

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING *to* RELATIVITY

*Constant Value in a Changing World*

JAMES W. GEIGER

**A PICTORIAL ESSAY**

*Summarizing*  
**The Gospel According to Relativity**

*BY JAMES W. GEIGER*

---



## James W. Geiger

---



**J**ames W. (Jim) Geiger graduated from Stetson University's Honors Program and Stetson Law School and also studied at American University and Knox Seminary. He began his professional career attending the FBI Academy in Washington, D.C and then served as a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation conducting criminal investigations in Dallas, TX and doing national security work in Cleveland, OH. Jim's law enforcement experience includes service as the prosecuting attorney for Broward County, FL. He practiced law in Fort Lauderdale, FL for many years, serves as a public arbitrator for the National Association of Securities Dealers, and has served as an adjunct professor at the community college and university levels. In 1988 he was a Coolidge Colloquium Fellow in Cambridge Massachusetts, and has presented academic papers at a number of national and international conferences. He is the author of a recently published book entitled *The Gospel According to Relativity*. The book rejects the absolutism of the past and the relativism of the present, while reaffirming the existence of constant value. Part I applies the model to Christianity, and Part II replicates the same model for secularism and other world religions.

## A. THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE



### **The Global Puzzle**

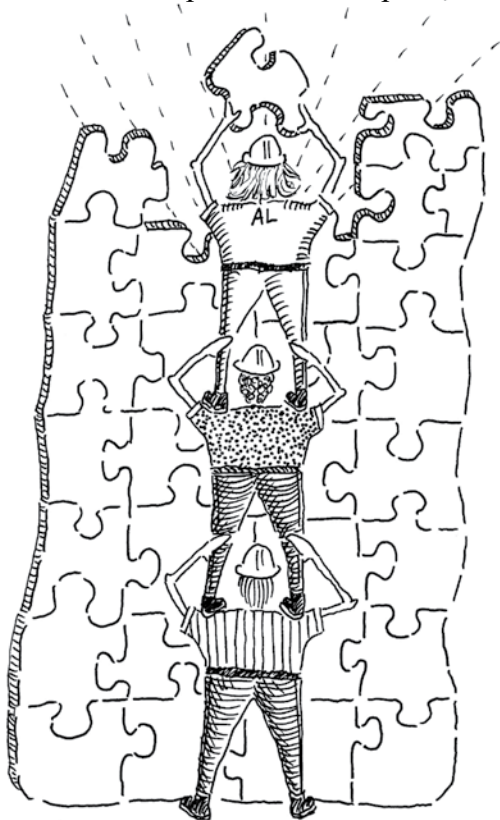
*(Graphic 1, page 30)*

Some have described the earth as a spaceship and its earthlings as passengers who are hurtling through space. However, one is forced to wonder where this ship came from and where is it going. Who are these people, and what are they suppose to be doing? The whole scenario is a big puzzle.

## **The Pieces of the Puzzle**

*(Graphic 2: page 26)*

The more one studies the “what” of science and the “why” of philosophy or theology, the more one realizes that there are a lot of pieces to this puzzle. Science alone has gone through a series of changes. Initially, it was thought that the earth was the center of the universe, then it was understood that the sun was at the center with its orbiting planets, and now our sun is seen as part of a galaxy with other stars, all of which are hurling through space. Indeed, our Milky Way galaxy is small compared to the many other galaxies that are expanding away from some inexplicable center point.







### **The Globe as a Shrinking Balloon**

*(Graphic 3: page 47)*

New ideas plus travel and communications technologies have destroyed the old isolationism and brought people and places closer together. It is as if the earth were a huge balloon that has been steadily losing air for a thousand years. Fully inflated, the people on the surface were remote and minimal contact meant fewer opportunities for friction. However, the “escaping” air has reduced the size of the “balloon” and increased the interaction between people and cultures. Indeed, the recent disappearance of Christendom’s long-standing hegemony means that Christians must learn to live in a new “global village.”

## B. GOD'S CREATION

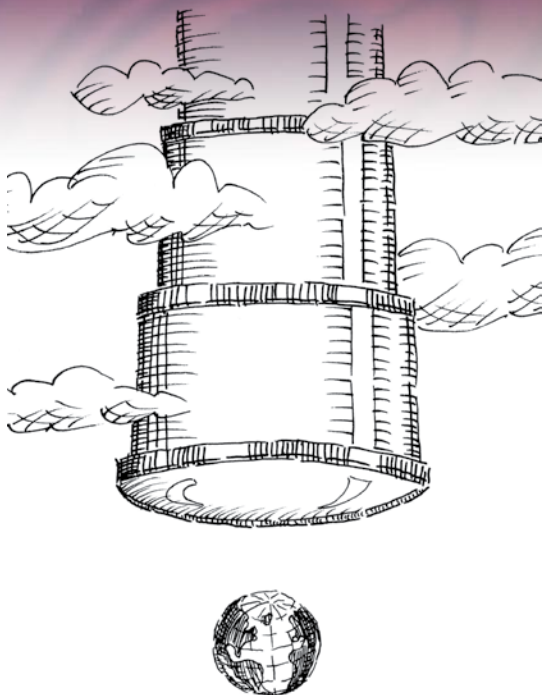


### **The Hand of God**

*(Graphic 4: page 62)*

When one ponders the increasing secularization of the West, it is easy to overlook the extraordinary impact that Christianity has had over the last two thousand years. For example, both Christianity and Marxism had prominent roles in the history of the twentieth century. Christianity, however, has had a two thousand year run, while Marxism has been around for a little over a hundred years. Anyone who compares the staying power of these two competing worldviews should realize that Christianity's longevity is phenomenal. Indeed, if we combine the gospel story with the law and the prophets, we understand that, in spite of the great diversity within the Judeo-Christian tradition, Christianity's impact on Western civilization is truly monumental.





## **God's View of the World**

*(Graphic 5: page 115)*

An individual cannot transcend his or her uniformity as a human being. For example, a man cannot become an ant, but God was able to transcend deity and become a human being as is celebrated in the awesome mystery of the gospel story. The relativity model offers a new insight into the Christ event because it showcases the constant Christ as the mediator between human uniformity and God's mysterious nonuniformity. In other words, God used the Christ event to cross over. The Bible says that in Christ, God was "made in the likeness of men" -- God opened a window to heaven that not only fashioned a reciprocal relationship between God and man, but also allowed that relationship to be understood from the human perspective. Comparatively, it is as if a man could become an ant and then help other ants come to some kind of understanding about humanness.

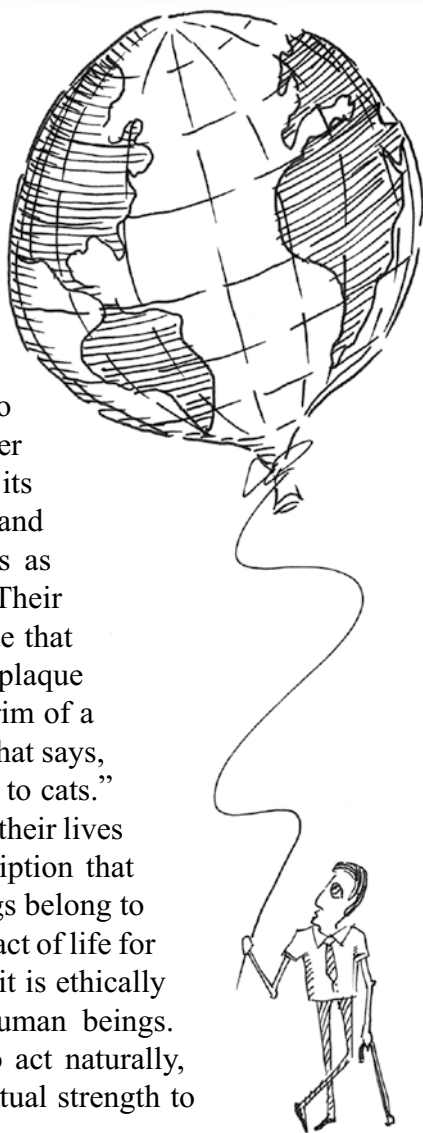


## C. HUMANITY'S PROBLEM

### **All Things Belong to Humans**

*(Graphic 6: page 119)*

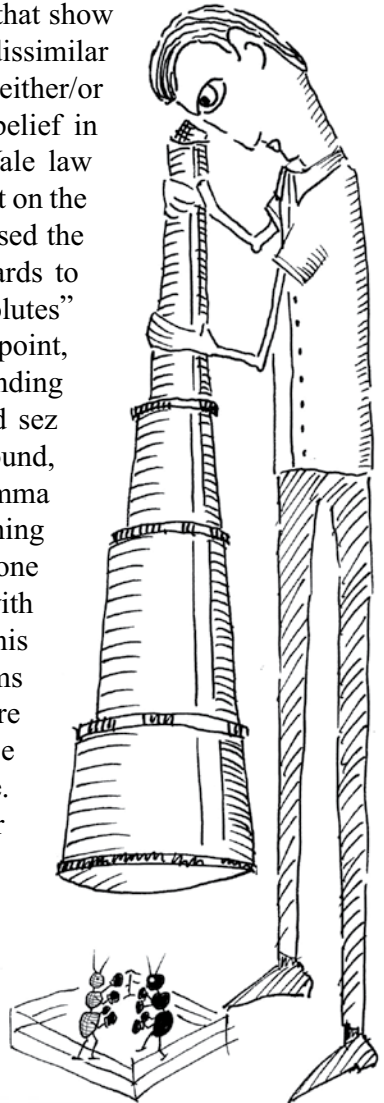
The Judeo-Christian tradition says human nature has fallen from its innocence into a state of sinful imperfection and that a renewed relationship with God's perfection requires some kind of redemption. It's sort of like a treasure falling into the hands of a pawnshop owner and then being redeemed by its original owner. Rebellious men and women, however, see themselves as autonomous and self-sufficient. Their nature is revealed in a wall plaque that hangs in my wife's kitchen. The plaque shows a cat with his paw on the rim of a goldfish bowl and an inscription that says, "In a cat's eyes, all things belong to cats." Many, if not most, people live out their lives as if there is a comparable inscription that reads, "In a human's eye, all things belong to humans." Might makes right is a fact of life for animals in the natural world, but it is ethically and morally unacceptable for human beings. If human "animals" are prone to act naturally, where does one look for the spiritual strength to act unnaturally?



## **Humanity's View of the World**

*(Graphic 7: page 89)*

Human beings have assorted cognitive skills that allow them to analyze, organize, and understand a great deal about themselves and the world in which they live. The most basic of these skills is the capacity to classify and create categories that show that things are either similar (uniform) or dissimilar (nonuniform). A classic example of this either/or mentality is theism or atheism, that is, belief in the existence or nonexistence of God. Yale law professor Arthur Leff found himself caught on the horns of the either/or dilemma when he used the existence or nonexistence of legal standards to discuss the difference between the "old absolutes" and the "new relativism." To make his point, he called up "the grand sez who"! Depending on the age of the combatants, "the grand sez who" can be identified with the playground, the barroom, and the classroom. The dilemma arises when someone suggests that something is either right or wrong. No matter what one person says, the other person can respond with – "Sez who?" The professor concluded his analysis with the old and new value systems in sharp contrast: "Only if ethics were something unspeakable by us, could law be unnatural, and therefore unchallengeable. As things now stand, everything is up for grabs. Nevertheless: Napalming babies is bad. Starving the poor is wicked. Buying and selling each other is depraved. There is in the world such a thing as evil. [All together now:] Sez who? God help us." Again, where does one look for the spiritual strength to act unnaturally?





### **Rearview Mirror Solution**

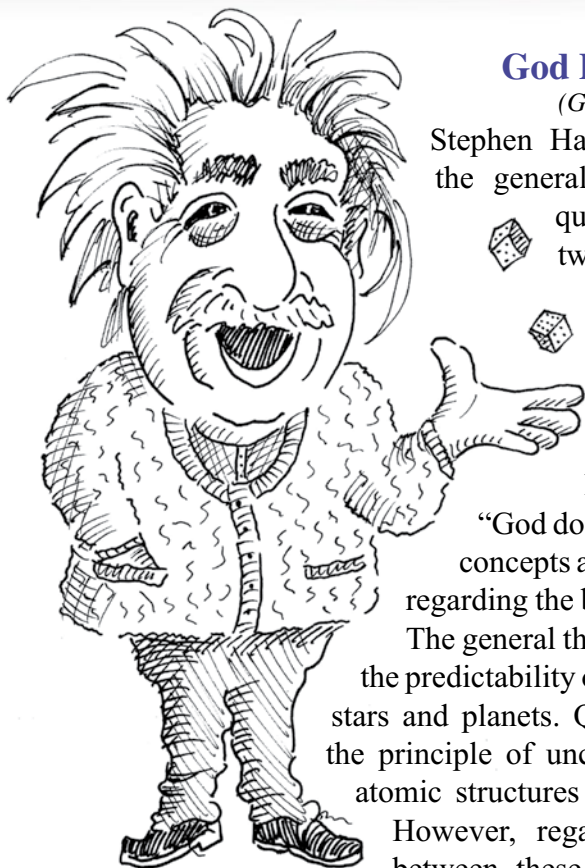
*(Graphic 8: page 183)*

Absolutism has a noble history that extends back to Greek philosophy, the church fathers, the Protestant Reformation, and the early years of The Enlightenment. However, the old absolutism has been discredited to some extent by modern science as well as social and political changes that have occurred during the modern era. As it turns out, the earth is not the center of the universe, and absolutist ideas like white supremacy and male chauvinism have fallen into disrepute. However, as absolutism has decreased, relativism has increased and produced an “anything goes” mind-set. Ironically, the “anything goes” revolution has precipitated a counter-revolution and rejuvenated theological interest in the idea that maybe some values do not change. Christendom’s renewed interest in the “old time religion” and Islam’s obsession with the past suggest that contemporary people are insecure and uncertain about the future. Moreover, when people are uncertain, they are inclined to return to ideas and ideals that are identified with earlier periods of certainty. In other words, they develop a rear-view mirror mentality -- they look to the past for solutions to present problems.

## D. SOLVING THE PROBLEM

### God Doesn't Play Dice

(Graphic 9: page 200)



Stephen Hawking has suggested that the general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics are the two greatest intellectual systems of the twentieth century. In fact, these two achievements are the basis for the debate in which Albert Einstein delivered his famous declaration that

“God does not play dice.” These two concepts account for the split decision regarding the basic nature of the universe.

The general theory of relativity deals with the predictability of large-scale structures like stars and planets. Quantum theory deals with the principle of uncertainty that governs subatomic structures like electrons and quarks.

However, regardless of the differences between these two “partial theories,” it must be remembered that the constant

speed of light [the  $c$  in  $E=mc^2$ ] is a common denominator between both theories. Therefore, the speed of light is a viable candidate to symbolize universal value, that is, the existence of a common denominator that lies between the certainties of human existence and the uncertainties that lie beyond human comprehension.



## **The Moving Target**

*(Graphic 10: page 210)*

It may sound strange to speak of universal value as a moving target -- a target that is not only traveling at the speed of light but is also part of a system that in which everything else is also moving. The situation is as if a railway passenger has suddenly discovered that both the train and the station platform are moving. A Thanksgiving turkey-shoot may be an even better analogy: If we view the turkey-shoot from the conventional perspective, the whole event takes place in a fixed frame of reference in which the target as well as the shooter and all the observers are “fixed” in time and space -- only the projectile is in motion. The relativity perspective, however, requires a moving frame of reference in which the shooter, the projectile, the observers, and the target are all in varying states of motion -- and the target is moving at the constant speed of light. The moving scenario can be understood in relationship to the study of astronomy where all celestial bodies, including planet earth, are moving parts of a dynamic universe. The constant speed of light, however, is the common denominator that allows astronomers to understand distant phenomena.



## **Putting the Puzzle Back Together**

*(Graphic 11: page 26)*

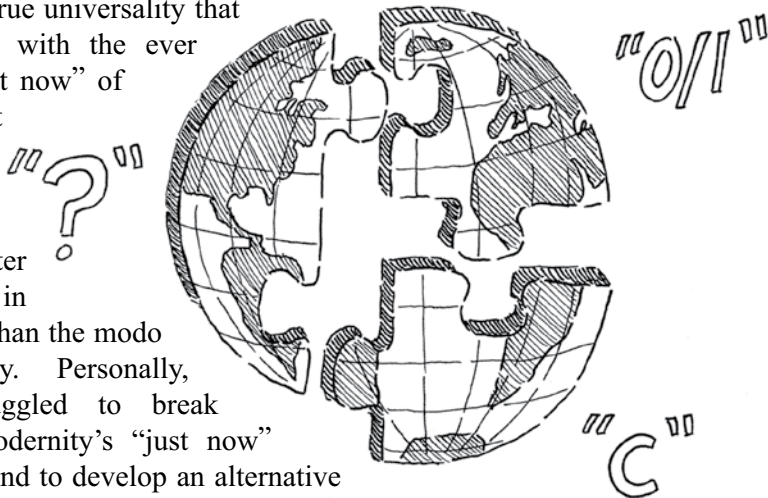
Cosmic motion applies to all people, all places, and all times and makes the pieces of the puzzle fit together. If the whole cosmos is in perpetual motion, then motion rather than time may be a common denominator around which people can seek mutual understanding. Modo, meaning “just now,” is the Latin root for the word “modern.” It is based on the idea that the river of time is ever flowing and that the latest thing, the avant-garde, is somehow privileged. Time is always moving forward, therefore, the latest trends and developments are the best, and the rest are simply passing away. On the other hand, moto is a Latin root that means “motion” or “to keep moving,” and it suggests a true universality that

is impossible with the ever changing “just now” of modernity. It may be that

the moto of motion paints a better picture of life in our universe than the modo of modernity. Personally,

I have struggled to break free from modernity’s “just now” assumptions and to develop an alternative

“model of understanding” that would unite all people around a “general theory of value” – a model based on motion rather than time. The basic problem in developing a general theory is that the “general” idea must incorporate “particular” ideas without losing their individual distinctiveness. In other words, a general theory must affirm the differences that abound within and among various groups, but it must also reaffirm the existence of universal value. To achieve this objective, the model would have to overcome three obstacles: The model would have to have a general point of view; it would have preserve both the sameness and the difference of particular points of view; and it would have to be value-based.



$$? + O/I + c = \underline{\underline{cValue}}$$

### **The Formula**

*(Graphic 12: page 30)*

The proposed general theory of value has three components: a moving frame of reference, a classification model, and constant value. Without in any way suggesting the existence of a mathematical formula, I am suggesting that these components “add up” to create a general theory of value that is in perpetual motion.

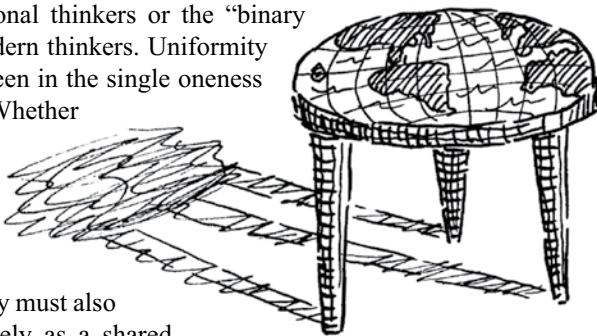
## Like a Three-legged Stool

(Graphic 13: page 81)

The three components fit together like a three-legged stool. Indeed, with only three legs, each leg must do its job or the stool falls. With the relativity model, each component must be understood or the whole model fails:

(1) Moving frame of reference refers to the cosmic lake of time and space. This general point of view abandons the old absolutes that assume the existence of a fixed hierarchy and acknowledges the existence of a moving frame in which uncertainty is built into the moving, changing world in which we live. It gives the search for meaning a unique point of departure like the train station platform that is moving along with everything else. The moving frame abandons the “big picture” absolutism of Plato, Aristotle, et al, but it also rejects modern relativism where “no big picture” is possible.

(2) The classification model refers to the either/or linguistics of “uniformity/nonuniformity.” The dynamic is the same whether one speaks of the “A and non-A” logic of traditional thinkers or the “binary oppositions” of postmodern thinkers. Uniformity is a primal identity as seen in the single oneness of each human being. Whether we speak of fingerprints, DNA, or a special relationship with a loved one, we know that each person is a unique entity. Uniformity must also be understood collectively as a shared



“sameness” within social, political, and economic groups including race, religion, gender, and other such categories. On the other hand, nonuniformity is a radical otherness; it is the primal contrast between self and other whether other individuals or other groups. A difference or diversity that exists within a uniformity is a simple difference, whereas, differences that exist between uniformity and nonuniformity are complex differences.

(3) The proposed model is value-based because it incorporates the idea of universal value. Constant value is defined in the context of  $E=mc^2$  where “c” represents value that does not change. In Einstein’s famous formula, “c” represents the constant speed of light -- Regardless of the movement of the source of light or of an observer; the free space velocity of light is invariable. The physical significance and the philosophical inference is that constant value is superimposed upon both uniform and nonuniform variables.

## CONCLUSION



### Is the Third Wave on the Way?

*(Graphic 14: page 190)*

The following matrix extends the wave metaphor from Alvin Toffler to my book -- *The Gospel According to Relativity*. (In Toffler's bestseller *The Third Wave*, the first wave is associated with the agricultural age, the second wave is associated with the industrial age, and the third wave is associated with the information age.) My book uses the imagery of successive waves to suggest three philosophical frames of reference that are somewhat analogous to the premodern era, the modern era, and the so-called postmodern era as described in the following lists. Of course, anyone who has ever been to the beach knows that a wave strikes the beach at one point and then slides down the coastline hitting successive spots as it goes. Figuratively speaking, some societies may be experiencing the first wave, while others have already moved on to the second wave or even the third wave:

#### FIRST WAVE:

- premodern era
- ancient regimes
- aristocratic control
- upper class emphasis
- theological focus
- objective mode
- Absolutism
- fixed frame of reference

#### SECOND WAVE:

- modern/postmodern era
- Enlightenment movement
- bourgeois control
- middle class emphasis
- scientific focus
- subjective mode
- Relativism
- no frame of reference

#### THIRD WAVE:

- next era
- next "movement"
- autonomous factions
- egalitarian emphasis
- interdisciplinary focus
- relativity mode
- Relativitism\*
- moving frame of reference

\*Relativitism is a coinage that I have used to distinguish between relativism and relativity:

Relativism features a “moving frame of reference” in which circumstances are continually moving and changing, and there is no constant value. Indeed, with relativism, value is a floating phenomenon that changes from time to time and from place to place. Therefore, it is more appropriate to describe relativism as having “no frame of reference.”

Relativity also features a “moving frame of reference” in which circumstances are moving and changing, but it is value-based because the constant speed of light, which represents “constant value,” is an inherent component in the theory of relativity – hence my use of the term “Relativitism.”