

“In The Beginning” The Biblical View Of Creation, Part 3

Given the strong degree to which some in media and academic circles seek to divide science from belief in God, it can be easy for us to conclude that this tension has always existed. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. It has long been asserted, and rightly so, that science arose out of a Theistic worldview. From their personal journals and published writings it is clear that the 17th century founders of modern science (such as the English philosopher and statesman, Francis Bacon; the Irish father of modern chemistry, Robert Boyle; and the British mathematician and physicist, Isaac Newton) were all grounded in biblical Christian thinking. In fact, their reason for doing science was to show forth more of God's splendor and their rationale for the ability to explore the world was that the infinite personal God had created an orderly world which could be studied.

If this was the case, then how did we get to where we are today? In part, it actually began in the days of those early scientists. These virtuosi reacted against a poor theology of the Middle Ages which saw science as something which discouraged knowledge of God and something that was in the realm of Satan. These fathers of modern science did such a good job researching and writing in the realm of creation, it led some to divorce science from theology (as if the latter were not needed). As such, they unintentionally laid the groundwork for those who came after them in the 18th c. who saw God as only operative in the initial creation and then was subsequently divorced from the natural process (deists). In one sense they also laid the foundation for those who took the thinking a step further and saw no need for God at all (Darwin and many evolutionists since him).

What the virtuosi, the 18th c. deists, and the 19th-20 c. scientists (Evolutionists and Creationists alike) have all struggled with is how can a supernatural God coexist with processes that happen in the "natural" realm and can be examined and explained? For example, the medieval philosopher may have argued that lightning was a magnificent act of God showing His power--and part of the awe-inspiring nature of it may have been that we could not explain it. However, as science unraveled some of these mysteries, including the causes of lightning, how could we still speak of God being the cause? The whole scientific struggle, on a philosophical level, has been over this question. From the medieval thinker who had no place for man's explanations about

That these men were grounded in biblical Christian thinking comes from John C. Hutchison, "The Design Argument In Scientific Discourse: Historical-Theological Perspective From The Seventeenth Century," Journal Of The Evangelical Theological Society, 41, 1 (1998): 85-105.

"The term `virtuosi'...refer[s] to those natural philosophers in the seventeenth century who actively promoted the growth of natural science. It...was a favorite term of Robert Boyle.... Although the term had a more general meaning earlier in the seventeenth century, one of Boyle's most famous books, The Christian Virtuoso, employed it in a narrower sense to mean `those that understand and cultivate experimental philosophy'.... It suffices to say that the common interest that bound them together was an avid interest in the study and promotion of science. The modern meaning of the word, a musical performer, did not originate until the eighteenth century." Hutchison, "Design Argument:" 85.

near causes all the way to the 20 c. scientists who continue to refine explanations about near causes and have no use for divine far causes, there has been a tendency to oscillate too far one way or the other.

As scientific knowledge exploded in the 18th and 19th centuries many scientists came to believe that God was no longer needed as an explanation for natural operations. This conclusion was based on two key premises: (1) That God had only been previously offered as an explanation since man did not have any other answers. (2) Because people have a natural tendency not to want to be under the scrutiny and requirements of God, it was to mankind's advantage to "reason" away God. Such would leave him as his own "god".

The tide has been turning in scientific and philosophical circles for some time now due to the strong evidence that creation has been designed and did not arise by chance. One of the best examples is that of the well-known British atheist philosopher, Antony Flew. As recounted in the article, "Atheist Becomes Theist: Exclusive Interview With Former Atheist Anthony Flew," in the Winter 2004 issue of *Philosophia Christi* (available at www.biola.edu/antonyflew/index.cfm), Flew now believes in God. This is quite a chance for one who spent his life as one of the most influential and well-known atheists. In his own words, he states the reason: "I think that the most impressive arguments for God's existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries.... I think the argument to Intelligent Design is enormously stronger than it was when I first met it."

Though Flew does not specific which evidence he has in mind, let's briefly outline four bits of evidence here.

- Irreducible Complexity. At various levels we see in creation that all of a living entity has to be present or it will not function or survive. Darwin had asserted that in order for his theory to work the most basic cell had to be very simple so that it could all exist and function right away and so that it could be a very short step for natural selection to go from non-living matter to that cell. The reality, however, is that the simplest cell has many parts (it is complex) and they all have to be present or none of the parts are of any worth (irreducible). Such realities point to intelligence behind the crafting of the cell. This phenomenon is also found at other levels—for example in the process of blood clotting. Organisms would not have survived during the alleged formation of the clotting process that would be necessary in the Darwinian macroevolutionary theory. All the complex of processes and components have to be present or

Many philosophers and theologians who have given much thought to the issue of God's operation in the world on the one hand and man's responsibility and explanations of nature on the other espouse a theory known as compatibilism. God's operation and man's responsibility coexist in the world--it is not either/or. Likewise, this theory is also a sound explanation of "natural" phenomena. For example, just because we can explain the near cause of lightning (what we would find in a science textbook) does not negate the possibility (and I would say the reality) that the far (or ultimate) cause is still God.

Douglas J. Futuyma, Science On Trial: The Case For Evolution (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983): 23-24: "Before the rise of science, then, the causes of events were sought not in natural mechanisms but in the purposes they were meant to serve, and order in nature was evidence of divine intelligence.... A flood of mechanistic thinking ensued. Descartes, Kant, and Buffon concluded that the causes of natural phenomena should be sought in natural laws. By 1755, Kant was arguing that the laws of matter in motion discovered by Newton and other physicists were sufficient to explain natural order."

clotting will not take place. Without any of them, death would be the outcome. This is not a good prospect for natural selection.

- **The DNA Library Of Life.** Deoxyribonucleic acid contains the genetic instructions used in the development and functioning of all known living organisms at the cellular level, such as proteins and RNA molecules. In The Case For A Creator scientist and philosopher Stephen Meyer (PhD, Cambridge) asserts: “DNA is...like a library.... The organism accesses the information that it needs from DNA so it can build some of its critical components.... To build one protein, you typically need 1,200 to 2,000 letters or bases—which is a lot of information.” “This issue has caused all naturalistic accounts of the origin of life to break down.... If you can’t explain where the information comes from, you haven’t explained life because it’s the information that makes the molecules into something that actually functions.” “I believe the presence of information in the cell is best explained by the activity of an intelligent agent.”
- **The anthropic principle.** Everything has to be just right in this universe, on this planet, to sustain life as we know it. Earth’s location, size, and composition, as well as structure, atmosphere, temperature, internal dynamics, and its many intricate cycles have to be exactly as they are for mankind to exist. Such precision does not give evidence of natural random chance acts as Darwinian evolutionary process would require. Instead, it cries out with evidence for intelligent design. (Taken from Lee Strobel, The Case For A Creator)
- **The Implausibility Of Common Evolutionary Images.** Whether it is Java Man, Darwin’s evolutionary tree, or Archaeopteryx as a missing link, many of the well-known evidences in behalf of Darwinian Macroevolutionary theory have been shown to be inaccurate at best or hoaxes at worst. The continually shrinking evidence in behalf of this theory, set along side the growing evidence in favor of design, are leading many scientists and philosophers away from Darwin and toward a Creator.

Discussion Questions:

1. What, if anything, surprised you in this reading?
2. Do you think that extra-biblical, scientific evidence for a Creator is important? Why or why not?
3. Did this reading and discussion strengthen your faith? Why or why not?
4. Why do you believe it is important for Christians to see science as a very important vocation, as a calling from God?