

Noesis

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EDITORIAL

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INTRODUCTION

When I first agreed to be responsible for this issue of Noesis, I thought that I would write on something mathematical. Upon further reflection I realized that this had at least three faults:

First, I would be writing on what I supposed were the interests of others in the society, rather than on that in which I myself was most interested. Worse, I realized that my assumption about the interests of others was likely erroneous.

Second, mathematics is actually a rather cold subject. The philosophical, religious, and political issues of our day actually have a far greater importance in real terms. I feel that we are flooded with illogical philosophy, false religion, and bad politics. Therefore, I feel it to be my duty to contribute my own thoughts on these subjects.

Third, I have joined this society partly to learn about myself by observing others who may be similar to me in some way. In order to provide the rest of you the same opportunity which I seek, I have decided to reveal some things about my personal life and beliefs.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

I am 50 years old and live with my wife, Diane, in the country outside of Burlington. We have a small house on one acre of land, with farm land on three sides. Our four children have all left home.

I have a degree in Physics from the University of Minnesota and spent two and a half years in graduate school studying Theoretical Physics before dropping out. I had a relatively easy time as an undergraduate, but finally reached the point where I could no longer study whatever I wanted and still pass all of my courses. In particular, I did badly on a written preliminary examination.

I was working toward a Ph.D. degree, but I had various disagreements with my advisor and other professors about the subject of my thesis work. I was interested in the general theory of relativity, and how quantum mechanics could be reconciled with a theory of gravity. They told me that this was a waste of time, that there was no way to obtain funding for work in such a field, etc. I finally realized that the government was mostly interested in physics work that might lead to new weapons, and that the professors wanted the students to only work on topics directly related to their own research.

All of the developments in the years since then, for example the speculation about black holes and other cosmology, have only proven that I was more sensitive to what was important than my professors were. I hope that they think about me from time to time.

I began working as engineer in computer system design and logic design. In those days (1963) the computer field was still new, and people from any technical field were accepted as well as electrical engineers. Over the years I worked at Univac, 3M Company, and General Electric. I am currently employed at the Eaton Corporation in Milwaukee in the "Corporate Research and Development" department. I did some integrated circuit design for them, but for five years now have been working on expert systems and other software projects.

I drive over 40 miles to work each day, which gives me much time for contemplation. I feel relatively secure living as far away as I do from major cities. Moreover,

this is a place appointed by God for the true church to dwell, and the only such place from which the church has not been driven by force and violence.

I am now a Christian, but I was raised with almost no religious education. During my high school years I was a strong disbeliever. During my early college years it had become apparent to me that there were deep mysteries in the universe which science by itself was insufficient to explain, but I remained essentially a sceptic. My attitude was that it would be pleasant to have assurance of eternal life, and so forth, but that one had to be realistic, and that I could not believe any such thing until it had been proven to me personally.

In 1959, at a time of crisis, I called upon God and promised him that if he would grant me a certain thing, I would thereafter obey him so far as my conscience allowed. The thing that I asked for was later given me. Nevertheless, I continued in unbelief.

In 1963, at a time of crisis related to my dropping out of graduate school, I called upon God many times, using the Lord's Prayer. Nevertheless, I afterward continued in unbelief.

About 1965 I bought a modern language translation of the New Testament, and read two or three of the gospels. It seemed to me that there were contradictions, and I continued in unbelief.

During the Vietnam War, I became deeply involved in the anti-war movement. It was incongruous that our government claimed to be fighting for freedom and democracy in Vietnam, but was using conscription to support a war effort which had neither been discussed nor voted on in Congress. Moreover, South Vietnam was neither a democratic nor a free country. The United States was responsible for allowing France reinstall itself as a colonial power in Vietnam after the Second World War, and the justifiable fight against colonialism gave the communist revolutionaries their initial impetus. My effort in opposing that war was completely patriotic, in that military withdrawal was in the best interests of our country, both morally, on behalf of those whose lives were disrupted by the draft, and on behalf of our soldiers who suffered there.

In 1971, at a time of crisis, when I was broken

in spirit, I was utterly surprised by some astonishing personal experiences. Although I had no visions in the ordinary sense of the term, I became completely convinced of the existence of spiritual things, and ultimately accepted Jesus Christ.

I finished reading the Bible, believing. Scripture study convinced me that the law of Moses has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, but that the covenant, including the ten commandments, is not all fulfilled. I began to keep the sabbath day holy, not working on the seventh day (from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday).

I also read the Book of Mormon, and was impressed with the powerful testimony it gives of Jesus Christ, both of his life and his divinity, in complete agreement with the Bible. However, it seemed to me that those who call themselves Mormons, following after Brigham Young who led so many to Utah, were not the true church.

In 1973 my wife and I briefly visited the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the area where I now live, which we call Voree. These are they who believe that Joseph Smith appointed James J. Strang to be his successor, and that angels ordained James Strang a prophet to the church at the time that the prophet Joseph Smith was murdered in 1844. They also observe the seventh day sabbath. I found that the church here has some difficult doctrines, and moreover is divided into factions.

Over four years passed, but I could find no other church to join. In February, 1978, I finally became convinced. After repenting with tears, I was baptized in the White River in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It had been necessary to cut a hole in the ice. Afterward I partook of unleavened bread and unfermented wine in remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. I also received the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. I believe that I have been called of God to be a member of his church, and that I have entered in at the appointed gate.

In 1980 I moved here to Voree at a significant personal sacrifice. There are actually very few here with whom I can comfortably fellowship. The church is approaching extinction. According to one estimate, there are 200 members scattered at various locations around the country. Perhaps this is accurate, but I think that there

are far fewer who are actually serious. There has been no prophet since James Strang was murdered in 1856.

There is not enough space here to tell the full story about the church and its persecutions. However, I am willing to correspond with those who are interested. I offer the following as encouragement for anyone who might be looking for a small church, rather than a large one:

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13-14

Of course the word "strait" here means "narrow," and not "straight." Perhaps this is well understood by members of this society, but it certainly confuses most people.

MY INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

I received a public school education, and I was in no way a child prodigy. I did poorly on spelling tests, and had a little difficulty obtaining correct answers to arithmetic problems. I cannot remember ever trying to learn one of those weekly spelling lists, as they seemed silly to me. I was ashamed of my inability to correctly add a column of numbers, and probably should have practiced more, but I really hated arithmetic.

After taking the Mega Test, one time when I was back in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I went to the school administration and asked for a copy of my school records. I found that in 4th grade I had been tested to have an IQ of 115, and that in 6th grade I had been tested to have an IQ of 117. These results were from some kind of written test taken in a group. There is no reason to suppose that these results are in any way inaccurate.

In 7th grade I had been asked to take a test after normal school hours. This was an individually given test, which I assume was a Stanford-Binet. I do not know why I was selected to take this test, nor do I know of anyone else

who took it. The result did not appear on the regular school transcripts, and the school officials told me that when the "Freedom of Information Act" was passed, all of the old school psychological records had been destroyed.

By the high school years, I had begun to excel somewhat. In mathematics I scored in some standardized tests at 99 percentile, and in verbal tests from 80 to 95 percentile. I did not read much of what was considered to be "literature," but I liked science fiction. My test scores were not high enough to get a college scholarship.

During high school I also started playing chess seriously, once or twice a week at the Minneapolis Chess Club, and several times a year in tournaments. My high school chess rating was 1766, which is class B. I finished about in the middle most of the chess tournaments, but was one of the better high school players.

In my senior year of college I took the GRE (Graduate Record Examination) and scored at the 99th percentile in three categories: Verbal, Quantitative, and Physics. The Verbal and Quantitative scores together were 1440, which I suppose corresponds to an IQ of about 145. This is too low to qualify for the Triple Nine Society, for example. Nevertheless, I did well enough to qualify for a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship, which supported me and my young family during two and a half years of graduate study.

I was perplexed at why I should score in a higher percentile of college seniors than I did of high school students. I am also perplexed at why there is such an anomalous correlation between my GRE score and my Mega Test score. The poor correlation can be best seen by looking at Noesis (then called Titania) Issue 1, where Ron Hoeflin charts the correlations between the Mega Test and the GRE. My X does not even appear on the chart, but if it did, it would be one of the poorest fits to a curve.

After taking the Mega Test, I also took the LAIT (Langdon Adult Intelligence Test). After a long delay I finally received a score which is within 4 IQ points of the Mega Test (first and latest norming). This is close enough to suggest that the Mega Test is not erroneous, but that something deeper is involved.

It should be clear that scores on adult intelligence tests depend upon at least two things: first, the rate

of intellectual development, and second, the age at which such development levels off. The first factor is what was originally called IQ, but the second factor is an equally important and greatly neglected factor.

In my case I have deliberately taken certain remedial action. I practiced with mental arithmetic in college. In more recent years I started looking up unfamiliar words in a dictionary, and have learned to read two foreign languages: German and Spanish. While I still do not like "literature," I have read over 10,000 pages in each language.

I do not feel especially intelligent. I persistently blunder in mental tasks, and frequently find myself at the limit of my ability to understand complex things.

Our human civilization is very, very young. Surely, by the standards of other advanced civilizations elsewhere in the universe, our top levels of ability would be considered moronic at best.

21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

Isaiah 5:21

28 O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

29 But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.

Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 9:28-29

PROBLEMS WITH THE MEGA TEST

It seems to me that there are two major problems with the Mega Test.

First, the score achieved on this test depends too much on effort. I am sure that I could have done better if I had spent more time on it, and that this is even more true for most people who took the test. The test may be

measuring ambition as much as intelligence.

Second, the cutoff for the Noetic Society is too close to the ceiling of the test. Scores for the 99.9 percentile are at the about half right and half wrong level, which is appropriate for discriminating at that percentile. However, at the level of the Noetic Society the ordinary statistical fluctuations which are to be expected in the score of any test like this, perhaps two points at the 43 point level, are sufficient to throw most of our current membership in or out of the society on the basis of chance alone.

In order to estimate the magnitude of the statistical fluctuations, suppose that a hypothetical test has 9 equally easy problems, 30 equally difficult medium problems, and 9 equally hard problems. Someone who can do all easy problems, half of medium problems, and no hard problems would (on each taking of such a test) have an expected score (mean) of 24 and would have a statistical fluctuation (standard deviation) in his/her score of one-half the square root of 30, or about 2.7. Someone who can do all easy and medium problems, and half of hard problems, would have an expected score of 43.5 and a statistical fluctuation of one-half the square root of 9, or 1.5.

A test which is used to discriminate at the Noetic Society level should be composed of enough difficult problems so that differences in the scores of persons at roughly our level reflect differences in ability, and not differences in luck.

Such a test should also have problems with a range of difficulty extending beyond most of our membership. A test like this could hardly be devised by the current membership. Ideally, we would need an extraterrestrial with an IQ of perhaps 300 to know what kinds of problems were important and elegant. For example, an interpenetration problem with some number of cones, cubes, spheres, etc. is merely gruesome unless there is an elegant general solution. Likewise, the use of increasingly rare and obscure words seems pointless. Intelligence should not be equated with nothing more than acquired knowledge. It would be necessary for the hypothetical extraterrestrial to know what was really important for us at our level.

A DIFFICULT PUZZLE

I consider that scripture is given to us partly as a puzzle. Sometimes it is a puzzle to determine which writings are true scripture and which are given by a false prophet. However, one can not work a puzzle without all of the pieces.

Some of the material in the Book of Mormon helps to understand important doctrines.

Many things contained in the Apocrypha are true, and other portions are not. The Apocrypha was originally contained in the King James Version of the Bible, but the Protestants have since dropped all of these books. The Roman Catholic Bible contains most, but not all of the Apocrypha.

I do not claim to have an infallible key to determine what scripture is true and what is false. However, as will be seen later, some of the material in the Apocrypha is directly related to the Revelation of John. It would seem to be important to consider all such relations in interpreting important prophecy.

My own study of scripture has caused me to differ greatly with conventional interpretation. In the following sections I will share with you a sampling of my opinions, not necessarily in the order of importance.

MYTH: THE BIBLE IS FREE FROM ERROR.

Many of those who reject all latter-day prophets are rejecting God, and do so by putting the Bible in his place, claiming that the Bible is the only book that we need, and that it is complete, perfect, and infallible.

The Bible contains a record of God's dealings with mankind. God's record of these events is no doubt complete and free from error. However, man's record, like everything else that man does, is flawed.

For example, consider the following contradictions. I use the King James Version of the Bible, but I think that the same problems will be found in any translation.

26 Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah,

the daughter of Omri king of Israel.

II Kings 8:26

2 Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

II Chronicles 22:2

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

Acts 9:7

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

Acts 22:9

Nevertheless, I believe that the Bible is substantially correct. When contradictions occur, they are usually over some minor issue of little significance.

MYTH: JESUS WAS NEVER MARRIED.

This is of course pure supposition. The Bible says nothing whatever about the life of Jesus from the age of 12 until the age of about 30. We are not told that he was a carpenter, nor any other thing about his life. Jesus could easily have married at the age of perhaps 15, and raised a child to nearly the same age before he began his ministry.

Now king David was promised that his kingdom, through his seed, was established forever. See II Samuel 7:12-13 and I Chronicles 28:7. Jesus claimed to be king in Israel in part through descent from David through his father Joseph. See the genealogies in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. That Jesus was the rightful king was the reason an attempt was made on his life as a baby, and was one reason for his crucifixion.

I personally believe that, because of the promise made to David, a rightful king of Israel must remain on the earth even in the present day, and that this king would most logically descend from David through Jesus. If Jesus was the father of children, their lives would have been

in the same danger as his, and their very existence would logically have been kept a secret.

MYTH: JESUS SPOKE IN PARABLES IN ORDER TO MAKE HIS TEACHINGS EASIER TO UNDERSTAND.

It is often objected by unbelievers that God, if he wanted us to believe a certain way, ought to make it plain to us. However, it is clear from the Bible that God does not want everyone to understand and believe, and that Jesus really spoke in parables in order to keep the majority from understanding his teachings.

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

...

15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Matthew 13:10-11,15

MYTH: THE DEPERSONALIZATION OF GOD.

Philosophers have done much harm by abstracting the definition of God into some amorphous, invisible, and unknowable entity, and then proving the concept to be ridiculous with arguments about irresistible forces and immovable objects, etc.

The God of the Bible is a person.

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. ...

22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Genesis 17:1,22

9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:

10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

Exodus 24:9-11

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ...

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 6:1,5

MYTH: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS HAVE BEEN FULFILLED.

Most Christians use the references in the Bible with regard to the Law of Moses having been fulfilled to justify not keeping the sabbath day, or for changing it to a different day. There are several things wrong with this theory.

First, the commandments were evidently already in effect prior to when they were given from mount Sinai.

5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Genesis 26:5

28 And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

...

30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

Exodus

16:28,30

Second, the ten commandments were given by God directly to the people of Israel, without the intervention

of Moses. Therefore, they are not part of the Law of Moses. See Deuteronomy 4:12-13,33,36, 5:3-4,22, 9:10.

Third, if one of the ten commandments has been abolished, or if we are in some way free from keeping it, then the same would logically be true for all of them, including stealing, adultery, etc.

Finally, consider the following scripture.

9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

Deuteronomy 7:9

16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

Exodus 31:16

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 7:21

7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. ...

9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Mark 7:7,9

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Romans 3:31

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Romans 6:15

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

I John 3:4

Evidently there was controversy with regard to keeping the sabbath day already in the very early church. Paul seems to take a neutral position.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. ...

12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Romans 14:5,12

James made a concerted effort to correct erroneous application of Paul's teaching on faith, and has a lot more to say on the subject of faith and works. I strongly recommend reading the entire second chapter of James.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

James 2:10-11

Incidentally, Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, but Peter, James, and John, I believe, served in turn as head of the entire church.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

I John 5:3

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:17

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 14:12

MY DUTY, A WARNING

It is my duty to give a warning. The prophet Joseph Smith made it very clear that the wrath of God would soon fall upon the wicked. I could easily quote from prophecy given by Joseph Smith and James Strang, but in the hope that the warning might perhaps be more readily received, the following older scripture is offered instead.

1 Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. ...

5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

Isaiah 24:1,5-6

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. ...

17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that

great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

Revelation 18:8-10,17-19

One of the significant things about the Apocrypha is that it also tells of the destruction of Babylon.

40 The great and mighty clouds shall be lifted up full of wrath, and the star, that they may make all the earth afraid, and them that dwell therein; and they shall pour out over every high and eminent place an horrible star,

41 Fire, and hail, and flying swords, and many waters, that all fields may be full, and all rivers, with the abundance of great waters.

42 And they shall break down the cities and walls, mountains and hills, trees of the wood, and grass of the meadows, and their corn.

43 And they shall go stedfastly unto Babylon, and make her afraid.

44 They shall come to her, and besiege her, the star and all wrath shall they pour out upon her: then shall the dust and smoke go up unto the heaven, and all they that be about her shall bewail her.

II Esdras 15:40-44

Perhaps it is relevant that the Russian Bible, as used by the Russian Orthodox Church, contains this book of the Apocrypha. Those few who read it must be aware of these things.

