treat taking animal life as a sacrament. Our “Christian” slaughterhouses involve little or no spiritual sensitivities. Yet,

even our secular society prohibits bull fights, cockfights, and artificial killing farms for bloodthirsty hunters.

Judging by the immense achievement of early humans 11,000 years ago which developed dogs out of wolves, it is apparent that even the rather blunt instrument of selective breeding can restore the wild to the tame. How much more can genesplicing do? Is the only solution to “kill or cage” the man-eating tiger—and the same for all wild animals as well?

Don’t worry if it looks like we can’t do all this. It is not at all clear that we humans are going to set everything right, eliminate all pathogens, tame all forms of life and usher in the millennium. What we do know that must be done is to work urgently to clear the name of God in matters of evil.

We can do that only by allying ourselves clearly and urgently with God’s kingdom efforts to fight all evil. Jesus said we are to be salt and light in this world and immediately followed those statements with the explanation that people who see our good works (not good words) will glorify our Father in Heaven. That is the primary way we can clarify His nature and glory—which, in turn, is essential to our most potent evangelism.

We may have become specialists in all those verses that speak of human redemption, such as “the angels rejoice when one sinner repents.” We may even misinterpret the NT statement about the gates of hell notwithstanding the offensive onslaught of the kingdom, assuming somehow that our new kingdom will merely be called upon defensively to resist the onslaught of Satan. It is just the opposite. What is needed is for the redeemed to move from survivors to soldiers, whose God is no longer just a Savior but a Commander in Chief.

I know this seems far out. I have been reflecting on the wild violence and suffering throughout nature for many years. At 80 I have had more time to reflect on this than most readers. And do listen to Hindus and Muslims on this point.

I conclude with an interesting quote from a pastor who also has a doctorate in science from MIT:

According to Scripture, the universe was originally good and the glory of God is still evident in it (Rom 1:20). But something else—something frightfully wicked—is evident in it as well. Of their own free will, Satan and other spiritual beings rebelled against God in the primordial past and now abuse their God-given authority over certain aspects of creation. Satan, who holds the power of death (Heb 2:14) exercises a pervasive, structural, diabolic influence to the point that the entire creation is in bondage to decay. The pain-ridden, bloodthirsty, sinister and hostile character of nature should be attributed to Satan and his army, not to God. Jesus’ Earthly ministry reflected the belief that the world had been seized by a hostile, sinister lord. Jesus came to take it back (McLaughlin 2004, 237).

Thus, the question arises: Is a syncretized theology blinding us to the existence and actions of a hideously evil, highly intelligent, intermediate being often described as an agent of masterful deception? It has been said that his greatest achievement is to cover his tracks. If that is true, then we need to look more closely for what other destructive deeds that kind of an intelligent evil may be performing.

Is our mission that broad? If so, then we have drastically underestimated what it should involve. Is it time to unravel a 1,600-year-old syncretism? If we do, that would seem to require a much larger public theology.

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The Bible and Saving Faith

(Seminar, June 1, 2005).

Transcribed from audio CAS1026.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5ebf0dbd2667ae6f525e30c7/1589579197694/The+Bible+and+Saving+Faith.pdf>

When we go back to the Bible we meet both Jesus and the Bible. As I was growing up I somehow got the idea that you could be saved by quote, “accepting Jesus as Savior.” Or that there was such a thing as a quote, “saving knowledge of Christ.” Or that you could, quote, “pray to receive Jesus.”

But there is nothing in the New Testament that would lead to the conclusion that accepting Christ as Savior is saving faith. Even the phrase “saving faith” is dangerously likely to imply the adequacy of a purely intellectual faith. This latter idea led easily to the idea that the New Testament brought a new, easier way to belong to God. Of faith, not works. In the Old Testament people had to obey to be saved. Ugh. In the New Testament they just had to believe. Believe certain doctrines like Jesus died for my sins.

The common view of things is getting people across a line into a circle, a bounded set. The idea is that if you get inside the boundary you go to heaven. If you’re still outside you won’t. Rather we should talk about a centered set. A center to which we are all drawing closer, and I assume only God knows where a boundary is.

I once read a book in which I discovered to my surprise the statement that certain forms of Christianity were further from the Bible than certain forms of Islam. I’m not sure if he was referring to the 14 million Ismailis in Northern Pakistan, who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Later I learned that Mohammed, in insisting that Jesus did not die but was taken directly to heaven, was not denying the deity of Christ but was protecting it from the implication that the Jews had the power to kill him.

I learned that in all the Koran, no one is more highly exalted than Jesus who is presented, unlike Mohammed himself, as having the attributes of divinity, and that the concept of the Trinity refused by Mohammed, was in fact a perverse concept that we ourselves today reject.

Then in my own teaching at Fuller I finally realized that the volcanic blast of the Greek Bible, that is to say, when the Bible finally appeared in the Greek language, which was a very, very widespread language, that sent ripples in all directions. When it invaded the Greek and Latin world it produced Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholic traditions. It’s later impact on the Semitic world was Islam. It’s later impact on the Teutonic world was Protestantism. It’s impact on the Anglo-Saxon world was Anglicanism.

All these traditions are quite defective in many ways if we compare them to the Bible. Islam is, in some ways, more defective, because Mohammed did not have access to the entire Bible, any more than the Christians he dealt with had. But Luther did. But in other

ways, Islam is closer to the Bible than evangelicalism. And unlike the Catholic traditions, Muslims at least don't have a goddess to whom they must pray.

I continue to understand the Bible better. None of the early followers of Jesus called themselves Christians. That term meant something like "Messiah-nut," and was an outsiders' term of derision that only 300 years later became a political term for the Greek and Latin forms of Christianity and by now is claimed by people from Jehovah's Witnesses to Mormons to Christian Science.

What did believers in the New Testament call themselves? It is even possible that in a Semitic language, like Aramaic, that Jesus spoke, or Syriac, or Arabic, they called themselves Muslims. And of course, for 600 years, Christians in the Semitic sphere prayed to Allah, before Mohammed was born. And 30 million pray to Allah today with Allah right there in the Bible.

The Bible also liberated me from the zany idea that at a certain time in history God switched gears, to which a distinct knowledge of Jesus was from that point on, in the entire world, essential to salvation. Now that idea, this insight, in turn liberated me from the idea that Cornelius would not have made it to heaven had Peter not gone to his house and told him about Jesus. By contrast it is now clear that if anyone in the Bible was headed for heaven, Cornelius was. Peter enabled Cornelius to be saved from the assumption that God preferred the Jews and their culture and that to please God you had to become a Jew. He was rescued from that delusion, which of course didn't prevent him from talking to God and God talking to him, as the Bible portrays.

That is, Peter did, as we do today, introduce people to Christ as the Redeemer of all mankind, not just the Jews. Indeed, that he is the only means of salvation, whether in the Old Testament they knew a lot about him or not. Knowing details about Jesus was a marvelous new insight, but it was not itself essential to salvation.

We have to get back to the Bible. We have got to realize that our Christianity has developed a sales talk that isn't really faithful to the Bible, and that many of our traditions are really foreign to the Bible, and that doesn't mean we should throw them all out, but that doesn't mean that some of them are in contrast to the Bible, which is very, very dangerous.

Now, to me, the biggest difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, in some ways, anyway, is not that we now have superior knowledge of the nature of God, by looking at the face of Jesus Christ, and seeing the glory of God. Now that, of course, is spectacular, even if not essential. But the really astounding difference between the Old and New Testaments, is the fact that you have 237 references to Satan in the New Testament and not one in the Old Testament, practically. As a person. The word satan in the Hebrew simply means adversary. God himself is a satan. God was a satan when he opposed a certain prophet. He was an adversary.

But it was not until the New Testament that there was deeper understanding of the fact that there is an intelligent adversary personality which we must fight against. If Satan is the one who perverted and distorted all of nature, and developed the outlandishly violent suffering that goes on every moment of the day in all of nature, with all kinds of creatures killing each other, if this was Satan's activity, along with dragging down Adam into a post-fallen original sin, a new damaged creation, we have monumental obstacles in becoming what God wants us to be. We were born depraved to some extent because of the Fall. Because of Satan's influence.

It isn't just getting saved, getting secure, but it's getting enlisted. When you were listed in the Lamb's Book of Life, you're also enlisted in an armed force, in a military operation. Disease, which is probably the most prominent reality among human beings today, and also among animals—disease is primarily the work of Satan. And we should be deliberately focusing on that.

It makes sense to say that as long as people get to heaven it doesn't matter how soon they die or how badly they suffer. Just so long as they get to heaven. You can easily say that, and that's logical.

But you can't quite say that it doesn't matter to the glory of God. It doesn't affect our understanding of the glory of God for people to be dragged down prematurely into death, into disease, into suffering. We can't say that, can we?

We talk about evangelism and social action as if they are both nice things to do. But we do not normally understand the fact that the very gospel we preach is undermined by the pervasive assumption since Augustine that evil in the world is primarily God's initiative and it's our part to resign ourselves to it and to ask God what his mysterious purposes are, and maybe have to wait until heaven to find them out. That does not empower our gospel at all. Thousand and thousands of marvelous evangelicals live in two worlds. One the church world and one the real world, in which, as a matter of fact, it doesn't make any sense.

Ruth Tucker's recent book, *Walking Away from Faith*, underscores the fact that a very large number of thinking adults really don't respond positively to that kind of a God.

What are we trying to get people inside this line for? Not merely that they should be saved, of course, and that gets them closer and closer to Jesus. Not merely that they would understand the wonders of God himself in the flesh. But that we would become enlisted. That, with Jesus we would be focused on a battle in which we would be involved. We would be following him not only as Savior and Lord, but also as Commander-in-Chief of an army.

The evils and corruptions and diseases and suffering of our time and poverty and injustice, and the terrible things that are happening—these are the work of Satan. We don't fight them because we believe in social action as well as evangelism. We fight them because we do believe in evangelism—of a God who does not identify with those things. If we want to come to the Bible, the Bible talks about “the Son of God appeared for this

purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). The 4 implications of that for mission and for restoring the glory of God in the minds and hearts of the peoples of the world, is very, very prominent, in my opinion.

Book Notes: Life on a Young Planet: The First Three Billion Years of Evolution on Earth

(2005) (*IJFM* 22:3)

http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/22_3_PDFs/102-105Book_Reviews

Ellis, Richard, 2004, *No Turning Back: The Life and Death of Animal Species*, New York: Harper Collins, 448p, ISBN: 0060558032—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

After writing 11 books on forms of life in the sea, Ellis wrote one, *The Empty Sea*, speaking of extinction of certain forms of underwater life. Then he did a book on already extinct sea life. Now he addresses the general question of extinction—of all forms of animal life. This book is a detailed and prodigious effort to give a range of opinions on the massive and mysterious disappearance of a thousand times as many forms of life as now exist. Rather than give answers it commendably stresses the unknowns in the lengthy story of extinctions.

It is clear that the human being has been by far the most destructive force. It is also clear, but mysterious, that present-day animal life is diminutive compared to earlier forms. Take for instance the ammonites with shells six feet across or flying pterosaurs with forty-foot wingspans.

But it does not question the existence of what might readily appear to the quite mysterious factor of violence in nature. It rightly laments the relatively huge attention scholars have given to the *origin* of species compared to their attention to the *demise* thereof.

Davis, James C., 2004, *The Human Story: Our History, From the Stone Age to Today*, New York: Harper Collins, 478p, ISBN: 0060516208—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

This is a truly fascinating book. I know of no other book which as simply and as readably recounts the human story in every part of the globe— not in generalities, but with intriguing detail at every point (yet with only the very most important dates, names and places).

Davis devotes a whole chapter to early Hebrew history, which covers the Biblical period, plus a twenty-page chapter to Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam as world faiths. However, religion is fairly absent in the entire remainder of his story. The index makes no mention of D. L. Moody, Billy Graham, Catholic, Protestant, Thomas Aquinas, etc.

This book admirably and winsomely presents the straight secular view of the human story. He is optimistic about the future due to his upbeat story of the past! Unlike Ellis' book, which covers a billion years, this story describes the last few seconds of that longer story (as the last 9 seconds of a 24-hour day).

Knoll, Andrew H., 2003, *Life on a Young Planet: The First Three Billion Years of Evolution on Earth*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 287p, ISBN: 0691120293—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Knoll is Professor of Natural History at Harvard, and a world class paleontologist. His book's main title needs the subtitle to avoid mis-leading. It does not intend to discuss anything more than life prior to the Cambrian Period that began 543 million years ago. However, he repeatedly acknowledges the perplexities for the concept of Darwinian evolution posed by the suddenness of the Cambrian period. That period between ten and thirty million years in length, even if the latter length, is only 1% of the period of the development of life, and yet is the origin of almost all present forms of life.

He concludes with two pages devoted to comments about science and religion, and the moral power of the latter, and adds, "That these two ways of ways of comprehending should be confused in either form or purpose strikes me as both absurd and unfortunate" (p. 245).

Diamond, Jared, 2005, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, New York: Viking, 598p, ISBN: 0670033375—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Having hit a home run with his earlier study entitled *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Diamond is writing again. One difference is that this book is less boring. Again, his hallmark is his very wide sweep of knowledge which he brings to the plate about the human experience. In *Guns*, the most important thing about the book was the very significant question he raised: "Why and how did the West get ahead of the rest of the world?" In this book he addresses even more lengthily the even more urgent question, "Why do societies fail after flourishing?" This is the other side of the coin. This book and this second question is not more important but is both more fascinating and more urgent.

The book teems with examples of environmentally destructive situations leading to the decline of societies. It is a veritable encyclopedia of what human communities ought not to let happen. Amazing stories of corporate greed fill its pages.

His final, summary chapter is a *tour de force* of dangerous trends such as loss of arable land, toxicity in ground water, etc. But he is "cautiously optimistic." His key point of contrast with past collapsed societies is the fact that today (unlike the past economies he describes) we can be aware of what has gone wrong, and what is going wrong elsewhere, even if at a distance.

Incidentally, the fact that Diamond is a professor of geology demonstrates the fact that many different academic disciplines are being drawn into the conversation about the human future. Now we have human geography! The adjective justifies a very different thrust of study and concern from the earlier type of geography that had little or nothing to do with human beings.

Again, there is, as with his previous book, no aware-ness nor at least no reference to religious or ethical factors pro or con. Academic giants such as Harvard's saintly Christopher Dawson (*Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, *The Dynamics of World History*) are totally missing from the bibliography. I guess geographers don't need to know their history?

Parkin, ed, David, 1985, *The Anthropology of Evil*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 288p, ISBN: 0631154329 —reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Just as some anthropologists make no mention of religion, determinedly seeing it as merely a part of culture, many more—perhaps in order not to appear judgmental—have avoided the word and even the concept of evil.

Parkin, Professor of African Anthropology in the University of London, acknowledges that hiatus. He gathered twelve other anthropologists (one American, the rest British) to address the phenomenon of evil, each from the viewpoint of the non-Western society of which they had special knowledge. He himself contributes one chapter on the perspectives of Muslims and Non-Muslims in coastal Kenya.

The various chapters of the book underscore the near futility of generating any very solid generalizations. Each presents a wildly different situation somewhere in the world. To generalize about concepts of evil is apparently far more difficult than to trace concepts of a high god.

Discussions of Judeo-Christian views, by way of exception to the global kaleidoscope, are to be found in the Editor's own twenty-five page Introduction and in the first chapter entitled "Theological Thoughts about Evil" by Donald Taylor, a graduate student in his same department.

Both of these essays mention the distinctive personification of evil found in the New Testament—an idea not in the Hebrew Bible to anywhere near the same extent. In both cases this significant transition or progress of concept over the centuries is attributed either to the direct influence (while in Babylonian captivity) of "Persian dualism" (i.e. Zoroastrian dualism) or to the indirect influence of that dualism via Manichaean Christianity, which, indeed, took over unscathed the two equal Gods of the Zoroastrians, one good and one evil.

My own comment from here on, excuse me, is that standard Christianity, as exemplified by New Testament documents, appropriated the Hebrew word for *adversary* (*satan*), and, perhaps, with the single exception of Jesus calling Peter a hindrance (*satanas*), used it dozens of times to refer to a powerful "god of this world." Even the Post-Exilic book of 1 Chronicles inserts the word Satan (21:1-25) in the place of the word God in the much earlier (2 Sam 24:1-25) verbatim story of David counting the people. I consider these two passages together to constitute the "Rosetta Stone of Biblical hermeneutics," displaying a new insight into the involvement of Satan, not merely the significance of God's overall sovereignty.

For us today it is very urgent to recognize that Augustine, trying to be different from his earlier Manichaean involvement, unwittingly took over a Neo-Platonic perspective of a god who himself did evil, Satan becoming unemployed. Augustine's enormously influential legacy in Western Christianity (not recognizing Satan's involvement) has led, and still leads, many to wonder why in daily life quite often "God does not make sense."

The missiological significance of this Augustinian "adjustment" is that we even today cannot go all out against evil if it in fact is of God—as when Jonathan Edwards wanted to defeat smallpox with vaccine he was warned by the Massachusetts pastors that he would be "interfering with Divine Providence."

Souder, William, 2000, *A Plague of Frogs: The Horrifying True Story*, New York: Hyperion, 318p, ISBN: 0786863609—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

Here is an impressively thorough, four-year job of a professional newspaper reporter. What details! He leads you almost minute by minute in the lives of those key persons he introduces.

The book is a documentation of the massive, destructive, physical distortions appearing in frogs leading to their worldwide decline and in many cases total extinction. Most of the action in this narrative account takes place at first in northern Minnesota. By the end of the book it includes the entire planet, as well as amphibians and reptiles (not just frogs), since the distortions were that far-flung.

The trouble is that what began as a detective case in a specific locale, and which seemed to be understandable in a fairly short period of time, turns out, disappointingly, to be, even by the end of the book (and the four years), a jumbled mass of multiple factors—parasites, pesticides, increases in ultraviolet light, global warming, etc.

However, facts are facts: 7.5 thousand tons of pesticides are employed on just the corn fields of Minnesota alone (p. 18). And, harvesting of a certain type of frog dropped in ten years from 50 tons annually to less than one ton (p. 278). Unfortunately, the obvious role of pesticides can't even be explored: "Pesticides remain the prime suspect but their source remains off limits to investigators (p. 281)."

The last sentence reminds me of the shocking report of one of *Harpers Magazine* senior reporters, Barbara Ehrenrich, that Monsanto provides the money the American Cancer Society uses to fund their walkathons and runathons, but those funds are given *on the condition* that the ACS not investigate toxic environments as a source of cancer!

Thus, missiologically, we see that the public continues to be deluded on the subject of the evil effects of contaminated ground water, harmful to sensitive wild life but inevitably to humans as well. Curiously the distortions of wild life seem always to begin in the sexual organs, interfering with procreation. It is said that 40% of the salmon going down the Columbia River change gender by the time they get to the ocean. What about gender confused humans? Obviously a society dominated by commercial considerations is not going to grapple with these problems effectively.

Fortey, Richard, 2004, *Earth: An Intimate History*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 444p, ISBN: 0375406263—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

This is another one-word-title book of his, following *Life: A Natural History of Four Billion Years of Life on Earth*. His earlier book relentlessly focused on the development of life forms without a whole lot of reference to the playground on which that development was taking place.

This more recent book fills in the amazing turbulent past of this planet, making you wonder how any kind of life could have survived.

For one thing this book is distinctly more than a jaunt across the globe describing interestingly diverse geography. It does that but at every point is conscious of the long story of millions of years behind what you see. Almost one's first impression is that this planet was not a good place for life to have been spawned. What with enormously destructive volcanic action, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis and asteroidal collisions (barely mentioned), it seems that humans have worked around such events if not tossed like chips in an angry sea.

But it is in fact a travel log. Witty, urbane, highly sophisticated in dialogue, actually exciting to read, it becomes (as with the book on the plague of frogs) difficult to distill systematic knowledge other than repeated recourse to the fundamental movements of plate tectonics. Inductively you must go. I find such books unnecessarily entertaining

page by page but when the reader is not seeking entertainment but insight such books become difficult to mine.

Yet, overall, it is a splendid thing to take into account the long and horrendous history of this planet and not assume that things always used to be this way. The spectacular video, *Our Privileged Planet*, extols the fine tuning of atmosphere and gravitation which enables life as something which was obviously prepared designedly for human life. But it does not acknowledge so readily the stark horror of our planet's geologic past. Surely there was a more pacific planet that could have been chosen! However, if 45 huge asteroidal collisions slammed into the earth in just the last 500 million years was there theological meaning to that? Perhaps this was a repeated extinction of life forms so distorted from God's intent that starting over was the best plan? And then, the destruction that apparently preceded Genesis 1:1 (the result of which is described in 1:2?)—was that a very recent asteroid? The sequence of the following events in Genesis 1 would seem to describe that kind of event. We read of darkness on the entire planet from an enshrouding canopy of dust, the gradual setting of that dust enabling glimmers of light, the eventual appearance (not creation) of the Sun and Moon, etc., all inevitably witnessed in other parts of the planet and later faithfully recorded by Moses.

Regarding the thought just expressed I am very happy to report that after much searching, I discovered virtually in my own cultural backyard amazing support for this pre-Genesis view. See the Reflection on page 106.

Reagan, ed, Michael, 2004, *Reflections on the Nature of God*, Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 160p, ISBN: 1932031693—reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

This has got to be one of the most beautiful books you have ever held in your hands. Most of every page is a beautiful four-color picture of creation. The first part of the book to page 72 portray astronomical pictures that are breathtaking. Page 73 marks a total shift to pictures of sights on earth, mostly animal life—some of the strangest and most exotic pictures you have ever seen.

I have three comments. The title may have been intended to have two quite different meanings. One referring to nature as the handiwork of God. The other allowing nature to help us understand the nature, the attributes and essence of God.

Secondly, why, why did the editors select outer-space shots achieved by state of the art telescopes and yet not employ microscopes, and even electron microscopes, to display the even more incredible beauties and complexities of nature that are too small to be seen by the naked eye?

Thirdly, it is “passing strange” that the total harshness of outer space and the total violence of life on earth are totally ignored. Is that unworthy of mention? Or merely incomprehensible? Or, perhaps, controversial? Why is it so unlikely for modern man to take note of evil, especially of intelligent evil—the kinds of pathogens, for example, that pull down nine out of ten Americans into premature death usually amidst severe suffering? Can we avoid mixing that kind of information into our understanding of the nature of God? If not, what a handicap for our evangelism!

Planetary Events and the Mission of the Church

Donald McClure Lectureship, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

October 3-4, 2005 (*Frontiers in Mission* 286-307).

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5f035c3cc46c79701edfd23b/1594055796725/Frontiers_in_Mission%2B4th%2Bed%2Bcopy.pdf

These three lectures are an honest and exciting new attempt to recognize Genesis 1 as a literal, eye-witness account. This attempt rejects Darwinian random, unguided evolution. It tries to answer questions that have often arisen about the sequence of events in chapter one. It upholds an inerrant Bible. It explains how nature became so violent a scene and how bad things may not always be the “mysterious” will of God but the work of Satan. It refocuses our understanding of Christian mission today, expanding it from an effort to rescue and redeem humanity into a full-blown Biblical effort to restore glory to God by destroying the works of the Devil. “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the Devil (1 Jn 3:8).”

Contents

Part 1: Pre-Edenic Events

A description of widespread scientific thinking regarding the last 500 million years: major life forms reflecting pervasive distortion and violence, punctuated by repeated and massive “extinction events” due to asteroids hitting the earth, all of this preceding Genesis 1:1.

Part 2: Genesis and the New Beginning

Following a massive regional asteroidal collision knocking out most of life in that region, Genesis then picks up the story. As dust settles, light gradually returns, new life is created that is neither violent nor carnivorous - neither animal nor human life. Immediately this new beginning is seduced by Satan and reverts to violence which continues throughout the next 6,000 years, leading up to the present. This relatively short period is one of redemption and advance through storm in spite of constant Satanic attacks of war and pestilence - animal life being distorted and suffering, animals eating animals, humans killing both animals and themselves.

Part 3: The Future that Ought to Be

The recognition of a wartime situation and thus the mobilization of redeemed people in the identification and destruction of deadly diseases as well as deadly delusions that also take life. This is a mission to restore glory to God!

Part 1. Planetary Events: Pre-Edenic

Let's begin by glancing at four significant discoveries, conclusions or inferences humans have made in fairly recent history.

Introduction

As telescopes improved, astronomers discovered that the things they could see out in space appeared to be expanding, racing farther and farther away from each other. This unexpected discovery meant that things must have started out closer and smaller. By tracing the contents of the universe backwards, scientists came to the remarkable conclusion that the entire universe began suddenly about 13.7 billion years ago, exploding from a tiny speck. Some scientists at first ridiculed this idea, calling it derisively, "The Big Bang" theory. Some warned that religious people would assume that this theory confirmed their Biblical ideas about creation.

However, now that this Big Bang theory has become widely accepted, and its derisive name has stuck, the concept itself is still very difficult to imagine. Within even the first second, we are told (this is very hard to believe), the universe exploded into a size larger than our galaxy. Now, our galaxy is so large it takes 100,000 years for light to travel across it going at 186,000 miles per second. Thus, if the universe expanded larger than our galaxy in the first second, the new-born universe would in that case have expanded at least 3,154 billion times faster than the speed of light. This would be true because simple arithmetic tells us there are 3,154 billion seconds in 100,000 years.

Equally breathtaking, but for different reasons, are two more conclusions, first, that the planet Earth came into being about 4.5 billion years ago, and, second, that tiny life forms began to appear about 4 billion years ago.

But, far more unexpected is a fourth double conclusion which is widely accepted as true: 1) the occurrence far more recently—about 500 million years ago—of the curious and astounding Cambrian Explosion of larger life forms, and at the same time, 2) the first appearance of predatory forms of life. This relatively abrupt and massive profusion of larger forms of life is, incidentally, all the more credible because the scientists who have accepted it have done so despite the fact that its suddenness would seem to be so very contrary to the gradualism expected by classical Darwinism. The vicious, predatory aspect will be considered further on.

The vast majority of fossils large enough to be detected appear in the 500-million-year period following the mysterious Cambrian Explosion. For example, about 160 million years ago the thousands of different incredibly destructive dinosaurs came into 100 million years of existence. Then, when the dinosaurs disappeared, about 65 million years ago, mammals came into their own, and of course humans have appeared far more recently. The chart on the next page indicates some of this.

Addressing the Puzzle

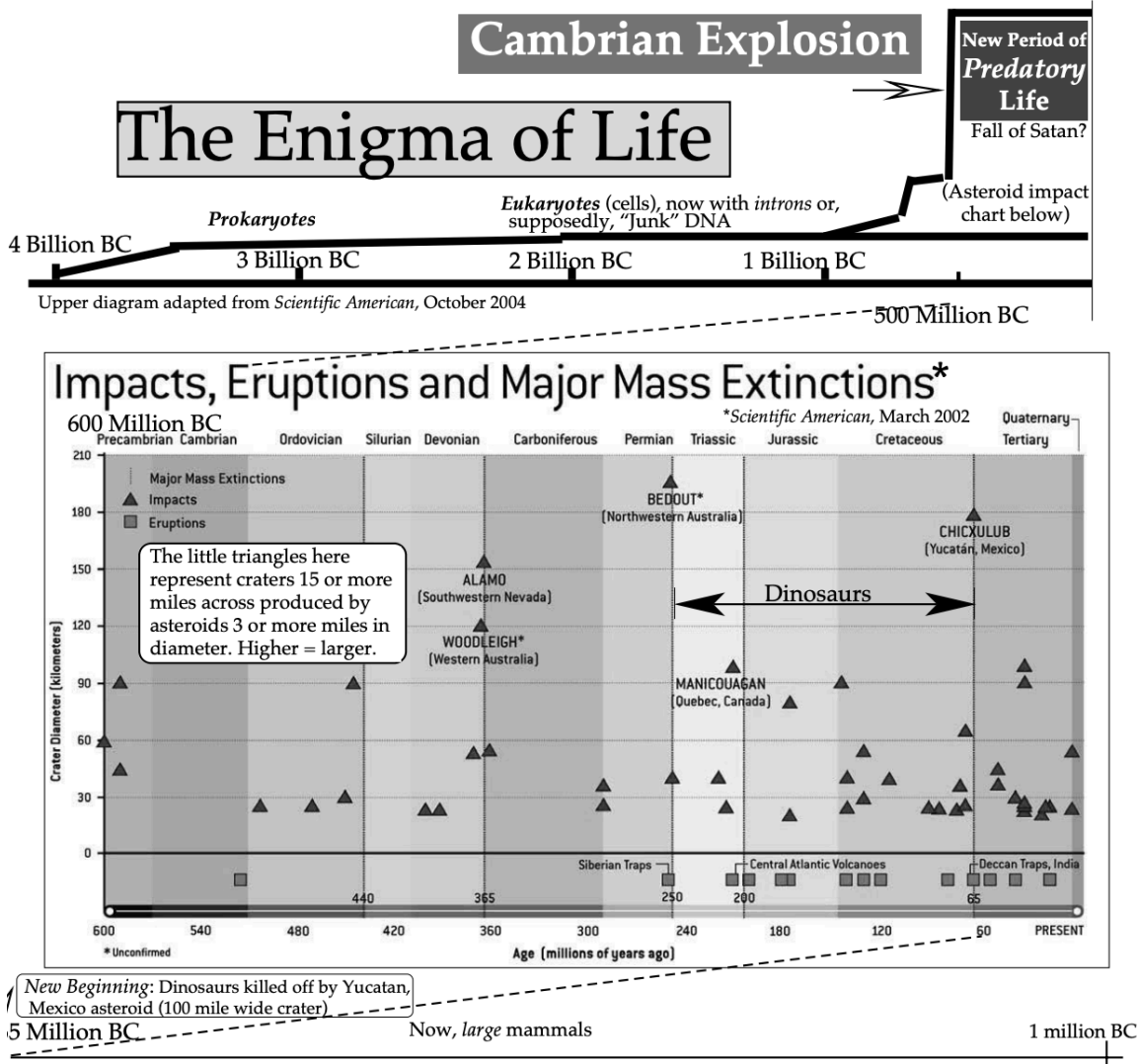
It is clear that few things have been as fascinating, and at the same time as endlessly puzzling, as the results of human inquiry into the far distant past. Today, even children are often as well-acquainted with dinosaurs as I was familiar in my childhood with the ABCs and Columbus sailing the ocean blue.

However, here I am most interested in the human period. While life is thought to have been under development for a total of four billion years, human forms of life are

exceedingly recent, and truly human creatures may only have appeared at the point of selective breeding of plants and animals which is about 11,000 years ago. On this see further below.

If the entire 4 billion-year period of the development of life were squashed into a 24-hour day, three hours would account for the last 500 million years, while the human period would become merely the last quarter of a second. But 500 million years itself is

THE CHART ON THE NEXT PAGE contains one diagram at the top which is redrawn from *Scientific American*. It displays the 4 billion period many have concluded is the period of the development of life. The next one down portrays only the most recent 600 million years, also from *Scientific American*. You can see the small dotted line running from the near right hand of the first to the near left of the second to show the portion of the first that is expanded for closer observation. Other dotted lines further below do similar things.



43,000 times as long as the human period. Even if just the last 500 million years is reduced to 24 hours, the human period is still only the last 2 seconds.

Interestingly, far more bones and shells and other evidences of earth's history have been uncovered in the past 20 years than ever before. In fact, digging up bones and ancient artifacts has become a global activity of scholars, competing with looters and falsifiers.

Cave drawings and arrowheads tell us a great deal about the impressive intelligence of forms of life earlier than humans. We are well acquainted, for example, with the capabilities of the Neanderthals, who are nevertheless no longer considered ancestors of humans due to recent DNA testing.

The Appearance of Humans

However, nothing that was accomplished by earlier forms of life is as impressive as evidences beginning about 11,000 years ago of the activity of deliberate, determined, patient, intelligent *selective breeding* of both plants and animals.

Worldwide, today, what we usually eat without appropriate gratitude, rice, corn, wheat, potatoes, are all genetically altered plants which give mute witness to the fact that fairly recently some very ingenious forms of life—working with apparently unique intelligence—worked for lengthy periods of time to achieve amazingly extensive modification of several plants that were originally virtually inedible, but which are now quite useful for human consumption.

Also about 11,000 years ago, these same new uniquely intelligent forms of life began carefully and skillfully breeding wolves into the 235 different species of dogs which today in multiple ways are friendly benefactors of human beings.

Some scholars are now thinking that the appearance of this kind of radically superior intelligence is more significant than the study of fossil bones in determining the time of the first appearance of true humans. Thus, in this light, I want to suggest two ideas for discussion purposes: 1) that the first appearance of humans can be detected from the first evidence of the intelligence necessary for the genetic alteration of plants and animals, and 2) that all of this may have occurred before Adam.

Huge but Local Destruction

Not widely understood as yet is the possibility that only about six thousand years ago some of these very intelligent human beings in various parts of the earth may have heard an enormous “boom” from an impacting asteroid from outer space. Although not as large as some earlier impacts, this one could have been large enough to have blotted out all life in a fairly large region of the earth, accompanied by a huge “boom” of sound flashing past humans further away at the speed of sound (about 750 miles per hour), an event leaving only a fleeting impression. More easily remembered is what would likely have happened next, namely, the almost immediate appearance of darkening dust in the atmosphere producing a shroud of thick and total darkness holding the entire earth in its grip, something humans living in every part of the globe would not easily forget even if they lived too far away to hear the initial boom.

It would then take time for this dark encompassing cloud of thick dust to settle. First it would thin out enough for light to come through dimly - just enough to tell day from night. Then the light would get brighter as time went on. Finally, the sun, the moon and later the stars would again become visible—the sequence we read in Genesis, chapter one. This is not a creation sequence but a recovery sequence.

I hasten to add that this is all supposition. However, if truly modern, highly intelligent humans did first appear 11,000 years ago, and if some time after that a sizable asteroid did hit our planet, it would certainly seem possible for the human beings surviving to have passed down an oral tradition about that event or recalled at least that sequence of events in its aftermath.

What about Asteroids?

Before thinking further about the possibility of oral tradition of this kind, it may be helpful to understand the background of my supposition that a major asteroidal collision could have occurred fairly recently in our planetary history.

All this actually began with our landing on the moon. When that happened, all of a sudden all those visible pock marks on the face of the moon - which had always been assumed to be volcanic craters - turned out to be impact craters! Absolutely stunned,

geologists began a mad scramble to track down evidences of similar impacts on earth, evidences which, of course, are far more difficult to find on earth due to the erosion of wind and rain which are completely absent on the moon.

Now, after 30 years of geological pursuit, we are being offered credible evidence of literally thousands of asteroidal impacts on the earth, both large and small. The vast majority of these impacts are small and, in fact, millions of small asteroids fortunately burn up before actually hitting the earth. This rain of objects from outer space is a process that continues unabated until today, their ashes settling down to earth at the rate of an estimated 40 tons a day.

Of special concern in this scenario is the fact that quite a few asteroids colliding with the earth in the distant past have been large enough to gouge huge craters and devastate a wide area of the earth miles away, maybe hundreds of miles, beyond the crater itself. The evidence of one meteor that hit only 50,000 years ago in the arid, rainless desert in Arizona is still an awesome, gaping hole a breath-taking mile across and a quarter of a mile deep.

But, let's ignore the thousands of smaller objects from outer space in the last 600 million years, and even ignore all those thousands of asteroids that created craters less than an enormous 15 miles across. At this date forty-five craters 15 miles or larger have been found. These much larger asteroidal collisions consequently killed off far more life on earth. The largest crater so far discovered - in northwestern Australia - is 135 miles in diameter, and is estimated to have killed 97% of all life on the entire planet. A slightly smaller one, 65 million years ago, created a crater only 100 miles across. However, the latter is the one credited with killing off all dinosaurs in all parts of the planet.

Although none of even these larger asteroids extinguished all of life, it seems evident that life on earth has had drastic ups and downs due to asteroids alone—without mentioning volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, etc., almost all of such events occurring prior to the appearance of human life.

Note that in the case of virtually all asteroidal collisions of any great magnitude, a familiar sequence would have unfolded as mentioned earlier: thick darkness, later, dim light half of the day, then, finally, rays of light from the directly observed sun, moon and stars, the very sequence described in Genesis.

Paleontologists have observed, interestingly, that the aftermath of such explosive “extinction events” has often been the occasion for the fairly abrupt emergence of quite different forms of plant and animal life. For example, the huge impact that extinguished the entire spectrum of thousands of different forms of dinosaur life was followed by the era of mammals, when their size zoomed from two pounds or less, to a ton or more.

The 45 largest asteroidal collisions mentioned are pegged at dates prior to the human period, that is, before there were humans in existence to witness their effects and create oral tradition about them. Thus, all we can go by are the evidences in the rims of their craters of certain things like crystallized iodine.

Record of a Recent Collision?

However, suppose there was a smaller collision relatively recently—after humans appeared on the scene—that is, in the last 11,000 years. In that case would we not expect surviving humans living at a distance to include a recollection of such an event in their oral traditions?

Let's look into this. In the last few years following the Moon landing it certainly has begun to seem possible that the collision of a fairly recent asteroid might have wiped out a large, regional sector of human life—such as the area of the Fertile Crescent, or just the Dead Sea—and that surviving humans outside that area could have noticed the characteristic sequence of events without understanding exactly what had happened. They might have only observed the thick darkness, the dim but increasing light, the final appearance of the Sun, Moon, and then the stars. Could such recollections have passed down, say, in oral tradition, down through Egyptian archives to Moses? *And, does the sequence of events described in the first chapter of Genesis describe this sort of sequence?*

If Genesis 1 describes such a train of events, then we would not expect the humans who created the Genesis narrative to be speaking of cosmological events that were only understood much later in the human story. Rather, logically, we would expect Genesis 1:1 to describe not the initial creation of the entire universe, but a much more recent new beginning, in merely a region of the earth (the “known world” of the people of that time). If there were such a collision, would not the next thing be the replenishment of animal and human life in that region?

To accept such a supposition would instantly require certain radical adjustments of popular exegesis, because it would mean the first few chapters of Genesis were entirely local events.

What adjustments? First, the Gen. 1:1 phrase, “In the beginning God” would have to be translatable as, “At the time God began.” Second, the Hebrew word “bara” would have to be able to mean “recreate” not just “create” (it does not mean “create out of nothing”). Thirdly, the familiar phrase, “formless and void” from the Hebrew phrase *tohu wabohu* would have to mean something like “destroyed and desolate.” The single sentence in Hebrew running through Gen. 1:1, and 1:2, would then come out something like, “Things (in a regional area) were quite destroyed and desolate when God began to recreate...”

Even more obvious would be the need to understand the whole of early Genesis as talking about events that were universally significant, yet geographically local. This would include the idea of a local flood, which has been a tolerated view in the Wheaton College faculty as far back as the 1950s. Even the “table of nations” in Genesis 11 would have to refer to predominantly Middle Eastern peoples, not Chinese, East Indians, or Eskimos.

Furthermore, it would be helpful if we were aware of at least some biblical scholars who have recognized all of these possibilities, even as it would be helpful to discover that these ideas (all but the asteroids) were more widely held some years ago.

Finally, speaking of nice things, today the most avid supporters of a world only six thousand years old are an outspoken group of so-called “Young Earth” Evangelicals. Can we listen to Merrill F. Unger? He was a conservative and respected Dallas Theological Seminary professor, head of the Department of OT studies. He expressed pre-Genesis 1 views in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* (the official journal of the seminary) in 1958, as well as later in his very widely used Unger's Bible Handbook (500,000 in print, in 24 editions), published by the press at the Moody Bible Institute. In his *Handbook* he says,

“In the beginning.” These opening words of Genesis have been commonly assumed to refer to the original creation of the earth and the universe, and well they might. But the question is asked, May they not envision a *relative* beginning as to God’s creative activity of the earth in a much later period in preparation for earth’s late-comer man? ... If “In the beginning” is a relative beginning with regard to the late-comer man, then “created” does not refer to God’s activity in bringing the earth into being *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), but His refashioning the earth and its sidereal heavens at a much later period in geological history. (Italics his)

Unger goes on to state that it is not grammatically possible to put the old earth between verses 1 and 2.

In view of these comments from Dallas Seminary’s Unger, I feel emboldened to suggest that there is apparently no insurmountable exegetical obstacle to the suppositions I have mentioned for the understanding of the text. In fact, we should perhaps feel ashamed that many of us have tried for so long anachronistically to read into the literary record of Genesis modern cosmological information about the origin of a universe and a planet, information totally unknown at the time of the writing or oral formulation of Genesis.

Those who might oppose this view—the “Young Earth” group—are highly visible within the homeschooling movement. Ronald Numbers has pointed out in his magisterial book, *Creationism: the Evolution of Creation Science*, that the Young Earth view of an earth only 6,000 years old was derived in the last seventy years from the emergence within Evangelicalism of a once mainly Seventh-Day Adventist understanding of Genesis. This relatively recent accrual from Adventism is not strengthened by the fact that even earlier, C. I. Scofield clearly presented the idea of the vast geologic ages occurring prior to the six days of Genesis 1 (in a “gap” between 1:1 and 1:2) in his *Scofield Reference Bible*, which was to become the most widely used study Bible of all time. Scofield, furthermore was backed by a list of prominent scholars on the title page of his famous study bible, including Moody Bible Institute faculty.

In any case, followers of the “Young Earth” perspective can at least take comfort in the fact that the interpretation I have described here does not conflict with, but would tend to substantiate not an awesomely ancient, but recent and quite literal (“eye-witness”) understanding of the events of Genesis.

The Ominous Presence of Evil

This entire scenario, however, simply lays the groundwork for an element in the story that is highly crucial to our concept of Christian mission, and which explains my personal interest in this whole subject.

Note the striking contrast between the type of animal life apparently inhabiting “the vast geologic ages,” being uncovered by paleontologists, and the distinctly non-carnivorous kind of life described in Genesis 1:29-30. By contrast, the thousands of creatures whose bones are being dug up from earlier earth history are for the most part outrageously vicious. This same frightful viciousness is also seen in the pervasive cannibalism of virtually all early evidences of humanity.

Furthermore, it is curious and highly significant that life-destroying forms of life, we are told by paleontologists today, first appeared suddenly at the time of the enigmatic

“Cambrian Explosion” we have already mentioned. Of course, 500 million years ago may seem very distant, although tiny forms of life may have appeared as much as 4 billion years ago, that is, eight times earlier. The point is, that for most of that very distant past, life forms were too small to have left fossil records. However, just prior to the Cambrian event (in the Ediacaran period) there are evidences of animal life that was radially symmetrical, like starfish, as well as bi-polar forms of life with a front and a back and four legs.

Still begging for interpretation is the evidence that these pre-Cambrian forms of life did not possess protective shells or quills, nor the kind of sharp teeth characteristic of predatory life. Thus, here is a theological question: at this point seven eighths of the way along in the development of life, when predatory forms of life first appeared, *did some of the intermediate beings rebel and begin to distort nature? Are these events evidence of what might be meant by Satan “falling?”*

The most thorough contemporary, Biblical discussion I know of referring to angels good and bad being involved in creation and its distortion is an essay by Robert C. Newman, a professor at the Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, PA. It is entitled, “Rumors of Angels: Using ID to Detect Malevolent Spiritual Agents,” and appears in a series of the Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute (report #56, 2005, www.ibri.org)

In any case, as noted, the kinds of life we see recreated in Genesis 1 are clearly stated to be non-carnivorous. Even Adam and Eve are described as non-carnivorous. Nevertheless some people hold the idea that the animal life appearing in Genesis 1 must be the animal life reflected in all the old bones of vicious animals. This in itself seems difficult to maintain, for that could then only mean that all of these incredibly old bones come from animals which would have had to appear after Adam, and have been distorted as a result of Adam’s fall rather than Satan’s much earlier fall. That in turn would mean that that enormous complexity would have both appeared and mainly disappeared very recently within just the brief period (the “two seconds”) of human life on earth. Existing life forms are very small in number compared to those now extinct.

In summary, in case Genesis 1 does happen to be an accurate eye-witness account of conditions of the earth following a massive but regional asteroidal collision, the oral history of those events would have had to have been preserved by unaffected humans outside the area.

Remember that the new creation of animal and human life as described in Genesis is a significantly different type of life. Adam, we are told, is the type of human being distinctively created “in the image of God.” That could at least mean “as God intended,” that is, for example, non-carnivorous. It is not until later in Genesis that Adam’s lineage is described as reverting to carnivorous behavior and a gradually shorter life span, following his fall and the breakdown of the Edenic New Beginning, the reversion logically being hastened by interbreeding with the previously distorted and depraved forms of vicious carnivorous human life elsewhere on the planet.

In any case, the clear implication is that the rampant, destructive violence observable all throughout nature was and is a perversion of God’s original intent and design. Eden, in that light, would then be a New Beginning which was a re-creation of undistorted life, just as Isaiah 11 describes in the end times the lion lying down with the lamb in the ultimate triumph of God’s intent—once again *in the form of non-carnivorous and non-violent life*.

In other words, the immense complexity and duration of what is perceived from thousands of old bones (and many more thousands of no-longer-existing forms of life) does not easily fit into the few short years between Adam and today. It does not seem to fit into the first chapter of Genesis. It very easily fits into a period prior to Genesis 1:1.

The Question of the Process of Creation

Now that we have plunged into the concept of God “creating” or “recreating” life, a small digression may be in order. The paleontologists are telling us that the development life on earth took an exceedingly long time. On the one hand, the enormous, sudden changes at the time of the Cambrian Explosion do not readily correspond to the gradual process envisioned by Darwin. But, neither does that sort of lengthy process seem to be the work of what some people think of as an infinitely wise and powerful wand-waving Supreme Deity—unless, for example, that Supreme Being was working through finite intermediate beings who did their work in a lengthy learning process.

But, are there intermediate beings? Are some of them small enough or smart enough to tamper directly with DNA as modern humans are beginning to do? If there are such beings, it would seem quite reasonable for them to have been involved in a lengthy learning curve. We can then imagine that their final achievement of cellular development and the consequent potential for large animals might have been the occasion of one of the key angelic leaders deciding to turn against God and systematically sabotage His creation. Here again note Robert Newman’s essay noted earlier,

Organisms which possess incredible complexity beyond what natural selection could “design” from the available offerings of chance, and which also seem to be clearly malevolent, might well be the work of malevolent spirit beings.

Interestingly, the evolution of the American automobile throughout the twentieth century may provide an example of an “evolution” which is actually the example of the work of finite beings. We see mostly continuity all along from model to model with no missing links, although, for example, at one point most cars got smaller. At another point some cars appeared with engines in the back. More recently, SUVs loomed into the picture, etc.

At every point along the way, however, *the changes that took place with automobiles were due not to random mutations but to the meticulous involvement of thousands of intelligent engineers.* The obviously necessary role of those human engineers could, it would seem, be parallel to the role of intermediate beings (good and bad) in the evolution (and distortion) of life forms. This perspective is radically different from the currently popular concept of Darwinian “unguided evolution.”

One question may come up. If loyal angelic beings took millions of years to develop life (all along under God’s guidance) how then could the various forms of life mentioned in Genesis 1 be re-created in six days, even if those periods of time were longer than 24 hours?

I don’t see this as a serious problem. To me this is like assuming that although swarms of highly intelligent automotive engineers took an entire century to go from a Model T to a Lincoln Continental, that with that backlog of experience they could not readily put out new models each year. But they do. Thus, obviously, if loyal intermediate beings (angels) had been steadily learning about genetics, developing a variety of life

forms over a very long period, they would certainly have had no problem in re-creating non-carnivorous life forms in a very short period.

In other words there does not seem to be any stubborn obstacle to understanding Genesis to harmonize with current scientific knowledge of the earth, and to accepting a version of both the so-called “Old Earth” scenario as well as the “Young Earth” concept.

An Intelligent Counterforce?

It would seem clear that one value of understanding the great ages of the earth as coming before Genesis 1:1 is the lack of conflict with the concept of an old earth. Another value, that to me is even more important, is the significance of recognizing the full extent of the distortion of nature by an active, intelligent counterforce. This, in turn, defines the need for those defending God’s glory today to deal seriously with the continuous worldwide assault by the microbiological world on both animal and human life.

This kind of recognition—this apparently belated insight—would seem to be essential to any truly serious mobilization of believers to fight back against the origins of disease. This, in turn, then defines an appreciably larger concept of mission, and is my primary concern.

Therefore, unless and until that recognition of a larger concept of mission is more widespread, we are confined and restricted to a “gospel” which concentrates almost solely on individuals gaining assurance about getting into the next world and merely staying out of trouble while spreading that gospel until then. In this common understanding of the Christian life there is no war going on. Worse still, many thinking people are honestly wondering again and again how a loving and all-powerful God can both create, and put up with, or condone, the pervasive violence and suffering and sickness in this world. Furthermore such people do not understand that in this war God is expecting our help.

In other words, what puzzles both theologians and scientists regarding the specific process of the creation of life is made significantly more understandable by taking into account that additional strange factor, namely, the evidence of a destructive counterforce to whatever might seem to be beautiful and good.

After all, one of the least mentioned and yet most unavoidable characteristics of nature is the absolutely pervasive evidence of a counterforce distorting, degrading, and destroying all that is good, pitting animal against animal and human against human, and in addition pulling down all forms of animal and human life by means of a virtual hurricane of deadly viruses, bacteria, and ominously clever parasites.

Curiously, those who commendably urge the recognition of Intelligent Design in nature do not usually offer comment on the resulting problem of people having to assume that violence in nature is due to the work of God rather than Satan. As a Harvard professor in a TIME Magazine cover story said that if Intelligent Design is true, “What kind of a divine sadist would create a parasite that would blind millions of people?”

Similarly, even Darwin pondered the paradox of an omnipotent God of love and the apparently gratuitous death of his little niece, the premature death of his father, and the rampant violence and suffering throughout the nature he knew so well. His resulting proposal of a purely natural, and random evolution was in one sense his method of absolving God of blame for the evident evil in nature. It might have been easier for him

had he seriously considered the existence of the factor of intelligent evil opposition to God. Newman, in his mentioned essay, quotes Darwin as saying,

What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and horribly cruel works of nature!

We can plainly see the evidence of virulent evil in the earliest remains of hominids, humanoids, or even modern humans who perversely and yet pervasively display extreme cruelty and homicidal behavior - the sort of thing bluntly described in Genesis. We also see evil in the omnipresent evidence of destructive disease. If divine intent is reflected in the re-creation that may be described in Genesis, as well as the final situation described in Isa. 6 and 11 (in which the lion will lie down with the lamb), *we can readily recognize that nature-as-we-know-it is clearly not the way a loving, powerful divine being intended it.*

However, if dangerous wolves can be altered genetically through selective breeding over a lengthy period of time, so, you would think, could man-eating tigers. That procedure would seem to be better than either of the two main alternatives we have at present - either to "kill or cage." I have read that there are only 5,000 tigers remaining in the wild, while in the U.S. as temporary pets there are another 10,000. I say temporary because treating wolves or tigers in a friendly way does not change their DNA. Nor, apparently, can either animals or humans become herbivorous just by being fed plant life.

The often overlooked genetic distortion that has already happened would seem clearly to be a more serious problem than can be coped with either through behavioral or nutritional modification. Patient, multigenerational selective breeding can make a difference. But that is a process which is inherently clumsy compared to gene splicing. "Original sin" in this light could be the result of genetic distortions re-inherited in the reversion following Eden. This may be why despite "the power of the Gospel to transform lives" humans still have seemingly indelible inclinations to sin, as Paul testifies in Romans 7.

Restoration in the Teeth of Opposition?

The thinking of the University of Chicago anthropologist, Robert Redfield enters here. He puzzled for years over the gradual but substantial changes that have often taken place in human society over the centuries. He first wrote the book, *The Village That Chose Progress*, which tussles with what really happens when an indigenous, tribal society encounters the modern world. (He did not think the changes were all that good.) Later, in a lectureship at Cornell University, he raised a lot of eyebrows and opposition in a famous speech entitled, "The Transformation of Ethical Judgment," which is now the final chapter in his book, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations*. In this lecture he asked what was happening when a young chieftain in a tribe of Plains Indians in the USA summarily abolished human sacrifice.

I realize it is not politically correct to assume anything like absolute historical progress in human ethical judgment. As I say, Redfield ran into a lot of flack. Many other reasons, therefore, are commonly adduced for the significant decrease of widow burnings in India and the near total amnesia in China today regarding the binding and grotesque distortion of little girls' feet. Also, there is the legendary ingenuity of the Chinese in human torture that is no longer a national boast.

Many serious books have been written about the puzzle of seeming progress in human society. Years ago the missionary statesman, Frank Laubach, wrote *The World Is Learning Compassion*. One fairly recent book wrestling with the question of historical progress would be Jared Diamond's very different ruminations about the mysterious rise of Western civilization in his *Guns, Germs and Steel*.

Could it be that human progress in knowledge of nature and technology has also been accompanied by a small but significant process due to "selective breeding," a process that has in fact genetically restored some of humans' pre-fall nature, varying from region to region? In the USA we have had our Jimmy Jones and his slaughter in Guyana, but can we imagine a U.S. mayor becoming a Pol Pot, or leading the way to chop off the hands of thousands of children as in Sierra Leone? Is the difference genetic or just cultural?

In any case, you would think that the constant attack of deadly disease germs, although their existence surfaced after Calvin died, would be enough to force us to wonder about an intelligent counterforce to the intent of the divine.

Unfortunately, the word Satan often swims in the same world as Santa Claus, the *Tooth Fairy*, and *Harry Potter*. Thus, if there is in active existence a frighteningly intelligent counterforce to divine intent, modern Christians don't usually think or talk much about that possibility. Such thoughts are almost never heard in church or seminary classes.

Paradoxically, once you emerge from church into the rest of the world, turn on the TV or a computer game, go see a movie, open a newspaper or visit a prison, the pervasive theme of good versus evil fairly jumps out at you. Embarrassingly, the world would seem to be doing more of the fighting against evil than what is constituted by overtly Christian efforts. Could it be that the Kingdom of God is being more advanced by the indirect influence of the Christian movement on the world than by the formal Christian churches and organizations of our time?

In contrast to the intuitions of "the world," the Western Christian tradition has often tended to concentrate on the next world, and, for this world, on merely the obligation to maintain good behavior. This has been especially true since the Reformation's massive over-emphasis on simply how to get to heaven.

In current Evangelical thinking there would not seem to be any all-out or all-encompassing battle to be fought, nothing that would make the calling of every believer, lay or clergy, to be a participant in that battle.

The key issue, as I see it, is the difference between 1) seeing our mission simply that of resolving a tension between man and God and 2) seeing our mission as clarifying the tension between God-plus-redeemed-humans and the evil that is often blamed on God, that is, seeing redeemed humanity in a wartime kingdom as an agent on God's side doing whatever can glorify Him - not merely concerned to recruit more people for a peacetime kingdom. This concept of the kingdom as being not a holding tank of saved souls but a wartime involvement of every believer is the concept we will pursue in the second and third lectures. ■

Part 2. Planetary Events: the New Beginning

As we have already seen in the previous presentation, the origin of modern humans would seem to have been only 11 thousand years ago. That is, if we go by the

first appearance of high intelligence—the first appearance of the intelligence it takes to genetically alter plants and animals by selective breeding. In any case, as I earlier explained, 11,000 years is an exceedingly short time in the light of a universe which is said to be about 13.7 billion years old, a planet 4.5 billion years old, the conjectured 4-billion-year earliest appearance of life, or even the last half billion years (the last 500 million years since the Cambrian Explosion).

You also will recall that, if we compare the human period to just the last 500 million years, the human period represents only the last two seconds in a 24-hour day.

However, our knowledge about the last 11 thousand years is perfectly enormous compared to what we know about earlier events. These last two seconds are the period of human existence. This is the period of human consciousness. This is the period we must try to understand. This is the period dealt with in the Bible.

I continue, as before, with the conjectural scenario which has the entire “old earth” falling before Genesis 1:1. That perspective makes relatively recent all of the events of Genesis. According to this scenario Genesis 1:1 in effect announces not “the beginning” but a very significant New Beginning.

It would be possible to suggest that Genesis 1:1 describes only one of many new beginnings, since each of the many major, previous asteroidal collisions occasioned new beginnings of life, often quite different forms of life. It is not necessary to understand those many extinction events as divine punishments to understand them at least as partial or almost complete new beginnings of life on earth.

Beyond chapter one in the book of Genesis there are other new beginnings. We read of the selectivity involved in the choice of Noah whose three sons formed a new lineage in at least one region of the earth. Then, we read of Abraham being selected, Isaac instead of Ishmael, and Jacob instead of Esau. We see Moses being chosen, and then Joshua. We see the Southern Kingdom emerging instead of “all Israel.” We see just a partial remnant returning from Babylon, two thirds remaining in Babylon, only one third returning to the land of their fathers. We see selectivity in the case of Galilee-of-the-Gentiles rather than Jerusalem, Nazareth, of all places, the selection of Mary.

Such *selectivity* has sometimes been interpreted as exclusivity. Thus, we are surprised when Abraham is judged immoral by a man, Abimelech, who was completely outside of the Abrahamic Covenant. It would seem that the Bible certainly reports accurately and critically on a nation and its story, a story which is not altogether admirable. But, in reality, much of the Bible describes almost exaggeratedly-objectionable behavior. Thus, the British historian, Herbert Butterfield, remarked that the uniqueness of the story of the Jewish people is not their history but their historiography. Apparently selection has had as much or more to do with reporting to posterity and other nations as it has been a matter of special favor.

Furthermore, the Bible obviously does not contain all the things God has said and done among all of the nations of the world. We don't always remember that fact. It is common for Christians to assume that God's selectivity has really been intended to be exclusivity: that God spoke to and through the Jewish tradition and to and through none other. Thus, again, echoing Butterfield, we can, in the case of the Jewish people, and their Bible, understand that it is the *nature of the record* not the *content of the record* that is the most unique.

In other words, the amazing and unique *literary* record we have in the Bible, despite its admirable honesty and self-criticism, does not on every page talk about human events that were unique or universal. With surprising accuracy it does describes people and their experiences and their understanding of things in the situation in which they found themselves.

For example, the Biblical authors speak of the “ends of the earth”—which to them meant “to the ends of the flat earth plain of the Fertile Crescent as bounded by the mountains of Afghanistan and the mountains of Turkey”—which was their known world. It did not mean, as we might think, anachronistically, the far reaches of the planet. Similarly, when the early chapters of Genesis speak of “the whole earth” they are not very likely referring to the entire planet, which was a reality not yet understood.

When Genesis speaks of Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the specific information about where they and their lineages lived is clearly in the middle east. The Biblical text apparently does not intend to refer to the Chinese. The entire reality of which Genesis speaks we would at least initially assume made sense to the authors of oral tradition and later to Moses, all of whom, however, were very likely unaware of the true extent of the planet in that era.

Thus, we gain from Gen 1:29-30 the idea that the Edenic New Beginning in its initial stage consisted of the emergence, in a single region, of animals and humans which were strikingly different from the past, being explicitly non-carnivorous. This kind of nonpredatory life, then, would seem be what had been intended earlier (even though consistently distorted) during the 500 million year period following the Cambrian Explosion.

This particular, Genesis “New Beginning,” according to the text, did not last long. The story tells us that during Adam’s lifetime it went down due to his yielding to the intervention of a counterforce to the intent of God, and both the new animals and these new human beings were created in the image of God, but after the breakdown of Eden reverted, interbreeding with the animals and humans living outside of the destroyed area spoken of in Genesis 1:1-2, beings already distorted.

At this point, what some call the Evangelistic Mandate became necessary, a mandate to reconcile estranged man to God. In addition, what some call the “Cultural Mandate”—in its original simplicity a mandate to care for life on earth—would now have had to be augmented in the face of the very hostile environment external to the area of Eden. We might think of the “Cultural Mandate” as being now necessarily incorporated into a new and distinctly larger “Wartime” or “Military” Mandate, which would include both the Cultural and the Evangelistic Mandate. The latter, would be a recruiting program, and have as its overall purpose that of redeeming human beings and not only putting them to work in caring for life on earth, but also, now, warring against the powers of evil and darkness.

The point of what I am saying would be the significant difference between 1) the idea that the Evangelistic Mandate is the total definition of mission, and, 2) the idea that a recruiting evangelistic enterprise is simply part of a larger wartime effort to defeat what Paul calls “the god of this world,” and to restore the whole creation to the glory of God.

There is, evidently, a very great difference between a mission to get people into heaven and a mission to recover the glory of God by defeating the powers of darkness and distortion. In this latter, larger mission evangelism is to be viewed as in part

recruitment for war. Mere evangelism, or mere recruitment for the Kingdom is not the single Divine goal. The Kingdom is at war and is not merely recruiting in peacetime. In this perspective the distinction between evangelism and social action is highly artificial. But both evangelism and social concerns are misconceived if they are seen as a humanistic campaign for the betterment of the human race. They are essential features of a Kingdom at war where the very glory of God is at stake. This reality is described by John as being very different from mere evangelism, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).”

In this light the major events of the Bible can be seen as the extension of God’s Rule: the sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, the military occupation of what is called Palestine, the scattering of the northern tribes, the captivity of the Southern Kingdom in Babylon, the expansion of Hellenistic culture by Alexander, the “salting” of the Roman empire by thousands of Synagogues, and the expansion of the faith East, West, North, South in the past 2,000 years. All of this can be summed up not merely as a campaign for human betterment, but as evidence of the partial, gradual defeat of the powers of darkness, in the words of the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

In this light we can note the gradual defeat of “war and pestilence” across the centuries. The conquest of either war or disease is neither easy nor automatic. One somewhat crude measurement of that conquest is an increase in the rate of population growth. For example, when the Roman legions withdrew from the British Isles to defend the city of Rome itself, at about 440 AD, the population of the British Isles has been estimated at one million. After three centuries of literacy, war and pestilence became again so fierce, however, as to hold the population constant for the next 600 years. Not until after 1066 AD did the population of the British Isles begin to creep up.

Similarly, there were an estimated 27 million people on earth in Abraham’s day, but 2,000 years later in Jesus’ day there were only roughly seven times that many. That’s a growth rate of one-tenth of one percent per year. What if in Abraham’s day world population had grown at 1.7%—the relatively modest rate of growth of world population today?

Note, first, that the Western, so-called “developed” countries of the world today contribute very little to world population growth. This fact forces down the average rate of world population growth to the relatively modest world average of 1.7% per year. Many countries, like Egypt are growing at 3.5% per year.

Thus, if world population in Abraham’s day had only grown at this 1.7% rate there would have been six billion people on earth in only 321 years. What actually happened, by comparison, was that the 27 million world population in Abraham’s day grew as we have seen above, at .1% per year, or at one seventeenth of the world growth rate today. That depressed rate, note, is obviously the result of unbounded war and pestilence. This stubborn fact makes both gruesome and obvious the ravages of war and pestilence.

In recent years war has diminished to the point that on a world level today the number of people killed in car accidents is now five times that of the number killed in war. Disease is a different story. Certainly great advances have been made against many diseases. Our increasing understanding of how we get diseased has greatly increased, but in this case, the extensive development of resistant strains counterbalances a great deal of

the progress. Two ways to measure the impact of disease on humanity are 1) to ask how long do people live, and also 2) how many people die prematurely of disease. In this country, longevity is constantly increasing. Yet, it is still true that nine out of ten Americans die prematurely from disease alone.

Let's stand back at this point. This second lecture is supposed to cover the period from Eden to the present. Clearly we cannot go into detail for all the major events of the last few thousand years. We have already remarked about the more or less continuous increase in population and what that means. We have already mentioned the major events of the Bible from the standpoint of an expanding Kingdom of God. Our knowledge bank for the last 2,000 years is filled if not clogged by the nearly infinite details we now have of those years. Those details are more voluminous than ever before both because of a growing world population - more and more people are doing things and saying things and also because of the zeal and discipline of modern scholars to retain that information.

Basically, however, we can note the amazing impact the Bible as a document has had upon a number of human traditions, the Greek, the Roman, the Celtic and the Armenian in the form of Christianity, the Semitic in the form of Islam, the Goths, the Ethiopians, the Anglo-Saxons, the Slavs and the Scandinavians in still other forms of Christianity, and so on into modern times where all the world is involved.

At the same time, often with glacial slowness along with many setbacks, we can note that both war and pestilence have steadily declined. It is conceivable that in view of the onslaught of the forces of darkness genetic changes were early made throughout nature in the form of elevated birth rates.

It was once a good question whether human life could even survive. Hundreds of human communities have not survived. One per month is blinking out. On the other hand, today it is more likely a question of how to quell or at least slow down the incredible growth rate of humanity. John Wesley was the 15th child of his mother, Susannah. His brother Charles was the 17th. However, there were never more than five children alive at any one time.

We do well to recognize that no greater enemy of animal life has ever existed than the human race. Virtually all large mammals have already been driven extinct. At the same time extreme measures are sometimes pursued today to protect animal and even insect life. (There would seem to be more zeal for this than for preserving human societies.) Interestingly, in terms of the entire sweep of earth history our paleontologists have made us aware of one thousand times as many now-extinct forms of life as are in existence today.

The question we must address, however, is the extent to which those who have treasured the Bible and sought to yield to its message have understood their mission. I am afraid the answer is not entirely a happy one.

Even our terminology is complex. If we go back as far as Joseph confronting his brothers in Egypt we see two strikingly different ways of looking at things. He says to them, pointedly, "You did not send me to Egypt, God did." We already have seen how, in fact, Joseph got to Egypt very clearly because of the actions of his brothers.

In 2 Sam. 24:1-25 we read the story of David's sinful counting of the people. In 1 Chron. 21:1-25, written centuries later, that story recurs, verbatim, except for one word. Earlier it is God who "incites" David to do wrong. Later, in Chronicles, it is Satan who "incites" David to do wrong. And, just in general, following the period of Babylonian

Captivity—where contact was made with Zoroastrianism, which held the concept of two gods, one good and one evil—the Bible begins more often to talk about the existence of an intelligent enemy, giving an alternate explanation of the reason for evil, the kind of thing the Old Testament almost always describes as simply the direct initiative of God.

The words *satan* or *devil* occur 68 times in the New Testament in one English translation, but apart from Job only three times in the Old Testament. One fairly strong early Christian movement, Manichaeism, took over the Zoroastrian dualism of two gods. Augustine started out in that group. When he rejected it he tended to move over to a neo-Platonic view which did away with an evil counterforce and ascribed all events to the direct initiative of God. It is possible to see this influence in at least Western Christianity. Let me give three examples.

Anicius Boethius, a Christian and follower of Augustine, and an upright man at the right hand of one of the tribal Goths ruling Rome, was accused of disloyalty and was for “safety sake” condemned to death. While awaiting his execution with calm and equanimity, he wrote an essay entitled “The Consolations of Philosophy.” This document was so high minded and noble in attitude, facing death without fear or recrimination, that it was widely read in the middle ages, almost beyond the Bible itself. Boethius resigned himself to the wisdom of God in his situation. The queen of England was so impressed that she translated it from Latin into English.

A 13th Century Mother Superior awakened one morning to feel something moving under the skin in her forehead. She wondered what God was up to. In a few days it broke the skin and the worm became visible. From time to time, stooping over, it fell out. Being God’s worm, she replaced it. You can’t fight God.

Jonathan Edwards, exiled from his pulpit in Boston to an artificial missionary village at the outer extremities of western Massachusetts, noted during his seven years there, amidst doing some of his most advanced writing, that his Indian charges were horribly decimated again and again by smallpox. There is no more painful death. Hearing about the Turkish idea of what we today call a vaccine, he set out to try it. The pastors of Massachusetts warned him that he was “interfering with Divine Providence.” He did not heed their warnings, tried it on himself and died very prematurely of that horrible death shortly after being appointed president of what is today Princeton University. It was thought that God killed him.

These three examples show how unlikely it is that anyone would take steps to fight evil if they think that God is the initiator of the evil in each case. Here are four contemporary examples of this perspective, this tendency to be resigned to evil rather than fighting it.

A few days ago I was given a brochure put out as a ministry by the International Bible Society. It was designed to help those who are grieving. It told of a young husband whose wife was suddenly taken in their second year of marriage. He almost went out of his mind. At one point it flashed through his head that he wanted to “punch God in the nose.” Obviously, in his mind, his theology allowed him to assume God was the one who took his wife. Instead of recognizing the existence of a hideous and cruel counterforce to God, and pledging himself to work with God to defeat the precise medical reason his wife died, he simply assumed that God must have done it. He now needed simply to resign Himself to the mysterious will of God.

Earlier I was referred to an article in an issue of Guideposts about a family of two boys, one of which in his teens was overcome by an unusual form of cancer. The distraught father created an organization to fight that form of cancer. He organized a 10K race to raise money for it. He himself participated in the runathon. But as he approached the finish line he collapsed and died of a heart attack. The surviving little boy asked his mother, "God wouldn't do two bad things to us in one year would He?" His intuition was good. His theology was bad. Even children within our stream of Christianity get the idea that God is himself the author of all evil - just as the Old Testament describes things.

A famous, but I will allow unnamed Christian leader writing a book about the Christian life proudly tells how his daughter who had struggled for years with an autistic son finally reached the point where her family could handle the situation fairly well. She at this point told her father "I have come to believe that Alex is exactly the way God wants him to be." Why God would want a boy to be brain damaged is one thing. The real question for me is whether this influential Christian leader is involved in trying to find out what it is that is brain damaging millions of children today. "Not expecting evil but resigning ourselves to it when it appears" has today replaced the New Testament's perspective of "expecting evil and fighting it when it appears."

When my first wife finally succumbed to cancer I was advised, "Don't fret, God knows what He is doing." Another said, "You need to thank God for cancer." Hundreds said they would pray for her. No one ever said they were going to do anything to fight cancer, or even pray for those limited efforts which are attempting to understand the sources of cancer.

In Philip Yancey's insightful book, *Where is God When It Hurts?*, he urges readers not to speculate about causes of evil but to focus on the purposes God may work out of evil. Satan is mentioned in passing (as one who some think of) as a cause, but nothing is said about fighting back

He brilliantly summarizes common approaches to evil in his first chapter where a formerly beautiful young woman married for only one year is flat on her back in a hospital room ravaged by Hodgkin's disease. Five visitors come to see her. The first, a deacon from her church talks to her for some time and before leaving says, "Surely something in your life must displease God ... these things don't just happen. God uses circumstances to warn us and to punish us. What is He telling you?"

A second visitor is an ebullient, cheerful woman who pastes get-well cards all over her window and refuses to talk about or listen to Claudia's problem. A third, also a woman, hearing what the deacon said, blurts out, "Sickness is never God's will. Haven't you read the Bible? The Devil stalks us like a roaring lion, but God will deliver you if you can muster up enough faith to believe you'll be healed ... Simply name your promise, in faith, and claim the victory."

A fourth visitor, patiently explains, "Claudia, you need to come to the place where you can say, 'God, I love you for making me suffer like this. It is your will, and you know what's best for me. And I praise you for loving me enough to allow me to experience this. In all things, including this, I give thanks.'"

Finally, her pastor visits and explains to Claudia that God must have chosen her to be a hero, whose stalwart faith in adversity will be a blessing to many others.

While Yancey's five visitors do not include any who simply say that Claudia's tortured situation is part of God's mysterious will, nevertheless that is commonly said,

and is essentially what these five visitors are saying. In no case, did any of these well-wishers recognize the necessity of believers taking steps to fight Hodgkin's disease.

Yancey does go on to say that no other problem provokes so serious a response and that many college students give up their faith because of it.

James Dobson's book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, similarly emphasizes the mystery of God's will attendant upon terrible and unexplainable happenings. The very title assumes God is the prime mover in all evil. He mentions Satan in passing as what some say is the cause of disease but he does not speak of the need to counter Satan's works.

Does our Christian mission involve an obligation and challenge to fight disease at its source? Orthodox Jewish doctors are at the forefront of such activity. Shall we simply let them busy themselves with this task? Apparently, we must assume that their intuitive theology is superior to our formal Evangelical theology. If so, this is very strange since their part of our Bibles is precisely the part which does not usually give reason for discerning the active, evil presence of a Satan in disease, nor reason to set about to destroy evil. We have that in the New Testament but not in our theology. Not since Augustine.

We have talked about the past and the present. If our life in Christ is both a great blessing and also a call to arms, just how can the future, and must the future, be different from the present? That is the subject of the third lecture

Part 3. Planetary Events: the Future

In this presentation I am not going to attempt to predict the future but rather to ponder what *ought to be the future*, that is, not guess at what will happen but propose *what should happen*.

The past, as portrayed in the earlier presentations, revolved around the basic stance of the redeemed human in regard to his earthly mission. It was alleged that seeking pardon for sin and becoming assured of heaven is by no means the whole picture. To the extent that that kind of reductionism is a product of the Reformation we do well to hold much of such theology tentatively. Even the simplicity of what is called The Lord's Prayer goes far beyond that kind of truncated mission.

However, if there is any substantial truth to what I have been saying, there are in our future substantial obstacles to our response to the very first petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

It would seem clear that the "coming" of the Kingdom of God is related to how God can be glorified in a darkened and captive world.

One way to approach a fresh redefinition of Christian mission for the future, then, is to ask the basic question, What will it take to remove the stain of accusations against a supreme being which arise from the very existence of evil in this created world? This gets at the task of glorifying God, but in so doing it recognizes that the task of glorifying God must involve the removal of understandings of God that are contradictory to His nature and existence.

Not long ago it was widely suggested that "God is dead." The ongoing Christian cultural momentum mainly doomed that phrase, but the phrase died in part because the same phrase could imply that God once lived - and that, too, is unacceptable to many. Today, any thought of a supreme being who ever existed in any form whatever in the past

or present is usually considered totally out of date or even antagonistic to our “sacred” science.

Thus, to approach contemporaries thinking in these terms it may not be necessary to prove that the Bible is a magical, superhuman book. However, if the Da Vinci Code’s popularity has done any damage at all it would seem urgent in the defense of the Christian tradition to discover ways in which people may disregard the Bible simply due to misreadings thereof.

I have described one of those possible misunderstandings in suggesting that Genesis should not be forced to talk anachronistically of modern cosmological insights. When both Luther and Calvin assumed the Biblical authors were acquainted with the sphericity of the earth and that the Bible described the Sun as going around the Earth, they were not accused of misinterpreting the Bible. It was assumed that those two very intelligent men had been simply following a defective book.

Today, when a *TIME* Magazine cover story mentions that Christians believe the earth is 6,000 years old—due to what the Bible teaches—the journalist is not thinking that someone has misinterpreted the Bible, but is quite likely assuming that the Bible itself is faulty in this respect.

Far more damaging is the fact that Christian leaders today are writing whole books to explain suffering and egregious evil without taking into account the role of an intelligent counter being to God.

Today we are in the midst of a massive shift toward explaining all things in purely mechanistic and material terms. This trend forces the concept of unguided evolution into prominence, but it does not make the concept of unguided evolution more credible, just more widely accepted. However, those who believe “God did it” are just as hard pressed to explain how and in what timing the creation of life was accomplished. The Christians are most concerned to maintain belief in God, while many scientists are just as determined to believe there is no supreme being.

Phobias in both cases? When the now-accepted “Big Bang” theory was first proposed the editor of the world’s most prestigious scientific journal, *Nature*, opposed it on the grounds that it was smuggling in a religious concept. Although scientists are no longer saying that, the same phobia today is desperately levelled against those who insist on the possibility of “intelligent design” in nature. Meanwhile, no one complains that multimillion dollar radio telescopes in Florida are trained skyward on the thesis that all that is necessary to prove the existence of intelligent life would be some minimal evidence of coding in the electromagnetic radiation from outer space that is constantly raining down upon the Earth.

An equal panic seems to exist for some who would seem to fear the thought that there is any real evidence of an old earth. I have wondered if this fear arises from a subconscious assumption that given enough time randomly guided Darwinian selection might possibly work, and thus prove there is no God.

But, besides removing misunderstandings of the Bible, there are other obstacles to the task of glorifying God. Some of these obstacles are very substantial, in the sense of being tangible and concrete, others equally substantial involve intangibles of misunderstanding. It is fairly simple to illustrate, first, the tangibles.

We have earlier considered the physical suffering due to physical aggression on the part of man or beast. We know we must fight wartime aggressors, muggers, robbers, dangerous animals - things we can see with the naked eye.

Not so clear is a theological mandate to fight the physical onslaught of entities Calvin knew not of: the tiniest of all are deadly viruses, which though tiny are not simple, some of them being composed of as many as ten million atoms. Viruses are all dangerous and destructive. Much, much larger in size are bacteria which are both good and bad. Finally, still larger are parasites, many too small to see but still incredibly more complex than bacteria and dauntingly clever, such as the malarial “plasmodium” which kills four children every sixty seconds.

Some parasites are big enough to be seen in their adult life, like the Hair Worm which invades grasshoppers, eats out their insides just short of total demobilization (a process called “zombification”), then creates proteins that mimic the grasshopper’s brain cells inducing the grasshopper to drown itself in water, at which time the Hair Worm swims away to breed.

Certain parasites invading humans, called generically worms, are even larger, including round worms, tapeworms, and flukes. They range in length from a quarter of an inch to three feet. One kind, for example, the schistosome in its tadpole stage in any water contact can breach the skin in three to five minutes not needing any cut or crack. Invading the body each one can lay from 100 to 300 eggs a day, course through the bloodstream penetrate the liver, the lungs, and the brain. The Guinea Worm may grow to 32 inches inside the human body.

These things are incredibly powerful enemies, designed to destroy, but to my knowledge there is not one substantial Christian institution in the world that is seeking to eradicate them. The problem is deep. Our theology and missiology originated in an era when the existence of such enemies was not known, and there has been no update of our theology, apparently, in the last four hundred years.

Of course, even if the global Christian family does choose to fight newly discovered evils rather than be resigned to them, it is not necessarily true that all disease can be crushed by human enterprise alone. Guinea Worm has been reduced by the Carter Center from 3.5 million victims to 13,000, mainly in unreachable areas of Sudan. But the Carter Center, although Jimmy Carter is a Sunday school teacher, is not funded by any Christian denomination or mission agency, and its modest goals of eradicating five major diseases is not the idea of any theologian or mission agency I know of.

It must be obvious that physical dangers of the kind we have just noted would seem in general to be more understandable and identifiable. The exception might be the ones too small to see with the naked eye. If our two-year-old daughter is playing in the backyard and we can see through the kitchen window that a mountain lion is creeping up toward her, or if a pit bull is about to break through the fence and get to her, or if a big black spider is crawling up the back of her dress, such a danger is both understandable and identifiable. We don’t stop to pray in such cases. We both pray and act.

But if the enemy entity is too small to see we have for most of human history not known of its existence, or, as in fairly recent history, we have learned only vaguely what the problem is, we tend, as a church, as a people, as a mission, simply to pray, not act. If we act at all we care for the sick, the victims, and we may try to avoid the pathogens by some sort of “preventive” measures or healthy lifestyle.

Yet, this is all “defensive.” We do not pay much attention at all to the appropriate search and destroy mission, only the victims. But, you can’t win a war by merely caring for the wounded. Our theology does not lead us to eradicate the attacking pathogens, as was done in the case of smallpox and polio through initiatives outside the formal Christian mission. In this sense our theology is still appropriate to the First Century.

All this is to observe that the problem is far deeper than mustering efforts to eradicate pathogens. They are tangible enemies. They are bad enough if only we could think clearly about them. Unfortunately, in a way parallel to the Hair Worm injecting mind-altering proteins into the brain of the grasshopper, the enemies we face that are tangible are made much more difficult to defeat due to mind-altering cultural and intellectual forces. These forces are similarly mind-altering and might be called “Diabolical delusions.” Thus, delusions not just physical enemies are foes.

Let me give some quick examples of deadly delusions of the kind we don’t have to fight in the United States.

I have, actually, already mentioned the grotesque practices of foot-binding that used to be practiced in some parts of China. What kind of a delusion would lead to the idea that that would be an improvement? Obviously, it was not a defensive measure against physical danger.

Or, take the burning of widows in India, which still exists in some places. That delusion is more understandable: the widow, if she dutifully yields to that fiery death she will be reincarnated at a higher level, she is given to believe.

More common in India today, but quite different, is the practice of burning to death a young bride whose dowry has already been turned over to her husband’s family. Once or twice a month such events occur in the city of New Delhi alone, being reported in the paper as accidental. But that kind of evil is different from widow burning in that, to my knowledge, it is not furthered by delusion but simple greed.

In Southern Africa it is widely believed that a man with AIDS can be cured by having intercourse with a virgin. That delusion certainly seems diabolical.

What, then, about delusions that must be fought in the United States? Why did we go on for 35 years ignoring the link of cancer to smoking? Why did we go on for 35 years chopping off women’s breasts when it was known that lumpectomy was equally effective in almost all cases?

For one thing, we must in the USA fight against delusions about the size and scope of out-of-sight, microbiological aggression. Consider these facts: less than one percent of Americans are victims of homicide. Twice as many die from suicide (1.4%). A full four percent die of accidents, mostly car accidents. Add it up. Almost all the rest, well over 90% die prematurely of *disease*. This, despite some significant progress over time. In Franklin D. Roosevelt’s era, when they determined a reasonable retirement age - 65 - certain factors including disease were taken into account. It has been estimated that if that same reasoning were followed today the calculation of retirement age would come out 92. Yet, despite many gains, disease is still clawing down to premature death over 90% of Americans!

A specific illustration of how enormous is the onslaught disease upon us, note the fact that Americans are forced to pay \$1 billion per day simply in treating cardiovascular disease - heart and stroke patients. That is, we are paying as much per day for cardiovascular disease as we are paying for the Iraqi war. But, you say, in Iraq we are

also paying in U.S. lives, averaging ten a day. Well, U.S. citizens are losing their lives in the cardiovascular war at 3,000 lives a day. Thus, for that one type of disease alone our country is losing as much money and as many lives as if we were fighting 300 Iraqi wars.

Yes, I believe we need to fight a delusion regarding the scope of the war against disease. We need to fight that delusion in order to fight that war.

I might add that delusions about disease are also extensive in the rest of the world. I think of a 300-page book entitled *International Development*. The African Oxford-educated Ph.D. who writes the book stresses in the introduction that the book is focused primarily on poverty. When four out of five family members are down with disease that family is bound to be poor. The major factor in poverty is disease. But there is not one line in the book about the disease factor in poverty.

This major delusion I have mentioned can be described as the amazing and dangerous underestimation of what some clear thinking authors have claimed is the “plague dimensions” of disease today.

Compounding the effect of this first major delusion is a second, related delusion we must fight. It is the widespread idea that the American medical/pharmaceutical complex with its multiple billions of income is seriously dealing with the sources of disease not just the treatment of sick people. Since there is already a chorus of voices protesting features of the medical/pharmaceutical industry, let me say in advance that I do not believe, and will not imply, that the people working in that enormous industry are any more or less ethical than those in any other basically wholesome industry.

However, major new and highly credible insight into the realities in this sphere have come from Dr. Marcia Angell, the Harvard Medical School professor and just-retired former editor in chief for 20 years of the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*. Her book, *The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What to Do About It*, is both eminently knowledgeable and fair minded. It is packed with actual cases and with detailed facts and figures to show how extensively the enormous inflow of money into the medical/pharmaceutical industry has allowed that industry to become a controlling influence in university testing, private testing, in medical journalism, advertising, education of doctors, the ostensibly autonomous Federal Drug Administration, the government sponsored National Institutes of Health, and even Congress (where there are more drug lobbyists than congressmen). Here is one comment: “Legislators are now so beholden to the Pharmaceutical industry that it will be exceedingly difficult to break its lock on them.”

It would be impossible to go into even a tiny portion of the many examples described in this sane and sad book in which we again and again see truth surrendered to economic benefit. But economic goals easily explain why drug companies do not bother with the diseases of the poorer parts of the glob. Similarly, they do not see sufficient profit in the use of natural substances which cannot be patented were they to be expensively tested. This applies even to diseases that can be cured outright. There is more money in drugs for diseases that last on and on.

It is a revelation that FDA approval says nothing about the relative merits of a drug compared to others but only that it is better than nothing. This means that when a widely advertised and profitable drug goes out of patent it is very often replaced by a new one that is either no better or actually less helpful, but which now will get the big TV ads. Meanwhile, the previous drug that might be better is dropped from production in view of

inevitable competition and lowered profits. Out of 415 new drugs approved by the FDA in five years, 77 percent were no better or were worse than earlier, earlier out-of-patent drugs. Most of the testing is either run by or controlled by the company that wants to sell the drug. When test results are negative they may be suppressed, or when they are submitted to journals, the company may submit only what happened in the first six months of testing and drop out the second six months which indicated a very different result.

These statements are only the tip of the iceberg. The reason for bringing this matter up, however, is that it illustrates well a widespread delusion about what the medical/ pharmaceutical industry does, working as it does almost exclusively subject to the gravitational pull of economic and market forces.

A specific illustration is the case of cardiovascular disease, the number one killer already mentioned. The perfectly enormous and expensive attention paid to treating those who have already suffered a heart attack or a stroke is explained by market forces. The victims are the ones who will pay anything to get well.

It is well known today that half of all who die of heart attacks lack the supposed symptoms of cardio-vascular disease. But heart bypass surgeons don't have time or training to look into primary causes. That is not what they are being paid to do. As for the pharmaceutical companies, even if there were the possibility of a drug that would strike at the cause rather than at the symptoms (such as high LDL cholesterol), such an outright cure would not render the same profit as the kind that requires, say, the long term administration of a drug to maintain lower cholesterol. Thus, institutionally, attention to root causes is almost non-existent by comparison to healing. It is a *delusion* to think otherwise. If Christian mission offers no help at the roots of disease then these delusions triumph even there.

The entire Bible expects us and exhorts us to do good works. We are not merely to wait for the next world. Paul put it this way to Titus:

We wait for the blessed hope —the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

Note the unspecific phrase, “to do what is good.” Whatever Paul had in mind, it was inevitably limited by his First Century understanding. He would not have thought about combatting cancer at the DNA level as a good thing to do. Our exegesis must explore all that he might have had in mind. That is, the first law of seminary exegesis is “What did it mean?”

But, we must go on to ask “What would Paul have said about good deeds had he known what we know today about what is dangerous in the microbiological world? What would he have said had he our understanding of the inherent limitations of a medical/pharmaceutical industry that is allowed and even expected to make decisions based on purely commercial factors? It is not enough for us to read Paul's statement to Titus out loud in church and turn our people out into the parking lot with merely the phrase ringing in their ears, “eager to do what is good.”

The definition of mission is the difference between what is and what ought to be.

It is absurd to suppose that we cannot sit down and make a list of things that are wrong, unfair, ungodly, deadly dangerous, and then accept profound responsibility to do

something about these evils, to work individually and jointly to identify every evil that could possibly be blamed upon God and confront it, as a church, in the name of Christ.

If a pastor was rumored to have been unfaithful, in a fit of anger to have broken the neck of a noisy two-year old, and to have cheated on his income tax, it would not be reasonable to schedule an evening of praise for him without first trying to clear up these rumors.

However, the concept of God is widely fowled with assumptions that God is busy inventing parasites that blind millions of people, of “taking the lives” of innocent and even godly people and doing all this for mysterious reasons. Yet we have no trouble going to church and singing, “The whole earth is full of His glory.”

It is not as though no Christian believer has noticed specific details of God’s creation. Brilliant individual scientists like John Kepler, James Clerk Maxwell, Michael Faraday and Isaac Newton were believers who paved the way for all of modern science.

For several centuries now, with such individual Christians taking the lead in the early years, science has churned up oceans of new evidence of God’s creativity, not only in outer space but within the world of the optical microscope and the electron microscope.

Seemingly, none of this new insight has been embraced by the church either for its theology or its hymnody. We don’t sing about the wonders of the microbiological world. Again, it is not as though Evangelicals know less about science than other Americans. Apparently those of us who have witnessed the incredible intelligence and creativity in nature have not made any connection to the never-never land of the Sunday morning service.

The future of rapidly expanding Christianity around the world is not very bright, beyond the initial explosion of numbers, if we cannot bridge the contemporary chasm between our outdated religion of mainly emotional conviction and the intellectual dimensions of updated science. We fail to understand that our religious version of our faith is extensively cultural. Thus, the real work going on today of the expanding Kingdom is perhaps more outside of the church than within it where we continue on singing platitudinous hymns and choruses.

Right now there are in this world millions of scientists, none of which would get out of bed in the morning if they did not have the faith that nature is orderly, is beautiful, and is reliable. We cannot expect them to give up that faith. At the same time we have millions of Christian leaders who would not get up in the morning if they did not have faith in an all-wise and loving divine being. We cannot expect them to give up that faith.

The one group is studying the divine Book of Creation, the other is studying the divine Book of Scripture. Neither of them can win if they insist on denying the faith of the other. Both faiths reflect God’s glory. I truly believe that both of them are in one way or another reflecting the expanding Kingdom of God. Again, I seriously wonder if much or not most of the work of the Kingdom is now being done by people Evangelicals consider nonbelievers.

The Bible itself says of the Book of Creation that there is no speech or language where its voice is not heard. We must take advantage of that fact. Ours is not just a world whose riches can be mined to create cell phones and computer chips. Ours is a world which, rightly understood, reflects at least in part the glory of God.

Clarifying the glory of God as a mission is an unacknowledged means as well as a goal of the Reformation emphasis on soul saving, the reason being that clarifying the glory of God is in fact the most sturdy basis for evangelism. Furthermore, clarifying the glory of God is the common ground between science and pure religion.

When Jesus spoke of His followers being salt and light in this world He went on to explain that they should “let their light shine in such a way that the world would see their good works and glorify their Father in heaven (Matt 5:16).” That is the common ground for the future. As St. Francis said, “Witness at all times, with words if necessary.”

Twelve Frontiers of Perspective

(2005) (Foundations Reader, 267-81)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5ed13d18cfba127f3c41f09d/1590770998243/Foundations+Reader.pdf>

Perspective Twelve: The Challenge of the Evil One

This is the most difficult to address of all of the other frontiers. It is actually an application of Perspective (Frontier) Five, the Recontextualization of Our Own Tradition. One reason it is a problem is because it is often easier to critique another culture than our own.

Furthermore, an understanding of this frontier requires going against the strong current in our own culture which puts any thought of an Evil One into the category of Santa Claus. Worse still, stressing this frontier requires a reconsideration of our own religious, theological and historical tradition, dealing as it does with a defect in that tradition. Finally, and most difficult of all, if there really is an intelligent Evil One, you would think that any attempt at calling attention to him would be opposed by a skillful, deceptive intelligence not just ignorance. And that is a long story.

The Old Testament itself is characterized by a continual viewing of things from the standpoint of final purpose, the purposes of God. The simplest example of this very noble point of view is where Joseph says to his brothers "You did not send me to Egypt, God did" (Gen 45:8). In this verse the outcome, the purpose, is highlighted without, of course, denying that the brothers in actuality also sent him into slavery.

A scarier example is the startling contrast between 2 Samuel 24:1-25 and 1 Chronicles 21:1-25. The latter passage, part of the Chronicler's summing up of things, is a verbatim repetition of the twenty-five-word earlier passage, with the exception of the replacement of a single word. In 2 Samuel God is the one who "incites" David to go wrong in counting the people. In the later summary by the Chronicler, Satan incites David to do wrong.

What we need to note here is that in the earlier passage, as in the OT in general, things are explained entirely in terms of God's sovereignty. Both accounts are correct, just as both Joseph's brothers and God can be said to have done the same thing.

Once we get into the NT, we find that the followers of Christ have now gained a heightened appreciation for an Evil One whom they now actually name *Satan*, a word that all through the OT simply meant an "adversary," God Himself being a *satan*, or adversary, when He opposes a false prophet. However, Christians of the Manichaean sect went further and adopted the Zoroastrian dualism of two equal Gods, one good and one evil.

It so happens that our present theological tradition is more influenced by Augustine than by any other theologian. Augustine started out Manichaean and eventually reacted so violently against it that he essentially banished references to an Evil One. In his writings, as in neo-platonism in general, all things are to be seen in terms of God's often mysterious *purposes*. For Augustine, facing tragedy and harm and disease is simply a case for us to trust God not only to work things out for good, but to trust that God had some good reason to bring it to pass in the first place.

Much could be said about this, but for me the key point is that if God does everything and we do not employ both of the Biblical perspectives about the work of God and Satan we see in the Bible, we will find ourselves unable to fight against the *causes* of evil for, in that case, we would be fighting against God.

Jonathan Edwards found this to be true. He sought to protect the Indians in his charge from smallpox by wanting to test out a vaccine. Pastors in Massachusetts warned him that in doing so he would be “interfering with Divine Providence.” He first tried it on himself and died the truly horrible death of smallpox. The pastors said God killed him.

Curiously and ominously, to this day, Christians are not well-known for fighting the viruses, the bacteria, and the tiny parasites that cause illness. We are only noted for being kind to people who are already sick, helping them get well, defending them against aggressive pathogens. We mount no offense against the pathogens themselves. We are willing to fight back at visible human muggers but not invisible bug muggers! That is, our pre-germ theological tradition does not trace disease back to the work of an Evil One. Thus, to my knowledge there is not a single avowedly Christian institution on the face of the earth that is working specifically for the eradication of disease pathogens. The medical and pharmaceutical industries draw their support from sick people who want help in getting well, and who are not paying for research at the roots of disease.

Is this a blind spot in the spectrum of God’s mandate to us in mission? I think so. If we can properly recontextualize our faith at this time, we will no longer need only to trust that in God’s sovereign *purposes* there are good things even when things go wrong. We can both recognize the truth of that and also work against the *causes* of evil and suffering. Indeed, we are in that case, free to understand that God is expecting us to join in that effort. Biblical perspective puts it this way: “The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 Jn 3:8). And Jesus said, “As my Father sent me, so send I you” (John 20:21). Isn’t that clear?

However, as Dr. Gordon Kirk has said, “Satan’s greatest achievement is to cover his tracks.” If that is true, then it is also true that we are extensively unaware of what the Evil One is doing.

For example, humans have concluded that cock fights and contrived animal-versus-animal shows are illegitimate and are now illegal. How much less likely should we suppose God to have created the nearly universal, vicious, animal-versus-animal world of nature? Indeed, were carnivorous animals originally herbivorous (as is implied in Genesis 1:28, 29)? Does the Evil One and his assistants have sufficient knowledge to tinker with the DNA of God’s created order and distort nature to become “red in tooth and claw”?

Obviously, the great theologians of the past, such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Calvin, could not have imagined how lions, originally content to lie down with a lamb, could or should one day be restored to that state through the combined efforts of good angels and human endeavors. But, remember, if Satan has covered his tracks well, we would not expect to find many thinking these thoughts. How then are we going to attempt to destroy his works? Is that a mission to be pursued? Does that represent a frontier to be crossed?

But Are These *Frontiers*?

Looking back on these twelve shifts of perspective, how many of these things can readily and feasibly be called *frontiers* of missiology? Of some value might be the following definition:

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go, yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly, and which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, the subject of mission frontiers is specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas, ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

But let's examine these ten issues.

The idea of the Great Commission in the Old Testament is not the usual kind of frontier. But for me it has been. I have often referred to it as the greatest intellectual revolution in my life. The whole Bible is completely different because of that one insight, and it has really made the Bible much more precious and significant to me. Since then I have studied the Bible far more than in all of my life before, and so it's a frontier of thinking for me even if it might not go over well to some as a "frontier." Note that it is one of the commonly mind-blowing elements of our Perspective course.

By contrast, to say that there is a huge number of peoples yet to be reached does sound like a frontier. But, of course, to recognize that all these peoples can be reached fairly readily now may have reduced that frontier to just sort of a need for further encouragement.

However, in number seven, to say that we need to make a major shift, giving up our form of Christianity so-called in order for the Biblical faith to penetrate Hinduism, *that* is still a frontier. That's the radical decontextualization frontier, and I don't think we need to pussyfoot about it. That perspective itself is not totally new, and we can safely say that both the frontier of the *unreached* peoples as well as the new frontier of the supposedly *reached* peoples must now be re-addressed with a truly Biblical form of Christian faith that makes sense of them. Here, then, are two major frontiers.

In fact, the latter involves the fact that there are many millions more individuals within the "reached" peoples than are contained in the remaining unreached peoples, which is a relatively small number. I did some calculations on AD2000's 242 "untargeted" groups. I came up with only 15 million people. Then I looked at all the smaller unreached groups—the 4,000 or so 280 Twelve Frontiers of Perspective groups smaller than 10,000 in population. As mentioned earlier, they only constitute another 1.5 million people. So we're talking about a total of merely 16.5 million people in all of the untargeted groups in the world! Is that a big number? Not really, for it is only 1/300th of the world's population! While this is not a huge frontier, it is still a pressing challenge.

Someone might say that just because there are only a few remaining "untargeted" groups does not mean that all other groups are actually reached—that is, already have a true, McGavran type "People movement to Christ." Aren't there still some massive larger unreached groups?

That is true since they do run up to 10 or 15 million in some cases, like the Juang in South China. But even so, we have our arms around the intermediate task of the

Unreached Peoples. This is a manageable task, and it's a frontier still, admittedly. It is not less important because we are now also talking about the frontier of radical decontextualization— one of two major dimensions of frontiers.

And there is, of course, the fifth perspective—can we call it a frontier if we are trying to disentangle Biblical faith from our own Christian tradition? I certainly think so. I'm not sure how many are involved in trying to do so, or at least with that terminology.

In a sense it does not matter whether we employ the word *frontier* or not. These are perspectives that throw light on our path into the future. The future is itself a frontier, after all.

Overview of the Mysteries

(2006) (Foundations Reader, 37-40)

What Is a Mystery?

We have referred to “Seven Mysteries” in our materials, and it’s important for us to understand what a “mystery” is. The Bible actually speaks of the Great Commission as a mystery—something that was not understood properly or correctly. *But it was not supposed to have been a mystery.* The Jewish people, as with Gentile nations since, did not readily get the point that they were blessed by a God of love whose love sought—through them—to bless all the rest of the nations of the world. Paul did not even begin to understand this until his Damascus Road experience. For much of his life and for most of his hearers this commission was a “mystery.”

There are some mysteries, however, which we may never fully understand. Thus, for people of faith it is important to recognize that God does know more than we know, and that some things that He knows will always be, in this life, mysteries to us.

The Mysteries Explained

Now just so you get these seven mysteries clear, the **first mystery** is simply the appearance of matter itself. The universe—where did it come from and where did matter itself come from? The latest theories are really quite spectacular. I know from my experience and my readings that some scientists, especially those who may not be eager to be accountable to a living God, have somewhat resisted the idea that there is any such a Person as a Creator. And it is true that in current scientific circles a professional does not have free reign to easily talk about God.

On the other hand, perhaps there are things that people might have found difficult to believe about the existence of God or of His creative intent. However, I am convinced that the most implausible proposition that has ever been made, that is the assertion which is unjustified and difficult to embrace, is the proposition made by some that there is no God. Or, as is current in scientific circles, take into consideration the bizarre idea that the whole universe simply exploded out of a tiny little particle. This particle was so tiny you couldn’t see it and yet all the vast billions of stars in our one galaxy, and the billions of galaxies within sight, all came out of this pinhead of matter. Surely, if you can believe that, then you can believe anything! And that is actually where scientific leaders really are today. They are realizing that it might be easier to believe that things are more complicated than they thought.

In an article published in *Time* magazine, entitled, “Science, God, and Man,” Robert Wright wrote,

One intriguing observation that has bubbled up from physics is that the universe seems calibrated for life’s existence. If the force of gravity were pushed upward a bit, stars would burn out faster, leaving little time for life to evolve in the planets circling them. If the relative masses of protons and neutrons were changed by a hair, stars might never be born, since the hydrogen they eat wouldn’t exist. If at

the ‘Big Bang,’ some basic numbers—the ‘initial conditions’—had been jiggled, matter and energy would never have coagulated into galaxies, stars, planets, *or any other platform stable enough for life as we know it.* (1992:40; italics added).

But who did the “calibration?”

There was a time when the emergence of life wasn’t thought too amazing. With Darwin having explained how specks of life became us, the question of where the specks came from seemed minor, such a small step compared with the ensuing big ones. Presumably, if you let simple molecules reshuffle themselves randomly for long enough, some complex ones would get formed, and further reshuffling would make them more complex, until you had something like DNA—a stable molecule that just happened to make copies of itself.

But more recently, more careful analysis suggests that even a mildly impressive living molecule is quite unlikely to form randomly (1992:40).

So the plot thickens.

And our final quote from Wright:

Deism is, in many ways well suited (as religions go) to an era as scientific as this one. But 20th century science sketches *a universe stranger than the one the deists imagined.* It is a universe that seems not to run as predictably as a clock, a universe *whose inmost workings may not be fathomable. The deeper our insight, the more baffling things become* (1992:43; italics added).

Remember that Deism is the idea that God created the universe and then walked off while we all watched it perk along by itself.

Now the quote we just encountered presents a rather awesome thought. Others have put it differently, that the diameter of our knowledge increases, and perforce, the circumference of our ignorance increases more than three times as fast as the diameter. So the more we know, the less we know. And this isn’t exactly what many scientists would like to believe.

One of the most sensible things that I have ever heard stated was first uttered by a well-known Muslim from Cairo.

“God, the Creator of the universe, can never be against our learning the laws of what He has created.”

How true this statement is. With this in mind, let’s explore the mysteries of this universe. We should take a look at the different mysteries here. First of all, there is the mystery of the origin of matter itself. And that so-called “small step” now is recognized to be a very, very massive and totally unfathomable step. The only explanation that modern science has presented is really a non-explanation: matter came out of nothing. It came out of a tiny little particle, which is essentially nothing. Now that’s as close to a non-explanation as anyone could propose.

However, the entire universe came into being, its mere existence would not necessarily imply the further incredibly complex event—**the appearance of life itself.** Now whether you’re talking about a plant, or an insect, or an animal—or a dinosaur—they all are born out of a DNA molecule. As you are probably aware, this DNA which is

within us all is an incredibly small object; and yet it is incredibly complex. One such molecule—found in every human cell and every cell of any kind of life—has two billion atoms in it. It is an organization together of incredible intricacy shaped in the framework of what is called a double helix. And there are billions of these DNA molecules in any given form of life. Is this not so complex as to boggle your imagination? Its origin is a real mystery.

John Templeton and Robert Herrmann, both noted scientists, have written works that describe the incredible complexity and mystery of the composition of organic matter. Take for instance the brain. It seems that even within a single human brain, more neural connections can be found than the number of stars that can be found in the entire universe. So, with the phenomenon of life, the tiny things are just as complicated as the big things. Thus the appearance of life is the **second** of the great and unfathomable mysteries.

Another mystery, which we'll just mention in passing, is the appearance of a special kind of life: thinking, feeling, sensible and reflecting life; namely, **the human species**. This also seems, like the other things that are so baffling, to have been very sudden in its appearance. The so-called discontinuities of earth's geologic record are as perplexing as the parts that are explainable. Suddenly, things happen! The evolutionary suppositions of gradual progress fall to the ground in the face of the evidence, and this is more and more troubling to all kinds of scientists, both people who are Christians and those who are not.

Now, let's move on to another form of complexity. Not the complexity that a human being represents, but the complexity of associations of human beings. Once again, in a sort of discontinuous, sudden appearance, all over the planet you have high civilizations. These were very complicated civilizations: civilizations that, in some instances, possessed scientific insights that rival those of today. For instance, some civilizations created calendars that are superior to our own. The amazing and perplexing and, really, infuriating thing is that these civilizations are everywhere noticed in their decline. They are always in a declining state. There does not seem to be any record of build-up.

Take Egypt for example. The most advanced architectural achievements of Egypt were made in the earliest appearances of Egyptian civilization—the pyramids, the Sphinx, and so forth. Nothing that followed involved anything equivalent to the complexity of accomplishments we see in the earlier period.

Or just take a single monument in England, the Stonehenge monument. Scientists are still very puzzled about this monument. Indications are that the earliest form of that astronomical observatory, if you wish to call it that, was more sophisticated than the later one when great huge stones were added to fix it up and to see if it could be made to work better. That would be like the designer of an automobile, who knew exactly how it worked, turning it over to some young person who took it apart and put it back together. The problem then would be that it did not work quite right so he tried to patch things up. But after that it never quite worked the way it was intended.

So here we have evidence of an earlier, more sophisticated peoples and later peoples who had forgotten what the earlier peoples had once known. Yet these people lived in the very same place, viewed the same monument, and yet could not understand how it worked. Thus, **civilization itself is a mystery**. Now that is mystery number four.

The Bible itself refers to a profound mystery. The Bible introduces the concept of evil, of things that have gone wrong because of some intentional opposition to the purposes of God. And this is where the Bible comes into the picture. All of a sudden, we know more about a man called Abraham than we know about any other man who ever lived that long ago. A sudden spotlight of detail!

In this abrupt, Biblical picture, we see a plan set in motion to correct the evil, to confront that evil, to push back the Prince of darkness and disorder on this planet. The fall of humanity is the entrance of that evil into the earthly situation. The fall of humanity, and then the confusion, the hopeless result, is the introduction to the Bible, Genesis 1–11. Then in Genesis 12, right at the beginning of the Bible (in fact, I like to think that Genesis 12 is the beginning), you have the introduction to the whole Bible and not just to the so-called “Book” of Genesis. Anyway, right there in Genesis 12, you have this plan presented, which is later in the Bible referred to as the Great Commission. While the Bible itself does not refer to it as the Great Commission, today we talk about it as the Great Commission. This commission that appears in Genesis 12 then reappears, as Jesus restates it with ultimate authority in the Gospels. However, this plan itself was obscured by the very forces which it was designed to counteract.

Remember the verse, “the gates of hell cannot defend themselves against the work of God,” the kingdom of God, the Church (Matthew 16:18). Yes, gates of hell will not be able to defend themselves against that outreaching, extending kingdom and power of God. Trying to understand this is itself battling with a mystery. This is the one mystery of the five which we can at least partially grasp. Maybe God did not intend for us to understand the other four so completely at this stage in our existence. But this fifth mystery is the mystery of the Bible itself. Most people do not understand the thrilling, single story of God’s re-conquering of what some have called “the dark planet”—a planet out of fellowship with God. The unfolding of this mystery begins to bring meaning into all else.

As you look back on these mysteries, one realization for today is that more than at any time in human history, more than at any time in my lifetime or in your lifetime, the scientific community could be referred to as the era of the dumbfounded scientist. We know so much that we did not know before, and as a result know so little. In fact, there is so much we do not know that scientists, if they are honest at all, are truly and profoundly dumbfounded.

Now, for a Christian, there is no problem in being dumbfounded at God’s greatness. That should not surprise us. We ought to welcome the realization that God is bigger than we are, and that many things that He knows, we do not know. It should be exciting and wonderful to us, even though we probably will not ever know in this life the answers to all these mysteries. For whether we or scientists look through telescopes or microscopes, look back in history or try to understand what is going on today, the reality faced is the baffling confusion of constantly increasing complexity.

One of the unique features of our generation is that there are more people on the earth. More studying is being done. For example, in recent years there has been an explosion of energy released in the area of the study of our planet, of our universe, of our past. In all fields, you see a profusion of new information boiling forth that both rewards and gratifies, and also mystifies profoundly.

For example, there are 20,000 sites today where dinosaurs have been dug up. In almost all cases, some new form of dinosaur life has been discovered. Other illustrations involve the cosmological wonders, where we are informed of new ideas that we now understand less—because of new things we have learned. This is a most amazing period. More scientists live today than have ever lived in all of human history, simply because of the exploding global population and relative peace which makes that possible. What the future could hold begs the imagination. Many processes of human life and association are racing so rapidly toward threatening conclusions that it is not even clear that anybody will be around in the future.

So we are in for great excitement, both in our studies together and in the world in which we live. As a result, we need to have our hearts open for whatever God wants to reward us and tell us.

Editorial Comment on fighting evil

(2006) (*Mission Frontiers*, Sept.-Oct.)

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment15>

In this issue you will find a brief but truly masterful summary of the mysterious strategy of promoting cross-cultural faith movements, that is, movements that may or may not look like church-planting movements.

Yes, we are accepting the durable possibility of genuine personal faith despite a wide diversity of social structures within which that faith is nurtured and expressed. To illustrate this, Bob Goodmann not only proposes what ought to be done but gives specific descriptions of what will happen if these proposals are not followed.

Warning: at first glance you may think some of these guidelines are crazy. Everything you have heard and everything within you may cry out, “That won’t work, don’t do that, that’s wrong.”

However, an immense amount of experience (centuries, really) stands behind Goodmann’s marvelous list of guidelines. Bob not only draws on his own considerable experience in the field, but his points also derive from the hard-won insights of many others. I will say it again: this is a very unusual and truly significant article. I have never seen so much crackling wisdom in so few and efficient words.

Explosive Growth

Of course, these insights could have and should have come 200 years ago. In any case, today such strange thoughts are popping up all over the world as the momentum of the gospel itself gains speed in dozens of fields.

As I have often reported in this column, the Bible itself is now clearly “out of control” in many parts of the world. Wycliffe Bible Translators are right: once people get the Bible in their own language, you can readily expect what in many cases will be explosive growth of “faith movements to Christ.”

What Is The Goal?

One friend has said that we basically want to see genuine personal and family faith spread throughout a society. This might happen somewhat like the Biblical parable of yeast working its way through a lump of dough.

Others want to see at least families gathering weekly to worship.

Others want church buildings to be built, and, I suppose Bible schools and seminaries.

Others are scared to death that these strange movements will not follow their own denominational and theological standards. I know of several missionaries (I can think of three within ten seconds) who were asked to leave their mission agencies when it became clear that they were not producing the expected church movements the home boards had in mind.

So what are we really trying to do?

I recently had a serious (and friendly) e-mail exchange with a young person who had at first been captured by my own often misunderstood emphasis that there are times in history when mobilization for missions is more strategic than for potential mobilizers

to go to the field. He rightly pointed out that we cannot simply go on forever mobilizing young people to mobilize young people for more mission mobilization! Someone must go. Of course—I will grant that.

However, there is an interesting and little-discussed parallel. When people are won to Christ and we set them to win people to Christ, to win other people to Christ, to win still other people to Christ ... isn't that somewhat the same?

My young friend explained that in India he is still essentially mobilizing: he is winning Hindus to Christ and urging them to set out to win more Hindus for Christ. Is there no other job for a new believer but to recruit other new believers? But around the world today millions of new believers have problems with which "the new creature in Christ" does not directly deal.

Jobs need to be created, or starvation will continue. Diseases need to be fought, or two-thirds of the workforce will be disabled. Laws need to be changed and enforced, and order achieved. Honest new believers are an essential ingredient in God's answer to these problems, but just becoming a new believer is not the full answer.

It is crucial to get people regularly and faithfully to worship a God who will pardon their sins, whether they worship in a church building or at the family level (which is more important in some ways). But in addition, how about worshipping a God who hates dishonesty, who hates to see wives and children beaten by the man of the house, who hates to see impurity or selfishness or the lack of generosity of spirit?

"Wait a minute," you may say, "What do you want these new believers to do besides behave well and win others to Christ?"

Curiously, "what to do" is a prominent, unnoticed problem within the USA. Churches don't seem to care much about what kind of a job a member has: just get a job and support the church! Also, here in the USA we don't usually need to find jobs for new members, or get them off drugs, or solve their physical problems.

In his unique little book, *Revolution*, George Barna says that millions of Evangelical believers in America today are so sold on Jesus and the faith that they are not attracted to church anymore. They are much more concerned to be out doing the will of God than to be content with easygoing, safe church life.

Really?

If in fact Barna is right, what nevertheless comes to my attention is the strong impression that these millions of "revolutionaries" are mostly lone warriors for Christ. Nowhere in his book do I see the necessity of these revolutionaries joining or forming teams to fight pervasive social, medical and spiritual evil. The idea is mainly to spread the faith to more and more individuals, and do deeds of kindness here and there. But that won't deal with the roots of nationwide gangs or defeat malaria, poverty and disease in general.

Okay, no hand-wringing about how little Evangelicals give, for our greater problem is that we can't see clearly how we can give to effectively fight the most serious types of evil. We need our eyes opened. Getting more and more people to believe in a God of love and heaven is not all that is necessary for His "will to be done on earth."

Here is a poignant parallel from World War 2: when American soldiers invaded Europe and finally began to push into Germany, they ran into German death camps and saw stacks of corpses six feet high in 400-foot rows. General Eisenhower then remarked,

“We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for. Now, at least, he will know what he is fighting against.”

We tend to flee evil, to seek security, safety, ease, sweetness and light, even “holy lives.” Spreading hope is basic. Personal integrity is essential, but it is not enough. Can’t we deliberately find, face and fight evil, and in the name of Christ?

The Unfinished Epic

(2006) (*Frontiers in Mission*, 317-26)

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However, it so happens that the two most influential Bible expositors of the 20th Century both taught that the Bible teaches no such thing.

Nevertheless, not all Evangelicals today can easily imagine how a widely accepted interpretation of Genesis 1:1 by a Dallas Theological Seminary professor (Dr. Merrill Unger) could possibly lead to a momentous reinterpretation of our conventional concepts of Christian mission. In any case, this paper actually has three different purposes.

1. This paper attempts to defend the trustworthiness of the Bible in the eyes of the average well-educated secular person by showing how the Bible does not necessarily conflict with the idea that the universe started with a bang and is immensely old, and that the Earth itself is very old and displays a steady progression of increasingly complex life forms. Even if that all were true, what would it do to the Bible? While this paper tries to describe accurately what most paleontologists believe for the sake of discussion, its conclusions do not depend on the validity of the views of contemporary paleontologists. And, for the record, it does not give an inch to either the idea of Darwinian random evolution or to an untrustworthy Bible.

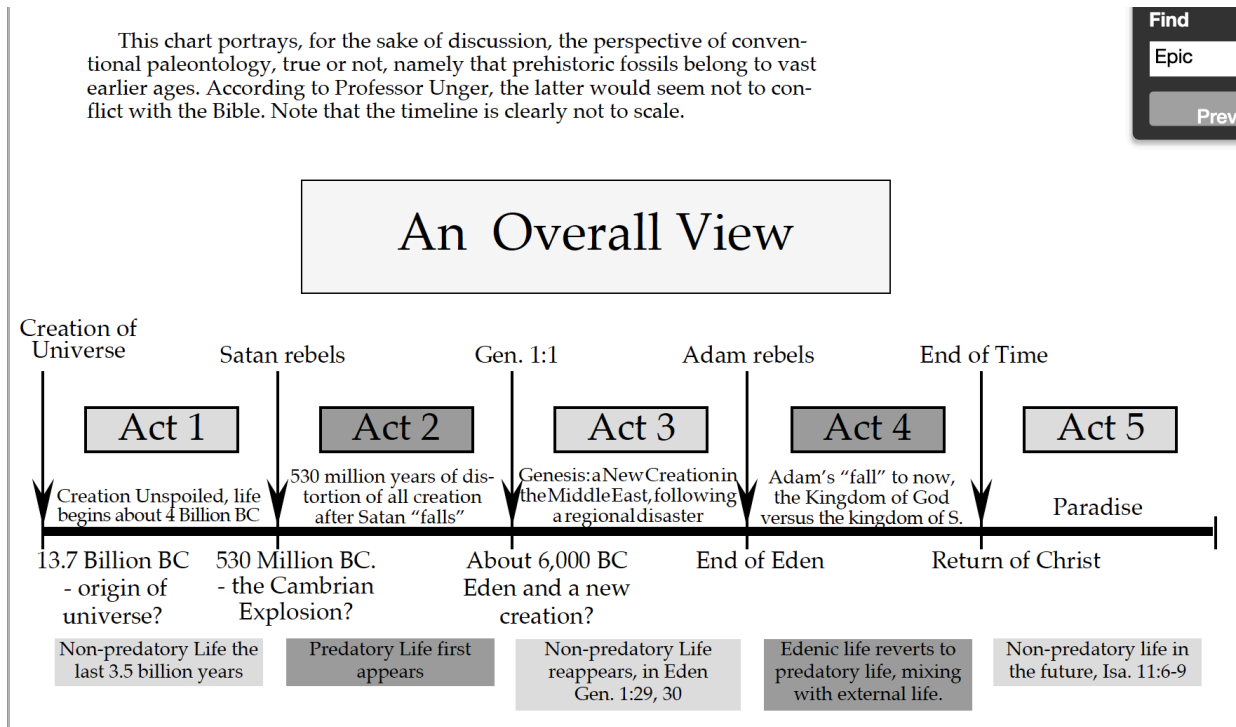
2. Secondly, it is a serious attempt to take the Bible literally and yet be able to believe in both “the young Earth” and “the old Earth” points of view. I feel sad when I hear that a famous Bible College *graduate* faculty believes in “the old Earth” while the *undergraduate* faculty believes in “the young Earth”—thinking they are contradictory. If they aren’t, let’s take this seriously.

3. Much more important, in a way, is the proposal that our current concepts of Christian mission work are good but incomplete, and, in fact, are much too narrow if we are really setting out to glorify God who is constantly blamed for evil. The novel element here is the idea that the full implications of the New Testament’s concept of Satan have

been largely lost in Western Christianity to the extent that we have been influenced by Augustine’s neo-platonic view of a God who, often with mysterious reasons, initiates both good and evil—with Satan only a “bystander.”

A larger interpretation of mission goes like this: we have been recruiting people all over the world into God’s eternal family, which is an activity as basic and as significant as you can get. But while our new “recruits” are now all dressed up in their new-life-in-Christ uniforms they do not realize these are military uniforms. Evangelicals may seem more often hoping to flee evil rather than fight it. Personal righteousness, both “attributed” and actual, would seem to be very thin if it does not turn around and fight evil.

Worse still—far worse—is the fact that if we just let the world fight disease, corruption and violence, God is generally blamed for “allowing” such evils. We are forced to puzzle over evil if we think God is “behind” all evil—instead of “in front”—working good out of evil. Such a theology requires books that help us to understand *When God Doesn’t Make Sense*.¹ However, suffering and violence *in a war* against an intelligent enemy *does make sense* and doesn’t need to be explained, and for the very same reason neither is an explanation necessary for the verse, “All that will live godly ... will suffer persecution.” We are in a war!



Summary

Opening the AD 1611 King James Bible we read "In the beginning God created" During the following 400 years this interpretation was cemented in the minds of millions of people. It conveys the idea that the Bible begins by describing the beginning of the entire universe, not merely the new beginning of the human story.

However, not even in 1611 was the universe well understood. It was likely far less clear to the "holy men of God"² writing in the days of Genesis.

In fact, the "known world" of Moses would not have even included the idea of a planet, of a sphere hanging in space. Similarly, "The ends of the Earth" in Isa. 49:6 never referred to our planet but to the ends of the Earthen plain ending abruptly where the "fertile crescent" of the Middle East is bounded by the mountains rising in Turkey and Iran.

In other words, the common interpretation of Genesis today -- that the universe began 6,000 years ago -- may simply be the result of reading later understanding into an earlier text. Such errors are called *anachronisms*. The error is understandable. However, the very serious result is to force the Bible (unfairly?) to say that the world is only 6,000 years old, *and thereby to create the greatest single stumbling block to modern man's trust in the Bible.*

Curiously, as long ago as 1958 the chair of the Old Testament Department at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Merrill Unger, taught that "the geologic ages" preceded Genesis 1:1 and that the events of Genesis 1 portray not THE beginning but "a *relative* beginning (*Unger's Bible Handbook*)."³ His was not a new idea even then, but today it has become uncommon.

Our problem is that most of the world today assumes that both our

planet and the universe are much older than 6,000 years. The grim result, then, is that to everyone who believes that, the Bible appears dead wrong, when in fact the Bible may be giving us a very accurate description of things using terms that were understood in that day.

Thus, Unger's insight is what undergirds the tentative perspective of this paper, namely, that "the geologic ages" took place long before Genesis 1:1 I would add that perhaps Satan is the one who began distorting all of nature from the Cambrian Period on, continuing that type of genetic distortion after Adam's fall. Although he was decisively routed at the turning point of the Cross, he stalks the land to this day, *his works casting blame on "the God of Creation."*

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This presentation is both hypothetical and conjectural. It lays out accurately I believe, the predominant secular interpretation of the history of the universe and more specifically the history of the Earth and life on Earth. In so doing, whenever the phrase "many scientists believe" is employed, I am not affirming my beliefs but describing theirs. It does not give any credence to random, unguided Darwinian evolution at all. But it does note that there is no necessary conflict with Genesis caused by the secular concept and time spans, if, that is, Genesis 1:1 does not describe the origin of the universe but rather a new creation of the era of "image of God" humans, as Professor Unger suggests.

The story is cast in narrative form for efficiency and digestible order. Credit is due to John Eldredge for the concept of "acts" in a story. He has four acts in his superb little book, *The Epic*.⁴ I have split his third act into Act III, the Edenic period and Act IV, the period after the Fall of Adam. Thus, I have five "acts."

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Note that this lengthy record of violent animal life does not seem to fit well into the first chapter of Genesis, even if the “days” spoken of there might be considered very long, since the animals described in Genesis 1 are explicitly declared (v. 29) to be *non-carnivorous*.

- Here is a thought: this new and radically different 500-million-year period might have begun when an intermediate being, an archangel, in turning against his Creator, in the “Fall of Satan,” carried perhaps millions of equally rebellious angels with him, becoming what C. S. Lewis called “a hideous strength” or what Paul called the “god of this world.”

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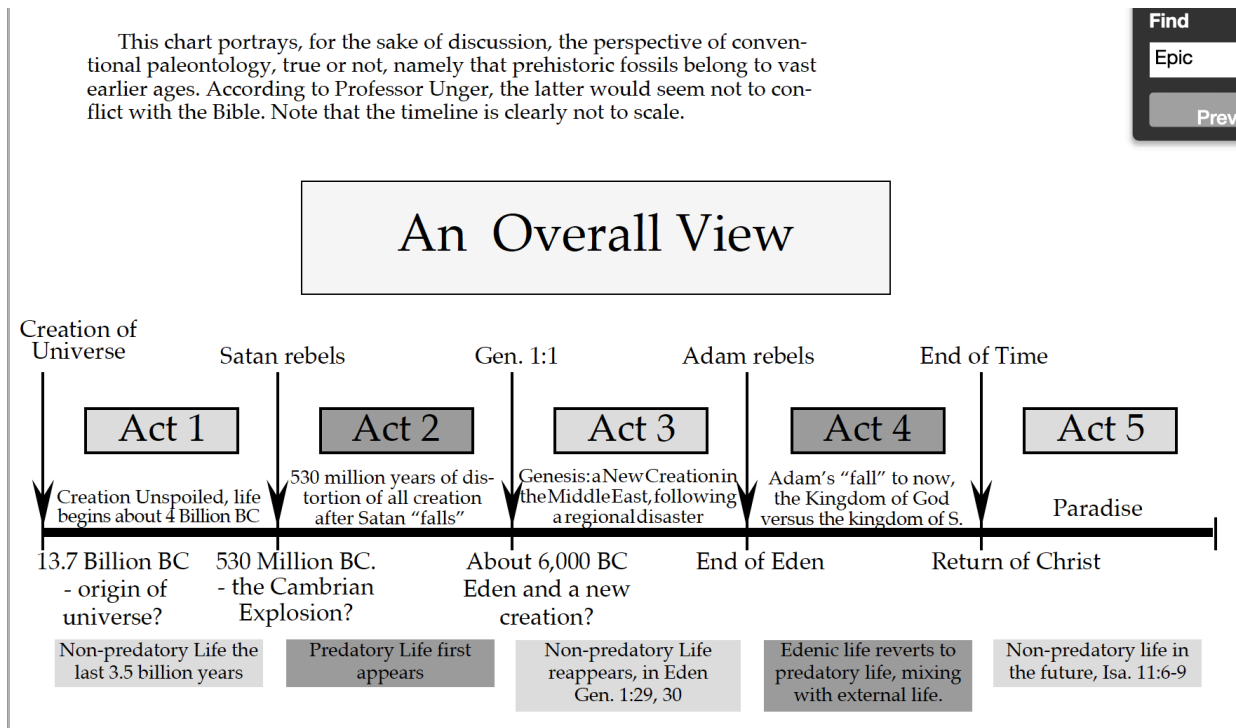
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Editorial Comment on Slavery

(2007) (*Mission Frontiers* July-August).

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment11>

There seems to be a quickening pace of opposition to the Evangelical cause in America and the world today. The relatively sudden emergence of Evangelicals with not only college degrees but PhDs and membership in Congress and involvement at the White House, has brought a tremendous negative response from many people who are fearful that an “Evangelical Taliban” wants to take over the country.

This is a bright spot actually, because it means that the Evangelical movement is gaining momentum and influence and the negative responses can readily be read as a measure of that strength.

At the same time, beginning with *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, a whole rash of very negative books have come out. One of the principal ones is by Richard Dawkins: *The God Delusion*. Another is by Victor J Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist*. Then, books by Sam Harris, first *The End of Faith*, and secondly a smaller book but with equally sharp teeth and totally destructive of the Christian faith, called *A Letter to a Christian Nation*.

These books cry out for response and one of the keenest and most delightful antidotes is a book, called *The New Atheism*, by David Marshall. It will be coming out from Harvest House Publishers very soon. There are also a lot of other articles that have, of course, helped to fight back against these outrageous types of attacks.

In any case, no matter what we do, no matter how clever we respond, we really have to face basic problems in the Christian mission. This issue of *Mission Frontiers* about Global Slavery points out one of the dimensions of our problem. Evangelicals are very well known at the Billy Graham level for talking and explaining and communicating and giving out information about Jesus Christ. Even commanding people to obey Jesus Christ. But we are not so visible when it comes to actual planning, to a presence in meetings that are now being held around the world on the really urgent suffering that is going on outrageously in many places in many different ways.

I have recently been looking back over the period of American slavery and the huge war that resulted when slavery was being more and more attacked by Evangelicals who were responding to the gospel. One of the key books, probably one of the most detailed and scholarly, by David Brion, is entitled *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. The difficulty of the eradication of slavery has been one of the most complex issues in American history and perhaps world history. The Civil War killed more people than all the wars in American History up through the Korean War. The number of human beings caught up in the war in the military in the North and the South, if a similar war were to take place today, would almost be the size of the population of California. We grossly misunderstand the tragedy of that war.

On the other hand, the rather rapid rejection of human slavery, first by the British and the French and then the Americans, has been one of the most significant “disruptions” in human history for which we have many reasons to be thankful.

The point is, we must not underestimate the cost of changing deeply ingrained Satanic cultural features that defy change and misrepresent God if they are attributed to Him, as do people like Dawkins.

There are, in fact, a whole rash of books that you can readily access through Amazon about human slavery, both past and present. The most upsetting feature of all of this, brilliantly displayed in one book I would recommend, entitled *Not for Sale* (see page 12 for one of its chapters), simply points out that there are more slaves in the world today than were bartered and bought during a 400 year period of North Atlantic slavery in the past. That is very hard to believe, but the statistics really back that up. The often quoted nearly 30 million slaves in the world today are a very unavoidable reality. They are not a philosophical concept, they are not a theoretical perspective, they are a grinding reality that is a terrible smudge and open sore on the global body politic.

The reason I bring this up here, however, is that this is not simply a world problem to be prayed about. It's something that Evangelicals have got to do something about and in fact are doing something about, but perhaps not as prominently as they could be or should be. Global slavery is again an incredibly complex problem, and it is bafflingly difficult to figure out what to do about it.

This brings me to my last point. I would point you to the "other editorial" (p. 34) in most of our issues written by the Director of the US Center for World Mission, Greg Parsons. His editorial in this issue is very insightful, speaking of "disruptive Missiology." He is not using the word "disruptive" in the negative sense. He is borrowing the term from American history in modern times quoting things like computers and email which have been "disruptive" technologies that have massively changed our society both for the good and for ill. There are some perspectives in mission today that, when they are fully understood or even before they are fully understood, will be very disruptive. Greg mentions one of them.

We have over the past years in both *Mission Frontiers* and in the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, been mentioning "disruptive" ideas swimming around in missions today, without using the term. Perhaps the term itself is a little confusing because it seems negative. But in many cases in society and missions some of the newer and "disruptive" ideas are actually a phenomenal blessing. And here simply I would refer you to his article because he refers to something we have mentioned again and again in *Mission Frontiers*, the so-called "Insider's approach." If properly pursued, there could be 100 million Muslims who are followers of Christ in the next 10 years. If not properly pursued, that is absolutely a pipedream at the rate we are going. If we insist upon all Greeks becoming Jews, or all Muslims becoming "Christians" we are simply smoking a pipe filled with marijuana. The fact of the matter is that Evangelicals are no more likely to convert millions of Roman Catholics or Orthodox or Muslims or Hindus or anybody else if we insist on them adopting the Evangelical western "Christian" cultural tradition with all of its different strengths and appalling weaknesses, such as high divorce rate, sexual licentiousness, pornography and other terrible things.

In one editorial we can't of course bring up a lot of "disruptive" missiologies, but this issue on the subject of what we might do about global slavery is clearly one "disruptive" issue. We have to stop and think and rearrange our schedules, our minds and our perspectives and do things differently if we are going to hit this global problem the way God would want us to do.

Introduction

(2007) (Foundations Lecture 1)

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Ralph Winter has proposed a story about the origins of evil on this planet that firmly attributes the source of this evil to spirit beings (Satan in particular and his many demonic followers), who chose to use their God-given gift of free will to rebel against God. The story places responsibility for overcoming that evil on the shoulders of humans—specifically those who are followers of Christ—who were created in the expectation that they would choose to use their gift of free will to say, “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done” and to participate with God in defeating the evil one and restoring creation to its intended state of displaying the glory of God. Under a burden of evil that God did not intend for it, creation groans as it waits for the Body of Christ to fulfill its mandate to work with God to defeat evil and demonstrate God’s character through participation with God in His mission in this world.

Ralph Winter introduces each of the lessons in this course with thought-provoking comments and stories intended to prompt the reader/listener to search for answers to difficult issues.

While the Jewish people were in captivity in Babylon, Isaiah 49:6 was written to tell them “it is a light thing that I shall raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel, I want my salvation to go to the ends of the earth.”

I have preached on that verse for many years as a marvelous example of an Old Testament statement of the Great Commission. Eventually I found out that people in those days didn’t know there was a planet, and they were thus probably not referring to the ends of the planet. They used the word earth to refer to the flat earthen plane of the Fertile Crescent. And at the end of that earthen plain were the mountains of Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey. To them, that was “the ends of the earth.” All of a sudden it seems clear—something I never realized before—that the Bible was really saying to these captives in Babylon (who were then literally at “the ends of the earth”) “I want my salvation to go to your captors.” Wow, that’s a bitter pill—a commission a lot more difficult than going as missionaries to the ends of the planet.

Let me explain why that mandate is so much more difficult. I’ll never forget being in Pakistan years ago. I found that the faculty members of this seminary to whom I was speaking for an extended period were getting more and more unhappy about my obvious concern that the 97% population of Pakistan, being Muslim, were not in their sights. They were clearly not terribly concerned about those people, that is, the Muslims, and I was. Finally one of the faculty members waved a finger in my face and said, “If you send missionaries to Pakistan to reach the Muslims we’ll go to the government and get them thrown out of the country.” You can easily understand that if anyone were to say to them, “Look, I want you to be my salvation to your captors”—that would be a very bitter pill. If the Bible is saying that, why should we cover it up, by interpreting it to mean “I want you to send missionaries to the ends of the earth (planet)”? As much as I might like the

Bible to say that, nevertheless, in the biblical context that phrase probably doesn't have that meaning that's all. Would it be fair to the Bible if we forced it to our current concept of global mission if in fact in these verses it meant something very different?

This verse is vital for Pakistani Christians today! Both in Pakistan and in Bangladesh there are Christians who not only don't want to reach out to the majority Muslim populations but will denounce and oppose those who do.

The Bible does speak to us today. Let's take a look briefly at one of the passages of the New Testament that does in fact talk in expansive terms. I think for example of Paul the apostle. Even he may not have known he was living on a planet. Thus, he wasn't generally talking in anything other than first century cosmological terms. But, he was announcing things that did indeed have significance for the entire earth.

Let's look at Acts 26. This is the chapter where he comes before Agrippa and where Agrippa allows Paul to tell him his story. Paul then explains how he was struck down in the middle of the day by an incredible light and a voice from the heavens said,

Rise, get up on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

That last sentence uses three metaphors—blindness, darkness, captivity—that in one sense say that same thing. But then, further on he says to King Agrippa “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, I preached that they should repent, turn to God, and prove their repentance by their deeds.” Here he goes much further than the Reformation emphasis about giving people a ticket to heaven.

Interestingly enough, Evangelicals today in the opposite sense have also gone further than the Reformation: we can now promise people they can get to heaven. The Reformation could not assure people that they could get to heaven, they just gave them a potentially better method of getting there. And even two centuries later, there were lots of Christians who couldn't possibly simply “accept Christ” and be sure to get to heaven. Why? Because there was no doctrine of the assurance of salvation. They were in the original Reformation tradition. In one of those traditions you waited until God selected you. You hoped that God would save you. You read your Bible. You went to church. But there was no teaching on assurance. Paul's words to Agrippa don't emphasize so much what you are going to get out of this but what you have to put into it—repentance, obedience.

Turning from darkness to light means repenting. When Paul said in 2 Corinthians, “He died for all, that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again,” he was not talking merely about people doing self centered things although that would be included. He was talking about a totally new life.

What did that mean? What did Paul understand that to mean? Obviously, we should be able to see further than he did, as to what God is up to. We've seen much more. Think for example of the lives of people who had only travelled 12 miles from where they were born, or only lived 12 years or 20 years or 30 years. People only knew a bit of space or time. Obviously they couldn't have extrapolated into all the different possibilities of what turning to God would mean. Nevertheless, Paul interpreted all of human experience as the arena in which God's will was being unfolded and fulfilled. And

he meant clearly that everyone who follows Christ would potentially be caught up in that larger picture in that larger vision.

But, two things come out in this story that we usually overlook. Why did God have to say to him “I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles”? And why a little bit later on does he say “that is why the Jews seized me at the temple and tried to kill me”? What was the reason? Why would a man who wants to rescue people from blindness, darkness and captivity be pounced on?

Well, for one thing, remember that the first recorded sermon of Jesus Christ led to an attempt on his death. In Luke 4 He was at first saying things everyone was very happy about. It’s as if they were poking each other saying “Ain’t he great.” And then all of a sudden he talked about certain Gentiles on whom God smiled. That jerked the people into alertness about what he was going to say next. He went on to say one more thing about another group of Gentiles to whom the grace of God had been extended. And that did it. They surged forward and seized him and tried to throw him off a cliff. Now why was that? They simply were repulsed by the thought that God also loved the Gen- tiles! They were being tested by a unique insight which of course was there in the Bible all along.

Or take the first recorded sermon of the apostle Paul. There were two Antiochs—the place he was sent from and his new Antioch where he went to give his first sermon recorded in the book of Acts. And he was invited to speak for two Sabbaths—that was a courteous thing for a person with rabbinical training which he had. But apparently they had no idea what he was going to say, because the very first time he spoke the elders who always sat in the front row became more and more disturbed. He seemed to be talking to people in the back rows—people who were Gentiles, just sitting in.

These back-row Gentiles were not proselytes. They hadn’t converted over to Judaism as a *culture*. But they were very interested in the Bible that was being read every Sabbath and they may have been listening for years. In the Book of Acts they are called *God-fearers or devout persons*. Paul was seemingly talking to them and releasing them from their assumption that they would have to become proselytes—culturally Jews—to be acceptable to God.

Thus, the elders in the front row were really furious. And of course, when Paul came back the second Sabbath they were prepared for him. It was common for elders to stand up and reinforce a point or give an illustration, or, you might say, assist the person who was speaking. That was a courteous and typical thing in a synagogue. But in this case they did not support him. They contradicted him. They stood up and they defied him and hassled him. Thus, finally he picked up his NIV Bible and just walked right straight out down the red carpet—and the whole crew in the back rows went with him.

You can see this was a serious problem for the synagogue elders. What did they do? It says the Jews followed him and tried to kill him. In fact, they actually thought they killed him. They dragged his body outside the city (that was the law-abiding thing to do). These were upright people. But, of course, they failed, because stoning is not a very secure way to kill people. You may just stun them, and they look like they’re dead but they may not be dead. In any case, whether he was raised from the dead or wasn’t quite killed, we have to give them credit for trying. But obviously, when the will of God impinges on the will of man, sparks fly. And what Paul is talking about is not going through a little ritual of theology and getting an assurance of heaven and getting a ticket

to heaven put in your pocket. He is talking about a totally new way of life—which has to do with the whole sweep of history.

But, the contrary element is very important here. Because it isn't just in this particular passage we find a contrary element to the will of God. Paul was of course, under pressure and difficulty and danger many times and was one of the most beat-up missionaries that ever lived. But, think for example of the Cross. I really am confused and stunned by all of these books that are so happy for the event of the Cross, and the blood of Christ was shed and we've got what we need now. What else does the Cross mean? It means that there is a very cruel and powerful force in this world contrary to God. It means many things. John Piper, my good friend with whom I had lunch a few weeks ago, wrote a whole book with 50 chapters talking about the purposes of God revealed in the Cross. And on the back cover of the book he says "Now, I'm not speaking about causes, I'm talking about purposes of God." So, when I ate lunch with him, I said, "John, don't you think the Cross had a very significant meaning in revealing the power and the cruelty of our enemy?" I think it does mean that. But it wasn't just the Cross. Even if you go back into Genesis 12, where we take so happily that verse, "I will bless you and you will be a blessing to all peoples of the world," the word "blessing" doesn't mean blessing in the modern English sense, it means "I will re-inherit you," like the blessing Jacob got instead of Esau. It wasn't a box of chocolates or a piece of land, it was a responsibility, a permanent responsibility. Well, in any case, right in those verses, it says "those who mistreat you, I will curse." Why would they mistreat them? There is this contrary principle.

But you go further back to Noah. In his day, it says in the King James, everyone was only doing evil continually. There was evil in the world, so much so, that Noah was practically the only person whom God could select. Go back further and you get to Lamech, who, if somebody was going to avenge somebody else 7 times, he would avenge them 77 times. Or Cain. Where did that evil come from? And then of course you see the serpent in the garden of Eden. In the garden of Eden, there was this often referred to cultural mandate of man being created to take care of the animals. But notice, when that happened there was no evil for them to contend with. The animals were not even carnivorous animals. And even the human beings were not carnivorous. There was no emergency or problem. And that cultural mandate to take care of the animals, after the fall of Adam, was obviously drastically modified. Why would it continue unchanged?

Now, you would think there would be some sort of a military mandate. And a military mandate, if you want to use the phrase, would include the cultural mandate. In a war, like I was in, the Second World War, war engulfed every single person in the United States, not just the service men. Every single person had to justify what they were doing. If you went on a Sunday drive with no purpose other than family happiness, you could be fined 50 dollars. You had to justify every drop of gasoline you used. You couldn't buy nylon stockings. That nylon was needed for parachute cords, and on and on and on. The entire citizenry is engulfed in a global war. And all of the functions of the cultural mandate still go on, except the trivialities. (I don't know that the cultural mandate in the first chapter of Genesis is supposed to refer to trivialities anyway.) In addition, there are other strident demands upon the populace that take some thousands and thousands to their death, and many more into casualties. And you don't have to write a book about the peculiar nature of suffering during a war, and so why is it that our theologians are writing

books about suffering—*because we don't think there is a war!* We don't realize there is a war. There is a continuing constant evil power to fight against.

And so, it is very significant that in the first chapter of Genesis, again and again it says, “and it was good.” It was good. This kind of creation in Genesis isn't dinosaurs which you couldn't call good. It isn't the tremendously violent clash of all forms of life which we witness in the bones we've been digging up for the last 200 years. In 1812 they first dug up the bones of a very large and vicious crocodile-like creature that they could easily see had no comparison to anything alive right now. In fact, from that time to this they now have dug up so many other kinds of animal life which is no longer in existence on this earth that rough calculations are that the diversity of animal life right now is only one-thousandth of the diversity of all the extinct diversity that has been dug up.

So, those bones don't really fit into chapter one of Genesis. And the question that we are going to be taking up very seriously in the next lesson is the question of whether Genesis is supposed to be describing those bones or not. This is a very intriguing question for me because all of my life I have been trying to understand the Bible better. And one of the constant things that has happened, not every day but certainly every year, is there is this verse or that verse which I thought meant one thing but actually meant something else. In those cases I have had to give up something that was maybe very precious, like the Great Commission in Isaiah 49—now I know that verse means something very much more ominous and serious than the Great Commission, as serious as that is.

Thus, this larger story brings into focus many of the smaller elements in the story, and I hope we won't just be episodic in our approach to this whole story. We'll try to get some fairly good ideas about what the overall story means.

Now, believe me, we're not going to come to absolute conclusions. I, at least, am not long on absolute conclusions about most of these things. I'm simply trying my best to figure them out. And I hope that you'll be able to help me do that. But in any case this is a preview of coming attractions in this course.

Seizing the Future

(2008) (Foundations Course, Lecture 20)

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In the perspective of this course we are dealing with the unfolding of a single story. It is not the story of the universe all the way from the big bang until today. Although presented speculatively, it is more especially the story of a good Creator and a good creation which after a lengthy period is suddenly attacked by a breakaway leader who, with his intelligent followers, wound terribly both the creation and the reputation of the Creator, thus presenting the challenge of redemption and restoration. It can be seen as an epic in five acts.

Act 1 is the longest of all the Acts, by far. During this first act the universe is created and the very lengthy period of the development of life takes place, possibly the work of angels guided by God, pleasing Him as they gradually learn what today we are beginning to understand as the true complexities of life itself.

The emergency arises at the end of Act 1. By this time atoms and molecules and, most surprisingly of all, the incredible intricacies of life have been developed, not just tiny bacteria based on DNA molecules, but small animals. Some of the animals are radially symmetrical, like star fish. Others are “bipolar” which means they have a front and a back, a right and a left. The key point is that none of these animals at this stage is aggressive. None needs to defend itself.

But the emergency, introducing Act 2, arises when, let’s guess, the archangel whom Paul calls “the god of this world,” with all his host, turns against God. This is the Fall of Satan. As a result of the genetic distortions of a rebel Satan, during this much shorter but still lengthy Act 2, predatory forms of life appear at all levels, from bacteria to dinosaurs, and all of nature becomes a battle ground.

Meanwhile during this tumultuous Act 2 the good angels continue to develop increasingly intelligent forms of life. By 11,000 years ago truly modern humans finally appear, but like the rest of nature, are gruesomely distorted and dangerously predatory.

Finally, a major counter move introduces Act 3. A massive asteroid wipes out all life in the middle East, possibly gouging the below-sea-level depression now known as the Dead Sea. And now in this region, the original, non-carnivorous kind of plants and animals are recreated in the Garden of Eden and a new Adamic race is brought into existence in the image of God, with the apparent intent of re-introducing harmonious, not carnivorous forms of life, life that is a reflection of the end of time when the lion will lie down with the lamb (Isa. 11).

However, Act 4 begins when Adam falls, and Eden breaks down. Now, the new forms of non-predatory life of Genesis 1 interbreed with the earlier depraved forms of life outside of the region of the Garden of Eden. The Sons of God marry the daughters of men, and the length of human life gradually sags to a fraction of what it was intended.

Obviously, as the result of Adam’s fall the image of God was damaged or erased, whatever it was, and all human beings are now equally depraved and in need of redemption.

We, today, stand at the later stages of this Act 4, in which God’s redemptive work is making men new and enlisting them in the war effort to “destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8).

Meanwhile, in this present Act 4 situation, widespread delusion and blindness prevails even concerning the existence of a war against Satan. This is especially true and tragic in those parts of the world where redemption would seem to have succeeded more completely, that is, in the “Christian” West, and where war efforts could best be launched.

Much of the world is still so beaten down by the ravages of evil—poverty, disease, human conflict—that it is ironic that unlike the West the poor and the powerless of this world are more likely to understand the wartime footing we actually are experiencing. It is further ironic because they may be the least likely to be able to do anything about it. For them “escapist theology” is the best solace. They are the ones who now can best sing “This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through.”

Since the poor and the disadvantaged can’t be effectively involved in a global war to defeat the works of Satan we must return to those whom we might describe as “disinclined,” but theoretically capable.

The famous philosopher of yesteryear, Mortimer Adler, made the observation that what the world needed was the “moral equivalent of war”—that is, an attitude of all-out war effort, not fighting against flesh and blood, but against a similarly massive, urgent, intense, sacrificial concentration of human beings against not humans but human problems and other evils which distort God’s creation and tear down His reputation. I would add, against an enemy that is not human and whose very existence is denied apathetically by even most Christians today.

Wars in the past have typically gotten started because of some massive and aggressive challenge. The closest thing to that might be a global plague of the sort that killed from 50 to 100 million people in 1918—far more people right after World War I than were killed in the war itself. But even that might not lead to the kind of total war which the United States and other nations experienced in what we call the Second World War. Not many people alive today lived through that war; those of us who did, can recall vividly the utter transformation of a nation involved in all-out, total war.

If our analysis in these lessons is correct, this war has been going on ever since Satan fell, and was renewed with humans involved when Adam fell. Adam’s role in the garden was to take care of it, but after Eden broke down, his own survival was at stake. Indeed, his own son lost his life no doubt in part due to the sin permeated atmosphere outside of Eden. There is no likelihood that the equivalent of a Pearl Harbor is going to happen that would rally the social resources of the world, or even Christian resources, or more particularly, the Evangelicals. But it is easily possible to imagine that the force of the Lord’s Prayer “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” would require us to do everything we possibly can, not just to exhibit fantastic personal sacrifice, but to mobilize as much of the Christian world and the non-Christian world as possible. 97

To quote 1 John 3:8 again, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” This verse points out how very central war against evil, war against Satan, actually is. If this is the central purpose, or one of the central purposes of the Son of God (who made it plain that, “as my Father has sent me, even so

send I you”), then His commission is our commission and our commission is today widely underestimated and misunderstood. First century believers could not know how great were the inroads the enemy had made, for example, in the realm of disease.

We do have, vaguely, the structure of war in our hands. Christians, notably in the western world, and now noticeably in the rest of the world, have launched mission agencies which are teams of people explicitly determined to carry out purposeful actions in accord with God’s will. These could be considered the “armed forces” of the Kingdom, containing the “servicemen” of that Kingdom. In that Kingdom there are also “civilians,” the donors, the supporters, and even those who do not support them, who are “behind the lines.” The problem is, that the civilians are not remotely as mobilized at this time as they would be during a real total war, and it is true that even the servicemen are only striking a glancing blow against the Enemy of the Kingdom.

I don’t believe the problem is that we have outrageously selfish, evil, or even acquisitive people. We simply have people who don’t sense any war effort and are living it up in an apparently peacetime situation.

It might be observed in passing that if all mission donors were to adopt the consumption level of the missionary families they support this would free up, in a large percentage of the donors cases, a good percentage of their income. But right now they would say, “What’s the use?” Such a question derives understandably from the thought that the needs around the world are dimly existent, hopelessly too large to resolve, or the efforts being made seem to be ineffective or futile.

If we are going to seize the future in terms of the wartime situation in which we find ourselves, several radically new perspectives must urgently become more widespread.

The Scope of the Problem

First of all, we must realize the true scope of the problem. If Satan is able to dull people’s senses and to divert their gaze, that would certainly explain the extent to which, as John Eldredge puts it in his book *The Epic*, “I am staggered by the level of naivete that most people live with regarding evil.” How is it possible for us to get a good deal of our country into a war effort in Iraq, where perhaps ten Americans die a day, and not be far more alarmed over the fact that back home due to two diseases alone, we lose as many people as if we are fighting 600 Iraq wars? Cardiovascular disease and cancer claw down to horrible death 6,000 people per day—600 times as many as in Iraq—who go down in as great a degree of suffering as those who are dying in Iraq. Yet the actual mobilization in this country to understand the origins of either of these two major diseases is terrifyingly minor. More than ninety percent of the money that goes for the ravages of these two diseases (almost two billion dollars a day) is focused on treatments of people who are already diseased, not on pursuing the sources of the diseases.

If this imbalance were more widely known, could this function as a “Pearl Harbor,” to help us rally the troops for a new world war against disease? Our gargantuan outlay in this country for medical and pharmaceutical services is almost totally concentrated on healing activity, not on the eradication of the sources of disease.

The Obscurity of the Problem

Secondly, we need to realize that this problem is not only huge and vicious, it is cloaked in the obscurity of confusion and ignorance. What has just been said about the lack of awareness of the problem is itself clearly a separate aspect of it. The hugeness of the problem wouldn't be as serious if it were in plain sight.

However, thus far I have only spoken of the evil of the massive onslaught of disease on animals and humans. Evil also includes the widespread corruption of the human element that might be involved in the solution of the problem!

Then, what about the rarely noticed distortions we see in the very existence of predatory forms of life? How about the genetic transformation that could restore predatory life to non-carnivorous condition? Is that part of the mission to glorify God? If man-eating tigers are vicious due to genetic distortion by Satan and his angels, isn't that a work of the devil? How about one day restoring them through genetic re-engineering? Is the only answer to kill or cage? Would it not be glorifying to God not to be blamed for their current predatory state? Again, is that part of our mission? If so, it involves a knowledge of microbiology which has only recently dawned on us.

But there are still other easily overlooked evils. After many years working for the World Bank, one of the senior officials wrote a book entitled, *The White Man's Burden*. The book points out the gruesome reality that well over half the funds intended to relieve the poverty and economic distress in underdeveloped nations of the world gets diverted by the dishonesty of government officials and intermediaries in the needy nations, as well as within the ranks of the 10,000 employees of the World Bank itself. Again and again, the World Bank has attempted to clean up its act, but the diversion of funds even within its walls is so extensive that there is little will to do it.

Indeed, for the Kingdom of God to come on earth and His will to be elaborated in opposition to our great enemy, radically new awareness is necessary.

Who Will Fight for Us?

Furthermore, it would be simplest to believe that it would be sufficient if the Christians of the world are aroused to this effort. Embarrassingly, except in the area of personal salvation and hopes of eternity, most of the efforts and initiatives in our world today that focus on the defeat of the works of the Devil are led by non-Christians, or by entities that are not clearly Christian.

If money would do it, then the magnificent efforts of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation could be the answer, since their example has already pressured many other foundations to deal with some of the world's most urgent problems. It so happens that at the cutting edge of microbiological research on sources of disease, Orthodox Jewish doctors are to be found all out of proportion to their percentage of the population. However, even in the case of Jimmy Carter and his outstanding Carter Center, which has a focus on the extermination of disease pathogens, neither the money nor the activity is noticeably derived from the formal Christian movement.

In other words, it does not seem likely that it would be wise to suppose that Christians alone can slay the giants of evil in our world today. In a sense, however, our main purpose, which is more likely achievable, is to clarify the fact that God's purposes, as reflected by Christian initiatives, make Him out to be the opponent of evil, not the initiator of evil.

A Particular Problem

Several types of theology would seem to frustrate any substantial efforts against evil. One theological tradition might emphasize that the world is getting worse and worse anyway, so why bother? Focus on the next world. Another, more virulent form of theology, would actually attribute all tragedies to the initiative of God Himself, rather than to the initiative of fallen angels, or fallen humanity. This latter type of theology is so pervasive that even Christian leaders can write books like *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, or *Where Is God When It Hurts?* In both cases, God's mysterious will, to which we are told we must resign ourselves, is the main emphasis, not an intelligent evil power which we have a mandate to defeat, or at least die in the attempt.

Even more pervasive is the assumption that Christianity is primarily the rescue of human beings rather than the restoration of all creation. It is thought that to escape this world is more important than to restore God's glory on earth through the conquest of the destructive and distorting elements of Satanic fury against God.

Discipline

The one obvious truth about effective human action is that the vast majority of the work of the world is accomplished through social discipline. In a war, the armed forces are characterized by disciplined troop activities. Commercial enterprises typically squeeze the life out of people to get their work done. Once people retire, their good intentions quickly evaporate for a lack of social discipline. Their lives are cluttered with many good things, but strikingly different is their useful output by comparison to their own earlier days when they were in the harness of the work force. Even wealthy athletes and movie stars have to pay "trainers." If the world were to depend on personal will power alone, practically everything significant would grind to a halt.

It is well known that the contemporary church in America requires very little of its people. This gives rise to the fact that we have an Opus Dei in the Catholic tradition which harnesses lay believers in a very accountable lifestyle. In the Protestant tradition we have the Disciplined Order of Christ which tends in the same direction, though far less seriously. When everyone does that which is right in their own eyes, the resulting efforts for the Kingdom are token at best, and essentially meaningless at worst. In the case of the Opus Dei, the "sanctification of daily life" is a marvelous emphasis, but considerably directionless without any clear war effort in mind. In the case of the Disciplined Order of Christ (DOC), there is even less emphasis upon "holy worldliness," to use Richard Mouw's famous phrase. However, something vaguely equivalent, in addition to, but not in opposition to existing congregations, would seem to be necessary if we are going to mobilize Christian believers in any real depth.

At the present time, I am unaware of any substantial, explicitly Christian organization in the world that is focused on the defeat of disease pathogens as is the case with the Carter Center. We have organizations devoted to justice and which defend the 100 rights of Christian believers in public schools and in public life, but these are, to some extent, defensive, or superficial.

There is not space or time here, to go further in elaboration of what it would take to disassociate God from evil events, or the disciplined group efforts necessary for that purpose. But at least we can sense, with what has been said, the larger dimensions of the Christian mission, and the contrast with what is now being accomplished.

Total war will require thousands of Evangelicals to move to the cutting edge of microbiology and of political life, to work for the transformation of ethical standards throughout the commercial world and a new sense of the need of group discipline to do those things. All this and more is necessary if we are to “seize the future.”

Summary of Ralph D. Winter's Warfare Missiology

8-14-05

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“The over-arching vision within the Frontier Mission Fellowship’s group of projects is to see all unreached peoples reached with the gospel and the kingdom to come among them.”

What is missing in this statement?

I clearly recall the situation over 30 years ago as I labored mightily to explain the concept of unreached peoples to the global conference in Switzerland. It was not such a difficult concept, but it was different. It was new. It was not something already in peoples’ minds. It was hard for them to accept the concept and know what to do about it.

Today, more than a quarter of a century after our founding, I am trying to explain another different and new concept that needs to be understood and adopted by the whole world of missions. This concept looks at the root problem: *why* are the unreached in this condition of spiritual darkness?

All my life I have assumed that the big tension is between human beings and God. Since Adam fell out with God, his entire lineage has been estranged and needs reconciliation through the blood of Christ. But the larger picture is that the biggest tension is not between humans and God but between vicious, hideous plotting evil and God, and humans were created to be on God’s side in that conflict with evil.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

I think we need to speak of four levels of strategy and purpose, whether in reaching the unreached or in evangelizing within our own culture:

Level 1: Getting people “saved”

Level 2: Winning them to the Lordship of Christ and into His family

Level 3: Glorifying God

Level 4: Fighting “the works of the devil” as a means of glorifying God, that is, understanding the lordship of Christ as involving us in an all-out war against evil, disease, corruption, a war in which we can expect suffering, hardship and death.

A major obstacle in reclaiming God’s glory is that much of the evil in this world is not known to be evil, but merely “the way things are,” as if God created things that way. Furthermore, where there is confusion about whether evil is from God or not, our power in evangelism and missions is greatly weakened.

An example of our confusion about what is evil and what is not is how we view the pervasive violence and suffering in nature. Unlike Luther and Calvin, we now know that nature includes all of the invading viruses, bacteria, and parasites. Many shrug their shoulders and say that’s the way God created it. The violence at both the microbiological and visible levels in nature is accepted as being God’s will.

Yet in the very first chapter of the Bible both the animal life and humans mentioned there are clearly described as non-carnivorous, meaning they don’t kill each other (Genesis 1:29). In the future, that will also be the case when “the wolf will live with the lamb, ... the infant will play

near the hole of the cobra and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:8, 9).

Violence in nature is not God's plan. But lack of an explanation for pervasive violence keeps thousands of intelligent people away from faith. If we are to glorify God, is it essential to free Him from the accusation that He, not Satan, is the author of evil? A great deal of evil in this world is blamed on God. How attractive is our invitation to people to return to and yield to their Father in heaven if they continue to believe he is the one who contrives for most everyone to die in suffering? Unless Satan is in the picture and we are known to be fighting his deadly works, we are allowing God's glory to be marred and torn down.

To understand how we have come to the place of attributing violence in nature to God, it is necessary to go back to Genesis 1. If I can help people clear up a longstanding misunderstanding of the first chapter of the Bible, I hope they will be able to see that once we are saved, our mission is to participate all-out in an onslaught against Satan and his works, not just lie back and await heaven.

All my life until recently I have assumed, along with most casual readers of Genesis in English, that Genesis 1:1 refers to the creation of the universe, and this would then have been fairly recently. Meanwhile, however, during my lifetime thousands of intelligent observers have been studying the earth and have continued to dig up bones of huge violent creatures that seem to have lived a very long time ago. Even in my teens my Scofield Reference Bible had taken this apparent age of the earth into account by concluding that there was a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Today, however, that "gap" theory is seldom mentioned. There are problems with believing that when God created the universe He began with a situation that could be called "destroyed and desolate" (Genesis 1:2, Hebrew: *tohu wabohu*).

More often people have gone to "long days." They have concluded that the six days of creation were longer than 24 hours, perhaps millions of years. However, for me the chief problem in inserting all of the old earth into the long days of Genesis One is that most of these old bones we have been digging up are bones of shockingly vicious and life-destroying creatures. If they were what were being created in those elongated days, then, why would Genesis One repeatedly say, "and God saw that it was good"? Or why would we read at the end of the chapter that neither man nor beast is carnivorous but is plant eating?

The problem in interpretation here becomes so severe that in recent years many have decided to simply deny that there is any great age to all the millions of old bones that have been dug up. To proponents of the "Young Earth" theory, the bones only look old, and things like the Grand Canyon did not take many years to form, but were formed almost overnight as a result of a global flood.

However the "Young Earth" concept is the laughing stock of the entire secular world simply because evidence is growing stronger every day that the old bones we have dug up really are old. What I am suggesting here actually accepts the events of Genesis 1 and 24 hour days of (re)creation as being only 6,000 years ago—as well as the "old earth" *before* Genesis 1:1. But notice, whether the Earth is both old and young or either old or young, if one interpretation is presented as the only possible meaning of the Bible, and turns out to be wrong, then the world will label the Bible wrong rather than the interpretation. This happened with Calvin and Luther who thought the Bible taught that the earth is the center of the universe, and scientists have claimed the Bible is wrong ever since.

Thousands of intelligent investigators all over the world, Christian and non-Christian, have concluded that the earth is old, not just six thousand years old. If they are right the question arises, "Does that indicate that the Bible is wrong?" We surely don't believe the Bible was dictated by God, as has been alleged for the Muslims' *Qur'an* and the Mormons' *Book of Mormon*. We believe our Bible was written by human men inspired by God to write for human

understanding in their time and place. That is why it behooves us to understand Bible times if we want to really understand the Bible and do it justice.

It is very likely that at the time the book of Genesis came into being people did not know they were living on a round ball hanging in space. When they said, in Isaiah 49:6, “to the ends of the earth” they were talking about their own known world. When they talked about “the whole world” they were talking about the world they knew, not about the entire planet. When they said the flood covered the world they were not talking about the entire planet. The ark thus contained all the animals in that area of the world to be destroyed, but not all of the other animals in the world, and certainly not dinosaurs 100 feet long weighing many tons.

Now the reason this issue is important to me and to a better understanding of the Christian mission is simple. If in a vastly earlier period of time before Genesis 1:1, Satan turned against God and distorted God’s good creation into the incredible suffering and violence we still see all throughout nature, if Satan has from that time been the perverter of microbes into deadly germs such that all forms of life suffer from microbiological attack—if all this occurred before Genesis 1:1—then the events of Genesis chapter one may well display the relatively recent recreation of plant-eating animals and humans in their original God-designed form, and can be seen as a new beachhead intended to assist in the defeat of Satan and the restoration of all creation.

However, Genesis explains that almost immediately thereafter, Satan (who already had a long crime record) also penetrated Eden and brought down the newly created humans and the new beginning of undistorted animal life. Ever since, humans and animals have been born genetically perverted along with all the rest of nature. As a result, the new forms of life created in God’s image in Genesis 1 are victims of Satan and now have dire need themselves to be saved before they can work effectively with God in the defeat of Satan.

The Cross was then the turning point in the battle against Satan. The Bible says, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Jesus had a job to do; he dealt a definitive blow against Satan, but the war isn’t over yet. Jesus said, “as the Father sent me, so send I you.” The immense tragedy is that the entire Christian world has been significantly duped by Satan, and has only vaguely understood this larger mission. The war against evil and against things that tear down our understanding of God is still going on. All over the earth people are dying prematurely in suffering and pain due to an onslaught from the microbiological world which we are only beginning to understand and which no one has understood theologically. It is not God that is inflicting the casualties but the enemy. Let’s not be confused about that and inactive in that war!

Gregory Boyd has said, “To follow Jesus is to do battle with the ever-present prince of darkness.” (Boyd 1997:280) It is not a coincidence that the unreached areas of the world where the Bible has had the least influence overlap with those areas where there is the most suffering, disease, war and poverty (Myers 1996): the works of the devil. A medical missionary to India from 1939-1969 wrote in his journal, “this kingdom of disease, death, ignorance, prejudice, fear, malnutrition and abject poverty is most surely a kingdom which ought to be overthrown by the Kingdom of our God.” (Rees 2003) The Kingdom began striking back when God gave the Great Commission to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. As Abraham’s children, we have inherited the family responsibility of God’s concerns and purposes which are to become our concerns and purposes. It is not to seek high pay or perks, but the war that must be won! Our lives and careers need to yield to that reality.

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**To the New Asian Society of Missiology:
Greetings from the West
(Twelve Mistakes of the West)**

(2007) (*Foundations Reader*, 247-51)

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5ed13d18cfba127f3c41f09d/1590770998243/Foundations+Reader.pdf>

In 1973, a third of a century ago, David Cho, Ph.D., invited several of us from the West to a meeting in Seoul, Korea which preceded the formation of the Asia Missions Association. On that occasion I presented a paper urging Asian mission leaders not to make the same mistake as Western leaders had made when the Foreign Mission Conference of North America shortly after 1900 had insisted that in God's Kingdom only denominational mission boards were legitimate. My paper was entitled, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," which spoke favorably of both "modalities" and "sodalities." By now, of course, there are many American as well as Asian structures that are interdenominational.

Later, I often pointed out in my classroom teaching the shocking failure of the Western missions to understand the possibility and importance of Non-Western believers to form their own mission agencies. By now, of course, Non-Western agencies are very numerous and enthusiastic.

It would seem clear that Asian mission leaders have potentially a great advantage in being able to learn from the mistakes of Western agencies. If not, Asian mission leaders face the danger of making some of the same mistakes. One problem is that Western leaders may not know what their mistakes are, and thus cannot warn Asian leaders of what Western leaders did wrong. It is also true that not all Westerners agree about the various issues in missiology. Thus, the twelve "mistakes" of Western churches and agencies, as described below, must be understood to be merely my own best understanding. Note that they are not problems of the distant past. They are all contemporary problems. In any case, Asians will have to judge their validity.

1. The Mistake of Starting Bible Schools, Not Universities

The Student Volunteer Movement, in which John Mott was a leader, is noted for the number of universities that it established around the world. The missionaries who went to China made sure there was a university in every province of China. However, in later years Evangelicals, who had never been to college, went out across the world and established Bible Schools, Bible Institutes or theological schools that either replaced or ignored the university tradition. In the last 50 years the majority of American mission agencies have not founded a single university.

The curious thing is that, even though western missionaries cannot be given credit (except in the earlier period) for establishing universities, the hundreds of thousands of national leaders who have been a product of western mission agencies have been able to see what the missionaries could not see. They have recognized the great influence of the university pattern. As a result they have taken the initiative to found over forty universities in the last forty years. I myself was, somewhat accidentally, part of the

founding of an evangelical university in Guatemala which now after forty years has 37,000 students. No missionary can be given any credit for the founding of this university. In my case I merely stood up for a photograph of the founding board of directors two weeks before leaving the country to be a professor at Fuller Seminary.

Why is it that missionaries have not realized that Bible Schools, no matter how high the quality of instruction and curricula, simply do not represent the global mainstream of the university pattern? In the last 100 years in the United States 157 Bible Institutes eventually, after sixty or seventy years, have converted over to colleges and universities. Why haven't missionaries applied the same practical wisdom in their work overseas? This has been a serious strategic mistake. We can at least be glad that national leaders have taken the initiative to found universities without the help of western missionaries.

2. The Mistake of Only “Salvation in Heaven,” not “Kingdom on Earth”

Earlier missionaries again were wiser than those in recent times. They realized that (as we see in the Lord's Prayer), Jesus told us to pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth. Yet we have mainly helped people escape this world. Unlike the 19th century, many missionaries in the 20th century, who have not been influential in the upper levels of society, have been content to talk about getting people into heaven but have no longer been concerned for transformation in this life. They have done many good things on the micro level of society—hospitals, clinics, schools, vocational training, agricultural developments—they even pioneered insights into leprosy and essentially conquered that malady. But there were many things on the macro level of society they couldn't do without greater social influence, such as stamping out Guinea Worm or malaria. Today, however, when Evangelicals have far greater influence than ever before, they are often asleep to the opportunities for transformation on the macro levels of society.

3. The Mistake of Congregations Sending Missionaries, Not Using Mission Agencies

Today many congregations are large enough and strong enough to feel that they don't need a mission agency through which to send their missionaries. This is a new and widespread phenomenon which ignores the great value of the veteran mission agencies which can draw upon the insights of missiology and the vast field experience which are lacking in the average congregation. It may be true that some mission agencies are more experienced and wiser than others, but to my knowledge there is no example of a local congregation bypassing mission agencies with any great success.

4. The Mistake of Whole Congregations in Direct Involvement, Not Professional Missions

A more recent phenomenon (which is characteristic of whole congregations which are highly excited about missions) is the idea of every family in a congregation briefly becoming a missionary family. In this plan, during, say, a four-year period, the intention is for every family in the church to go overseas to work on some sort of two-week project. This is a marvelous idea for the education of people in the church about foreign lands. Yet, it is incredibly expensive and it is a very questionable contribution to the cause of missions.

5. The Mistake of Insisting that Devout Followers of Jesus Call Themselves “Christians” and Identify with the Western Church

Congregations may find it easy to believe that their people can win converts to Christianity in a ten-day short-term mission. But what very few congregations in America are prepared to understand is that dragging people out of their culture and converting them to what they think a “Christian” should look like, is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible talks of our conveying a treasure in earthen vessels. The earthen vessels are not the important thing, but the treasure is. The new vessel will be another very different earthen vessel. This is what happened when the faith of the Bible was first conveyed to Greeks. In that case the treasure of Biblical faith in an earthen Jewish vessel became contained in a Greek earthen vessel. Later it went to Latin vessels and to Germanic vessels and to English vessels, and is now contained in Muslim vessels, Hindu vessels and Buddhist vessels.

It is just as unreasonable for a Hindu to be dragged completely out of his culture in the process of becoming a follower of Christ as it would have been if Paul the Apostle had insisted that a Greek become a Jew in the process of following Christ. Amazingly, there may be more Muslims who are true, Bible-believing followers of Christ, than there are Muslims who have abandoned their cultural tradition in the process of becoming Christian. There are already more Hindus who are predominantly Hindu in their culture but who are Bible-reading believers in Jesus Christ, than there are Hindus who have abandoned their culture and become “Christian.” In the New Testament there was no law against a Greek becoming a Jew. However, Paul was very insistent that that kind of a cultural conversion was not necessary in becoming a follower of Christ.

6. The Mistake of Sending Only Money, Not Missionaries

This has been a problem for many years. It can rarely be a good thing to send money to a mission field with little accountability for its use. There are many examples where foreign funds are used to “buy” national leaders away from their churches or away from their denominations rather than strengthening the existing churches. Money can be very helpful but there is no example of harm to the cause of missions that is more extensive than the careless use of money. Money is more easily corrupted than missionaries. This is the reason that wise national leaders talk about trade, not aid. What poor people need is the ability to earn money. With earnings they can buy food and medicines and not have to rely upon uncertain gifts from a foreign country. Missionaries are often ill-trained to establish businesses.

7. The Mistake of Sending Short-Termers, Not Long-Termers

This is not a case where one of these things is good and the other is bad. Neither should take the place of the other. However, there are now almost two million short-termers leaving the United States each year compared to 35,000 long-term missionaries. Note that the overall cost of short-termers is at least five times as much as the overall cost of long-term missionaries. This means that instead of doubling or tripling the number of long-term missionaries we’re investing at least five times as much money in short-termers. Short-term trips are wonderful education, but a very small accomplishment in

missions. Worse still, a short term is often scary enough or useless enough to turn a young person away from being a missionary at all.

8. The Mistake of Not Understanding Business in Mission and Mission in Business

One of the latest explosions of interest in missions is the result of Christian businessmen in the United States recognizing the value of thoroughly Christian businesses in a foreign land. There is no question that one of the greatest needs of churches across the world is for their members to earn a living. It is pathetic when we think of sending food around the world instead of sending businesses that would enable believers to earn the money necessary to buy their own food. Businesses can often do things that are very essential. They can enable local people to sell their products in foreign lands. They can produce goods of great value to the people. Unfortunately, it is true that few missionaries have business experience and often ignore opportunities to establish businesses that would employ large numbers of needy people.

One thing is true, however, that businesses cannot be relied on as a source of profit for missionary work. In the long run, businesses that divert profits to other things will lose out to competitors who don't divert profits to other things. There is no great future in a plan to "milk" profits from a business to support ministry. It is equally true that micro loans may have a temporary value, but will also fall prey to competitors with larger capital resources employing inherently more efficient processes. In the early history of missions, Moravian missionaries started businesses and so did some Swiss and German missionaries. Sadly, American missionaries have not been as creative. However, the business process will never take the place of the mission process in situations where the people in need cannot pay for what is needed. Businesses have to recover their own expenses. The mission process is still essential in all situations where there is no realistic possibility of remuneration.

9. The Mistake of Healing the Sick, Not Eradicating Disease Germs

The activity of healing the sick is one of the most genuine means of portraying God's love and His concern for hurting people. It is a perfect example of the importance of the essential relationship of word and deed. On the other hand with our increased scientific knowledge of microbiology God can expect us to go beyond healing the sick to the eradication of the germs that make millions sick. Missionaries have done well in establishing a thousand hospitals but very few of them are big enough or are properly structured to be able to drive out of existence the evil pathogens that cause millions of people to be sick.

Malaria is an example of a tiny parasite that drags 45 million Africans out of the workplace every day of the year. It is imperative that the malarial parasite be eradicated. Malaria is virtually as large a threat in Africa as the AIDS epidemic. We don't yet know how to eradicate the AIDS virus, but we do know how to rid this planet of malaria. That would be a significant transformation. Why then is there no Christian mission agency that is involved in the eradication of malaria rather than merely the healing of those who are attacked by malaria? It is very embarrassing to have to admit that the church of Jesus Christ is expecting billionaires like Bill Gates to do that job for them. Worse still, Christians are misrepresenting the love of God in Christ if they do not become noted for their relentless efforts in such a cause.

10. The Mistake of Thinking “Peace” Not “War”

Missionaries have for centuries moved out across the world with the idea that the Gospel is merely a message to be communicated rather than a “call to arms.” I grew up with the idea that the main problem the Bible talked about was how human beings can become reconciled to God. That is certainly a glorious part of the story! But the main problem the Bible is really talking about goes beyond man’s reconciliation to God and is more precisely a war in which God-plus-man is fighting against Satan and his evil works. As a result our God is being blamed widely for rampant disease, poverty, injustice and corruption—since we as Christians are not fighting these works of Satan. People are asking what kind of a God would sponsor a world like this? They say this because they are unaware of the existence of Satan and his intelligent opposition to God. Thus, instead of God being glorified, He is being blamed for the work of Satan.

When things go wrong Evangelicals commonly say, “Why would God do that?” instead of blaming Satan. They do not realize that we are in a war and that casualties are to be expected because of the hideous strength of our opponent. We are lulled into inaction by the widespread belief that Satan was “defeated” at the Cross. In fact, the Cross was the turning point beyond which there have been centuries of ongoing conflict with a Satan yet to be completely defeated. Long after the Cross Paul told Agrippa his mission was delivering people from “the dominion of Satan.” Satan was still around. Peter talked about Satan seeking to destroy. Christians today, with modern understanding of microbiology, for example, as well as the endemic corruption in business and government, now possess far greater responsibility than we have ever had before. Are mission agencies part of that war against Satan? Is it necessary for Christ’s followers to be counted at the front lines of that war whether it be eradication of disease or the conquest of corruption in business and government? Do we misrepresent God if we are missing in action? I feel sure we do.

11. The Mistake of Assuming Science Is a Foe Not a Friend

When I was a young person missionaries were showing science films 2,000 times per day in the non-Western world. The Moody Institute of Science films were shown even more widely in America. Many times in history Christian scholars have recognized that God has revealed Himself in “Two Books,” the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. As Psalm 19 indicates, the Book of Nature does not even need to be translated into the world’s languages. Every missionary must take with him to the mission field both a microscope and a telescope if we are to properly glorify God. Even more important is the need to take to the field a true reverence for the glory of God in Creation. This requires a substantial knowledge of nature. Science is the study of God’s creativity. Art is the study of man’s creativity. We cannot truly expect educated people to accept Christ if our hymns in church reflect no awareness of anything discovered in nature in the last 400 years, or if our young people are being led astray by recent and superficial theories that the world is only 6,000 years old. That is an improper reading of Genesis 1:1, as well as a reckless ignoring of thousands of honest Evangelicals who are outstanding scientists.

12. The Mistake of an Evangelism That Is Not Validated and Empowered by Social Transformation

Several times in the points I have already made above have I contrasted the 19th Century Western missionaries and 20th Century Western missionaries. This is because a radical change in the perspective of American Evangelicals took place between the 1800s and the 1900s. In the 19th Century we were singing about the glorification of God as His will is fulfilled “on earth.” Here is the final stanza and chorus of “America the Beautiful”:

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears.
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

In the 20th Century we have been singing mainly about heaven:

This world is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through.
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from Heaven’s open door
And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.

In the 1800s great revivals swept the country and Evangelicals in high places conceived and promoted equally sweeping reforms. Ten, immigration of non-Evangelical people quadrupled the population and Evangelicals lost influence. Millions of non-college people were converted by D. L. Moody and others, but their 157 Bible Institutes did not feed the professions nor congress. Only recently, as Evangelicals have more and more been going to universities, are there sufficient numbers of American Evangelicals to begin to think seriously about social transformation either in the USA or elsewhere in the world.

Conclusion

I hope it is clear that I have not wanted to do more than point out what in my estimation are failings and shortcomings in the history of Western mission thinkers. My perspectives may be faulty. At least I have raised certain issues that Asian missiologists may also confront in their work. Furthermore, this must not be a one-way street. I hope that we in the West can learn from members of the Asian Society of Missiology as they share with us their own perspectives. In 1972 I helped to start the ASM (American Society of Missiology, www.asmweb.org) and its journal, *Missiology: An International Review*. A few years later I helped start the ISFM (International Society of Frontier Missiology, www.ijfm.org) and the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. I have edited the latter for the last six years. It will be strategically helpful as Asian counterparts such as the Asian Society of Missiology arise and global sharing increases.

We of the West have already learned a great deal from you. We expect to learn a great deal more in the future. Thank you for this invitation to greet you in Christ’s name!

When God Doesn’t Make Sense

Seminar April 10, 2000

Frontiers in Mission, 171-72

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When we act on a hunch or a guess or a wish or a hope, that is what people generally mean when they say, “I don’t know for sure but I *believe* so.”

By comparison, acting on a certainty which does not entirely rest on visible or rational reality is more like *believing* in the Biblical sense.

In fact, acting on a hunch or a wish, by comparison to *Biblical believing* could be called “over-believing,” which is actually very common. Perhaps even more common than acting on true faith.

Faith itself is the basis on which we believe. It is mere confidence if that kind of “faith” derives solely from known facts. Faith is Biblical faith if it comes from God and allows us with certainty to see things that are ordinarily unseen. In the book of Hebrews we read, “Faith is the evidence of things not seen.” Confidence, by comparison merely derives from visible evidence. Biblical faith derives from evidence which is not visible as well as visible evidence. Faith is like light from God on our path, light which by walking in, acting on, we are obediently believing. The reward for walking in that light, that faith, is more light, more faith, which allows further steps of faith!

Neither Biblical faith, nor even mere “confidence faith,” is something we ourselves create. It is something “out there” over which we have no control.

Over-believing is acting on mere whims, hunches, or wishful hopes. Biblical believing is when God leads and we follow. Note that I am speaking of the relatively rare true initiative of God, not our human tendency to put words into His mouth.

Rather than thrusting our wishes into His mouth and then proudly or presumptuously saying “God told me ...” God is much more willing for us normally to employ our God-given senses, our intelligence and common sense to guide us. But, on special occasions He gives us true faith to obey, to believe beyond what others can see (they may think we are jumping into the dark).

Thus He is not a micromanaging God but a patient father in heaven who wants us to employ all of the knowledge and intelligence He has given us. He also wants us to wait on His guidance when we find we cannot proceed on our understanding alone. For example He does not normally want us to break out of the culture of our people. At the same time He does expect us to respond to His guidance even when it leads us out of the box of conventional thinking. That may not be often, but it may never be never.

Much of God’s relatively rare direct faith-guidance will in fact come into conflict with our cultural limitations, our cultural eyeglasses for seeing things, the unexamined cultural assumptions that mold our thinking. Much of all this is masterminded by the great Adversary of our faith. What can, sadly, be called *diabolical delusions* may control much more of our perspective than we are readily aware.

It is precisely and unfortunately in regard to *the uncommon sense of rare, true faith* that the Adversary would obviously want to blind us to his efforts, deceive us as to

his activities, conceal from us his strategies, even leave us relatively oblivious of his existence.

Yet, it seems ominously clear that the Adversary has greatly succeeded in not only concealing his own existence but in persuading us to think God is the author of all evil. There is an entire book with the title *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, which attempts somehow to justify the idea that harm and suffering and calamity is usually a mysterious work of God.

It is as if a couple were to come home to their house late at night from a church meeting and discover all the lights on and the front door standing wide open with police wandering through the house. Terrible things have happened. The drawers are pulled out, cupboards are emptied, dishes smashed, even carpets pulled up. The whole place is an incredible mess. And the police turn angrily to the returning couple. "We got a 911 call that something was wrong in your house. We have been here a half hour and we are overcome with puzzlement and fury. We have never seen a house so poorly kept. They turn to the wife, "What kind of a housekeeper are you anyway?"

Now, this is highly illogical. Anyone would assume that an intelligent enemy had ransacked the house, not a poor housekeeper. But suppose no one had ever heard of robbers? Suppose there were no previous cases of adversarial destruction? Suppose the robbers wanted to continue entering and ransacking houses for jewelry or whatever, they would do so well if they could cast a great delusion over everyone making them assume the non-existence of robbers.

Last Friday I taught Perspectives for one of the sessions of the Call students. Teri Busse was the one coordinating (and did a great job). But I was reminded of being at her wedding in the bay area when I first met Philip Johnson face to face, the famous Berkeley professor who has challenged the feasibility of what is called Darwinian evolution. Later at another meeting in the bay area I engaged him in the following conversation, as I recall it:

"Dr. Johnson, you and professor Michael Behe have certainly proven beyond a shadow of a doubt the presence of intelligent design in nature. If your computer screen were suddenly to go blank and a dialogue box appeared announcing that your hard disk was wiped clean, in that case you would have no trouble assuming that an intelligent person, not some random, Darwinian process, had done the work—a virus, right?"

"Yes," he said

"This would be clear evidence to you of intelligent design, right, but more precisely would it not be the evidence of 'intelligent evil design'? Aren't computer viruses all like that? Intelligent evil?"

"Yes," he said

"Then, what about real viruses? Are they for the most part evidence of 'intelligent evil design.'"

Thoughtfully he cocked his head, "I'll have to think about that."

I waited six months for him to think about that. I wrote him a letter. His response can be summarized: "Ralph I should have told you at the time we talked that I conceive of my role as one intending to undermine the theory of evolution and nothing more. In my writings I cannot even refer to God much less Satan."

He may be right about what he ought not do. If he did talk about intermediate beings both good and evil, maybe even Christians would not listen to him or read further what he was writing!

Why do we avoid taking Satan into account? Why, unless this phenomenon of skirting his existence and possible activities is itself evidence of a master Satanic delusion?

A secular Jewish professor at Columbia University has written a whole book, *The Demise of Satan*. With ponderous scholarly footnotes and all, he traces down through American history the gradual disappearance of Satan as a serious reality and the gradual appearance of him as a comic-book character. It may not have appeared to this professor that he is tracing the progressive delusion of a real Satan. Is he?

Prayer Log Entry: Why Fight Evil

(date unknown).

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3157f3b40b9d21a8096625/t/5ec83183e621fe5550238677/1590178179969/Why+Fight+Evil%3F.pdf>

Ralph Winter's Prayer Log Entry (date unknown)

“The reason I am so concerned to identify evil and become known as a believer in Jesus Christ who is fighting it, is because a great deal of evil in this world is blamed on God. How attractive is our invitation to people to return to and yield to their Father in Heaven if they continue to believe he is the one who contrives for most everyone to die in suffering? Unless Satan is in the picture and we are known to be fighting his deadly works we are allowing God's glory to be marred and torn down. Doesn't that make sense?”