

# DARWIN AND THE GOSPEL COMMISSION

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

**I**n 1991, James Rachels wrote *Created From Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*.<sup>1</sup> In this work, Rachels sets out to demonstrate how Darwinism (or any other materialist view of origins) undermines traditional Judeo-Christian morality. Rachels sees traditional morality as centered on the protection of human rights at the expense of the rest of the natural world. His significance is that he seeks to establish the moral implications of Darwin's theory by directly attacking tradi-

tional Judeo-Christian ethics and morality.

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

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tion of teleology, i.e., design, and that any form of theism based in divine will and design is incompatible with Darwinism.

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

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

#### Overview of Rachels' Position

Rachels uses the problem of evil to undermine Christian morality and theology. "The existence of evil has always been a chief obstacle to belief in an all-good, all-powerful God. How can God and evil co-exist? If God is perfectly good, he would not want evil to exist; and if he is all-powerful, he is able to eliminate it. Yet evil exists. Therefore, the argument goes, God must not exist."<sup>2</sup> He lists five traditional answers offered by theologians and then argues that the excessive amount of evil in the world and the distinction between moral and natural evil combine to undermine

these traditional answers. However, he admits that "All these arguments are available to reconcile God's existence with evil. Certainly, then, the simple version of the argument from evil does not force the theist to abandon belief."<sup>3</sup>

In reference to the theism issue, Rachels asserts that Darwin's theory would expect natural evil, suffering, and unhappiness to be widespread as it is, while the divine hypothesis view would not. "Thus," asserts Rachels, "Darwin believed, natural selection accounts for the facts regarding happiness and unhappiness in the world, whereas the rival hypothesis of divine creation did not."<sup>4</sup>

This last point is especially crucial for Rachels. He notes that Darwin sought an account of origins and life that most easily fits the facts of suffering with the least amount of explanatory contortions. Rachels claims that "Divine creation is a poor hypothesis because it fits the facts badly."<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, the current patterns of suffering are said to be just what Darwin and his theory would expect with natural selection in process. Rachels thus argues that the biblical doctrine of creation is less parsimonious than Darwinian evolution, particularly in explaining the presence of natural evil. Since Darwin has, in Rachels' view, presented an alternative to divine creation that is viable and exhibits greater economy, the divine creation

hypothesis is now undermined by good reasons. Feeling he has established this point, Rachels now turns to the issue of teleology.

#### Teleology: The Central Issue

Rachels credits Marx with pinpointing the "philosophical nerve" of Darwin's theory. According to Rachels, Marx declared the theory of evolution to be "the death blow . . . to 'Teleology' in the natural sciences."<sup>6</sup> Thus, it may be that the most significant aspect of Darwin's theory is his overall rejection of teleology in nature. Rachels reminds us that "a teleological explanation is an explanation of something in terms of its function and purpose: the heart is for pumping blood, the lungs are for breathing, and so on."<sup>7</sup> Teleology thus implies a purpose or design, which must have been determined by the intentions of a maker. But there can be no designer in Darwinian evolution, and as Rachels notes, "If there is no maker—if the object in question is not an artifact—does it make sense to speak of a 'purpose'?" The answer is, "No," says Rachels. Any purposes attributed are merely those we assign. Thus, "the connection between function and conscious intention is, in Darwin's theory, completely severed."<sup>8</sup>

Rachels has thus highlighted the debate over the design argument (offered by Paley), which is considered



by many to be definitively refuted by Hume. The problem is, notes Rachels, that Hume and other critics of the design argument only pointed out logical deficiencies in the design argument, but “they could not supply a *better way* of understanding the apparent design of nature. . . . Darwin did what Hume could not do: he provided an alternative, giving people something else they could believe. Only then was the design hypothesis dead.”<sup>9</sup> For Rachels, then, it is the fact that Darwin’s theory provided a rational alternative to teleology that makes Darwin’s theory so capable of undermining any form of theism necessary to sustain traditional Christian morality.

The issue here, however, is not the efficacy of the design versus materialism argument. It is, rather, that to accept Darwin’s theory is to accept that there is no purpose or design in nature at all. This completely opposes classic Judeo-Christian theism, in which there is a cosmic design and purpose, often articulated by Adventists in terms of the Great Controversy motif. Rachels asks his clinching question: “Can theism be separated from belief in design? It would be a heroic step, because the design hypothesis is not an insignificant component of traditional religious belief. But it can be done, and in fact it has been done, by eighteenth-century deists.”<sup>10</sup>

Deism, he notes, rejects any per-

sonal-relational view of God, replacing that with a God who created natural laws, made the world, and now lets it run itself by those natural laws. The God of deism is hands-off and not concerned with details. Thus, there is theism without teleological design.

“Since deism is a consistent theistic view,” Rachels observes, “it is tempting simply to conclude that theism and Darwinism must be compatible, and to say no more. But the temptation should be resisted, at least *until we have made clear what has been given up* in the retreat to deism.”<sup>11</sup> In the words of Sigmund Freud, the God of the deists is “nothing but an insubstantial shadow and no longer the mighty personality of religious doctrine.”<sup>12</sup> All that is left is the concept of God as the original cause. But, says Rachels, Darwin has asserted that to say the original cause is God is merest speculation. It can be asserted, but no good reasons can be given to substantiate it. And, in fact, Rachels asserts that if we can accept that God is uncaused, then there is no good reason to reject the assertion that the universe is uncaused. Thus, for Rachels, Darwinism clearly undermines biblical theism so severely that “the atheistical conclusion can be resisted, but only at great cost.”<sup>13</sup> He further asserts that a theism compatible with Darwin’s theory is too weak to support traditional Christian morality.

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### Darwinian Theism

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

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

Alvin Plantinga offers an initial answer to the first question. He notes that the only arguments for incompatibility between God and evolution “have turned from deductive to *probabilistic* arguments from evil.” Thus, “the typical atheological claim

at present is not that the existence of God is *incompatible* with that of evil, but rather, that the latter offers the resources for a strong probabilistic argument against the former.”<sup>14</sup> However, the probabilistic argument itself assumes a particular doctrine of God.

This issue is superbly developed by Cornelius Hunter, who cites numerous claims by evolutionists who gave various reasons that God would not have created the present natural order in this way. He calls this approach “negative theology” because it is offering proof by negative instead of positive evidence. But in so doing, argues Hunter, “they are beholden to a specific notion of God, and notions of God, no matter how carefully considered, are outside the realm of science.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, a major assumption of the evolutionary position is not scientific at all! And this point is foundational to why Hunter calls Darwin’s theory the “evolution theodicy.”<sup>16</sup>

But why does Hunter see Darwin



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as so theological? He argues that a seminal influence on Darwin was Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In Hunter's view, Milton was addressing the problem of evil, and solved it by distancing God from the creation. "Both men were dealing with the problem of evil—Milton with moral evil and Darwin with natural evil—and both found solutions by distancing God from evil. And most important, the two held similar conceptions of God."<sup>17</sup>

However, "Darwin's solution distanced God from creation to the point that God was unnecessary. One could still believe in God, but not in God's providence. Separating God from creation and its evils meant that God could have no direct influence or control over the world. God may have created the world, but ever since that point it has run according to impersonal natural laws that may now and then produce natural evil."<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, "Darwin was now increasing this separation to the point that the link between creation and God was severed."<sup>19</sup> According to

Hunter, the result is that "God, on the one hand, is seen as all-good but not necessarily all-powerful, or at least does not exercise all his power. God is virtuous, not dictatorial."<sup>20</sup>

But notice, then, that elimination of God is no longer necessary. "The end result of Darwin's theory is not that there is no God, but rather, that God is disjoint from the material world. . . . In evolution theodicy, the Creator must be disjoint from creation, but no more than this is required."<sup>21</sup>

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

#### A Theology of Evolution

From the late 20th century until

the present, we find movement in the direction of promoting such a theology. First, authors such as Michael Ruse and Kenneth Miller deny that Darwinism is incompatible with belief in God. Both seem to leave the door open for a variety of theological options. But how wide is a wide array of options? Ruse recognizes that for those who read Genesis literally, "the Darwinian reading of Genesis is going to give you major problems—insoluble problems, I suspect."<sup>22</sup> Thus, the portal to religious Darwinism may not be as wide as is touted. Not all may enter, though some have, and the results are fascinating.

John F. Haught, possibly the leading scholar in the recently formed movement of evolutionary theology, laments that it is not just the discipline of theology that has failed to grapple with the implications of Darwin's theory; neither have the philosophers. "If theology has fallen short of the reality of evolution, however, so also has the world of thought in general. . . . Philosophy also has yet to produce an understanding of reality—an ontology—adequate of evolution."<sup>23</sup> Thus he charges that, "to a great extent, theologians still think and write almost as if Darwin had never lived."<sup>24</sup>

Haught responds to this problem by proposing the possibilities of a theology informed by evolution. "Darwin has gifted us with an ac-

count of life whose depth, beauty, and pathos—when seen in the context of the larger cosmic epic of evolution—expose[s] us afresh to the raw reality of the sacred and to a resoundingly meaningful universe."<sup>25</sup>

Haught expresses high hopes about the prospects of a Darwinian theology: "I cannot here emphasize enough, therefore, the gift evolution can be to our theology. For us to turn our backs on it, as so many Christians continue to do, is to lose a great opportunity to deepen our understanding of the wisdom and self-effacing love of God."<sup>26</sup>

But what would such a theology be like? First, it is not the same as natural theology. Haught declares: "Evolutionary theology, unlike natural theology, does not search for definitive footprints of the divine in nature. . . . Instead of trying to prove God's existence from nature, evolutionary theology seeks to show how our new awareness of cosmic and biological evolution can enhance and enrich traditional teachings about God and God's way of acting in the world."<sup>27</sup>

Diarmuid O'Murchu further asserts that: "Evolutionary theology wishes to keep open the possibility that all forms of creaturehood (plant and animal alike) are dimensions of divine disclosure and can enlighten us in our desire to understand God more deeply and respond in faith more fully. Evolutionary theology is



committed to a radically open-ended understanding of how the divine reveals itself in and to the world.”<sup>28</sup> This means that in evolutionary theology, nature is not used as evidence to prove classical attributes of God. Rather, both Darwinian evolution and God’s creatorship are assumed to be true. Thus, evolution shows us how God created, and this method of creating, in turn, deepens our understanding of who God is and how He operates.

Haught cautions, however: “trying to locate God’s activity within or at the level of natural biological causation really amounts to a shrinkage of God. This approach is known as ‘god-of-the-gaps’ theology. . . . A god-of-the-gaps approach is a science stopper. . . . But, even worse, it is theologically idolatrous. It makes divine action one link in the world’s chain of finite causes rather than the ultimate ground of all natural causes.”<sup>29</sup>

This, in turn, means that we cannot ascribe specific activity to God, just as Rachels predicted. The result, as O’Murchu observes, is that “evolutionary theology borrows liberally from process thought.”<sup>30</sup> O’Murchu further asserts that “the process position challenges the assumption that our God must always be a ruling, governing power above and beyond God’s own creation.”<sup>31</sup> Why is the tendency to favor process theology significant? O’Murchu explains,

“What conventional believers find unacceptable about the process position is the notion of a vulnerable God, allegedly at the mercy of capricious forces as are all other creatures of the universe.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, the first significant theological impact of Darwin that we shall examine is the limiting of God’s power in order to save His goodness.

#### Limiting God’s Power to Save His Goodness

The limiting of divine power is one of the early issues that Haught examines in his book, *God After Darwin*. Early in the book, Haught examines David Hull’s argument that the present order is incompatible with the concept of God. Hull asks, “What kind of God can one infer from the sort of phenomenon epitomized by the species on Darwin’s Galapagos Islands?” He eventually answers, “The God of the Galapagos is careless, wasteful, indifferent, almost diabolical. This is not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray.”<sup>33</sup> But would this not impeach the goodness of God, as Hull has charged?

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

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power can God’s moral goodness be preserved.<sup>34</sup>

C. Don Keyes states that through the work of Julian Casserley, he has come to the conclusion that “God ought not to be defined primarily in terms of sovereignty and power. The implications of this statement liberated me from interpreting God’s omnipotence as the kind of coercive power capable of always preventing evil. Instead, I now firmly believe with Plato that the goodness of God is his most essential quality and that he is the author only of the good things that happen. Ultimately ‘power’ and ‘good’ are different kinds of reality, but of the two, good is more absolutely attributable to God. The power of the good is almost always indirect.”<sup>35</sup>

Keys gives no good reasons for ascribing goodness as an absolute quality while treating omnipotence as a symbolic or relative quality, other than the ability to explain evil,

and possibly the support of Plato. It is also significant that goodness becomes the supreme, untouchable attribute of God to which all other attributes, including power, seem to be subjugated.

Korsmeyer echoes the refrain in which God’s power is limited in order to preserve His goodness. “The painfully slow evolution of life, spreading in great diversity into all available niches, trying out all possible avenues of advance, the huge role of chance, the stumbling advances to greater complexity, all these things suggest a divine nature *at odds with the omnipotent God of classical theism*. The universe, as we know it, was not created in an instant of *absolute coercive power*. . . . *The universe’s story is suggesting that divine power is different from what we have imagined*. It is like the power of love, persuasive, patient, and persistent.”<sup>36</sup>

All of these authors speak as if their position on limiting God’s



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power is so self-evident that there can be no criticism of it.

Kraemer offers three rebuttals to the limited power view of God. First, is God only limited in power as claimed? If He is limited in power, why not in knowledge and goodness as well? Why limit God’s power only? Second, he picks up Hume’s argument that if God were this limited in power, He should have created fewer animals with better faculties for happiness. Third, Kramer questions if such a limited, imprudent God is worthy of respect and worship. He reminds us that “other great but limited beings, saints and heroes, clearly merit respect, but not worship. Once God is similarly limited, the problem of justifying the worship-worthiness of God needs to be addressed.”<sup>37</sup>

### The Hidden, Humble God of Evolution

Haught proposes that his non-omnipotent view of God depicts Him as actually being more deeply involved in the world than a deity

who controls things by external power. This depth of involvement is based on a panentheistic doctrine of God. Thus, His work is “interior to the process of creation.”<sup>38</sup> But why should we believe such a God inhabits nature? Is there any evidence for this conclusion?

Ironically, the answer is no. Three times in as many pages, Haught asserts that the concept of divine humility better explains the evolutionary data than does traditional theology or materialism.<sup>39</sup> In another work, he argues that “nothing less than a transcendent force, radically distinct from, *but also intimately incarnate in matter* could ultimately explain evolution.”<sup>40</sup>

Haught describes this immanent presence as God’s “self-withdrawal,” “self-absenting,” and “self-concealment,” so as to not have any external influence or exercise of “coercive power” over the universe.<sup>41</sup> “God is present in the mode of ‘hiddenness.’”<sup>42</sup> Twice more he asserts that God is present in the form of “ultimate goodness.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, Haught as-

sociates the limited power of God, represented by His hiddenness, as being ultimate goodness.

It seems ironic, with Haught’s dedication to modern science, that he claims this hidden God can be detected only by faith. Says Haught, “The world is embraced constantly by God’s presence. But this presence does not show up as an object to be grasped by ordinary awareness or scientific method. It is empirically unavailable, in other words. . . . Only those attuned to religious experience will be aware or appreciative of it.”<sup>44</sup> This is amazing! Here and elsewhere in his writing, Haught appeals to subjective experience for a major pillar of his theology. Haught further claims to base this subjective discovery of God in nature from Tillich’s concept of God as infinite depth, which is self-authenticating.

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

The theological basis of this metaphysics of divine hiddenness and humility is the emptying of self (*kenosis*) of Philippians 2:7. For Haught, this quality, especially as seen in the crucifixion, is the *primary method* by which God relates to creation, from and throughout

eternity. God hid Himself through the incarnation in the humble servant-form of the man Jesus Christ. Thus, for Haught, “It is to this image that Christian theology *must always repair* whenever it thinks about God’s relationship to the world and its evolution.”<sup>45</sup>

The application of this metaphysical principle leads to an openly espoused panentheism advocated through the concept of a divine incarnation with the material universe. For example, Haught describes his God of evolution as “a promising God already incarnate in matter.”<sup>46</sup> Commenting on the saying of Jesus, “If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32), Haught offers an alternative model of incarnation, declaring, “This image suggests that the most glorious form of power is that which humbly invites other beings to enter into *organic unity* with God of their own accord, and not out of compulsion.”<sup>47</sup>

### The Non-Coercive Nature of Love’s Power

For evolutionary theology, a key implication of this panentheism is that a truly loving God must be non-coercive. Haught makes this fundamental connection by stating: “The doctrine of grace proclaims that God loves the world and all of its various elements fully and unconditionally. *By definition*, however, love



does not absorb, annihilate, or force itself upon the beloved. Instead it longs for the beloved to become more and more 'other' or differentiated. . . . To compel, after all would be contrary to the very nature of love."<sup>48</sup>

Miller argues in a similar fashion that the divine love is not a controlling power in the universe. "A world without meaning would be one in which a Deity pulled the string of every human puppet, and every material particle as well. . . . By being always in control, the Creator would deny His creatures any real opportunity to know and worship Him. *Authentic love requires freedom, not manipulation.*"<sup>49</sup>

Haught uses emotive and almost pejorative language to describe the traditional view of God in contrast to his humble, vulnerable God. "The God of Jesus is utterly unlike . . . our traditional images of God understood as divine potentate or 'designer.' Theology is offended by evolution *only when it assumes a rather imperious concept of divine omnipotence.* . . . Evolutionary science, however, demands that we give up once and for all the *tyrannical* images we may have sometimes projected onto God."<sup>50</sup>

By contrast, evolution invites us to "recapture the often obscured portrait of a self-humbling, suffering God *who is anything but a divine controller or designer of the cosmos.*"<sup>51</sup>

The evolutionary God "refrains from wielding the domineering power that both skeptics and believers often project onto their ideal of the absolute." Yet God is not "a weak or powerless God incapable of redeeming this flawed universe, but one whose salvific and creative effectiveness is all the more prevailing because it is rooted in a divine humility."<sup>52</sup> Thus Haught asserts that, "in the final analysis, persuasive power is more influential, more 'powerful,' than coercion."<sup>53</sup>

This rejection of any kind of hands-on rulership and intervention by God has some important implications for soteriology and eschatology. Korsmeyer expresses the ultimate destiny of the world in terms of apotheosis. "The divine life is constantly receiving the lives of everyone in the world, and adding each moment to the collected moments of their past. All these moments are experienced by God with no loss of intensity or immediacy. *The past of the world enters the everlasting present of the divine immediacy. The world is transformed in God,* who weaves everything that is worthwhile into greater harmony, a greater whole."<sup>54</sup>

For Korsmeyer, "Perhaps we have been called into existence to assist the great divine evolutionary plan to move the whole universe toward divinity, to be co-workers, co-creators in bringing about the Kingdom of

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God among us. Perhaps eschatology has to be rethought."<sup>55</sup>

#### Evolution, Soteriology, and Eschatology

Korsmeyer asserts that "the idea of God bringing the universe to an end in the near future through Christ's second coming is not compatible with the evidence of the divine efforts in the universe for fifteen billion years."<sup>56</sup> O'Murchu likewise affirms, "I no longer believe in the anthropocentric myth of the end of the world. There is every likelihood that we humans will destroy ourselves, but not creation. Creation has an infinite capacity to co-create."<sup>57</sup>

Haught likewise denies, based on an evolutionary perspective of our world's history, that there was an original, perfect world that lost its perfection and will once again be restored. "Thus, a scientifically informed understanding of redemption may no longer plausibly make themes of restoration or recovery

dominant. . . . It would be absurd, therefore, to seek the restoration of a chronologically primordial state of material dispersal."<sup>58</sup>

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For Haught, "It would be callous indeed on the part of theologians to perpetuate the *one-sidedly anthropocentric and retributive* notions of pain and redemption that used to fit so comfortably into pre-evolutionary pictures of the world."<sup>59</sup>

Korsmeyer holds a similar position: "Any 'exclusive' theology, which in effect suggests that God is only concerned with one group of people on one planet of one small star, is not credible. It is the product of a



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theology that considers Scripture in a literalist manner, convinced it provides a comprehensive scientific worldview, and has not considered the scientific evidence of who we are, where we are, and how we got here.<sup>760</sup>

Evolutionary theology clearly has catastrophic implications for biblical eschatology. But this would seem to be the logical outcome of reinterpreting God without design. If God does not relate to the material universe through designs and purposes, the key elements of the biblical views of the plan of salvation, end-time judgment, and eschatology all crumble with the loss of teleology. A non-coercive, evolving God of limited power who is found in panentheistic hiddenness, a ground of being instead of a personal being, is what is offered instead. Rachels seems fundamentally correct in asserting that traditional Christian morality and

theology cannot survive the implications of Darwin's theory.

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

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

The designless theism that Rachels rightly demands of Darwinism would have to eliminate the Ten Commandments and all other direct moral guidance by God, as shown in the Bible. In such a scenario, sin is eliminated since there can be no divine law or design to violate (Rom. 4:15; 5:13; 7:7). Thus, Darwinism clearly undermines the foundations

of biblical morality, yet our identity as Adventists lies heavily in the imperative to call people to obedience to God's commandments. How can we do so if our scientific paradigms eliminate the veracity of the Ten Commandments? It seems likely that Darwinism is quite toxic to this dimension of our mission as a church.

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

This undermining of the doctrines of sin and judgment, in turn, removes the need for salvation from sin and its penalty, for there can be no sin or penalty without divine design and sovereignty. This would

mean, therefore, that there would be no need for an incarnation and sacrificial death by Christ. Furthermore, the incarnation event was a designed, planned, unnatural act incompatible with Darwinism or a deistic god who uses no design. Removing teleology thus undermines several key pillars of Christian faith that are crucial to the salvific mission of the church.

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

Our core identity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been forged in the Great Controversy motif in which there is a battle of rival governing powers—something impossible if there is no teleology. Our mission is to prepare people to give account of themselves to a sovereign, yet loving, almighty moral



governor and to prepare them for the eschatological restoration of all things, which begins at the second coming of Christ in glory. It seems clear that the expulsion of teleology required by Darwinism will be catastrophic to the mission praxis of the Adventist Church.

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

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

By contrast, those who hold to a biblical protology should have a robust theism capable of supporting the biblically defined mission of the church. God is sovereign. He rules and lays claims on us. A divine imperative impels us to labor for the salvation of souls and to call people to obedience to God's command-

ments as an expression of their faith and submission. The biblical God designs, decides, and reveals His will to humanity. We have the privilege of calling people to renounce rebellion against God's express will and surrender to God's divine designs in morals and lifestyle.

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

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