

# Are We Alone in the Universe?

## A Biblical View of Aliens

*Dr. Ray Bohlin provides a Christian view on the probability and meaning of life on other planets. From a biblical perspective, what would it mean to find evidence of life beyond this earth?*



*This article is also available in [Spanish](#).*

### Life on Mars?

There was great excitement in the media when a group of scientists from NASA announced they had found evidence of life on Mars. Their evidence, an alleged Martian meteorite, was vaulted to center stage, and everyone from CNN to *Nightline* ran special programs with interviews and video footage of the scientists and their prized specimen. President Clinton was so excited by the announcement that he praised the U.S. space program and took the opportunity to establish a bipartisan space summit headed up by Vice President Al Gore to study the future of U.S. space research. Aren't we already doing that?

Anyway, clearly this announcement took the country by storm. Some of the scientists were embarrassingly gushing about how significant these findings were. The media frenzy was prompted by the early release of an article from the journal *Science*, the premier scientific journal in the U.S. The article was due out the following week, but *Science* decided to release it early because it had leaked out.

Here's what the excitement was about. A group of scientists had studied a meteorite that had been found in the ice of Antarctica. Previously, it had been determined that this meteorite had originated on Mars by studying the gaseous content of glass-like components of the meteor. The gas

composition matched very well the atmosphere of Mars. This conclusion seems reasonable.

So, they presumed they had a meteor from Mars. Next they looked for evidence of life on and in the crevices of the meteor. They found two types of molecules that can form as a result of life processes, carbonates and complex molecules called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons or PAHs. They also found shapes in the rock that resembled those of known microfossils on Earth. Microfossils are fossils of one-celled organisms which are rather tricky to interpret.

Well, what does this mean? Obviously, the NASA scientists felt the things just mentioned provided ample evidence to conclude that life once existed on Mars. However, the chemical signs could all be due to processes that have nothing to do with life, and the supposed microfossils are 100 times smaller than any such fossil found on Earth. Other groups that studied this same meteorite concluded that either the temperature of formation of the chemicals was far too high to allow life (over 700 degrees C) or that other chemical signals for life were absent. John Kerridge, a planetary scientist from the University of California at San Diego, said, "The conclusion is at best premature and more probably wrong." But listen to the concluding statement in the paper in *Science*:

*Although there are alternative explanations for each of these phenomena taken individually, when they are considered collectively, particularly in view of their spatial association, we conclude that they are evidence for primitive life on Mars.*[\[1\]](#)

In plain English, there are reasonable non-life explanations for each of the evidences presented, but we just think that they mean there is life on Mars. The evidence *is* very equivocal and was challenged by many other scientists, but the media did not report that as fully. But maybe they are right!

In fact, there is one simple explanation that is consistently ignored by media and scientists alike. If there really is, or has been, life on Mars, what could that possibly mean for evolution, and more importantly, does it somehow refute creation? We'll look at that next.

## **What Would Life on Mars Mean?**

Because of the recent announcement of signs of life on Mars, many people were encouraged in their belief that we are not alone in the universe. These signs are far from certain and probably wrong, but if it's true, what would these results mean to evolutionists? Moreover, is there any reason for Christians to fear confirmation of life on Mars?

Let us assume, then, for the moment that the evidence from this Martian meteorite is legitimate evidence for life on Mars—life that at some point in the past actually existed on Mars. What would it mean?

For evolutionists the evidence is perceived as confirmation that life actually arises from non-life by purely chemical processes. In addition, evolutionists draw the conclusion that life must be able to evolve very easily since it did so on two adjacent planets in the same solar system. Therefore, even though origin of life research is actually at a standstill, such a discovery seemingly confirms the notion that *some* chemical evolution scenario *must work*. I will address this assumption later.

On the other hand, some have stated that if there is life on Mars, creationism has been dealt a death blow. They rationalize that since (1) we now know that life can evolve just about anywhere, and (2) the Bible never speaks of life anywhere but on Earth, the Bible is, therefore, unreliable. Besides, they reason, why would God create life on a planet with no humans? However, since the Bible is absolutely silent on the subject of extra-terrestrial life, we can make no

predictions about its possibility. God is certainly free to create life on planets other than Earth if He chooses.

Getting back to the evolutionists' glee at the possibility of life evolving on other planets, the real question is whether this is the proper conclusion if life is indeed found on Mars? The simple answer, inexplicably avoided by the media, is NO! The simplest answer to the possible discovery of life on Mars is that the so-called "Martian life" actually came from Earth!

Think about it this way. The meteorite that was found is supposed to have existed on Mars previously. How did it get to Earth? Well, it is hypothesized that a large meteorite crashed into Mars throwing up lots of debris into space, some of which finds its way to Earth and at least a few of which are found by Earthlings. If you are thinking with me, you now realize that the same scenario could have been played out on Earth.

Evolutionists suggest that the Earth was under heavy meteor bombardment until at least 3.8 billion years ago—about the time they say life appeared on Earth. Christian astronomer Hugh Ross states it this way:

*Meteorites large enough to make a crater greater than 60 miles across will cause Earth rocks to escape Earth's gravity. Out of 1,000 such rocks ejected, 291 strike Venus, 20 go to Mercury, 17 hit Mars, 14 make it to Jupiter, and 1 goes all the way to Saturn. Traveling the distance with these rocks will be many varieties of Earth life. {2}*

Ross also documents that many forms of microscopic life are quite capable of surviving such a journey. All this is quite well known in the scientific community, but I have not seen it mentioned once in any public discussion. I believe the reason is that the possibility of life having evolved on Mars is too juicy to pass up.

# The Improbability of Life Elsewhere in the Universe

I would like to address the amazing optimism of so many that the universe is teeming with life. No doubt this is fueled by the tremendous success of such science fiction works as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* which eloquently present the reasonableness of a universe pregnant with intelligent life forms.

Inherent within this optimism is the evolutionary assumption that if life evolved here, certainly we should not arrogantly suppose that life could not have evolved elsewhere in the universe. And if life in general exists in the universe, then, of course, there must be intelligent life out there as well.

This is the basic assumption of the SETI program, the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. This is the program, now privately funded instead of federally funded, that searches space for radio waves emanating from another planet that would indicate the presence of intelligent life. But is such a hope realistic? Is there a justifiable reason for suspecting that planets suitable to life exist elsewhere in the universe?

Over the last two decades scientists have begun tabulating many characteristics of our universe, galaxy, solar system, and planet that appear to have been finely-tuned for life to exist. Christian astronomer and apologist, Dr. Hugh Ross documents all these characteristics in his book *Creator and the Cosmos*, [{3}](#) and is constantly updating them. In the book's third edition (2001), Ross documents 35 characteristics of the universe and 66 characteristics of our galaxy, solar system, and planet that are finely-tuned for life to exist.

Some examples include the size, temperature, and brightness of our sun, the size, chemical composition, and stable orbit of Earth. The fact that we have one moon and not none or two or three. The distance of the Earth from the sun, the tilt of the earth's axis, the speed of the earth's rotation, the time it

takes Earth to orbit the sun. If any of these factors were different by even a few percent, the ability of Earth to sustain life would be severely compromised. Recently it has been noted that even the presence of Jupiter and Saturn serve to stabilize the orbit of Earth. Without these two large planets present exactly where they are, the Earth would be knocked out of its present near circular orbit into an elliptical one, causing higher temperature differences between seasons and subjecting Earth to greater meteor interference. Neither condition is hospitable to the continuing presence of life.

Ross has further calculated the probabilities of all these factors coming together by natural processes alone to be  $1 \times 10^{-166}$ ; that's a decimal point followed by 165 zeroes and then a one. A very liberal estimate of how many planets there may be, though we have only documented less than 100, is  $10^{22}$  or 10 billion trillion planets, one for every star in the universe. Combining these two probabilities tells us that there are  $10^{-144}$  planets in the entire universe that could support life. Obviously this is far less than one; therefore, by natural processes alone, we shouldn't even be here—let alone some kind of alien life form.

So unless God created life elsewhere, we are alone, and for the materialistic evolutionist, this is a frightening thought.

## **Problems with Chemical Evolution on Earth**

The statistics given above mean that we are really alone in the universe and that there is no hope of finding intelligent civilizations as in the television program *Star Trek*. While it means there is no one out there to threaten our survival, there is also no one out there to save us from our own mistakes.

This observation highlights why I believe the scientific

community and the media became so excited about the possibilities of life on Mars. Efforts to determine how life could have evolved from non-living matter have been so fraught with problems that it makes the possibility of life elsewhere extremely remote. But if it could be proved that life evolved elsewhere, then it would demonstrate that life springs up rather easily, and we just haven't found the right trick here on Earth to prove it. But this just leapfrogs the problem.

But is the evolution of life from non-living chemicals really that impossible? The difficulties fall into three categories, the Chemical Problem, the Thermodynamic Problem, and the Informational Problem. These issues are presented comprehensively in a book by Thaxton, Bradley, and Olsen titled *The Mystery of Life's Origin*<sup>{4}</sup> and in a chapter in the edited volume by J. P. Moreland, *The Creation Hypothesis*.<sup>{5}</sup>

*Chemical Problems* are illustrated by the difficulty in synthesizing even the simplest building block molecules necessary for life from inorganic precursors. Amino acids, sugars, and the bases for the important nucleotide molecules that make up DNA and RNA were all thought to be easily synthesized in an early Earth atmosphere of ammonia, methane, water vapor, and hydrogen. But further experiments showed this scenario to be unrealistic. Ammonia and methane would have been short-lived in this atmosphere; the multiple energy sources available would have destroyed the necessary molecules and water would have broken apart into hydrogen and oxygen. The oxygen was scrupulously avoided in all prebiotic scenarios because it would have poisoned all the necessary reactions.

*Thermodynamic Problems* arise from the difficulty in assembling all these complex molecules that would have been floating around in some prebiotic soup into a highly organized and complex cell. To accomplish the task of achieving specified complexity in life's molecules such as DNA and proteins, the availability of raw energy for millions of years is not enough. All systems where specified complexity is produced

from simple components requires an energy conversion mechanism to channel the energy in the right direction to accomplish the necessary work. Without photosynthesis, there is no such mechanism in the prebiotic Earth.

*The Informational Problem* shows that there is no way to account for the origin of the genetic code, which is a language, without intelligent input. Informational codes require intelligent preprogramming. No evolutionary mechanism can accomplish this. Life requires intelligence.

So you can see why evolutionists would get excited about the possibility of finding evolved life elsewhere. It's because life is seemingly impossible to evolve here. So, if it did happen elsewhere, maybe our experiments are just missing something.

## ***Independence Day, The Movie***

In the movie *Independence Day*, an alien battle force swoops down on Earth with the intention of destroying the human race, sucking the planet dry of all available resources and then moving on to some other unlucky civilization in the galaxy. But, those indomitable humans aided by good old American ingenuity outsmart those dull-witted aliens and Earth is saved. The story has been told many times, but perhaps never as well or never with such great special effects. The movie was a huge success.

But why are we continually fascinated by the possibility of alien cultures? The movie gave the clear impression that there must be great numbers of intelligent civilizations out there in the universe. This notion has become widely accepted in our culture.

Few recognize that the supposed existence of alien civilizations is based on evolutionary assumptions. The science fiction of *Star Trek* and the *Star Wars* begins with

evolution. As I've stated earlier, evolutionists simply rationalize that since life evolved here with no outside interference, the universe must be pregnant with life. Astronomer Carl Sagan put it this way after he had reviewed the so-called success of early Earth chemical evolution experiments:

*Nothing in such experiments is unique to the earth. The initial gases, and the energy sources, are common throughout the Cosmos. Chemical reactions like those in our laboratory vessels may be responsible for the organic matter in interstellar space and the amino acids found in meteorites. Some similar chemistry must have occurred on a billion other worlds in the Milky Way Galaxy. The molecules of life fill the Cosmos.* [\[6\]](#)

Sagan strongly suggests that the probabilities and chemistry of the universe dictate that life is ubiquitous in the galaxy. But as I stated earlier, the odds overwhelmingly dictate that our planet is the only one suitable for life in the universe. And the chemistry on Earth also indicates that life is extremely hard to come by. The probability of life simply based on chance occurrences is admitted by many evolutionists to be remote indeed. Many are now suggesting that life is inevitable because there are yet undiscovered laws of nature that automatically lead to complex life forms. In other words, the deck of cards is fixed. Listen to Nobel Laureate and biochemist, Christian de Duve:

*We are being dealt thirteen spades not once but thousands of times in succession! This is utterly impossible, unless the deck is doctored. What this doctoring implies with respect to the assembly of the first cell is that most of the steps involved must have had a very high likelihood of taking place under the prevailing conditions. Make them even moderately improbable and the process must abort, however many times it is initiated, because of the very number of successive steps*

*involved. In other words, contrary to Monod's affirmation, the universe was—and presumably still is—pregnant with life.* [\[7\]](#)

The only problem with de Duve's suggestion is that we know of no natural processes that will lead automatically to the complexity of life. Everything we know of life leads to the opposite conclusion. Life is not a product of chance or necessity. Life is a product of intelligence.

Without Divine interference we are alone in the universe and without Christ we are—and should be—terrified. The gospel is as relevant as ever.

#### Notes

1. *Science*, 16 August 1996, 273:924-30.
2. *Creator and the Cosmos*, NavPress, 2001, p. 210.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-199.
4. Lewis and Stanley, 1984.
5. InterVarsity Press, 1994, pp. 173-210.
6. *Cosmos*, Random House, 1980, p. 40.
7. *Vital Dust*, Basic Books, 1995, p. 9.

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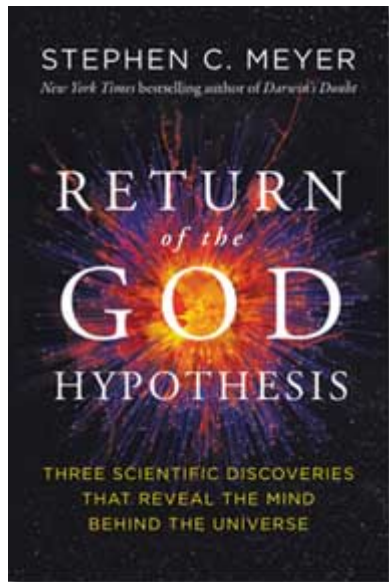
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# 'Return of the God Hypothesis' for Regular People

*Dr. Ray Bohlin provides an overview of Stephen Meyer's book Return of the God Hypothesis, looking at how recent scientific*

*discoveries provide evidence for an intelligent creator.*

## Was There a God Hypothesis Prior to Scientific Materialism of Today?



In this article I give an overview of Stephen Meyer's *Return of The God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries that Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe* [\[1\]](#). The three discoveries are first, the discovery in the 20th century of the Big Bang Model for the origin of the universe, second, the continuing discovery of the extreme fine-tuning of a universe that is friendly toward life, and third, the grand amount of genetic and cellular information needed for the origin of the first life

and the Cambrian Explosion, where nearly all animal phyla suddenly appear with no ancestors.

But we need to cover a little history first. Meyer's title is "Return of the God Hypothesis."

This implies that there was previously an accepted "God Hypothesis" in science. Then it was lost, and the time and evidence are right for that God Hypothesis to return.

Early, Meyer quotes Richard Dawkins, "The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference." [\[2\]](#) So according to Dawkins, science has shown God to be superfluous.



This has been the position of most scientists since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when two authors detailed a long-standing warfare between science and religion. Most of the scientific community followed along to the present day.

But Meyer goes on to document that most if not all historians of science today agree that the Christian worldview greatly influenced, some say was even necessary for, the rise of modern science. Three key Christian concepts were, first, God's ability to choose what kind of universe He wanted to create. That meant that we can't just reason what nature *should* be like, we had to *discover* it. Second, nature is intelligible. Humans, being created in the image of God, could discover how nature operates (Romans 1:18-20). And last, human fallibility. Humans are sinful; therefore, one man's conclusions about the operation of nature must be subject to review of other scientists to ensure they are accurate. Christianity is the only worldview capable of developing modern science.[\[3\]](#)

So, what happened? Well, the Enlightenment happened where philosophers began to think only human reason is necessary or even proper to use in discovering the nature of humanity and nature around us. In the next section, I begin to investigate the three scientific discoveries that warrant a return of the God hypothesis.

## Scientific Discovery #1: The Big Bang

The subtitle of Stephen Meyer's book, *Return of the God Hypothesis is "Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe."* Now we will look at the first of these discoveries, the Big Bang.

First, I know that some of our readers don't accept the concept of the Big Bang since they are convinced that our universe is much younger than 13.7 billion years. I understand your position, [please read my article "Christian Views of Science and Earth History at [probe.org/christian-views-of-science-and-earth-history/](http://probe.org/christian-views-of-science-and-earth-history/)] but let's look at this then as an argument you can use with an atheist to show that his own dating of the universe and the Big Bang requires a Mind.

In the early 20th century, scientists like Edwin Hubble began to observe that the universe was not static as previously accepted, but was actually expanding. It took several lines of evidence, more powerful instruments, and many astronomers and mathematicians to come to this conclusion. The novel result was thinking about running the clock backwards. If the universe is expanding now, if you go back in time the universe gets smaller and smaller. Eventually you get to a point where they say the universe was contained in a “particle” that was infinitely dense and occupied no space.

We know now the universe had a beginning. Astronomers and cosmologists had assumed the universe was static and existed for eternity. This conclusion was disturbing to some astronomers. Some rejected the Big Bang for philosophical reasons not scientific. Mathematician Sir Arthur Eddington said,

“Philosophically, the notion of a beginning is repugnant to me. . . . I should like to find a genuine loophole.”[{4}](#) “We [must] allow evolution an infinite time to get started.”[{5}](#)

Edmund Whittaker wrote what many were thinking: “It is simpler to postulate creation ex nihilo—divine will constituting nature out of nothingness.”[{6}](#)

And finally, Robert Jastrow wrote, “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”[{7}](#) So, God creating matter and energy out of nothing explains the Big Bang, where any naturalistic idea simply cannot explain the evidence.

## Scientific Discovery #2: The Fine-tuning of the Universe for Life

Let us now turn our attention to the second of the discoveries in Stephen Meyer's book, the fine-tuning of the universe for life.

This has also been referred to as the "Goldilocks Universe," meaning a lot of things turned out to be just right for the universe to be friendly to life. For instance, you may be aware that there are four fundamental forces in the universe: gravity, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces. Each of these forces is expressed as an equation that contains a unique constant, and each one could have had a range of values at the Big Bang.

Meyer reveals that the gravitational constant alone is fine-tuned to  $1/10^{35}$ —that's one chance in 100 billion trillion trillion. The other three constants are also fine-tuned, but even further, the constants are also fine-tuned in relation to each other. This adds another number of at least 1 part in  $10^{50}$ .

Meyer had the opportunity to hear Sir John Polkinghorne at Cambridge during his doctoral work in the history and philosophy of science. Polkinghorne used an illustration of a universe generating machine with numerous dials and adjustable sliders, each representing one of the many cosmological fine-tuning parameters. Any slight change in the dials and adjusters of these parameters would render a universe hostile to life in any form. Polkinghorne would later say in an interview that a theistic designer provided a much better explanation than any materialistic hypothesis.[\[8\]](#)

Later, Meyer shows that including entities such as entropy and black holes, the odds of generating a life friendly universe are in this context 1 part in 10 to the power of 1 followed by

122 zeroes.[{9}](#) It would take several lines to write this number. This is an insanely impossible number to be arrived at by chance.

Nobel-Prize-winning physicist Charles Townes said, "Intelligent design as one sees it from a scientific point of view, seems to be quite real. This is a very special universe: it's remarkable that it came out just this way."[{10}](#) This intelligence is perfectly consistent with the God of the Bible.

## **Scientific Discovery #3: Genetic Information for the First Cell**

In this section I'm discussing the third scientific discovery; the need for complex specified genetic information for the first cell and new groups of organisms throughout time.

In Darwin's time, the first microscopes were being used and cells could be seen. Of course, scientists understood little of what they were seeing. Most of the cell appeared to be filled with something called protoplasm, a jelly-like substance that was thought to be easily derived from combining just a few substances. I've often said that if Darwin knew of the amazing complexity and the need for information storage, processing and regulation, evolution would have never been offered as a chance process.

Now we understand that the need for information to compose the first living, growing, and reproducing cell, is enormous. The first cell needed DNA to store information, specific proteins and RNA to produce additional proteins for the cell to function, and a controlled means to copy DNA accurately.

For instance, life uses 20 different amino acids to link together to form proteins, the workhorses of the cell. The number of combinations of two amino acids is 400. A four amino

acid stretch has 160,000 different combinations. A small protein of “just” 150 amino acids has  $10^{195}$  possible combinations. But how many of these could be a protein with some function? Just one in every  $10^{77}$  sequences.

But also, new groups of organisms appear suddenly throughout the fossil record. Nearly all large groups of animals, or phyla, appear in the Cambrian explosion. Animal and plant phyla rapidly diversified in at least 13 more explosions within phyla and classes into new classes, orders and families with no precursors, from flowering plants and winged insects to mammals and birds. All these explosions would require massive amounts of new genetic and developmental information.

The evidence supports the need for an intelligent designing mind to create all the needed information. Minds create information all the time. Natural processes simply can't do it.

## **Do These Three Evidences Point to Theism?**

The three discoveries discussed in Stephen Meyer's book, ***Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries that Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe*** are the Big Bang, the extreme fine-tuning of the laws of physics to provide a life-friendly universe, and the necessary complex and specified information for the origin of life and the progression of complex life-forms through the fossil record.

But where does that leave us? Do these discoveries warrant a return of the God Hypothesis? Meyer examines four different worldviews to ask, would the universe we have, be expected by any of these worldviews? He uses a scientific approach called “the inference to the best explanation.”

So, given a universe that is not only friendly toward life but contains living organisms, which worldview would best explain

this universe? He begins with scientific materialism. Materialism has no explanation for the beginning of the universe. There was no matter or energy before the beginning, so matter and energy cannot account for the beginning of the universe. Moreover, for the origin of complex specified information needed for life, naturalism has no answer. In fact, only theism posits an entity, God, that has the causal power to produce genetic information.

Let's move to pantheism. Pantheism does not propose a personal God but an impersonal god. This "god" is one and the same with nature. Then pantheism suffers the same fate as naturalism in that the beginning can't be explained by what doesn't exist yet, matter and energy.

But what about theism and deism? To explain the notion of a beginning, an entity outside the universe is required. Both theism and deism propose a transcendent, intelligent agent, God. Both can explain the beginning and the fine-tuning. But what about the appearance of complex specified genetic information on the earth? Deism and many forms of theistic evolution require a front-loaded beginning: all the information for life was present at the beginning and natural laws took over from there—God did not intervene. But how was this information retained over billions of years until life arose on earth? And natural laws simply can't produce complex specified information. Deism and theistic evolution won't work. Only theism remains.

On pg. 298, Meyer states, "As one surveys several classes of evidence from the natural sciences—cosmology, astronomy, physics, biochemistry, molecular biology, and paleontology—the God Hypothesis emerges as an explanation with unique scope and power. Theism explains an ensemble of metaphysically significant events in the history of the universe and life more simply, more adequately, and more comprehensively than major competing metaphysical systems."

## Notes

1. Stephen Meyer, *Return of the God Hypothesis* (New York: HarperCollins, 2021).
2. Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* 133, quoted in Meyer, *Return of the God Hypothesis*, 14.
3. *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994) by Nancy Pearcey and Charles Thaxton.
4. Arthur Eddington, "The End of the World: From the Standpoint of Mathematical Physics" *Nature*, vol. 127 (1931) p. 450.
5. Arthur S. Eddington, "On the Instability of Einstein's Spherical World," *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 90 (May 1930): 672. Quoted in Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Kindle Locations 484-485). RTB Press. Kindle Edition.
6. Cited in Robert Jastrow, 1978. *God and the Astronomers*. New York, W.W. Norton, p. 111-12.
7. Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*. p. 113-114, 116.
8. *Return of the God Hypothesis*, p. 143-144.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
10. Bonnie Azab Powell, "'Explore as Much as We Can': Nobel Prize Winner Charles Townes on Evolution, Intelligent Design, and the Meaning of Life," *UC Berkeley NewsCenter*, June 17, 2005, [www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2005/06/17\\_townes.shtml](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2005/06/17_townes.shtml). Cited in Meyer, *Return of the God Hypothesis*, p. 146.

# Theistic Evolution: A Theological Critique

*Dr. Ray Bohlin concludes a four-part series covering some of the big ideas in Dr. Stephen Meyer's book 'Theistic Evolution' by examining some of the theological problems with this perspective.*

## Did God Create a World with Pain and Suffering Already In It?

In this article I review the theological critique of theistic evolution from the book, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. (I have previously written on the scientific problems [here](#) and [here](#), and the philosophical problems [here](#).) First, I review a chapter in the philosophical section, "Bringing Home the Bacon: The Interaction of Science and Scripture Today" by Colin R. Reeves. I'm focusing on Reeves's section on theistic evolution's problem with theodicy.

A theodicy seeks to explain God's reasons for allowing evil. He says that many conservative Christians who have embraced theistic evolution simply view natural evil as having always existed. He writes, "If natural evil is of necessity a part of evolutionary history, and if evolution is the process instituted by God to, in the end, result in creatures on earth with whom he could have a relationship, then it follows that God is the direct cause of natural evil – it is part of his plan."[1](#) Reeves quotes evolutionary philosopher David Hull: "The God implied by evolutionary theory . . . is careless, wasteful, indifferent, almost diabolical . . . not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray."[2](#) Hull's solution is to simply reject any notion of God. He mentions



theologian Christopher Southgate struggling with this problem. How does one “redeem” the notion that pain, suffering, and death are intrinsic to evolution, which Southgate accepts? Southgate settles for an underwhelming notion of what he calls a “pelican heaven,” symbolizing the hope that everything will be fine in the end. That is just bizarre. This seems to recognize the problem, but seeing no solution, this idea simply hopes that God has it figured out somehow.

Reeves refers to Denis Alexander, who simply recognizes that “God created a tough world . . . in which there is pain and death.” For many theistic evolutionists, since humans evolved from a population of at least 10,000 individuals, there was no Adam and Eve and therefore, no Fall. He then references John Schneider who seems to say that we just shrug our shoulders and stop worrying!

If I were a theistic evolutionist, I would be very worried. But since they embrace evolution with no hesitation, they figure there just *must* be a way out of this dilemma, so don’t make a big deal about it.

## **Did Adam and Eve Even Exist for Theistic Evolutionists?**

Now I will focus on theologian Wayne Grudem’s opening chapter in the theological section of the book. He briefly discusses twelve points at which theistic evolution (as currently promoted by its prominent supporters) differs from the biblical creation account if it is taken as historical narrative. Now I’ll address the first three points:

1. Adam and Eve were not the first humans.
2. Adam and Eve were born of human parents.
3. God did not directly or specially create Adam out of the dust of the ground.

Something that needs to be understood concerning theistic evolution—or evolutionary creation as is now preferred—is that the human species came about as any other species, through naturalistic evolution. Calculations from some evolutionary creationists conclude that the human species can only be reduced to a population of around 10,000 individuals, certainly not just two. Some have even gone so far as to explicitly say that Adam and Eve did not exist. Others are willing to say that God chose a man and a woman from this population as Adam and Eve. But even this concession has problems of its own.

The primary question at this point is whether Genesis 1 to 3 is historical narrative. For evolutionary creationists, the simple answer is *no*. These initial chapters in Genesis are considered theological or allegorical but not a description of any actual events. But are they?

Grudem makes a significant case that these three chapters have always been understood as historical narrative and to consider them otherwise, one must bring an evolutionary viewpoint to the text. The text itself does not lead you to this conclusion.

Even if one assumes that God chose Adam and Eve out of the population of 10,000, they were born of human parents. God did not do anything supernatural to bring them into existence. This brings problems further down the line.

## **Were Adam and Eve Sinless?**

Three more doctrines will be upturned if humans came about through a naturalistic evolutionary process. First, Eve wasn't formed from Adam's rib or side; second, Adam and Eve were not sinless; and third, if they weren't sinless, they didn't commit the first sin.

For evolutionary creationists, humans evolved and were not

specially created. Therefore, Eve was not formed from Adam's rib or side. But this raises some important questions. In Genesis 2, Adam gives names to all creatures (of course, theistic evolutionists say this didn't happen either). But he doesn't find a suitable helper. So, God creates Eve from Adam. Jesus refers to this passage in Matthew 19 where He addresses marriage. The context is that since Eve was taken from Adam, he is to hold fast to his wife. Paul also adds that man was not made from woman but woman from man (1 Corinthians 11:8). Elsewhere, he confirms that Adam was formed first, then Eve (1 Timothy 2:13). In both cases Paul indicates that Genesis 2 is historical narrative. It really happened this way.

Now we come to the issue of sin. If humans evolved and were not created, then all humans would have acted selfishly for the benefit of themselves and their offspring. This is a key feature of an evolutionary system. They likely cheated on their mates, stealing food or shelter. In other words, all humans were sinners from the beginning! However, at the end of day six (Genesis 1:31), God says that everything He made that day was not just good, but **very** good. This would preclude sin! According to theistic evolution, humans were not sinless, and Adam and Eve could not have committed the first sin. Indeed, God would have made a very difficult world, and humans were a part of that harsh reality. I think you can begin to see that theistic evolution plays fast and loose with significant doctrinal issue.

## **Were All Humans Descended From Adam and Eve?**

To recap: In theologian Wayne Grudem's opening chapter in the theological section of the book *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, he briefly discusses twelve points at which theistic evolution (as currently promoted by its prominent supporters) differs

from the biblical creation account if it is taken as historical narrative.

I will now focus on points 7 to 9, which are rather distinct from each other.

1. Human death did not begin because of Adam's sin.
2. Not all human beings are descended from Adam and Eve.
3. God did not directly act in the natural world to create different kinds of plants and animals.

According to most if not all versions of theistic evolution, humans began as a population of at least 10,000 individuals. And since they evolved from an ape-like ancestor, death of humans had been around for hundreds of thousands of years. But when God informs Adam of the penalty of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He says, "You will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Not something you would say to someone who already knew he was going to die. In addition, Paul tells us in Romans 5 that sin came into the world through one man and with it, death! In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul links death through the one man, Adam, with life through the one man, Christ. Death entered for humans through Adam's sin.

The next problem we see is that theistic evolutionists contend that not all humans descended from Adam and Eve. This should appear rather obvious, since Adam and Eve were supposedly just two of thousands of humans at the time. Humanity would have descended from this population, not just Adam and Eve. But later in Genesis (3:20), we read, "The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all the living," meaning all humans.

Last, it should seem obvious that theistic evolutionists accept that all life evolved and just about all of Genesis 1 is not historical. But in all of Genesis 1, God repeatedly acts. He doesn't just let matter alone do the work.

Evolutionary creation dismisses not just the historical

accuracy of Genesis but also many New Testament doctrines.

## **Summing Up the Problems with Theistic Evolution**

Finally, I'll review the last three of the twelve events in Wayne Grudem's chapter and summarize his critique. Essentially, the last three events are:

1. Did God rest from anything on the seventh day?
2. Was the original creation a safe place?
3. After Adam and Eve's sin, there was nothing new. Thorns and thistles already existed.

As I have stated throughout this article, according to evolutionary creationists, God did not act in any kind of a direct way to bring anything into existence except matter and the physical laws of how matter operates. This means there was nothing for God to rest from. But Exodus 20:11 states clearly that God made heaven and earth and all that is in them and then rested. This is the basis for resting and keeping holy the Sabbath. Why would man need a rest day if God didn't?

Genesis is clear that the earth and specifically, the Garden of Eden was a safe environment and all that changed with their sin. Things were now much more difficult. Adam and Eve would sweat to get their bread. Thorns and thistles would grow where apparently, they hadn't before. God had cursed the ground so it wouldn't yield its fruit as easily. But evolutionary creationists affirm that nothing could have changed since there never was an idyllic Garden. So there was no curse on the land.

Grudem concludes with eleven significant Christian doctrines that are undermined or denied by theistic evolution. Time prohibits mentioning all of them, but some of them are the truth of the Bible, evidence in nature for God's existence,

and God's wisdom. Grudem closes with this paragraph: "Because theistic evolution denies the historicity of these twelve events, it also denies or undermines eleven significant doctrines. In sum, belief in theistic evolution is incompatible with the truthfulness of the Bible and with several crucial doctrines of the Christian faith." Amen. We heartily agree.

## Notes

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# The Biology of Human Uniqueness

*Dr. Ray Bohlin demonstrates unique biological attributes that set humans apart because we are made in the image of God.*

## What's So Special About Humans?

As humans we tend to think of ourselves as rather unique in the created order of things. As Christians, we understand ourselves to be created in the image and likeness of God as we learn in Genesis 1:26. But what does this really mean? Certainly being made in God's image does not refer to our physical construction; God is spirit and therefore does not have a physical body. But God's plan from the beginning was to rescue us from our sin through the incarnation, God becoming man. Jesus was and is the Son of God, Messiah, the God-Man. Therefore it is not a stretch to suggest that our bodily make-up is meant to be the unique earthly home of Jesus and His Spirit within us. Therefore, I suggest that our biological make-up is unique in the animal kingdom since no other animal

is made in His image.

But what does this really mean? I am going to borrow from several sources, principally Michael Denton's *Nature's Destiny*<sup>{1}</sup>, to discuss the biological uniqueness of humans. The [Discovery Institute](#) is also in the process of producing a film series based on Denton's work, titled *Privileged Species: How the Cosmos is Designed for Human Life*.



We are able to point out numerous qualitative abilities in the human species found nowhere else in the animal kingdom. I will discuss these in detail below, but I'll provide a brief overview now to whet your appetite.

First, I'll be discussing our unique intelligence. Humans' ability to think abstract thoughts appears to be absolutely unique. It is difficult to arrive at a selective advantage in an evolutionary sense to this type of thinking, so where did it come from?

Second, and related to our intelligence, is our unique language capability. Most animals communicate with their own species, but no other species, including primates, actually use *language*. As toddlers we accumulate language by simply being around it. Chimps and gorillas have to go through painstaking trial and error and still can't communicate as a three-year-old does.

Third, our excellent vision allows us to use our intelligence, language and other capabilities to manipulate our surroundings in precise and advantageous ways.

Fourth, our excellent manipulative tool, the hand, is unsurpassed in other primates. We have both strength and fine motor control in our hands, allowing us to combine a strong grip and delicate finger movements that allow a wide range of movements. This, combined with our upright stance, provides an ability to restructure our immediate surroundings as no other

species can.

We are also a highly social species which allows for quick distribution of ideas to everyone's benefit. And all these combine to allow us to be the only species to use and manipulate fire, which brings a host of unique abilities.

## Human Intelligence and Language

As I mentioned above, our intelligence separates us from any other primate species. Our brain is three times the size of the brain of a chimp. But beyond that, the number of neurons and connections between neurons far surpasses any other mammal. Michael Denton cites that in each cubic millimeter of the human cortex, are 100,000 cells, about 4 kilometers of axonal wiring and 500 meters of dendrites, and around 1 billion synapse connections between neurons. We have 10 million more of these synapses than a rat brain.

The size and scope is one thing, but our mental capabilities are indeed unique. As mentioned above, humans are capable of abstract and conceptual thought. No other primate exhibits any signs of this capacity. In addition, our mathematical reasoning is completely *other* compared to other animals. You might suspect that some animals can count. But it is a learned response attached to reward. We don't really suspect the rat/horse/chimp knows what they are doing. Comparing calculus to simply counting bananas is just no comparison at all.

When you stop to consider our appreciation of the arts, there is no place to go but humans. James Trefil is a physicist fascinated by biology and evolution. But when considering the arts he says, "No matter how hard I try, I can't think of a single evolutionary pressure that would drive the ability of humans to produce and enjoy music and dance. . . . This has always seemed like a serious problem to me—perhaps even a more serious problem than that perceived by most of my colleagues."

When we turn to language, our uniqueness is informed even further. Plants and animals all communicate in one form or another, but not by language as humans communicate. We communicate both new information and abstract concepts, something other species don't even approach. We possess the proper equipment to both produce and receive language and speech. And by proper equipment I mean both the brain processes and the anatomical necessities for actual speech (e.g., teeth, tongue, voice box, etc.). There is also a social ability that can utilize these upper levels of communication.

But we've heard about chimps and gorillas learning language. Kanzi, a bonobo chimpanzee, learned words and even symbolic use of a keyboard. Kanzi also learned through hearing the use of new words. But that is where it stopped.

To quote James Trefil again, "If we take the claims being advanced for Kanzi at face value, where are we? We have a member of the most intelligent primate species, a veritable Shakespeare of non-human animals, raised under special and unusual conditions, performing at the level of a human child of two and a half. But remember that in humans, real language begins just after this age. . . . Then we have to conclude that even in this optimal case, animals other than humans cannot learn real human language."

## **Human Vision and the Hand**

Now I'd like to introduce two features we can easily take for granted, our hands and our eyes.

Ordinarily we don't think of our hands as being anything special. But just try to think of any other creature that can do the many and diverse things we can do with our hands. The closest match is the hand of a chimp. But chimp hands are larger, stronger, and even clumsy. Simple things like using all ten fingers to type, peel an apple, or

tie a knot are beyond what chimps can do.

The strength in our fingers comes from larger muscles in the forearm and the fine manipulative control comes from much smaller muscles in the hand itself. Our ability to manipulate our environment with our hands is unparalleled. Using our intelligence we even devise additional tools for our hands to further extend our mastery of the world around us. Full use of our hands comes about from our upright and bipedal gait, allowing our hands the freedom not found in any other mammal.

In his book *Nature's Destiny* Michael Denton asks about the human hand "whether any other species possesses an organ approaching its capabilities. The answer simply must be that no other species possesses a manipulative organ remotely approaching the universal utility of the human hand. Even in the field of robotics, nothing has been built which even remotely equals the all-around manipulative capacity of the hand."

But in order to even use our hands well, we need exceptional vision to be able to detect all the little things our minds notice to manipulate. Given the physics of visible light and the dimensions and molecular process of detecting light in our eyes, the resolving power of the human eye is close to the optimum for a camera-type eye using biological cells and processes.

Some animals such as high-flying hawks and eagles detect motion from far greater distances that we can, and some organisms see much better in the dark than we do, but for all-around color vision, detail and resolution, our eyes seem to be the best there is. Combined with our highly interconnected brain, our upright gait for easily seeing straight ahead, a swiveling neck to see side to side, and our overall size, our eyes open the world to us as for no other species.

Developing science and technology, communicating to thousands

and even millions through the written word, and simply exploring the world around us, are only possible through an integrated use of our unique intelligence, social structure and speech, hands and vision.

## The Use of Fire

As I have explored the biology of human uniqueness, I have focused on some of our individual capacities such as our intelligence, speech, our marvelous hands, and our unique all-around color vision. I have used throughout, the wonderful book by Michael Denton, *Nature's Destiny*. Now I'm looking at one of our key distinguishing characteristics which combine all of these. Humans are the only biological creatures that have mastered the use of fire. If you think for a minute, every other animal has nothing but fear when it comes to fire. We are also fearful of fire and the damage it can do, but we have also managed to harness it and use it.

There are a couple of obvious advantages for the use of fire. First it provides additional light after sundown that extends our activity into the evening. Second, fire provides additional warmth in the evening and allows us to venture into colder climates. Third, fire allows us to cook food, particularly meat which is a very significant source of fat calories and protein. Cooking our food certainly distinguishes us from any other creature and has allowed us to add the necessary energy to fully use that big brain of ours which is a major drain on our energy stores, even at night.

But beyond these, if we never harnessed the energy and power of fire, we would not have been able to develop tools involving metal. Using heat to forge ever more powerful hand tools and weapons revolutionized human culture. Without fire we could not have developed any form of chemistry and especially the use of electricity. Electricity has revolutionized human existence in the last 100 years. Fire is

an influential and powerful tool indeed.

But how have we been able to do this? First, we need to take advantage of our intelligent capability for abstract thought and reasoning. As I said earlier, we too fear fire, but we need to be able to think about it and be curious enough to not only rationalize that we might be able to harness its power, but that it would also be useful. This ability to deduce the control and use of fire requires high-level reasoning.

Denton also points out that for a fire to be sustainable it needs to be at least 50 centimeters across (or about a foot and a half). To create a fire of this size we need our upright stance to walk the distance to gather the right amount and size of branches. That means that our upright stance, free arms, the manipulative tools of our hands, and our discerning vision work together to allow us to create a sustainable fire.

Therefore, the control and manipulation of fire requires a combined use of most of our unique biological capacities. Think about this the next time you sit around a campfire or grill your supper on a warm summer day. It's part of what makes us human!

## **Human Anatomy and Genome**

In this article I have been focusing on aspects of human biology that make us unique in the universe of living organisms. I discussed in some detail our unique intelligence, allowing us complex and abstract thought. We have a unique ability to communicate audibly and through a symbolic written word. These combine with our stereo vision and unique manipulative tool the hand, to allow us sole possession of the ability to use and manipulate fire. All of these capabilities are made possible by several unique aspects of our anatomy.

Humans have the largest brain of any primate species. Whales, dolphins, and elephants have larger brains, but size is not

the main distinctive. Our human brain is structured like no other. If you were to open up just one cubic millimeter of our brain you would find over 100,000 cells with 4 kilometers of cell wiring and 1 billion connections between neurons. The structure and organization of our brain is definitely without parallel. Studies of our entire genome compared to chimpanzees indicate vast differences in non-coding sequences that influence the production of brain proteins. These changes are in the thousands.

In 1999, famous MIT linguist Noam Chomsky, reflected that "Thus, in the case of language, . . . (new research) is providing interesting grounds for taking seriously an idea that a few years ago would have seemed outlandish: that the language organ of the brain approaches a kind of optimal design, that it is in some interesting sense an optimal solution to the minimal design specifications the language organ must meet to be usable at all." Without our unique brain structure, our language ability would not be forthcoming.

When comparing our skeletal structure to those of our supposed closest ancestors according to an evolutionary explanation, there are major changes that would have been needed to be accomplished in a relatively short time. Casey Luskin from the Discovery Institute does an admirable job digging into these differences and makes some sweeping conclusions. Numerous studies indicate that between the lineage of *Australopithecus* and *Homo* there would need to be significant changes in shoulders, rib cage, spine, pelvis, hip, legs, arms, hands and feet. But of these major transitions, the fossil record is silent.

Luskin also refers to a study by Durrett and Schmidt in 2007 that estimates that a single-nucleotide mutation in a primate species would take 6 million years to become fixed. But what is needed are multiple mutations in multiple segments of the skeletal system and in the physiology of the brain. *Homo sapiens* are far more unique than many have suspected. The more

we learn, the more unique we become.

Since humans are created in the image of God, we expect human biological uniqueness. Even more significantly, bearing His image indicates an affinity for humans by the Creator we cannot fully comprehend.

### Notes

1. Michael Denton, *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe* (New York: The Free Press, 1998).

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## The Common Woodpecker: Chance or Design?

Dr. Ray Bohlin gave this presentation at the Discovery Institute's 2025 Dallas Conference on Science and Faith.

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## A Philosophical Critique of Theistic Evolution

*Dr. Ray Bohlin provides an overview of some philosophical problems with theistic evolution, particularly methodological*

*naturalism.*

## **Methodological Naturalism as a Ground Rule of Science**

In this article I review the philosophical critique of theistic evolution from the book *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*.<sup>{1}</sup> I'm starting with the chapter in this section by Steve Meyer and Paul Nelson titled, "Should Theistic Evolution Depend on Methodological Naturalism?" Now I admit that's quite a mouthful. What is methodological naturalism?

Well, if you simply break the word down, you can see that it is first about a method, therefore "methodological." The second word is "naturalism." The philosophy of naturalism maintains that only nature exists. There is no supernatural, no spirit or spirits, only matter and energy.

Therefore, methodological naturalism is a method that only considers matter and energy. This refers for many to science. So methodological naturalism is a method of science that only considers natural explanations. As Meyer and Nelson put it, "Methodological naturalism asserts that, to qualify as science, a theory must explain by strictly physical or material—that is, non-intelligent or non-purposive—causes."

Theistic evolutionists collectively assert that this is how science must be done. No purpose or intelligence allowed. Strangely though, Meyer and Nelson quote atheist Sean Carroll saying, "Science should be about determining truth, whatever truth that may be—natural, supernatural, or otherwise." In addition, they quote theistic evolutionist Darrell Falk admitting that natural selection and mutation do not explain the origin of animal form. Yet he also affirms there is a natural explanation waiting out there. Why?

Meyer and Nelson explain, "Because of his commitment to

methodological naturalism, Darrell Falk will not consider any theory (such as intelligent design) that invokes 'creative intelligence.'" Instead, he waits for an adequate and fully naturalistic theory of evolution. But is this reasonable?

This is my third article critiquing Theistic Evolution. You can find the first two [here](#) and [here](#). I simply ask that our brothers and sisters who accept Theistic Evolution, look again with unbiased eyes.

## Why Methodological Naturalism?

Above, I said that science should be about determining truth, wherever the evidence leads. Methodological naturalism limits that search for truth in science to only natural explanations. So why this restriction?

Some theistic evolutionists like Nancy Murphy are quoted as saying that, "For better or worse, we have inherited a view of science as methodologically atheistic." This limit by history over the last 150 years hardly seems adequate. Others, however, insist that methodological naturalism is supported by independent and objective criteria. These are often referred to as Demarcation criteria, such as:

1. Must be based on observable data and/or
2. Must be testable or falsifiable and/or
3. Must offer explanations based on natural law.

These criteria will be able to distinguish genuine science from pseudoscience, metaphysics, or religion.

I'm going to need to examine these criteria to see if they provide what is needed—basically a principled philosophical or methodological reason for supporting methodological naturalism. Can these criteria enable scientists or philosophers to do science in a normative way? Do the criteria justifiably exclude, *a priori*, some theories as unscientific

or pseudoscientific, despite what the evidence may show? If so, then it may be perfectly justifiable to exclude from scientific consideration theories of the origin and development of life that invoke creative intelligence, and it may also be justifiable to require that theories refer only to materialistic causes or natural processes just as many theistic evolutionists assume.

BUT—and this is a big BUT—what if these demarcation criteria are neither independent nor objective? Is there already an inherent bias in these criteria and are they applicable in all situations? The answer is a resounding NO!

## **Demarcation Criteria Work, Except When They Don't**

Earlier, I discussed if methodological naturalism is necessary for science, and most evolutionists and theistic evolutionists think that it is. There are what are called demarcation criteria that are supposed to distinguish science from pseudoscience and religious theories.

There was a significant and famous federal court case challenging a new law passed in Arkansas back in 1980, that required creationism to be taught alongside evolution in public schools. Federal Judge William Overton struck down the Arkansas law and used many of these demarcation criteria as his reasoning. His reasoning was that creationism was not science based on these criteria.

First, he said, virtually verbatim from the brief submitted from the ACLU, creationism was not guided by natural law. Second, it was not explained by reference to natural law. Third, creationism was not testable against the empirical world. And fourth, Creationism was not falsifiable. On the surface judge Overton's decision was reasonable.

Therefore, despite whatever scientific evidence creationists were able to offer for their claims, it simply wasn't science. No matter what the evidence!

But within months of the ruling being issued, it was blistered by philosophers of science. They explained that many theories throughout science in the past and present would not qualify as science according to Overton's decision.

But as Meyer and Nelson point out, Newton and Galileo posed no natural law to govern gravitational phenomena. Yet, Newton's universal law of gravitation described and predicted gravity precisely, but according to the criteria, it's not science. Even Darwin's theory of natural selection knew nothing of the genetics it would eventually refer to. Were both Newton and Darwin unscientific? No one would claim that today. So, judge Overton greatly overreached.

## **Demarcation Criteria Could Exclude Both ID and Evolution**

In the previous section I began discussing what are called demarcation criteria that are supposed to distinguish between science and non-science. I showed that Newton's gravitational ideas were not based on scientific law. He had no idea what caused gravity. Another criterion is that science must be testable. But as philosopher of science Larry Laudan showed after the trial, creationists routinely offered geological tests for their catastrophic flood geology.

Another major criterion was that a scientific hypothesis must be observable. When discussing intelligent design, of course, the designer is not observable. So, ID is not science. Meyer and Nelson point out however, that this is applying the criterion far too rigidly. After all, we still cannot see gravitational waves, we have never observed an electron, we

have never observed a mammalian carnivore evolving into a wolf or a lion, or anything even remotely this close in relationship.

But evolutionists can suggest evolutionary events that could give rise to the wolf and the lion, and we can very precisely predict and describe gravitational fields even though we can't observe gravity itself, only the results.

Appropriately, while we may not observe the designing mind behind the information rich content of living things, we are very acquainted with the results of intelligence. Our only model today for the origin of complex specified information (or language) is the mind. Our minds interpret and produce language every hour of our waking day; even in our sleep, we dream—again information.

So, if we use the criterion of observability too rigidly, then both evolution and ID are not science, but if we apply the criterion more realistically, then both materialistic and non-materialistic theories can qualify as science.

## **Why Methodological Naturalism Sinks Theistic Evolution**

I will now close my discussion of the philosophical objections to theistic evolution by discussing an intriguingly-titled chapter, *How to Lose a Battleship: Why Methodological Naturalism Sinks Theistic Evolution*.

Remember that Methodological Naturalism is defined by asserting that science, properly understood, can only suggest natural causes. Author Stephen Dilley reminds us of what has been known for decades; that Darwin's *Origin of Species* was written as a scientific answer to its main competitor, special creation. However, in the fourth edition, Darwin also claimed that special creation is not science.

But if you use scientific evidence to discredit a theory as false, it must be science, otherwise, scientific evidence is useless. But when Darwin also claimed that special creation was not science, then his scientific arguments against special creation should have been taken out of what he called “the long argument.”

But even modern-day theistic evolutionists do much the same thing. On the one hand, they use methodological naturalism to contend that ID is not science, but then they offer scientific evidence that ID is false using scientific arguments. If ID is not science, then scientific evidence is useless; if it is science, then use scientific evidence to demonstrate that it is incorrect science.

Francis Collins is perhaps the most recognizable proponent of theistic evolution. In his book, *The Language of God*, he uses theological language to show evolution as being true and ID as false. Basically, he reasons that the design of the mammalian eye is less than ideal. That is what you would expect, he says, from evolution, but not design. Evolution will cobble something together that works, whereas you would expect the Designer to design it perfectly. This argument has been around for some time and simply is not true, but you can see that Collins uses theological language to exclude design.

If evolution is science, then why resort to what we think God would do, to argue in favor of evolution? Either way, Dille shows, theistic evolutionists would be wise to discard methodological naturalism. I agree.

## Notes

1. *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* by J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

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# Theistic Evolution – Part 2

*Dr. Ray Bohlin reviews a second science critique of Theistic Evolution, asking if universal common descent is real. The evidence says no.*

## The Fossil Record and Universal Common Ancestry

In a previous article, I examined [the failure of neo-darwinism](#) on the basis of the landmark book *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*.<sup>{1}</sup>

In this article, I'm reviewing the second science critique of theistic evolution. This section asks whether universal common descent or UCD is real. Universal common descent simply states that all organisms today are descended from one or a few early organisms by Darwinian evolution. UCD is usually if not always vigorously defended by theistic evolutionists, or, as they now prefer, "evolutionary creationists." UCD is considered beyond question. And doubters of UCD are compared to flat earthers and those who believe the sun and planets revolve around the earth. In this section I'll review the first chapter in this section by Gunter Bechly and Stephen C. Meyer.



Bechly and Meyer simply ask if the fossil record records this smooth transition from a single common ancestor to all life forms today. They survey numerous gaps in the fossils where certain large groups appear suddenly again, and again, and again. When a variety of new forms appear, the fossil record is full of gaps. In an old earth perspective, which theistic evolutionists adopt, one of these gaps goes back to the

earliest life on earth. Fossils of bacteria show up 3.8 billion years ago right after the Late Heavy Bombardment of the earth by asteroids from 4.1 billion years ago to 3.8 billion years ago. This leaves virtually no time for the origin of that first life.

Let's jump ahead to the Cambrian Explosion where nearly all animal Phyla show up in the fossil record suddenly, with no ancestors, 450 million years ago. Arthropods, Mollusks, Annelids, Chordates, and many others just show up, already fully differentiated from each other, with few clues of which phyla are most closely related to other phyla.

Then there is the Silurian-Devonian Radiation of Terrestrial Biotas. Here vascular land plants show up suddenly with no clue as to how and when they transitioned from marine plants to land plants.

Then there are the flowering plants. Charles Darwin called their sudden appearance in the Cretaceous period "an abominable mystery."

There are more problems in the animal kingdom. All the orders of mammals with placentas suddenly show up in a narrow time window, too narrow to have evolved from earlier animals. A paleontologist said, "Within approximately 15 million years of dinosaur extinction most of the 20 orders of placentals had appeared." And last, the orders of modern birds show up all at once in the fossil record around the same time. Whew, more tomorrow.

## **Universal Common Descent: A Comprehensive Critique (Part 1)**

In this section I'm reviewing Casey Luskin's chapter called "Universal Common Descent: A Comprehensive Critique."

In this chapter, Luskin covers four main topics:

- evidence against common descent from biogeography,
- the fossil record,
- molecular phylogenies, and
- embryology.

Since I covered the fossil record in the above section, I'll focus on biogeography here and molecular phylogenies in the next.

Why would biogeography even be considered by theistic evolutionists as evidence of common ancestry? Well, it was used by Darwin, when he saw that the fossil mammals in South America resembled the animals living on the continent today. Luskin looks at a most glaring example of a severe problem in this category, Platyrrhine monkeys. Two families have prehensile tails, which can grasp things like tree branches while their four limbs perform other tasks. While some old-world monkeys have tails, they are not prehensile.

The new world monkeys are said to have arrived in South America about 30 million years ago. At that time however, Africa and South America were at least 600 miles apart. So how did the platyrrhine monkeys, supposedly recently evolved from old-world monkeys, cross the ocean? The usual response is to suggest that a group or even a single pregnant female rafted on some fallen trees and brush.

This seems incredibly improbable. First, it would require these branches or shrubs to provide food for at least one pregnant female. This drifting pile of branches would take several weeks or most probably months to drift from Africa to South America. This incredible hypothesis is offered because these two groups of monkeys are supposedly related by common ancestry, but on different sides of the ocean. So, there must be a way to preserve common ancestry of these two groups of

monkeys no matter how improbable.

Biogeography hurts UCD far more than it helps.

## **Universal Common Descent: A Comprehensive Critique – (Part 2)**

In this section on Casey Luskin's chapter on Universal Common Descent, my focus is on evidence from molecular phylogenies, where molecules like genes and proteins are compared to create trees based on molecules, not anatomy. Scientists can now determine the amino acid sequence of proteins and the nucleotide sequence of the gene that codes for the protein.

Previously, Darwin's tree of life was constructed by comparing anatomical similarities and differences to determine where a species or group of species belonged in the tree. And since it was thought that genes determine the anatomical structure of an organism, a tree constructed by comparing the gene sequences of a protein should give the same tree as the anatomical tree. This was the expectation of numerous scholars.

However, there has been no agreement between anatomical and gene sequence trees except with very closely related species. Molecular phylogenies for different proteins reveal contradictory trees. Now, many scientists have abandoned Darwin's tree of life. In 1999, W. Ford Doolittle offered that "Molecular phylogenists will have failed to find the 'true tree' . . . because the history of life cannot properly be represented as a tree." The problem has only gotten worse. Several authors over the last 25 years are quoted by Luskin<sup>{2}</sup>: one said that "Different proteins generate different trees" (1998); another said, "Evolutionary trees from different genes often have conflicting branching patterns," (2009). A third author wrote, "The problem was that

different genes told contradictory evolutionary stories” (2009). And finally, a fourth author said, “Evolutionary trees constructed by studying biological molecules often don’t resemble those drawn up from morphology.”

Many evolutionists have abandoned the tree model altogether, which leaves Universal Common Descent in grave trouble.

## **Missing Transitions: Human Origins and the Fossil Record**

Theistic evolutionists agree that humans show clear evidence of having a common ancestor with chimpanzees. But if humans evolved from an ape-like ancestor, was there a real Adam and Eve? Was there an actual fall? Many evolutionary creationists would say no. They hold that humans evolved from a population of at least 1,000 individuals, not two, and that humans were already sinful and therefore never fell into sin.

Casey Luskin explores whether the fossil record documents a steady series of fossils transforming an ape-like ancestor into humans over the last 6-7 million years.

Luskin focuses on three critical questions about the hominin fossils: first, are there candidates for something very close to the common ancestor of humans and chimps; second, are the australopithecines intermediates between our ape-like ancestor and us; and last, is there a series of fossils linking australopithecines and humans?

Fragmentary fossils of three possible candidates for a common ancestor between chimps and humans have been found between 6.6 to 4.4 million years ago. But all three were eventually dismissed as simple apes or too fragmentary to draw any conclusions. All these fossils would easily fit inside a child’s shoe box.

The second question is, were the australopithecines

intermediates between our ape-like ancestor and us? The australopithecines ranged from 4 to 1 million years ago and have long been advertised as on the road to humans. But paleoanthropologists cannot agree about the roles, if any, the australopithecines had in human origins.

The third question asks, is there a series of fossils linking australopithecines and humans?

*Homo erectus*, the first species in the genus *Homo*, appeared about 1.8 million years ago, but we haven't found *any* potential intermediates between australopithecines and *Homo*. "Although the transition from *Australopithecus* to *Homo* is usually thought of as a momentous transformation, the fossil record bearing on the origin and earliest evolution of *Homo* is virtually undocumented." The so-called evolution of the human species is fragmentary and blotchy.

## **Evidence for Human Uniqueness**

Most evolutionary creationists believe that humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor around 6-7 million years ago. Above, I addressed the lack of fossil evidence for the human descent from this common ancestor. But equally, evolutionary creationists claim there is powerful evidence linking humans and chimpanzees, that there is only a 1-2% difference of our DNA, indicating humans and chimps are closely related. Ann Gauger, Ola Hossjer, and Colin Reaves deal with this claim in their chapter, *Evidence for Human Uniqueness*.

This chapter uses an abundance of technical terminology. I will be avoiding many of those terms to save time needing to define them for you. I will be generalizing their discussion as much as possible.

If you simply compare the individual building blocks of DNA

called nucleotides, where the sequences match up between human and chimp DNA, there is only a 1.23% difference between humans and chimps. But when you begin to include insertions, deletions, the number and location of repeated elements, as well as the extreme differences between the Y chromosomes of humans and chimps, the difference rises to at least 5%.

It's estimated that there are about 60 genes found in humans that have no similar genes in chimps. It's difficult to get just one unique gene in 6 million years, but 60? Impossible!! There are differences in non-coding DNA, how chromosomes are arranged in the nucleus in cells of different tissues, how genes are regulated, etc. Many of these differences are found in genes expressed in brain tissues.

These genetic differences bring about dozens of anatomical and physiological differences. Our brains are larger and constructed differently; our feet, necks, and location of the skull on the spine are different.

We think about past and future, we play, dance, make music, communicate through language, use symbolic logic, we write novels and poetry, use math and art, and show empathy for others. There are so many more differences. We do not share a common ancestor with chimps. There is not enough time for evolution bring about all these differences.

I hope that now you are convinced that evolutionary creationist insistence that Universal Common Descent be fully accepted is not based on evidence, just a belief that evolution is true.

## Notes

1. J.P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem, Editors. *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017.

2. Pp. 380-382.

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# Theistic Evolution: The Failure of Neo-Darwinism

*Dr. Ray Bohlin provides an overview of the first section of a landmark book on theistic evolution, showing why evolution doesn't hold up to scrutiny.*

## Three Good Reasons for People of Faith to Reject Darwin's Explanation of Life

In this article I'm discussing the first of four sections in the book, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*.<sup>{1}</sup> I'll be covering five chapters from the section, "The Failure of Neo-Darwinism." First we'll look at Doug Axe's chapter titled, "Three Good Reasons for People of Faith to Reject Darwin's Explanation of Life."

I need to let you know from the start that I totally disagree with any theistic evolutionary perspective. As a biologist, I see no reason for any accommodation since Darwinism should be rejected on purely scientific grounds.

But moving along, Axe makes three points in this chapter. First, that there is a cost to any theistic evolution position. Second, Darwin's view of life is false. Third, the reasons for the accommodation are confused. I want to focus on his first point that accommodating Darwin's view of life within traditional faith is costly. He begins with a familiar quotation from the Book of Job 39:26-27. "Is it by your

understanding that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south? Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?" Eventually, Job was appropriately humbled as he responded later in Job 42:3, "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." And if you *don't* agree, then *you* should try to make an eagle. Oh, we can create flying toys with flapping wings and all, but these don't come close to an actual eagle or hawk. These toys must be made on an assembly line with humans adding parts until the "eagle" is complete. With only the yolk and white of the egg as its nutrition, true eagles are formed within the egg by a seamless automated process. No human interference needed.

If a part breaks in the flying toy, it must be replaced by a human. Eagle's bodies can mostly heal themselves and true eagles reproduce on their own. No flying toy will ever reproduce itself. Job's response was correct. He didn't respond, saying "Actually, God, hawks and eagles could have appeared by accident over millions of years." As Doug states, "I see no way around the fact that the arresting awe we're meant to have for the maker of the majestic eagle is lost the moment we accept that accidental physical processes could have done the making instead Neo-Darwinism and the Origin of Biological Form and Information Now we turn to discussing Stephen Meyer's chapter on the origin of biological form and genetic information.

## **Neo-Darwinism and the Origin of Biological Form and Information**

Before we begin, I need to discuss what a body plan is. The body plan of an animal is the overall structure of the body. For instance, the butterfly and the polar bear have very different body plans. The butterfly has its skeleton on the outside, what's known as an exoskeleton. The polar bear has an

endoskeleton; the skeleton is on the inside of the body. Butterflies have wings, polar bears don't. In fact, all the major organs, limbs and other body parts are arranged very differently. So, each of these animals will need to form along very different pathways to arrive at the final product. The question becomes, "How does the evolutionary process form such different body plans from similar beginnings?"

Studies in developmental biology, the study of how organisms develop from fertilized egg to final product, show that changes in biological form require attention to the timing, especially those steps involved in developing the body plan. Also, there is a need for careful choreography in the expression of genetic information, not just when, but how much, how long lived, the proper sequence.

There are real problems here for Neo-Darwinism. Major evolutionary change requires changes in the body plan which is formed very early in embryonic development. So, mutations need to occur early. Mutations that may occur late have no effect on body plan. But numerous studies have shown that early mutations are inevitably lethal. Late mutations don't produce body plan changes. As Meyer puts it, "The kind of mutations we need, we don't get. The kind we get, we don't need."

There isn't just a need for new genes and proteins for new functions of the organism. Polar bears can endure freezing temperatures, butterflies can't. But new regulatory pathways are needed. Early development is controlled by developmental gene regulatory networks, or dGRNs. These networks regulate the time and perform the choreography. Any mutations here are always inevitably lethal. Neo-Darwinism can't explain the origin of new animal body plans.

**Are Present Proposals on Chemical**

## Evolutionary Mechanisms Accurately Pointing toward First Life?

Now we will review Dr. James Tour's discussion on the origin of life. Dr. Tour is the foremost authority on organic chemical synthesis. That is, he makes chemical products based on the element carbon. This background makes him just the scientist to critique the chemical origin of the first life, since life is also based on the element carbon.

Tour begins by describing the start and stop necessity of making something as simple as a carbon-based car and a car that also contains a motor and then an even better motor. These nano cars take many steps to build. Usually Tour and colleagues run into a roadblock necessitating, before moving to the next step, that they back up several steps and redirect the process. He also documents that each stage usually requires different chemical requirements. This makes it necessary to purify your product. What he demonstrates is that making something comparably simple as a nano car requires intelligent input at every step. This will not happen by chance. Tour emphasizes that the undirected chemical synthesis to make useful biological molecules, and even a cell, is far more complex with no opportunity to start over again when you hit a dead-end.

After walking the reader through the many and enormous roadblocks a prebiotic chemist faces in trying to form the building blocks—sugars, amino acids, fatty acids, and nucleotides—and then the macromolecules; carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, DNA and RNA, and *then* trying to assemble these very different parts into a functioning, reproducing cell, Tour comes to a final conclusion.

“Those who think scientists understand how prebiotic chemical mechanisms produced the first life are wholly misinformed. Nobody understands how this happened. Maybe one day we will.

But that day is far from today. It would be more helpful (and hopeful) to expose students to the massive gaps in our understanding. Then they may find a firmer—and possibly a radically different—scientific theory.”

## **Why DNA Mutations Cannot Accomplish What Neo-Darwinism Requires**

Now we discuss Jonathan Wells’s chapter on why DNA mutations are insufficient to account for the arrival of new organisms through evolution. Mutations acted on by Natural Selection are what provides the variation, when given enough time and continued mutations with selection, to provide new types of organisms.

Dr. Wells begins his chapter by making sure we understand what is meant by the “Central Dogma.” It goes something like this: DNA makes RNA, makes protein, makes us. It was thought that all the instructions for building organisms was in the sequence code of DNA. But DNA never leaves the nucleus. The sequence of DNA that codes for a protein is transcribed into a molecule of RNA. The messenger RNA then leaves the nucleus and enters the cell, where molecular machines called ribosomes, translate the RNA code into protein code. Proteins are made of long chains of amino acids. Proteins are the workhorse of the cell. They speed up necessary chemical reactions the cell needs and provide structure and support. Our bodies are composed of organ systems, which are made up of organs, which are composed of tissues, and tissues are composed of cells that perform their functions through the proteins each cell makes. Therefore, DNA makes RNA, makes protein, makes us.

Over the last few decades, this analogy has fallen apart. Initially, a stretch of DNA that coded for a single protein was called a gene. One gene, one protein. We now know that the RNA transcribed from a gene can be split up into two or more segments and these segments put back together in several

different ways. The RNA then doesn't match the original sequence of DNA. About 95% of human genes can be spliced into more than one RNA and more than one protein. Proteins can also be modified with sequences of sugar molecules that are specific to a particular tissue. What controls the splicing and the addition of sugar molecules is still not fully known. But for various reasons, it's not the DNA alone that determines these variations on a central theme.

## **Evidence from Embryology Challenges Evolutionary Theory**

Finally, I'll cover the final chapter for this article, "Evidence from Embryology Challenges Evolutionary Theory." Sheena Tyler states early that Darwin thought that "Embryology is to me by far the strongest class of facts in favor of change of form." [2] Tyler goes on to indicate that in Darwin's time, embryology was largely a black box of which little was known.

The section I'll be covering is titled "Development is Orchestrated." Tyler makes a comparison to a mystery novel where the author plans to ensure the different characters come together at the right place and time to resolve the mystery. Embryological development is very much like that. She mentions a four-dimensional pattern of stored information. The first three dimensions of this pattern revolve around being in the right place, the fourth dimension is time. So embryological proteins, chemicals and even electrical fields need to be available at the right time and place. Any deviation and the structures are ill-formed, or the embryo could even die.

Skeletal development in vertebrates starts with an electrical field that begins the process. And from there she quotes an embryologist indicating that the size and shape of skeletal elements in the embryo are "exquisitely regulated." Another word used to describe the sequence of events is "precise."

This doesn't sound like something that was cobbled together by chance over a few million years. There is a definite plan and prepattern that *must* be followed.

The central nervous system requires, again, a "precise and exquisitely regulated gene expression." Another expression used is "intricately orchestrated." Each developing neuron anticipates where a connection with another neuron will need to be before contacting the other neuron.

Last, she mentions the heart and circulatory system. One embryologist reports that cardiac transcription factors (small proteins that help initiate the expression of a gene) *choreograph* the expression of *thousands* of genes at each stage of cardiac development. Every blood vessel ends up in the right place every time along with the proper architecture for veins or arteries. Just amazing!

## Notes

1. J.P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger, and Wayne Grudem, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017.

2. Quoted in Sheena Tyler, Evidence from Embryology Challenges Evolutionary

Theory, in *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, Moreland, J.P., Meyer, S.C., Shaw, C., Gauger, A. K., and Grudem, W., editors.

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# Dr. Ray Bohlin Presents “Natural Limits to Biological Change”

Discovery Institute's *Dallas Conference on Science and Faith* (January 22, 2022) featured Probe VP and Discovery Institute Fellow Dr. Ray Bohlin's breakout session on his book *The Natural Limits to Biological Change*.

Read Dr. Bohlin's article: [The Natural Limits to Biological Change](#)

His PowerPoint slides can be accessed [here](#).

PowerPoint slides in a PDF document are [here](#).

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## Probe Survey 2020 Report 5: Sexual Attitudes and Religion vs. Science

*Steve Cable continues his analysis of Probe's 2020 survey of American religious views moving over to consider their response to sexual mores of today and how they navigate religion and science.*

The previous reports on Probe Survey 2020 were primarily focused on religious beliefs and practices. In this report, we will look at how these beliefs impact Americans as they deal with sexual issues and with navigating the relationship between religion and science. In general, the survey results confirm a continuing degradation in Americans', and particularly Born Agains', view of sex within a heterosexual marriage. We find that fewer than one in five Born Again Protestants affirm a biblical view in this area. On the other hand, Americans still tend to consider religious views at least as important as scientific positions in establishing their beliefs.

## **American Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors**

We asked four questions regarding sexual attitudes and behaviors in this survey.

1. Sex among unmarried people is always a mistake: from Agree Strongly to Disagree Strongly
2. Viewing explicit sexual material in a movie, on the internet, or some other source is:
  - a. To be avoided
  - b. Acceptable if no one is physically or emotionally harmed in them.
  - c. A matter of personal choice
  - d. Not a problem if you enjoy it
  - e. Don't know
3. Living with someone in a sexual relationship before marriage:
  - a. Might be helpful but should be entered into with caution.
  - b. Just makes sense in today's cultural environment.
  - c. Will have a negative effect on the relationship.
  - d. Should be avoided as not our best choice as instructed

by God

4. People attracted to same sex relationships are:
  - a. To be loved and affirmed in their sexual choices.
  - b. To be avoided as much as possible.
  - c. To be accepted while hoping they realize there is a better way.
  - d. To be loved and told God's truth regarding our sexual practices.

First, let's see how the different religious affiliations impact the answers to these questions.

## Sex Among Unmarried People

First, let us establish the biblical standard for sexual relations outside of marriage. Is there clear teaching on this topic? Consider Jesus' discussion in the Sermon on the Mount where He said, "You have heard that it was said, '**Do not commit adultery.**' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."[\[1\]](#)

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul writes, "For this is God's will: that you become holy, that you keep away from sexual immorality." And then in 1 Peter 2:11, Peter writes, "I urge you to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." It is very clear that the biblical standard calls for all sexual relations to occur within a marriage between one man and one woman.

✘ Results from the first question are plotted in Figure 1. As shown, here and in the next three graphs, we will look at those ages 18 through 29 next to those ages 40 through 55 to see if there are differences based on age. If there is a trend or variation seen in the 30 through 39 age group, then that one is also shown as seen for Born Again Protestants in Figure 1.

The graph shows the older group of Born Again Protestants is much more likely to Strongly Agree that fornication is always a mistake than the youngest group, dropping from almost one half to a little over one quarter, 46% to 29%. **Over two thirds of Younger Born Again Protestants have adopted the common view of the culture** that sex and marriage are not necessarily related. Note that even among the older group, **less than half of them strongly agree that sex outside of marriage is always a mistake.**

Looking across other religious affiliations, we see that the vast majority said they Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed with this statement<sup>[2]</sup>. They generally believe that sex outside of marriage by unmarried people is not an issue. This is particularly true of the Unaffiliated with close to 90% (nine out of ten) disagreeing.

How have these views changed among born again young adult individuals over the last decade? Looking at the GSS survey from 2008, we find that over one in three (37%) Born Again Christians ages 18 through 29 agree with the statement, "If a man and woman have sex relations before marriage, I think it is always wrong." Now in 2020, we find that over one quarter (27%) of Born Again Christians agree that it is always wrong. Although the questions asked were not identical, they are close enough to indicate that the drop of ten percentage points is a significant decline in young adult, Born Again Christians who take a biblical position on sexual activity outside of marriage.

### **Pornography.**



The second question deals with views on the acceptability of viewing pornographic material. What does the Bible tell us about feeding our minds with sexually immoral material? Jesus tells us in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil ideas, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." We are warned in 1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee sexual immorality! Every sin a person commits is outside

of the body but the immoral person sins against his own body.” And further in Ephesians 5:3, “But among you there must not be either sexual immorality, impurity of any kind, or greed, as these are not fitting for the saints.” Clearly, avoiding sexual immorality in all forms includes avoiding explicit sexual material.

The results are shown in Figure 2. Once again, we see that Born Again Protestants are much more likely to say that we should avoid exposure to such material. Both the younger group and the older have more than 50% who say it is “to be avoided.” However, the data also shows over four out of ten Born Again Protestants believe it is usually okay. Given what we know about the negative effects of [pornography](#) on healthy living and relationships, this result is surprising.

All the other religious affiliations have only a small percentage of people who think that explicit sexual material should be avoided. Only about one in five Other Protestants and Catholics affirm that pornography is to be avoided. Once again, the Unaffiliated lag those affiliated with some religion having only about one in twenty (5%) that think pornography should be avoided.

For those who are not Born Again Protestants, around 10% to 20% say that such material is okay if no one is hurt in them. These people fail to realize that the person being hurt by these materials is themselves and their loved ones. More surprisingly, the vast majority of these people selected “a matter of personal choice” or “not a problem if you enjoy it,” implying that if people are shown being harmed in this pornographic material, that is perfectly okay if you enjoy it or want to put up with it.

## **Living Together Before Marriage**

What does the Bible tell us about living in a sexual relationship before marriage? In Colossians 3:5, Paul states,

“So put to death whatever in your nature belongs to the earth: sexual immorality, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry.” The current philosophy of “try before you buy” is popular but totally contrary to biblical instruction for a rich, fulfilling life. This philosophy clearly “belongs to the earth.”

✘ The third question examines views on whether it is a good thing to live together in a sexual relationship before committing to marriage. The results are summarized in Figure 3. This is another question where Born Again Protestants show a significant difference based on age. The older group, 40 through 55, shows almost 60% who say that it should be avoided as instructed by God. The younger group, 18 through 29, shows only 40% with the same viewpoint. Across all age ranges only about one half of Born Again Protestants say that this practice should be avoided. So, even among this group, over half believe that it is okay and might be helpful.

Once again, this question reveals a stark difference between Born Again Protestants and all other religious affiliations. Other Christian groups show **much fewer** than one in five adherents who believe this practice should be avoided. And we see the Unaffiliated lead the other viewpoint, with about nine out of ten of them saying the practice “might be helpful” or “makes sense in today’s culture.”

### **Same Sex Relationships.**

The fourth question deals with how people react toward those who profess to have a sexual attraction towards those of the same gender. What does the Bible say about same sex relationships? Let’s consider the instruction from 1 Corinthians 6:9b-11, “Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolators, adulterers, passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God. Some of you once lived this way. But you were washed,

you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

The verse above tells us two things. First, that someone  who is given over to homosexual activity (like those given over to idolatry, sexual immorality, and greed) are not true followers of Christ. Even in Paul’s era, many were apparently saying they would inherit the kingdom of God and so Paul begins the statement by saying “Do not be deceived.” But it also clearly states that such a one can be washed, sanctified and justified in Jesus Christ. As Christians, we should love them and tell them the truth that God has a better way for their life.

Note that our question does not distinguish between those experiencing same sex attraction and those actively involved in living out their attraction through homosexual activity. Both categories of people need to be loved and told the truth.

The results for this question are summarized in Figure 4. As shown, we see some difference based on age for Born Again Protestants. However, it is not as pronounced as for the question on fornication above. Looked at as a group between age 18 and 55, less than one half of Born Again Protestants selected loving them and telling them what the Bible says about homosexual practices.

Once again, all other groups are much less likely to take a biblical position. However, when we add in the answer about “accepting them while hoping they find a better way”, the other religious groups (excluding the Unaffiliated) show almost four in ten who desire them to find a better way.

Note that Other Protestants are most likely at 20% (about one out of five) to say they would try to avoid people attracted to the same gender.

**Combining Questions for Born Again Protestants.**

How many Born Again Protestants take a clear biblical view of all four questions concerning sexual attitudes and behaviors? Results are shown in the adjacent chart. The chart begins with results by age for the first question concerning fornication. As you move to the right, additional questions are added to the questions already addressed to the left. Thus, the bars on the right include those who took a biblical position on all four of the questions.

✘ Clearly, ones in the older group are more likely to take a biblical view on sexual behavior. In fact, on the far right, we see that those 40 to 55 are twice as likely as those 18 to 29 to hold to a biblical view. However, more important, is that over 80% of the younger ages and over 75% of the oldest ages do not hold to a biblical view on these combined topics regarding sexual behavior.

To understand how disturbing these results should be, consider **Born Again Christians with a biblical view on sexuality as a percentage of the entire United States population. The results are 2% for 18 through 29, 3% for 30 through 39, and a whopping 6% for 40 through 55.** In other words, a slim remnant of adults in America hold to a biblical view of sexuality. A secular view promoting no relationship between sexual behavior and marriage and no limits on satisfying one's lusts currently dominates our national thinking.

**Don't Do What You Say You Will Do.**

We will address this topic more fully under Topic 10 but it is relevant to thinking about the Combining Question topic above. We asked this question:

*When you are faced with a personal moral choice, which one of the following statements best describes how you will most likely decide what to do?*

One of the answer choices is "Do what biblical principles teach."

Almost half (47%) of Born Again Protestant young adults (18 through 39) selected that answer. They would follow biblical principles in making moral decisions. Yet as just seen, only about 15% of Born Again Protestant young adults selected biblical principles on all four questions regarding sexual behaviors.

*Although we can't be certain, it appears that many Born Again Protestant young adults either don't know what topics are covered under moral choices OR they don't know what biblical principles teach OR both. Clearly, almost half of Born Again Protestant young adults think that they are choosing to think biblically about moral choices, but most of them are not living the way they think they are.*

### **Responding to These Results on Sexual Attitudes**

All of the results presented above show that a large majority of young adult, Born Again Protestants do not adhere to a biblical position on topics related to sexual morality. The data also shows that when Born Again Protestants enter the world of higher education and secular careers, they are surrounded by an even greater majority of people who believe that pretty much anything is acceptable in the area of sexual relations. Among other conclusions, we can be sure that these two data points tell us that while young adults were involved in church as teenagers, they were not adequately taught the basics of Christian doctrine in the area of sexuality and did not receive a good explanation as to why the Christian attitudes are much, much better than the free license rampant in our society today.

Christian teaching on sexuality must occur more frequently from the pulpit, in bible studies, in small group times. If we think that parents as the only source of information are sufficient to set up young Christians to be an example of godly sexuality, the data says "not so fast." However, we do not equip parents to discuss these matters with their

children. We cannot allow their peers to set the bar on acceptable behavior.

## **American Attitudes Concerning Science and Religion**

We included three questions probing people's views on the relationship between science and religion. The first question relates to any apparent conflicts between current scientific theories and their beliefs based on their religion. From the answers, one can tell whether the respondent puts more credence in current scientific theories or in their religious beliefs. The question is:

**Question #1: When apparent conflicts appear between science and religious teachings, one should:**

1. Ignore science, accepting that when science learns more it will agree with your religion.
2. Examine your religious teachings to determine if the scriptures are in conflict or it is just someone's interpretation of the scriptures that conflict.
3. Change your religious views to align with current scientific views.
4. Abandon your religion as being false.

The first two answers are consistent with a Basic/Enhanced  Biblical Worldview, reflecting 1) a view that their scripture is informed by a higher source of truth than simple science can draw upon, 2) a recognition that generally accepted scientific viewpoints have often changed over time, and 3) on the type of scientific questions being addressed here, there are in most cases a variety of theories supported by different groups of scientists. The second answer includes

the possibility that the person's holy scriptures do not directly address the topic at hand, but that some religious leaders have inferred a position on the topic from their interpretation of scriptures.

The second two answers, i.e. 3 and 4, reflect a view that scientific teaching communicates truth that religious teachings are unable to counter. The third answer results in a religious viewpoint that will vary over time as scientific ideas gain or fall out of favor in the scientific community.

As shown in the figure, the majority of American young adults do not accept that science is infallible (by supporting answers 3 or 4). Less than 10% of Born Again Protestants selected one of these answers. And even among the Unaffiliated, less than half of them selected an answer where scientific theories trump other sources of beliefs.

At the same time, those who selected a view that ignores science all together (answer 1) were a small minority as well. Less than one in five (20%) of the Born Again Protestants and slightly over one out of ten for the other religious groups.

So well over 50% of all religious groups selected answer number 2, showing a willingness to go against science but also a desire to meld the views of science into their religious views. We did not ask a follow up question as to what they would do if they determined there was an unresolvable conflict with the current position supported by most scientists. There are not many unresolvable conflicts if one is willing to adopt a position supported by a reputable minority of scientists, e.g. intelligent design.

**Question #2: My understanding of human origins is the result of:**

1. Using the Bible alone with no regard for the findings of science.

2. Using science to better understand what the Bible teaches us about origins.

3. Not sure

4. Accepting a completely naturalistic view, i.e. no intelligence involved in the process.

☒ Note these answers follow a similar pattern to those of the first question, but now they are applied to a specific question where many people assume there is no meeting ground between science and religion.

The answers are shown in the adjacent graph. On this more specific question, the percentage of each religious group that is going to look at the Bible alone for their understanding hovers around 30% for all religious groups but plummets to under 8% for the Unaffiliated.

Conversely, only the Unaffiliated show more than three out of ten who “accept a completely naturalistic view” (choice #4). Born Again Protestants show only about one out of eight who select such a view. This result is amazing given the concerted push by some educators to force our students to accept a completely naturalistic view of creation. However it is consistent with the current state of the research on the origins of man, including new reports from 2021.[\[3\]](#)

The majority for each group of people selected “Not sure” or said they would use science to help them better understand what the Bible teaches.

**Question #3: All real scientists believe that science is the only source of real truth.**

The potential answers ranged from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree and included Neither agree or disagree.

First note that if we strictly define real scientists as ☒ individuals meeting these qualifications—1) a Ph.D. in a

scientific field, 2) actively involved in the field, and 3) published in reputable scientific journals—we will find many scientists who agree that there are other sources of truth outside of science. So, we can say with confidence that **the statement in question #3 is objectively, verifiably not true.** However, there are certainly some believers in scientism [the belief that science is the only way to know ultimate truth] who claim the statement is true. They accomplish this trick by claiming that anyone who does not believe that science is the only source of real truth cannot by definition be a real scientist.[{4}](#) In other words, they use circular reasoning.

But there is certainly a movement to instill scientism as the favored viewpoint in society.[{5}](#) How successful are these proponents of scientism? Looking at the answer shown in the adjacent chart will throw some light on this question.

We would like to see the answer: Strongly Disagree. This answer aligns with the objective truth discussed above. But what we find is that only one out of five (20%) of Born Again Protestants profess this view. Among Other Protestants and Catholics only about one out of twenty (5%) profess this view. Adding some uncertainty by adding those who say they Disagree, increases those amounts to two out of five (40%) for Born Again Protestants and one out of five (20%) for Other Protestants and Catholics.

Those who agree with the statement range from one out of four (25%) Born Again Protestants up to nearly one half (almost 50%) of Other Protestants and Catholics. Clearly, the proponents of scientism have done a good job of skewing our understanding of who scientists are and what they believe.

### **Combining the Questions**

✘ What do the results look like when we combine these questions? In our opinion, there are a number of different answers that could be consistent with a biblical worldview.

Starting with the strictest view of relying on the Bible rather than science and then adding in those who would look at the results from science to obtain a clearer understanding of what the Bible teaches or those areas where the Bible is silent. Then, we add in their view on scientism which as already discussed is demonstrated by a long list of scientists who disagree to be false, thus being a source of strong disagreement.

The results from this comparison are shown in the adjacent figure. The first thing to notice is that the percentage of Born Again Protestants who take a more fundamental position, i.e. science should be ignored as a source of information, is low for one question and goes down to only a few percentage points when all three questions are combined.

The right hand side of the chart considers all combinations of answers that reflect a commitment to biblical truth above current scientific theories combined with a willingness to consider what science has to offer. As shown, the combination of the first two questions has a large percent of Born Again Protestants, ranging from 55% for the youngest age group and growing to over 65% for the older age group. Since only a minority of Born Again Protestants stated Strongly Disagree that all scientists are adherents of scientism, when we add that question to the mix on the far right, we see less than one in five take a Biblical position on all three.

### **Effect of a Basic Biblical Worldview.**

A natural question to ask is, “Does having a Basic Biblical  Worldview correlate with having a biblical view on these science issues?” We can look at this question by comparing Born Again Protestants with a Basic Biblical Worldview with Born Again Protestants without a Basic BWV. The results are shown in the adjacent figure.

At a top level, we can see a correlation between a Basic

Biblical Worldview and a biblical understanding of the relationship with science. This correlation appears to be strongest with those ages 18 through 29. We see that those with a Basic Biblical Worldview are about twice as likely to have a biblical view on all three of the questions related to science.

### **Responding to These Results on Science and Religion**

As we can see from the first two science questions above, the majority of Americans do not buy into the idea that the only real source of truth is science. They don't believe that scientific positions automatically take precedence over their religious beliefs. Perhaps one factor supporting this stance is an understanding that scientific hypotheses and positions have changed fairly often over the years, particularly in the areas of the origin of life and the role of evolutionary processes on our current bounty of life forms. Certainly, it is not the public school system which has attempted to promote concepts which current day scientists studying the field do not support.

However, Americans do have a skewed view of scientism, with a vast majority believing that all real scientists support this religious concept. This position is a little surprising given that the view is demonstrably false.

In one area, sexual behavior, even American Christians have thrown out the teaching of the Bible. At the same time, they are resisting the call to make science the ultimate source of truth.

### **Notes**

1. Matthew 5:27-28
2. There is also a small number of those answering Don't Know included in the number of those who do not state that they Strongly Agree or Agree Somewhat with the statement.
3. In March, Nobel Prize-winning physicist Brian Josephson

declared that “intelligent design is valid science.” In April, researchers writing in the journal *Current Biology* asked whether Darwin’s “tree of life” should “be abandoned.”

4. See for example: Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, 2006.

5. See for example the book by J. P. Moreland, *Scientism and Secularism*, 2018.

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