

PURPOSE

Reflections is the official newsletter of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. It seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors, and teachers.

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NEWS AND COMMENTS

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON SPIRITUALISM AND THE CHURCH

For a number of years (2004-2006) the staff of BRI has been meeting with a group of Adventist theologians from Africa studying the subject of spiritualism in Africa and how the church should relate to this phenomenon. The purpose was to provide guidelines that would help church leaders, pastors, and



elders to address the issue from a biblical perspective. During our last meeting, the first draft of the guidelines was put together. The document contains an introduction giving the history of the meetings and the theological foundation for the guidelines. It includes specific guidelines in response

to issues concerning demonic possession, ancestor veneration, witchcraft, magic and sorcery, traditional healing, and rites of passage. The document also includes a series of recommendations. The guidelines are not yet ready for publication and distribution, but we anticipate that the document will soon be available to those who may be interested in this particular topic. Hopefully, it will provide the basic material for the preparation of guidelines for the world church. We will keep you informed.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI

IS THE GENERAL CONFERENCE INVOLVED IN ECUMENISM?

Is the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC)? Every week someone calls the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty office of the General Conference and asks this question. My answer is always the same emphatic “No!” Some callers believe that the Adventist church is a “secret member” or something “like a member,” but these categories do not exist. Visiting the WCC web site one can read the membership list. The name of the Adventist Church is not found there. In other words, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not a member of the WCC and is not planning to become one.

Does the church have relations with the WCC? From time to time Adventist observers attend the WCC Central Committee at their General Assembly. This attendance is not a secret, and articles are published in the *Adventist Review* which give a report of these meetings.

Some readers have heard that a delegation from the General Conference attends the annual meeting of the Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions (CS/CWC). This is correct, but the WCC is not the CS/CWC. Let me explain.

The WCC is the official organization of the ecumenical movement. Its headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland.

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About 340 churches are members of the WCC, and they represent 592 million

Christians. The purpose of the WCC is to promote Christian unity. “To promote” would have been too weak a goal for the founders of the organization. Following two World Wars between so-called Christian countries, it was their dream to build a visible unity between Christians—a unity which would be the fulfillment of Jesus’ prayer for unity and a major factor of peace in the world. Today visible unity even among the members of the WCC is a real challenge. Members of the Orthodox and Protestant churches do not even share the Eucharist together despite half a century of meetings, statements, and studies.

The majority of Christians (about 75%) are not members of the WCC, and the most dynamic wing of Protestants, namely Evangelicals and Pentecostals, have not expressed any interest in becoming members. The Roman Catholic Church is very influential within the WCC, but is not a member either.

When we think about the WCC it is important to remember its purpose, which is the visible unity of Christianity. Unity may have different interpretations and it may seem a long, long process, but the WCC is the most significant religious organization which is totally committed to this goal.

What about the Conference of Secretaries of the Christian World Communions? Adventists are not a member of the WCC, but they are involved in the CS/CWC. The difference is that the CS/CWC is not an organization but a conference of Christian leaders, composed of the Secretary General of the conference, other top officials, and representatives of various churches. The purpose is not to build the visible unity of the Christian family, but to share information, concerns, and reports, and to become better acquainted with each other. No church is encouraged to change her beliefs or to create a new Christian community. Doctrinal issues are not on the agenda. The members represent their churches and their beliefs.

The Conference of Secretaries represents about two billion Christians and covers more churches than any other organization, including the WCC. The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church are represented and so are the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Mennonite Conference, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Baptist World Alliance, and others. Adventists have played an important role

in this Conference in opening it to Evangelicals. Bert B. Beach was the Secretary of the Conference for 32 years. In 2002 I have been elected to serve in this position. Our presence in such a group, which represents the Christian world, has been extremely helpful for our church around the world. It has shown that we are a Christian Church recognized by the Christian family of leaders. We are not a cult or a dangerous group of fanatics, but a Christian denomination.

The relations between the WCC and the CS/CWC were difficult at the beginning, but they have improved. Difficulties arose because the CS/CWC accepted churches as they were and respected their differences. This was perceived as approving the division of Christianity rather than building unity. Today the WCC has its representative within the CS/CWC. Will the CS/CWC join the WCC? Some on both sides think a close cooperation would be good for all and a consultative commission was set up last year, but other members of the CS/CWC do not want the Conference to change its main purpose.

Adventists have always been favorable to developing good relations with other churches or religious groups while staying faithful to their own mission and their beliefs. Although Adventists respect other Christians, they believe that God has called them to fulfill a specific mission and to proclaim a specific message for the last days. They do not feel threatened within the CS/CWC, and meeting other Christian leaders gives them a great opportunity to be better known and to share their mission without compromising their identity and faith. The Adventist agenda is not ecumenism; it is building good relations.

John Graz,

Public Affairs and Religious Liberty

DARWINIAN APOLOGETICS: BIG QUESTIONS, INADEQUATE ANSWERS

During the 1974 commencement address at Cal Tech, Nobel Laureate Richard Feynman provided some sage advice on science and ethics: “I would like to add something that’s not essential to the science, but something I kind of believe, which is that you should not fool the layman when you’re talking as a scientist.”¹ Unfortunately, when scientists become apologists for various beliefs about the nature of life and reality, it is almost impossible for them to fully live up to the ethical standard Feynman set. In no branch of scientific controversy is this truer than in the debate over evolution.

The quality of much that is written by advocates of all positions about the origin of life deteriorates exponentially in publications written for general audiences. That is not to say that all popular books dealing with Darwinism and ideas such as Intelligent Design (ID) are misleading, but many leave informed readers with two

“You should not fool the layman when you’re talking as a scientist.” R. Feynman

unpleasant options to consider: (1) The author is ignorant; or (2) the author is attempting to take advantage of the ignorance of the readers.

Francisco Ayala's new book, *Darwin and Intelligent Design*,² is a striking example of this phenomenon. In fact, it is such a perfect example, so engagingly and concisely written (a mere 104 small pages), that I am recommending it to anyone who wishes to understand the arguments of ID opponents.

There are many flavors of argument leveled against ID in this book, and responding to each one of them would be impossible. Instead, I will focus on a few of the arguments presented by Ayala that represent general trends and are commonly recognizable in the arguments of other ID opponents.

One of the most useful tactics in any debate is to define the opposing position in terms which make the position being advocated win automatically. ID is easy to define accurately and succinctly; it is the religiously neutral observation that some aspects of nature most reasonably originated as products of intelligently guided, rather than unguided natural forces. The Discovery Institute, a leading ID think-tank, puts it this way: "The theory of intelligent design holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection."³ This is a definition that is easily understood by any thinking person and is widely available, and yet it is rarely, if ever, used by opponents of ID.

Instead of allowing advocates of ID to define ID, Ayala attempts to win over his readers by avoiding the widely used definitions and instead makes such statements as, "The intended meaning of the proponents of intelligent design is precisely this: namely, that organisms and their features have been designed by an external agent, God."⁴ Ayala is not

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just a professor of biology, ecology and evolutionary biology; he is also a full professor of philosophy at the University of California, Irvine. None of

these qualifications, however, makes him capable of getting inside another person's brain and determining, if their "intended meaning" is different from the actual semantic meaning of the words and grammar they use.

The claim that ID amounts to a narrow argument for the Judeo-Christian God is preposterous, because ID is not a detailed metaphysic, it is embraced by people spanning a broad range of belief systems ranging from deist Antony Flew,⁵ all the way to Muslims, Hindus, and traditional Protestant and Catholic Christians. Even some professed atheists like Francis Crick, when proposing arguments like directed panspermia,⁶ employ ideas that closely resemble ID.⁷

One consistent trend in misdefinitions of ID is conflating ID with creationism. This may be because opponents of ID see creationism as an easier target, while some creationists see ID as a powerful argument that proves creationism true. Both views of ID are wrong. ID does not prove or even attempt to show that the God of Genesis is the creator or that creation occurred in a manner resembling the Genesis description. On the other hand, ID is not inconsistent with biblical creation, but it is also not logically inconsistent with theistic evolution, progressive creation or directed panspermia. ID is remarkably metaphysically neutral.

Because opponents of ID commonly conflate it with creationism, they tend to recycle arguments against creationism that do not logically relate to ID. Ayala's book devotes a large portion of its space to attacking creationist claims rather than addressing ID. While these anti-creation arguments have their own set of problems, it is not necessary to counter them if the question is the strength or validity of ID. For Darwinists, ID is not acceptable because it allows open questioning of the adequacy of naturalistic mechanisms and does not embrace the materialistic metaphysic. For some creationists, ID does not go far enough in embracing the

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C. R. Darwin*

Biblical account of creation.⁸ ID relies on logic and data alone.⁹ Another problem is that science itself is

commonly defined in materialistic terms that provide an advantage to ID opponents, although philosophers of science have struggled for years without agreement on an adequate definition of science. Most people reasonably assume that science has something to do with logical interpretation of data, and even Ayala states that "Science does not imply metaphysical materialism."¹⁰ Yet he consistently refers to science in materialistic or naturalistic terms.

The argument is that science is about empirical reality, and because science can only provide natural explanations for natural phenomena, ID cannot be science because ID is not metaphysically bound by naturalism. Furthermore, the claim is commonly made that ID cannot be tested and therefore is not science, but defining science in ways that exclude either Darwinism or ID makes no difference to whether either is true or not.

In any case, the methods of ID are testable. For example, if it could be shown that the kind of specified complexity seen in computers, jet aircraft, and living things is the product of unguided natural forces, it would call into question the claim that specified complexity logically infers an intelligent cause. Darwinism also is testable, as Darwin pointed out: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory

would absolutely break down.”¹¹ Specified complexity, particularly the specific case of Irreducibly Complex (IC) molecular machines inside cells, cannot be produced via successive slight modifications. Thus, biological IC causes Darwin’s theory to “absolutely break down.” This is why Ayala and others work so furiously to cause confusion about IC and the detailed examples that have been provided. Ayala’s objections to IC are simply misinformed and appear to reflect ignorance of a widely available literature addressing his objections.¹²

As Ayala points out, there are ways of gaining knowledge about the universe other than science, although he clearly does not think ID is one of them.¹³ The catch comes when science is presented as the ultimate arbiter of truth in the natural or material world. According to this view, if ID is “not science,” it cannot embody truths about the empirical world. The problem for Ayala’s overarching argument is compounded by his invocation, without attribution, of Stephen J. Gould’s Non-Overlapping MAGisteria (NOMA).¹⁴ NOMA is essentially an extension of the postmodernist fragmentation of knowledge. Its central claim is that “science and religion *cannot* be incompatible, because they concern non-overlapping domains of knowledge.”¹⁵ But if ID is not science and is bad theology, then, because science cannot address theological questions anymore than theology can inform questions of science, using science to oppose ID is incoherent, and yet this is precisely what Ayala attempts to do for much of *Darwin and Intelligent Design*.

NOMA is a direct assault on the Christian understanding of a unity of knowledge embodied in one God, one faith, and one truth. The Christian quest is not to divide knowledge into autonomous entities that do not inform one another, but to recognize and be informed by areas in which tension exists between branches of knowledge like science and theology. To the degree that theology

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emphasizes revealed knowledge and science emphasizes empirical knowledge and both rely on human logic, tension between the two areas is inevitable, but this does not logi-

cally imply that they lack the potential to inform each other. Separating science from faith renders both less relevant to human existence, denies the ultimate unity of truth and prevents different branches of knowledge from informing one another.

Just in case the “overwhelming” scientific evidence does not convince readers of the truth of evolution, Ayala does make a foray into theology, recycling arguments about the goodness of God and “imperfections” in the creation.

In other words, the “science” of Darwinism is presented as a theodicy that gets God off the hook for the problem of evil, particularly natural evil; so much for NOMA. The link between this argument and ID is tenuous because ID makes minimal, if any, claims about God. From a strictly ID perspective, the presence of certain phenomena logically infers an intelligent cause, but the intelligent cause does not have to be good, wise, or nice. Though guns are designed to maim and kill, that does not mean they are not the product of intelligence.

Often arguments invoking imperfection in nature are arguments from ignorance: If we don’t know what something does, it must do nothing. This was the logic used to declare essential organs like the spleen “vestigial” remnants of evolutionary history.¹⁶ Ayala claims

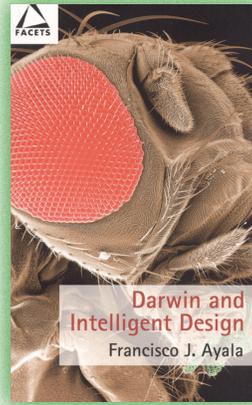
that “Embryonic rudiments are inconsistent with claims of intelligent design.”¹⁷ This stems from an earlier misstatement about ID: “The imperfection of structures is evidence for evolution and contrary to the arguments for intelligent design.” This is false. ID does not predict perfection (and neither does creationism for that matter). A 1970s Ford Pinto car complete with gas tank that explodes on rear impact and rudimentary rear bumper was still intelligently

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designed to meet very specific design goals.¹⁸

The argument from imperfection requires very specific theological assumptions, including that a perfect God would only create perfect creations and that we see those creations in their perfection now. ID takes no position on the perfection of God; and creationists who base their beliefs on Scripture understand that, while the creation was “good” when it came from God, what we now see is the marred product of thousands of years of sin and God’s curses on the creation pronounced at the fall. The question is not, “Why is nature broken?” but rather “Why is it still so incredible?” ID provides a partial answer to this, Biblical creation provides a more complete answer, and Darwinism provides an answer inadequate to account for the data.

Students of rhetoric will recognize many of the techniques commonly used to promote Darwinism as a science. Ayala’s book is rich with arguments from authority with numerous assurances that everyone—all scientists, the pope, and the church fathers—supports evolution and not biblical creation or ID. Possibly most startling is Ayala’s reliance on the ruling of United States District Court Judge John E. Jones III in the recent Kitzmiller case.¹⁹ It is weird to read an eminent scientist like Ayala relying on the authority of a judge rather than on a good argument, or at least a qualified scientist, to decide what is good science and what is not.



Arguments that are merely appeals to authority can only work on those who are not equipped to evaluate actual substantive arguments, which is why they are commonly employed in publications and debates claiming to make the case for Darwinism with the general public. A reasonable person would agree that everyone, from popes to the most eminent scientists of the past, has a long track record of being wrong on any number of issues. This is why science does not rely on arguments from authority. It relies, like ID, on logic, data and replicable results.

In many cases, Ayala abandons arguments for simple assertions. For example, he quotes Theodore Dobzhansky without attribution when he states “The theory of evolution needs to be taught in the schools because nothing in biology makes sense without it.”²⁰ This statement is absurd. Before Darwin plenty of things made sense in biology absent of any reference to evolution. Even during Darwin’s life, eminent biologists like Louis Pasteur made sense of the cell theory of life when he disproved the spontaneous generation of life without reference to evolution or Darwinism (which happens to require spontaneous generation).

When an individual seeks to win a debate by resorting to simple assertion instead of logic, it is difficult to take the ideas being put forward seriously. Statements like “It is now possible to assert that gaps of knowledge in the

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evolutionary history of living organisms no longer exist.”²¹ or “The missing link is no longer missing”²² carry about as much weight as saying, “I’m right

and you’re wrong – so I win.” Luckily for aspiring evolutionists, the missing link remains missing, so there is plenty of reason to keep looking, if you are a Darwinist.

At the beginning of this essay, I quoted Richard Feynman’s advice that scientists “should not fool the layman when you’re talking as a scientist.” Unfortunately, in the propagation of Darwinism this advice is routinely ignored. It would be nice to imagine that this is not the case in the creationist literature, but logical errors abound there as well. In both cases, this is unfortunate as the One who made all things promised His followers, “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

In a world where truth is in short supply and genuinely liberating, confusion about creation sometimes threatens to overwhelm the precious truths given to humanity in God’s Word. Believing in the truth about creation is not about having all the answers; it is about having some very good answers and being unwilling to abandon them for clearly inadequate answers like Darwinism.

Mr. Feynman! from Richard Feynman’s 1974 Caltech commencement address. The entire text of this chapter is available on line at many locations including: <http://www.uky.edu/~holler/msc/roles/cargcult.html>.

²F. J. Ayala, *Darwin and Intelligent Design* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

³<http://www.discovery.org/csc/topQuestions.php>.

⁴Ayala, 54.

⁵Antony Flew was a famous British atheist for many years, but since embracing ID has declared himself a deist and distanced his beliefs from Christianity.

⁶Panspermia suggests that “seeds” of life existed already in the universe and that life on earth may have originated through these “seeds.”

⁷See F. Crick, *Life Itself: Its origin and Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 192. Note that, particularly since his death, an effort has been underway to distance Crick from these ideas. The argument is essentially that since discovery of ribozymes imagining how life could have evolved as it is now is much easier than it was at the time Crick wrote his book.

⁸See for example: Mark Looy, “It’s Intelligent, But Is that Good Enough?” <http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2/4257gc3-24-2000.asp>. Also see: R. Moll, “The Other ID Opponents: Traditional Creationists see Intelligent Design as an Attack on the Bible, April 25, 2006. Available online at: <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2006/aprilweb-only/117-22.0.html>.

⁹T. G. Standish, “Changing the World with ID?,” *Ministry*, November 2003, 26-27.

¹⁰Ayala, 101.

¹¹C. R. Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 1958), 171.

¹²For example, Ayala’s claim that the type III secretory system may have been co-opted to produce the bacterial flagellum is disingenuous for multiple reasons. This objection has been dealt with in detail by flagella and type III secretory system expert Scott Minnich, see: <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/filesDB-download.php?id=389>.

¹³Ayala, 90.

¹⁴S. J. Gould, *Rocks of Ages* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999).

¹⁵Ayala, x; italics in original. Almost exactly the same words are used on page 91.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 8, specifically mentions the spleen without mentioning its essential function in the production of certain essential cells in the immune system or that William Paley was correct in suggesting that it probably does have a long term function of some sort. For a good discussion of this issue, see J. Bergman, “Do Any Vestigial Organs Exist in Humans?” *Technical Journal* 14/2(2000):95–98; available online at: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/tj/v14/i2/vestigial.asp>.

¹⁷Ayala, 35.

¹⁸M. Dowie “Pinto Madness,” *Mother Jones* September/October 1977; available online at: <http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/1977/09/dowie.html>.

¹⁹For a discussion of some of the issues in this case, see D. K. Dewolf, J. G. West, C. Luskin, J. Witt, *Traipsing into Evolution: Intelligent Design and the Kitzmiller v. Dover Decision* (Seattle: Discovery Institute Press, 2006).

²⁰Ayala, 75. See also: T. Dobzhansky, “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution,” *The American Biology Teacher* 35 (March 1973): 125-129.

²¹Ayala, 41.

²²*Ibid.*, 43.

¹R. Feynman, “Cargo Cult Science,” adapted in *Surely You’re Joking*,

THE JESUS TOMB

I. Discovery

The tomb was initially discovered on March 28, 1980, when a construction crew uncovered it in the process of preparing the foundations for an apartment complex in Talpiat, five kilometers south of Jerusalem. Following the law, the construction team contacted the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) to inspect the site. The IAA looked it over and assigned a salvage team to excavate and map the tomb and remove its contents for study and preservation.

The salvage excavation team removed 10 limestone boxes—ossuaries—used by the Jews for secondary burials. According to Jewish practice at that time (approximately 30 B.C. to A.D. 70), a body would initially be interred in a tomb for one year. During this time, the body would decompose, leaving only the bones. After one year, family and/or friends would reenter the tomb and the bones of the deceased would be gathered up and deposited in a bone box or ossuary.

Of these ten ossuaries, six had inscriptions bearing the names of the deceased contained therein in either Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. It was not uncommon for surviving family members to etch or scratch the name of the deceased on the bone box before final re-interment. Three ossuaries had only geometric designs. One ossuary (the tenth) was plain, having neither an inscription nor a design. The six inscriptions were translated as follows: (1) “Mariamene e Mara,” (Miriam and Martha); (2) “Yehuda bar Yeshua” (Judah son of Jesus); (3) “Matia” (Matthew); (4) “Yeshua (?) son of Yehosef” (Jesus, son of Joseph) (5) “Yose” (a contraction of Yehosef or Joseph) (6) Marya (Maria).

At first glance it would appear that these names would create a lot of excitement, especially the name of Jesus, as these are well known people of the New Testament. However, all of these names were so common during the Hellenistic/Roman period that they did not cause any excitement among scholars at the time—they saw no connections whatsoever with the New Testament people of the same names.

The ossuaries were deposited at the Rockefeller museum. The tenth ossuary that had no inscription or design was placed by Dr. Joe Zias in the garden area of the Rockefeller Museum near other sarcophagi. This would become the “missing ossuary” that the Discovery program would later claim was the “James Ossuary.”

II. Publications

The excavation of the tomb was quickly published by Yosef Gat in 1981. A more detailed study of the ossuaries was published in 1994 by a leading expert on ossuaries and 1st century tomb practices, Dr. Levi Yizhaq Rahmani. Prof. Amos Kloner published “A Tomb with Inscribed Os-

suaries in the East Talpiot” in the Israeli journal *Antiqot* in 1996. Both of these studies focused on the nine ossuaries that had either inscriptions or designs or both. Since the tenth ossuary had neither and was otherwise quite ordinary, it was omitted from both publications. Neither of these publications attracted any special interest by scholars in relationship to Jesus of Nazareth.

III. Media Attention

In 1996, sixteen years after the initial discovery the BBC produced a program for Easter Sunday entitled “The Body in Question.” It used the Talpiot discovery to pose a hypothetical question: What if Jesus wasn’t resurrected? They received tremendous criticism for the program. Joan Bakewell insists they were not trying to claim that this was Jesus’ tomb; they were just trying to be provocative. Bakewell recently expressed her own view on the matter: “The truth is that it is highly unlikely this is the actual tomb of Jesus and his family. There is certainly no positive proof of anything. The names were all common in the Palestine of that era; Jesus belonged to a poor family in Nazareth which would be unlikely to own a rich tomb in

Jerusalem; another tomb, actually near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, has a greater claim to be the space offered by Joseph of Arimethea. But even speculation is dangerous.”

The negative reactions to the BBC production did not deter James Cameron, producer of the successful and critically acclaimed movie “Titanic,” and Israeli-born filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici from using the same discovery for their production of “The Lost Tomb of Jesus”—broadcast this past March by the Discovery Channel. While the program was one of the most successful programs for the Discovery Channel in the last couple of years, it received so much negative criticism from Christian groups and academics alike, that they pulled their plan for a rerun broadcast.

IV. Claims of the Discovery Team

The essential claim of the Discovery Channel team is that the individuals whose names are found on the ossuaries of the Talpiot tomb are none other than the well-known people mentioned in the NT. They attempt to support this claim with the following additional claims:

- (1) The most sensational claim is that the Jesus, son of Joseph, whose ossuary was found in the Talpiot tomb is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. They base this on their assertion that this combination of father/son names (Jesus son of Joseph) is very rare. Out of thousands of inscriptions catalogued, only one other “Jesus son of Joseph” inscription ever has been uncovered. Obviously, the discovery of an ossuary of Jesus would mean that he did not undergo bodily resurrection, but rather was buried after the crucifixion,

Neither of these publications attracted any special interest by scholars in relationship to Jesus of Nazareth.

allowed to decompose for one year and then his bones were re-buried in an ossuary.

- (2) They claim that the ossuary with Maria is the mother of Jesus because finding a Latin version of a Hebrew name—"Maria" instead of "Miriam"—inscribed phonetically in Hebrew letters is very rare and supposedly always points to the mother of Jesus. In fact, out of thousands of ossuaries discovered so far, only eight other such inscriptions have been identified.
- (3) They suggest that Matia (Matthew) may be a member of Jesus' mother Mary's family (based on the genealogy of Luke 3:23)—and possibly the author of the gospel by that name.
- (4) They suggest that Jose, a rare form of the full name Joseph and appearing only on this ossuary to date, is Jesus' brother who appears in the gospel of Mark.
- (5) They claim that the ossuary inscribed "Mariamene e Mara," provides a unique form of the name Maria or Mary and was used especially by early Christians as a name for Mary Magdalene. They translate this inscription as "Mary, known as the Master," based on apocryphal works.
- (6) The next claim is that the ossuary with the "Judah son of Jesus" inscription proves that Jesus was married and had a son. His wife was Mary Magdalene. DNA samples from the ossuaries of Jesus son of Joseph and Mariamene e Mara did not match, thus supporting the claim that these two individuals were unrelated biologically and could have been a married couple.
- (7) In order to bolster their claim that the Talpiot tomb is the family tomb of Jesus and that the 10th ossuary which was not listed in either the Rahmani or Kroner publications was none other than the infamous, "James son of Joseph brother of Jesus" ossuary whose find was announced a few years ago and which is now the subject of tremendous controversy over its authenticity.

The discovery of an ossuary of Jesus would mean that he did not undergo bodily resurrection.

The most common criticism is that the names are not as unusual or rare at the program leads viewers to believe.

Subsequent to her work, Richard Bauckham, published 2,625 male and 326 female names in his recent book *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*. Bauckham notes that all of the names found in the Talpiot tomb were actually quite common during the time of Jesus. Out of the 2,625 men, the name Joseph (including Yose, the abbreviated form) was borne by 218 or 8.3%. The name Judah was borne by 164 or 6.2%. The name Jesus was borne by 99 or 3.4%. The name Matthew (in several forms) was borne by 62 or 2.4%. Of the 328 named women--women's names were much less often recorded than men's—a staggering 70 or 21.4% were called Mary (Mariam, Maria, Mariame, Mariamme).

While Ilan's and Bauckham's works show how common the names from the Talpiot tomb were in Jesus' time, it does not address the question of how likely it would be that the particular combination of names found in this tomb would occur together. Randy Ingermanson, a theoretical physicist, has calculated the number of men in Jerusalem between 20 B.C. and A.D. 70 who would have been named "Jesus son of Joseph." The number is 1.26% of 80,000 men, which works out to 1,008 individuals. Allowing for possible deviations, Ingermanson suggests that the number was somewhere between 900 and 1,100 men with this name.

More important is the question as to what are the odds of a Jesus son of Joseph being buried with the particular combination of two women and three men in the Talpiot tomb. Ingermanson calculated that one would expect at least 11 men known as Jesus son of Joseph to be buried with a set of other people that meets or beats the "amazing coincidence" cited by the Discovery team. To illustrate that the occurrence of names as found in the Talpiot tomb could show up in other tombs of this period Dr. Michael S. Heiser points out that the 1953-1955 excavation of the site of Dominus Flevit on the Mount of Olives uncovered a necropolis and over 40 inscribed ossuaries which included the names of Mary, Martha, Matthew, Joseph, and Jesus.

Regarding the claim that Jose is a rare name used only for the brother of Joseph, Richard Bauckham notes that Jose is only rare in the ossuaries. It is not as rare among the broader corpus of names from this period. Even in the NT, one of the brothers of Jesus bore that name (Mark 6:3). However, one of the sons of Mary the mother of James the younger bore that name too (Mark 15:40), and he was not Jesus' brother. And it was a name of Barnabas according to some biblical manuscripts (Acts 4:36).

As to the claim that the ossuary refers uniquely to Mary Magdalene, most scholars translate this inscription as "Mariamene [also called] Mara" rather than "master." Mara is a contraction of the name "Martha." While some have suggested two women were buried in this ossuary, it

V. Criticisms of the Claims

Reaction to the claims of the Discovery team has been rapid and almost universally negative. Criticisms have been provided by Christian thought leaders and theologians, as well as notable archaeologists—both Christian and non-Christian. The archaeologists include several of those who were involved with the original excavation, cataloguing, and publication.

The most common criticism is that the names are not as unusual or rare as the program leads viewers to believe. The leading scholar in gathering and compiling these names from the various extant sources is Prof. Tal Ilan. In the *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200CE* she has published a list of names of 3,193 individuals.

is more likely that this woman was known by two names. Moreover, the name on the tomb is not Mariamene or Mariamne, but Mariamenou which, as Richard Bauckham convincingly argues, has a very different etymology. Thus, this ossuary cannot refer to Mary Magdalene.

Similarly the claim that the DNA evidence supports a marriage between the “Jesus” found in the tomb and “Mariamenou” has been vastly overstated and has been dismissed by knowledgeable scholars. One of the forensic experts on DNA, Prof. Carney Matheson who was consulted for the program made the following comments online afterwards: “In the report it concludes that these two profiles from two different individuals were not maternally related. That is all the report states.” Nothing in the findings indicates that the Jesus and Mariamenou were married. That was a conclusion that the film makers jumped to on their own.

There has been additional criticism of the techniques and assumptions involved with the collection of the DNA samples by the film crew. The original bones were not available for analysis since they had been reburied at the time of the original excavation. Susanne Sheridan notes that the DNA results are probably invalid due to poor sampling techniques. If they did obtain samples from ancient remains, it has to be remembered that there were many bodies in the tomb originally, bones were scattered around, and ossuaries could be reused. In short, there is no way of knowing precisely from which body or individual a given DNA sample was derived. Thus, DNA conclusions are ultimately meaningless.

Finally, the claim by the Discovery team that the 10th ossuary went missing after the original excavation and is actually the infamous “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” ossuary that was presented to the world a few years ago, is purely bogus. First of all, the original ossuary, never “went missing.” It was catalogued by Dr. Joe Zias in the Rockefeller museum and deposited in the garden of that museum, precisely because it had no decoration or writing on it. Second, the dimensions of the 10th ossuary that were taken at the time of excavation and those of the “James” ossuary are not the same. Third, claims that the patina of the James ossuary matches that on the other ossuaries of the Talpiot tomb has been disavowed by the very expert who was cited in the program. Fourth, there is a serious question as to the authenticity of all or part of the inscription on the James ossuary—it is thought by many to be a fraud. Finally, Eusebius makes it clear that James the brother of Jesus was buried in Jerusalem proper, close to the temple, not 3 miles south in Talpiot.

In addition to these refutations of the specific claims of the Discovery Channel program, scholars have noted many other problems. Dr. Jodi Magness, an archaeologist and expert on first century tombs, declared that at the time of Jesus only wealthy families buried their dead in tombs

cut by hand from solid rock, putting the bones in niches in the walls and then, later, transferring them to ossuaries. Jesus’ father was a poor carpenter, and there is no evidence that Jesus’ family was affluent enough to afford a stone-cut tomb and ossuary. The location is wrong. “If Jesus’ family had been wealthy enough to afford a rock-cut tomb, it would have been in Nazareth, not Jerusalem,” according to Magness.

Moreover, she notes, the names on the Talpiot ossuaries indicate that the tomb belonged to a family from Judea, the area around Jerusalem, where people were known by their first name and their father’s name. As Galileans, Jesus and his family members would have used their first name and hometown. Furthermore, there is no information on analyzing the relation of “Mary” and “Jesus son of Joseph” or any other tomb occupants.

In summary, then, there are virtually no leading archaeologists or biblical scholars who find the claims of the Discovery Channel that they have identified the actual tomb of Jesus of Nazareth credible.

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FOCUS ON SCRIPTURE

THE POWER OF CULTURE

During the BRI’s third meeting with African theologians and biblical scholars on the topic of magic and witchcraft, which took place on the campus of the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, in December 2006, the following traditional practice was shared: In a certain part of Africa a father, who had daughters only, was considered more or less childless. He needed a male descendant. If one of his daughters would have married and born a boy, this child would have carried on the line of the son-in-law, not the father’s own lineage. So the marriage of a daughter was no help for the father. Therefore, fathers who had only girls at times refused to give them in marriage. However, if one of the girls got pregnant without being married and a boy was born, this boy belonged to the father’s house and carried on the father’s line. Thus, traditionally, certain African fathers condoned that their daughters had a sexual relationship without being married from which a boy was born for the sake of the family line to be continued over against a regular marriage. This custom may have disappeared. However, customs prevalent in societies often affect also

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the area around Jerusalem, where people were known by their first name and their father’s name. As

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Adventist families as do the practice of magic and witchcraft these days in Africa and new standards on sexuality in the Western world. Biblical guidelines and commands concerning sexuality, premarital sex, and occult activities have been or are abandoned in favor of the customs of society and the dictates of a prevalent culture.

This problem is not new. We find biblical reports in which the same phenomenon appeared among believers in the time of Jesus. According to Matthew 15:3-9 and Mark 7:6-13 Judaism of the first century set aside the commandment to honor father and mother by the *corban* provision. Jesus accused Pharisees and scribes of invalidating the Word of God by their tradition and continued: “You do many things such as that.” In Revelation 2 the churches of Pergamon and Thyatira accepted the teachings of Balaam, the Nicolaitans, and the woman Jezebel. We hear about immorality and the eating of meat offered to idols (Rev. 2:14-15, 20). Obviously they were influenced by their place and culture, where Satan dwelled (Rev. 2:13) and by “the deep things of Satan” (Rev. 2:24).

That culture and social environment have an immense impact on Christian communities can also be seen in the North American context. In her book “*You Shall Not Kill*” or *You Shall Not Murder*”? catholic author W. A. Bailey discusses the shift in Protestant translations of the sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13) from “You shall not kill” to “You shall not murder” which took place to a large degree from the middle of the 20th century onward.¹ The old English

The desire to become mainstream churches, the close connection to militarism, and the influence of culture led to a change of the wording of the sixth commandment as well as a change in practice.

translations such as Wiclif’s Bible, Tyn-dale’s Pentateuch, the Geneva Bible, Douay (catholic), and the King James Version translate the sixth commandment

as “You shall not kill.” The American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version, as well as catholic translations still retain this rendition. However, the New American Standard Bible (1960), the New International Version (1973), the New King James Version (1982), the New Revised Standard Version (1989), the English Standard Version (2001), and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004) have shifted to “You shall not murder” which is much more limited than the broader “You shall not kill.” Such a rendering subtly influences Christians including Adventist church members, bringing about undesirable changes of understanding and behavior.

Why has this happened? There is no new manuscript evidence supporting such a shift, and Bailey shows that linguistically and theologically “You shall not kill” is the preferable translation.² In the NT Jesus broadens the sixth commandment to include even verbal abuse of another person (Matt. 5:21-22). So why the change? In a historical section she traces several faith traditions, showing that for

Evangelicals the desire to become mainstream churches, the close connection to militarism, and the influence of culture led to a change of the wording of the sixth commandment as well as a change in practice.

Discussing, for example, the Southern Baptist Convention she shows that in 1917 this church supported the war effort, but already in 1921 it promoted disarmament. This was repeated in a 1932 statement in which Southern Baptists supported complete disarmament and the abolishment of war as a national policy, because of its incompatibility with the ethical principles of Jesus. In 1940 it was urged that the United States should not participate in World War II. In 1948 a resolution stated that peace does not come out of war and rejected the notion that wars are unavoidable. In 1967 and 1971 the call was issued to study Scripture when dealing with issues of God-and-country. However, in the 1980s a strong national defense was supported. In 1991 the military was praised for its success in Desert Storm. In 1994 the participants of D-Day were commended. In 1998 a statement of the same Convention reads that “the purpose of military combat is to use force against an enemy in order to kill, damage or destroy—a purpose and essence aligned with the male role.”³ In 2002 a resolution supported the war on terror, which was considered a just war. In 2003 the war in Iraq was supported and also called a just war. In 2004 the military was praised for “maintaining peace throughout the world.”⁴ This rising support for the military and for war among Southern Baptists may be connected to the decision to translate the sixth commandment as “You shall not murder.”

With regard to the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal church, Bailey summarizes her findings saying: “And so the same text was used in the Assemblies of God to reject killing in war at the beginning of the twentieth century and support it at the beginning of the twenty-first century.”⁵

In a somewhat provocative way she states: “People want to kill people, and they want biblical permission to do so. The translators of the NRSV and the other translations of the late twentieth century gave them that permission.

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W. A. Bailey

Both lay people and scholars have been inculturated into the societies in which they live. Those who live in cultures that sanction killing in war and capital punishment

are more likely to read the sixth commandment in a more limited way because it suits a culturally created worldview.”⁶

Where do we as Adventists stand? We too have become more mainstream and more a church than a movement, and we must recognize and admit that culture strongly influences human life including the Adventist community. Are we in danger of following older denominations by

becoming completely adapted to respective cultures and social-political environments?

Culture has been understood as a framework of human belief, knowledge, and behavior that has been received and learned by one generation and passed on to the next generation. It consists of customs and traditions, language and symbols, ideas and beliefs, techniques and works of art, as well as institutions. Individuals, their physical, emotional, and mental capacities are to a large degree shaped by the culture or cultures in which they live. There are aspects of culture which are helpful for societies and are not opposed to biblical principles and the gospel of Christ and can be espoused by sincere Christians. We are not opposed to such cultural expressions at all. However, there are other aspects of culture which have to be challenged by the Word of God, and from which we must distance ourselves.

The Adventist Church has issued official statements on sexual behavior, on assault weapons, and peace.⁷ The church supports noncombatancy.⁸ These statements clarify where the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church stands with regard to these issues. However, what may be clear in these statements as to the position of the church may not be clear to all church members. It may not be the practice in some parts of the world. And what may be clear today may not be clear tomorrow. Although change is necessary as we—as individuals and as a church—grow toward Christ, not all change is desirable and beneficial. Beliefs and practices do not become right automatically because they are the cultural expression of certain societies. God's will as revealed in Scripture supersedes all human institutions and customs. Therefore, we have (1) to recognize and (2) resist cultural views and practices opposed to the gospel of Christ as well as questionable Bible translations informed by societal pressures and common practice among other Christians. Otherwise a subtle and yet strong influence will be exerted which in the long run may damage our message and mission and cause us to water down our convictions. Then Jesus' words would also apply to us: "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8).

God's will as revealed in Scripture supersedes all human institutions and customs.

¹Wilma Ann Bailey, "You Shall Not Kill" or "You shall Not Murder"? *The Assault on a Biblical Text* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005).

²Ibid., 1-25.

³"Resolution on Women in Combat," 1998, at sbc.net. Copyright © 1999-2005 Southern Baptist Convention.

⁴"On Appreciation of Our American Military," 2004, at sbc.net. Copyright © 1999-2005 Southern Baptist Convention.

⁵Bailey, 35

⁶Ibid, 52.

⁷See, Rajmund Dabrowski (ed.), *Statements, Guidelines & Other Documents* (Silver Spring: Communication Department of the

General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2005), 94-95, 4-5, 73-80.

⁸See, www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/noncombatancy.htm.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

SCRIPTURE APPLIED—A BIBLE STUDY

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

Western societies are often quite individualistic, missing the importance of a corporate entity. Yet groups of people are very important and can function in ways individuals cannot. Here is an illustration: Think about matches. An individual match can easily be broken. However, if ten or twenty matches are bundled together, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for humans to break them. So is the Christian church versus individual believers. Although the church is made up of individuals, it is a kind of organism that surpasses them. It is a group of people who believe in Jesus Christ and are His disciples and followers.

I. Nature and Meaning of the Church

1. Messianic Community

Matt. 16:18; John 10:16	Jesus has founded the church, and it is His community.
Acts 10:41	Through baptism believers are added to the church.
Heb. 10:25	The Bible does not teach that we can be Christians in isolation.
1 Tim. 5:1-2; James 2:15	The church is the family of believers. Church members are brothers and sisters.
Eph. 3:11-13, 19; Gal. 3:28	All barriers are gone. All believers belong to God's household.

2. The Structure of the Church

1 Thess. 1:1, 6-7; Rev. 3:14-17	There are local churches with different characters and problems.
Eph. 1:20-23; 3:10	There is also the universal church.
Col. 1:18; Eph. 2:20	Jesus is the head of the church and her chief corner stone.
Eph. 2:20	Together with Him the apostles and prophets form the foundation.
1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:5-6	All believers form a priesthood.
Eph. 4:11-12	There are also leaders.

1 Cor. 12:12-13 The unity of the church is important.

3. Images Depicting the Church

The NT uses many images to describe the church. Some of them are listed here. These images are complimentary and express some of the many facets of the church and her ministry.

1 Cor. 12:12-26	The body of Christ
Eph. 2:21-22	Temple and house
Matt. 5:13-16	Salt and light
1 Tim. 3:15	A pillar
2 Cor. 11:2	The bride of Christ

II. The Church in History

1. Problems of the Church

Paul had already predicted problems for the church (Acts 20:28-30). Internal difficulties include the following:

Rev. 2:4	A lack of love
Rev. 2:6, 14-15, 20-24	False teachers/teachings
Rev. 3:1	Spiritual death
Rev. 3:15-16	Lukewarmness
Rev. 3:17	Self-deception

External challenges are:

Rev. 2:9	Blasphemy
Rev. 2:9-10; 13:7, 16-17	Tribulation and persecution
Rev. 2:10; 6:9; 13:15	Death and martyrdom

2. Apostasy in the Church

The appearance of false doctrines and their adoption led to apostasy. The church of Christ split into various denominations. Revelation depicts a pure church in the wilderness (Rev. 12) as opposed to an apostate and persecuting church (Rev. 17-18). Time spans given (Rev. 12:6, 12; 13:5) take us to the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century.

3. The End-Time Remnant

In the time of the end (after A.D. 1798) a faithful remnant would occur. Characteristics of this remnant are:

- Keeping God's commandments (Rev. 12:17; 14:12).
- Having the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 19:10).
- Patience (Rev. 13:10; 14:12).
- Faith (Rev. 13:10; 14:12).

In addition : (1) They are the property of God and Jesus (Rev. 14:1, 3-4). (2) With them there is no false worship (Rev. 14:4). (3) They are followers of the Lamb (Rev. 14:4). (4) They are truthful and blameless (Rev. 14:5). (5) They proclaim on a worldwide scale the three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6-12). People are called to leave apostasy and join Christ's remnant community (Rev. 18:4).

III. Tasks of the Church

Church members have received spiritual gifts that should be used to benefit the church and others (1 Cor. 12:7-11). The tasks of the church can be grouped into three broad categories:

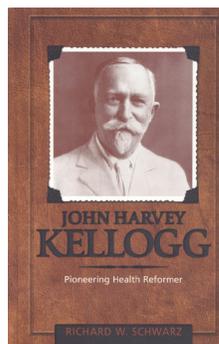
- Ministry to God:
Worship, following Jesus, prayer, etc. (Rev. 5:8; 14:3-4, 7)
- Ministry to believers:
Nurture, fellowship, support, etc. (John 13:34; Acts 4:34-35; Eph. 4:12-16)
- Ministry to the world:
Evangelism and social concern (Matt. 25:31-40; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

IV. The Church and I

We are called to become part of the church, attend church, and get involved in the mission of the church. If we do so, we will be greatly blessed and will become a blessing for others.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

BOOK NOTES



Richard W. Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006. 240 pp. US\$17.99.

This volume on John Harvey Kellogg in the Adventist Pioneer Series is a reprint of the 1970-book published by Andrews University Press. The new edition has a foreword by George R. Knight and a number of pictures which were not in the original publication. The book is almost entirely based on the author's doctoral dissertation which he completed at the University of Michigan in 1964.

John Harvey Kellogg (1852–1943) was one of America's most colorful individualists and leaders in medicine. He was an exceptionally bright young man who not only learned the printing business at 12 years of age, but was a proofreader at 14, and a public school teacher at 16. In 1873 James and Ellen White encouraged him to take a medical course. Three years later, shortly after having finished his two-year medical course, he was appointed superintendent of the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, later called the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

In this book we meet J. H. Kellogg, the confirmed vegetarian and enthusiastic advocate of the principles of health and temperance. To make the Sanitarium menu more attractive and healthful he developed cornflakes and other dry cereal breakfast foods, now available world wide. He also developed a number of meat substitutes. In addition to being an able physician and a famous surgeon, he was

also a great writer. He wrote more than 50 books, most of them large scientific works, and numerous articles for medical journals, besides serving as editor of *Good Health*. He was a very generous man who took a great interest in the welfare of children and young people. He and his wife had no children of their own, but they opened their home to needy youngsters eventually rearing 42 boys and girls, and adopting several of them.

Kellogg's fertile and brilliant mind not only made an invaluable contribution to the fledgling health work of the Adventist Church, it also led to his fall from grace. When the Battle Creek Sanitarium burned to the ground in 1902, Kellogg immediately set about to erect a larger, more modern, and better-equipped sanitarium building. To finance his rebuilding plans he wrote the book *The Living Temple* which, unfortunately, was permeated with the principles of pantheism. This led to a series of events which eventually cost him his membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was disfellowshipped in 1907, but was able to maintain control of the Battle

Creek Sanitarium, with which He remained connected until his death in 1943.

Due to the fact that the book is based on the Schwarz's dissertation at a non-Adventist University, the role of Ellen White in this chapter of Adventist history is not as prominent as it would have been had the book originally been written for an Adventist audience. For example, her timely intervention at the Fall Council in 1903, when two letters from her, pointing out errors in the book *The Living Temple*, arrived at the precise time when the Council was debating the book, is not mentioned. Neither the original nor this edition contain any footnotes, which is regrettable. Students of Adventist history would have benefited from Schwarz's research without having to look for the original version of his dissertation. Nevertheless, the book makes a fine contribution to the understanding of an important chapter in Adventist history, and every church member interested in Adventist history should have a copy of it.

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