

The Editor's Page

Ed Christian

This is not the first issue of *JATS* to focus on creation, but it is the first to include articles on creation written by well-credentialed scientists. Far too often theologians writing on creation or the flood are woefully naïve about basic physics, chemistry, and biology—and more naïve about such fields as geology, paleontology, and evolutionary theory. This sometimes leads them to speculate in unfruitful ways or accept as fact ideas that creation scientists know to be impossible. We welcome the four articles our scientific colleagues have contributed.¹ They all believe in creation, but they have the technical expertise most of us lack.

All but three of the articles in this issue were first presented at the International Faith and Science Conference held August 23–29, 2002, in Ogden, Utah.² These articles were selected by three of the ATS officers present at the conference. Papers selected had to be within the bounds of the ATS centrist beliefs on creation.³ The conference was limited to eighty-four Seventh-day Adventist scientists, theologians, and church administrators.⁴ To encourage frank discussion, only those invited were admitted, and comments made there have been kept confidential.

Dabrowski writes: “The conference was held both to affirm belief in God as Creator as revealed in the biblical account, and to begin a dialogue on questions, issues, and diverse views about the origin of the earth.”

¹ You may note that some of their papers do not follow the citation style generally found in *JATS*. I've allowed them to use note styles acceptable in their own fields, so long as they are consistent.

² The articles by Schafer and Booth and Brand's article “What Are the Limits of Death in Paradise?” were submitted independently and went through the usual double-blind review process.

³ Three other papers—by Randy Younker, John Baldwin, and Fernando Canale—were recommended but for various reasons were not available.

⁴ Details and quotations given here, unless otherwise noted, are from Ray Dabrowski's news report, “Adventist Scholars and Leaders Begin Faith and Science Conversation,” found at <http://www.adventistreview.org/2002-1538/news.html>. Dabrowski is the communication director of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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In his remarks to those attending, General Conference President Jan Paulsen said, “Having the faith and science conference with focus on creation was in part difficult, but very necessary. More good comes from having it and talking about difficult matters than from running away from them. It is necessary that we learn to talk together.”

However, he also cautioned, “As a church we don't come to these discussions with a neutral position. We already have a defined fundamental belief in regard to creation. We believe that earth and life on it was created in six literal days and that the age of earth since then is a young one.”

The position of the Adventist church on creation, as found in the church's statement on fundamental beliefs, is as follows:

Creation: God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made “the heaven and the earth” and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)⁵

Having read all of these articles at least three times, I am especially excited about the first four. Richard Davidson's “The Biblical Account of Origins” is probably the best available scriptural defense of the position held by many ATS scholars.

Be sure to read Timothy Standish's “Bits and Particles: Information and Machines Sufficient to Infer an Intelligent Designer.” Standish carefully explains the biological role of a single protein without which animal life is impossible and shows that it could not possibly have come into being through evolution. The article filled me with love and admiration for the God Who Designs. Genesis 1 gives us God speaking things into existence. True science, working in harmony with Scripture, reveals to us the astonishing complexity and elegance with which the Creator made all things fit together. I don't see how any scientist could read this article without falling at God's feet in awe. Surely, every step forward in scientific knowledge, read correctly, provides additional evidence that God is the greatest of all scientists.

Leonard Brand's “What Are the Limits of Death in Paradise?” raises questions we have too long ignored. Many of us are guilty of imposing onto Scripture our own conceptions of what a perfect world would be like, assuming that our thoughts are God's thoughts (Isa 55:9), that our definition of death is God's definition. We admit that we live in a world where all things are to some degree

⁵ Fundamental Belief 6, available at <http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/index.html>

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influenced by sin, but just how different is what we see from the original creation? If “The spirit of Christ’s self-sacrificing love is the spirit that pervades heaven and is the very essence of its bliss,”⁶ is self-sacrifice also part of God’s design for this earth? If some of the *e.coli* bacteria necessary for digestion—which presently multiply by the millions in our colons every day and die by the millions—were excreted during a bowel movement, would they live forever? Would that piece of excrement remain forever intact and undecayed in the Garden of Eden, or did God design a way for it to be useful as it decayed, disintegrated, and disappeared? If Adam ate an apple and tossed the core to the ground, would that core always remain white and juicy, or would it decay, providing food for insects and plants? If the cycle of self-sacrificing decay and regeneration we see today is not somewhat similar to what happened before sin, then how do we account for it? Is it all a result of sin? This is not like saying, “Once we had perfect digestions, but now we sometimes have indigestion.” It’s more like saying, “Now we digest, but once we had systems where digestion wasn’t necessary.” Holding the latter position makes necessary a second creation after the fall, and this is not the biblical teaching. Brand raises several interesting possibilities while remaining within the bounds of scriptural teaching scholars have too often misinterpreted.

Finally, Rahel Schafer’s “The ‘Kinds’ of Genesis 1: What Is the Meaning of *Min*?” compares the word “kind” in Genesis with the same word in Lev 11, shedding light on both chapters. This is an example of sound, useful biblical exegesis, answering questions and illuminating texts. Schafer provides strong evidence that the “kind” and the “species” are not synonymous and that the Bible does not teach the fixity of species. On the other hand, she also shows why the text precludes the possibility of macro-evolution, as God commands the sea or the earth to bring forth the “kinds” ready-made.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 77.