

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

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## Malaria, Mosquitoes, and Special Revelation

Mark Volkers

*Dordt College*, [mark.volkers@dordt.edu](mailto:mark.volkers@dordt.edu)

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## Malaria, Mosquitoes, and Special Revelation

### Abstract

"We needed the microscope to help us see what's going on, and God, in great love, gave us the Word."

Posting about how God reveals Himself from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/malaria-mosquitoes-and-special-revelation/>

### Keywords

In All Things, malaria, mosquitoes, Biblical revelation, analogy

### Disciplines

Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

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 [inallthings.org/malaria-mosquitoes-and-special-revelation/](https://inallthings.org/malaria-mosquitoes-and-special-revelation/)

Mark Volkers

I've had malaria more times than I care to remember. It's not pleasant. Bone-chilling cold. Sweating, terrible fever. You can understand my hatred for the mosquito!

I dislike mosquitoes in general, but especially the female *Anopheles* mosquito. This is the one that brings the deadly parasitic punch to millions of people over the world. This is the one that makes us sick.

Early explorers and missionaries to Africa didn't know the mosquito was responsible, but they did observe the sickness coming more often when they were in lower, wetter areas.

That general revelation helped them make the connection between a certain type of yellow, acacia tree that likes growing in those marshy areas. They called it a "fever tree" because they thought perhaps the vapors released by this tree were responsible for the fevers they felt. They weren't entirely original in their thinking. This idea of malaria being caused by miasmas rising from swamps wasn't new. Some say the word "malaria" comes from the Italian "mal'aria," which means "spoiled air."

It wasn't until 1880 that a French army surgeon stationed in Algeria noticed parasites swarming in the blood of a patient suffering from malaria. Dr. Laveran received the Nobel Prize in 1907 for his discovery.

This is a wonderful analogy to God's special revelation and general revelation. The intricacy of nature — even parasites and diseases — points clearly to a creative Creator and a Supreme Being. Paul tells us in Romans 1 that no one has an excuse because the heavens and earth tell clearly of God's presence and design. But it's not enough, is it? We need more to understand things clearly.

Those early missionaries had something like general revelation, enough to help them understand that they got sick when they were in those marshy areas. But general revelation — while helping them avoid the marshy areas — wasn't enough. Some special revelation was needed. That came later under the lens of a microscope. Only then were they able to make a connection to mosquitoes, eventually isolating the *Anopheles* mosquito.

In our sinful state, we look around at the beauty and the harvest and the birth of our first child, and see that indeed, this is wonderful. But every society on earth asks, "Who is behind all this? Who created all this? Who created me? What is the Creator's name? Does the Creator know my name? Am I here for a reason? Is there a purpose for my life?"

We needed more. We needed the microscope to help us see what's going on, and God, in great love, gave us the Word — special revelation where, through story, poetry, a love song, and history, God tells us in great detail who the Creator is, who we are, and why we are.

Interestingly enough, this "microscope" also leads us to blood. In the greatest moment of human love, the very One who spoke and the universe leapt into existence, spoke again, and gave up life so we can live.

Perhaps this analogy — mosquitoes and the nastiness of malaria linked to God's wonderful special revelation — is the ultimate case of turning lemons into lemonade, but it works for me. In my discipline, I don't study parasites. I study communication techniques and theories, then evaluate them in the light of God's word. This connection between general revelation and special revelation is so clear, so obvious, so

magnificent. Studying the world with only one of these reveals only part of the story; to really understand the world and God, we must acknowledge that God is revealed in multiple ways, and we must use both, or else we get it wrong.

When we get it wrong, we spend our entire lives looking at fever trees instead of anopheles mosquitoes.