

Roberta Winter Institute

Compiled and condensed from the writings and speeches of Ralph D. Winter.

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The Roberta Winter Institute will try to upgrade our desire to bring glory to God by ending our apparently neoplatonist truce with Satan in the realm of all his ingenious and destructive works. Our global mission agencies, which already have to their credit the discovery of the nature of leprosy, will declare war on other *sources* of disease in addition to being kind helpfully to sick people and preaching resignation amidst suffering.

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

We are in a war against an intelligent enemy

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

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

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

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

Providence"?

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

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

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

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

Attributing evil to God/distortion of God's character

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

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

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

The corollary to this mistaken assumption that all evil comes from God is that we can't go after evil because we'd be going after God. The pattern is to be "resigned" to evil, even to presume that

God is behind all things rather than that God is in front of all things, turning Satanic evil into good, but by no means initiating the evil, much less suggesting that we do nothing about it.

Free Will/God works through intermediaries

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

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

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

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

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

We should not ask God to take care of disease.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I spent a couple of hours [recently] prayerfully perusing a book that patiently, detailedly, describes how over 200 years of missionary work went down the drain. The word Florida in the 16th century included not only our present state by that name but also the entire southeast of the USA, in the triangle from Virginia to Alabama to Miami. In that area lived literally hundreds of thousands of Indians (native Americans). Well, between about 1530 and 1800 primarily Spanish work was undertaken employing both soldiers and missionaries, the latter very faithfully. Lots of good things and unwise things happened, but eventually “missions” (outposts) of the kind we see still standing in California, 150 of them, were planted. Each one was a worship center, an educational center, and an industrial center. However, today there is not a physical trace of a single one of those painstakingly established missions. Worse still the entire

Indian population, as in Cuba, has totally vanished, dying primarily of European diseases. All of those hundreds of thousands of people! Their religion certainly did not save them, at least not in this life. ... I admit that I cannot easily shake off the sensation of strangeness and tragedy hovering over those 250 years during which Spanish, French and British fought each other and in some cases Indian uprisings, without realizing that their real and common enemy was Satanically devised pathogens.

Missions implications/bringing glory to God

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

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

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

The Purpose for the Roberta Winter Institute

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

roots of the problem. In a way this is the most ominous fact of all.

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

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

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

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

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

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