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 polyaromatic 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 1×10^{-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*{4} and in a chapter in the edited volume by J. P. Moreland, *The Creation Hypothesis*.{5}

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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The Causes of War

Meic Pearse's book The Gods of War *gives great insight into the charge that religion is the cause of most war. History shows this is not true: the cause of most war is the sinful human heart, even when religion is invoked as a reason.*

The Accusation

Sam Harris, the popular author and atheist, says that "for everyone with eyes to see, there can be no doubt that religious faith remains a perpetual source of human conflict."{1} Writing for the Freedom from Religion Foundation, fellow atheist Richard Dawkins adds, "Only the willfully blind could fail to implicate the divisive force of religion in most, if not all, of the violent enmities in the world today."{2} Speaking more bluntly, one British government official has said, "theocrats, religious leaders or fanatics citing holy texts . . . constitutes the greatest threat to world peace today."{3}



War is the ultimate act of intolerance, and since intolerance is seen as the only unforgivable sin in our postmodern times, it's not surprising that those hostile to religion would charge people holding religious convictions with the guilt for causing war.

This view is held by many others, not just despisers of religion. A 2006 opinion poll taken in Great Britain found that 82% of adults "see religion as a cause of division and tension between people. Only 16% disagree."{4}

To be honest, religion has been, and remains, a source of conflict in the world; but to what degree? Is it the only source of war, as its critics argue? Is it even the primary source? And if we agree that religion is a source of war, how do we define what qualifies as a religion? This leads to another question. Are all religions equally responsible for war or are some more prone to instigate conflict than others? Once these issues are decided, we are still left with one of the most difficult questions: How does a religious person, especially a Christian, respond to the question of war?

When confronted with the accusation that religion, and more

importantly, Christianity, has been the central cause of war down through history, most Christians respond by ceding the point. We will argue that the issue is far too complex to merely blame war on religious strife. A more nuanced response is needed. Religion is sometimes the direct cause of war, but other times it plays a more ambiguous role. It can also be argued, as Karl Marx did, that religion can actually restrain the warring instinct.

In his provocative new book, *The Gods of War*, Meic Pearse argues that modern atheists greatly overstate their case regarding religion as a cause for war, and that all religions are not equal when it comes to the tendency to resort to violence. He believes that the greatest source for conflict in the world today is the universalizing tendencies of modern secular nations that are pressing their materialism and moral relativism on more traditional cultures.

The Connection Between Religion and War

When someone suggests a simple answer to something as complex as war, it probably is *too* simple. History is usually more complicated than we would like it to be.

How then should Christians respond when someone claims religion is the cause of all wars? First, we must admit that religion can be and sometimes is the cause of war. Although it can be difficult to separate political, cultural, and religious motivations, there have been instances when men went off to war specifically because they believed that God wanted them to. That being said, in the last one hundred years the modern era with its secular ideologies has generated death and destruction on a scale never seen before in history. Not during the Crusades, the Inquisition, nor even during the Thirty Years War in Europe.

The total warfare of the twentieth century combined powerful

advances in war-making technologies with highly structured societies to devastating effect. WWI cost close to eight and a half million lives. The more geographically limited Russian Civil War that followed the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 resulted in nine million deaths. WWII cost sixty million deaths, as well as the destruction of whole cities by fire bombing and nuclear devices.

Both Nazi fascism and communism rejected the Christian belief that humanity holds a unique role in creation and replaced it with the necessity of conflict and strife. By the end of the nineteenth century, Darwin's ideas regarding natural selection and survival of the fittest had begun to affect philosophy, the social sciences, and even theology. Darwin had left us with a brutal universe devoid of meaning. The communist and fascist worldviews were both firmly grounded in Darwin's universe.

Hitler's obsession with violence is well known, but the communists were just as vocal about their attachment to it. Russian revolution leader Leon Trotsky wrote, "We must put an end once and for all to the papist-Quaker babble about the sanctity of human life." Lenin argued that the socialist state was to be "a system of organized violence against the bourgeoisie" or middle class. While critics of the Russian Tsar and his ties with the Orthodox Russian Church could point to examples of oppression and cruelty, one historian has noted that when the communists had come to power "more prisoners were shot at just one soviet camp in a single year than had been executed by the tsars during the entire nineteenth century."{5}

So, religion is not the primary cause of warfare and cruelty, at least not during the last one hundred years. But what about wars fought in the more distant past; surely most of them were religiously motivated. Not really.

Meic Pearce argues that “most wars, even before the rise of twentieth century’s secularist creeds, owed little or nothing to religious causation.”{6} Considering the great empires of antiquity, Pearce writes that “neither the Persians nor the Greeks nor the Romans fought either to protect or to advance the worship of their gods.”{7} Far more ordinary motives were involved like the desire for booty, the extension of the empire, glory in battle, and the desire to create buffer zones with their enemies. Each of these empires had their gods which would be called upon for aid in battle, but the primary cause of these military endeavors was not the advancement of religious beliefs.

Invasions by the Goths, Huns, Franks, and others against the Roman Empire, attacks by the Vikings in the North and the Mongols in Asia were motivated by material gain as well and not religious belief. The fourteenth century conquests of Timur Leng (or Tamerlane) in the Middle East and India resulted in the deaths of millions. He was a Muslim, but he conquered Muslim and pagan alike. At one point he had seventy thousand Muslims beheaded in Baghdad so that towers could be built with their skulls.{8}

More recently, the Hundred Years War between the French and English, the American Revolution, and the Napoleonic Wars were secular conflicts. Religious beliefs might have been used to wrap the conflicts with a Christian veneer, but promoting the cause of Christ was not at the heart of the conflicts.

Pearce argues that down through the millennia, humanity has gone to war for two main reasons: greed expressed by the competition for limited resources, and the need for security from other predatory cultures. The use of religion as a legitimating device for conflict has become a recent trend as it became less likely that a single individual could take a country to war without the broad support of the population.

It can be argued that religion was, without ambiguity, at the

center of armed conflict during two periods in history. The first was during the birth and expansion of Islam which resulted in an ongoing struggle with Christianity, including the Crusades during the Middle Ages. The second was the result of the Reformation in Europe and was fought between Protestant and Catholic states. Even here, political motivations were part of the blend of causes that resulted in armed conflict.

Islam and Christianity

Do all religions have the same propensity to cause war? The two world religions with the largest followings are Christianity and Islam. While it is true that people have used both belief systems to justify armed conflict, are they equally likely to cause war? Do their founder's teachings, their holy books, and examples from the earliest believers encourage their followers to do violence against others?

Although Christianity has been used to justify forced conversions and violence against unbelievers, the connection between what Christianity actually teaches and these acts of violence has been ambiguous at best and often contradictory. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told to use violence to further the Kingdom of God. Our model is Christ who is the perfect picture of humility and servant leadership, the one who came to lay down his life for others. Meic Pearce writes, "For the first three centuries of its history, Christianity was spread exclusively by persuasion and was persecuted for its pains, initially by the Jews but later, from 63, by the Romans."{9} It wasn't until Christianity became the de facto state religion of the Roman Empire around AD 400 that others were persecuted in the name of Christ.

The history of Islam is quite different. Warfare and conflict are found at its very beginning and is embodied in Muhammad's actions and words. Islam was initially spread through military conquest and maintained by threat of violence. As one pair of

scholars puts it, there can be no doubt that “Islam was cradled in violence, and that Muhammad himself, through the twenty-six or twenty-seven raids in which he personally participated, came to serve for some Muslims as a role model for violence.”{10}

Much evidence can be corralled to make this point. Muhammad himself spoke of the necessity of warfare on behalf of Allah. He said to his followers, “I was ordered to fight all men until they say, ‘There is no God but Allah.'”{11} Prior to conquering Mecca, he supported his small band of believers by raiding caravans and sharing the booty. Soon after Muhammad’s death, a war broke out over the future of the religion. Three civil wars were fought between Muslims during the first fifty years of the religion’s history, and three of the four leaders of Islam after Muhammad were assassinated by other Muslims. The Quran and Hadith, the two most important writings in Islam, make explicit the expectation that all Muslim men will fight to defend the faith. Perhaps the most telling aspect of Islamic belief is that there is no separation between religious and political authority in the Islamic world. A threat to one is considered a threat to the other and almost guarantees religiously motivated warfare.

Pacifism or Just Wars?

Although most Christians advocate either pacifism or a “just war” view when it comes to warfare and violence, Pearse argues that there are difficulties with both. Pacifism works at a personal level, but “there cannot be a pacifist state, merely a state that depends on others possessed of more force or of the willingness to use it.”{12} Some pacifists argue that humans are basically good and that violence stems from misunderstandings or social injustice. This is hardly a traditional Christian teaching. Pearse argues that “a repudiation of force in all circumstances . . . is an abandonment of victims—real people—to their fate.”{13}

Just war theory as advocated by Augustine in the early fifth century teaches that war is moral if it is fought for a just cause and carried out in a just fashion. A just cause bars wars of aggression or revenge, and is fought only as a last resort. It also must have a reasonable chance of success and be fought under the direction of a ruler in an attitude of love for the enemy. It seeks to reestablish peace, not total destruction of the vanquished, and to insure that noncombatants are not targeted.

However, even WWII, what many believe to be our most justified use of force, failed to measure up to this standard. Massive air raids against civilian populations by the Allies were just one of many violations that disallow its qualification as a just war. As Pearse argues, "war has an appalling dynamic of its own: it drags down the participants . . . into ever more savage actions."{14}

How then are Christians to think about war and violence? Let's consider two examples. In the face of much violent opposition in his battle for social justice, Martin Luther King said, "be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. . . . We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win *you* in the process."{15} Reform was achieved, although at the cost of his life, and many hearts and minds have been changed.

However, another martyr, German minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer, rejected pacifism and chose to participate in an attempt on the life of Adolf Hitler, mainly because he despaired that an appeal to the hearts and minds of the Nazis would be effective.

Neither King nor Bonhoeffer were killed specifically for their faith. They were killed for defending the weak from slaughter, as Pearse puts it. Perhaps Pearse is correct when he argues, "If Christians can . . . legitimately fight . . . , then that fighting clearly cannot be for the faith. It can only be for

secular causes . . . faith in Christ is something for which we can only die—not kill. . . . To fight under the delusion that one is thereby promoting Christianity is to lose sight of what Christianity is."{16}

Notes

1. Meic Pearse, The Gods of War (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 16.
2. Ibid., 15.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 14.
5. Ibid., 31.
6. Ibid., 53.
7. Ibid., 54.
8. Ibid., 55.
9. Ibid., 134.
10. Ibid., 58.
11. Ibid., 59.
12. Ibid., 173.
13. Ibid., 175.
14. Ibid., 173.
15. Ibid., 180.
16. Ibid.

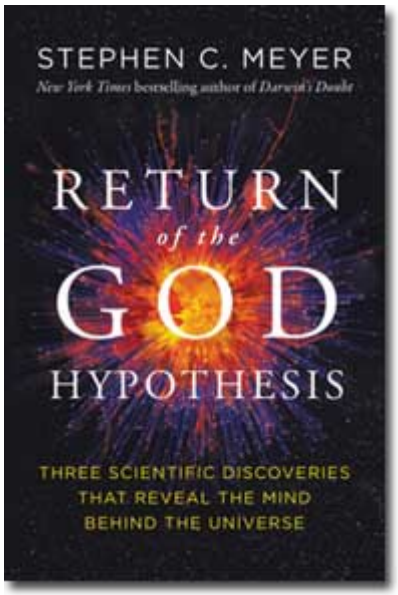
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'Return of the God Hypothesis' for Regular

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

19th 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/] 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 Whitaker 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

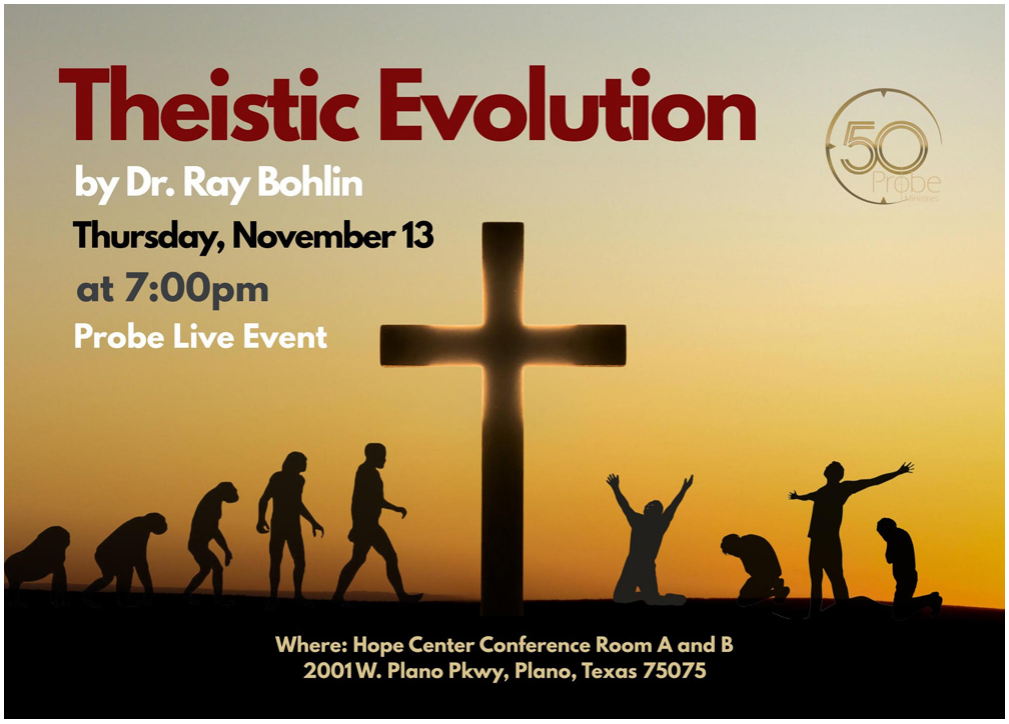
major competing metaphysical systems."

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. Cited in Meyer, *Return of the God Hypothesis,* p. 146.

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Probe Live – Theistic Evolution



Theistic Evolution is the belief that God used random, purposeless mutations and unguided natural selection to create the universe and our world. Some TE adherents believe God *had* to have used evolution as His means of creation.

Theistic Evolution is completely unnecessary scientifically, and has deep theological problems that most believers would turn away from if they understood what is being suggested. Molecular and cell biologist Dr. Ray Bohlin addressed both of these issues at our Probe Live on November 13, 2025.

The Common Woodpecker: Chance or Design?

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

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***.{1} 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.

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{2}. 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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Lessons from C.S. Lewis

Two issues which vex Christians today are moral subjectivism and the origin of the world. Through a couple of his recorded lectures, C.S. Lewis provides helpful insights and answers to the challenges we face.

The Poison of Subjectivism

C.S. Lewis was both a serious scholar who could tangle with the great minds of his day and a popular author who had the wonderful ability to write for children. Lewis, who died in 1963, is still an intellectual force who is well worth reading.

I want to dig into Lewis's thinking on a few subjects which are still applicable today. Studying writers like Lewis helps us love God with our minds.



Are Values Created by Us?

Let's begin with a very pertinent issue today, that of *subjectivism*. Subjectivism is the belief that individual persons—or subjects—are the source of knowledge and moral values. What is true or morally good finds its final authority in people, not in an external source like God. Today there is more of an emphasis on groups of people rather than individuals. However, truth and morality arise from our own ideas or feelings.

Over the last few hundred years there have been many attempts to work out ethical systems that are grounded in our subjective states apart from God but somehow provide universal moral values. That project has been a failure. The individual is now left to his or her own devices to figure out how to live, except, of course, for laws of the state.

In a lecture titled "The Poison of Subjectivism," Lewis scrutinizes subjectivist thinking with a special focus on what he calls "practical reason." Practical reason is our capacity for deciding what to do, how to act. It has to do with judgments of value. It is different from theoretical reason which deals with, well, theories. Practical reason answers the question, What should I do?

It sounds odd today to talk about moral values as matters of reason since people tend more to go with what they *feel* is the right thing to do. But this is just the problem, Lewis says. "Until modern times," he wrote, "no thinker of the first rank ever doubted that our judgements of value were rational judgements or that what they discovered was objective."{1} In other words, matters of value have not always been separated

from the realm of reason.

Lewis continues:

> Out of this apparently innocent idea [that values are subjective] comes the disease that will certainly end our species (and, in my view, damn our souls) if it is not crushed; the fatal superstition that men can create values, that a community can choose its 'ideology' as men choose their clothes.{2}

Just as we don't measure the physical length of something by itself, but rather use a measuring instrument such as a yardstick, we also need a moral "instrument" for deciding what is good or bad. Otherwise, what we do isn't good or bad, it's just . . . what we do.

Cultural Relativism

A prominent form of moral relativism today is *cultural relativism*. This is the belief that each culture chooses its own values regardless of the values other cultures choose. There is no universal moral norm. This idea is supposed to come from the observation that different cultures have different sets of values. A leap is made from there to the claim that that is how things *should* be.

We're often tempted to counter such a notion with the simple answer that the Bible says otherwise. Lewis provides a good lesson in doing apologetics by subjecting the belief itself to scrutiny. Cultural relativism is based on the assumption that cultures are very different with respect to values. Lewis claims that all the supposed differences are exaggerated. The idea that "cultures differ so widely that there is no common tradition at all" is a lie, he says; "a good, solid, resounding lie." He elaborates:

> If a man will go into a library and spend a few days with

> the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* he will soon discover that massive unanimity of the practical reason in man. From the Babylonian *Hymn to Samos,* from the Laws of Manu, the *Book of the Dead,* the Analects, the Stoics, the Platonists, from Australian aborigines and Redskins, he will collect the same triumphantly monotonous denunciations of oppression, murder, treachery and falsehood, the same injunctions of kindness to the aged, the young, and the weak, of almsgiving and impartiality and honesty. He may be a little surprised . . . to find that precepts of mercy are more frequent than precepts of justice; but he will no longer doubt that there is such a thing as the Law of Nature. There are, of course, differences. . . . But the pretence that we are presented with a mere chaos . . . is simply false.{3}

Someone might ask whether the Fall of Adam and Eve made us incapable of knowing this law. But Lewis insists that the Fall didn't damage our *knowledge* of the law as much as it did our ability to *obey* it. There is impairment, to be sure. But as he says, "there is a difference between imperfect sight and blindness."{4}

We still have a knowledge of good and evil. The good that we seek is not found within the subject, within us. It is rooted in God. It is neither above God as a law *He* has to follow, nor is it a set of rules God arbitrarily made up. It comes from His nature. And, since we are made in His image, it suits our nature to live according to it.

Is Theology Poetry?

In 1944, Lewis was invited to speak at a meeting of the University Socratic Club at Oxford. The topic was, "Is Theology Poetry?"{5}

Lewis defines poetry here as, "writing which arouses and in

part satisfies the imagination." He thus restates the question this way: "Does Christian Theology owe its attraction to its power of arousing and satisfying our imagination?"{6}

Why would this question even be raised? This was the era of such scholars as Rudolph Bultmann who believed the message of the Bible was encrusted in supernatural ideas unacceptable to modern people. Bultmann wanted to save Christian truth by "demythologizing" it.

Some Problems

It has been assumed by some critics that until modern times people didn't know the difference between reality and fantasy. But this is a condescending attitude. People know the difference for the most part, even premodern people—and even Christians! In fact, Lewis believes there are elements in Christian theology which work *against* it as poetry. He says, for example, that the doctrine of the Trinity doesn't have the "monolithic grandeur" of Unitarian conceptions of God, or the richness of polytheism. God's omnipotence, for another example, doesn't fit the poetic image of the hero who is tragically defeated in the end.{7}

Critics point out that the Bible contains some of the same elements found in other religions—creation accounts, floods, risings from the dead—and conclude that it is just another example of ancient mythology. Lewis says there are notable differences. For example, in the pagan stories, people die and rise again either every year or at some unknown time and place, whereas the resurrection of Christ happened once and in a recognizable location.

However, we shouldn't shy away from the fact that our theology will sometimes resemble mythological accounts. Why? Because we cannot state it in completely non-metaphorical, nonsymbolic forms. "God came down to earth" is metaphorical language, as is "God entered history." "All language about things other

than physical objects is necessarily metaphorical," Lewis says.{8}

Did early Christians believe the metaphorical language of Scripture literally? Lewis says "the alternative we are offering them [between literal and metaphorical] was probably never present to their minds at all."{9} While early Christians would have thought of their faith using anthropomorphic imagery, that doesn't mean their faith was bound up with details about celestial throne rooms and the like. Lewis says that once the symbolic nature of some of Scripture became explicit, they recognized it for what it was without feeling their faith was compromised.

The Myth of Evolution

Lewis had a wonderful way of turning criticisms back on the critics. So they believe Christian doctrine is mythological because of its language? They should look to their *own* beliefs! These critics, Lewis says, believe "one of the finest myths which human imagination has yet produced," the myth of blind evolution. This is how he describes this myth.{10}

The story begins with infinite void and matter. By a tiny chance the conditions are such to produce the first spark of life. Everything is against it, but somehow it survives. "With infinite suffering, against all but insuperable obstacles," Lewis says, "it spreads, it breeds, it complicates itself, from the amoeba up to the plant, up to the reptile, up to the mammal. We glance briefly at the age of monsters. Dragons prowl the earth, devour one another, and die. . . . As the weak, tiny spark of life began amidst the huge hostilities of the inanimate, so now again, amidst the beasts that are far larger and stronger than he, there comes forth a little naked, shivering, cowering creature, shuffling, not yet erect, promising nothing, the product of another millionth millionth chance. Yet somehow he thrives." He becomes the Cave Man who

worships the horrible gods he made in his own image. Then comes true Man who learns to master nature. “Science comes and dissipates the superstitions of his infancy.” Man becomes the controller of his fate.

Zoom into the future, when a race of demigods rules the planet, “for eugenics have made certain that only demigods will be born, and psychoanalysis that none of them shall lose or smirch his divinity, and communism that all which divinity requires shall be ready to their hands. Man has ascended to his throne. Henceforward he has nothing to do but to practice virtue, to grow in wisdom, to be happy.”

The last scene in the story reverses everything. We have the Twilight of the Gods. The sun cools, the universe runs down, life is banished. “All ends in nothingness, and ‘universal darkness covers all.'”

“The pattern of the myth thus becomes one of the noblest we can conceive,” Lewis says. “It is the pattern of many Elizabethan tragedies, where the protagonist’s career can be represented by a slowly ascending and then rapidly falling curve, with its highest point in Act IV.”

“Such a world drama appeals to every part of us,” Lewis says. However, even though he personally found it a moving story, Lewis said he believed less than half of what it told him about the past and less than nothing of what it told him about the future.{11}

This kind of response to the critic of Christianity doesn’t prove that the critic is wrong. Just to show that he has his own mythology doesn’t prove he is wrong about Christianity. That’s called a *tu quoque* argument, which means “you too.” It serves, however, to make the critic hesitate before making simplistic charges against Christians. What is important about a belief system isn’t first of all whether it contains poetical elements. It’s whether it is true.

Naturalism and Reason

Having pointed out that the critic has his own mythology, Lewis examines another aspect of the issue, that of the reliability of reason, the primary tool of science.

Critics were purportedly looking at Christian doctrine from a scientific perspective. They believed that the findings of science made religious belief unacceptable. Lewis was no outsider to the atheistic mentality often found among scientists; he had been an atheist himself. Yet even as such, he didn't have a triumphal vision of science as being the welcomed incoming tide that overtook the old mythological view of the world held by Christians. Lewis had accepted as truth the "grand myth" of evolution which I recounted previously, but he came to see a serious problem with it quite apart from any religious convictions. "Deepening distrust and final abandonment of it," Lewis wrote, "long preceded my conversion to Christianity. Long before I believed Theology to be true I had already decided that the popular scientific picture at any rate was false."{12} There was "one absolutely central inconsistency" that ruined it. This was the inconsistency of basing belief in evolution on human reason when the belief itself made reason suspect!{13}

What Lewis calls "the popular scientific view" or "the Scientific Outlook" is based on naturalism, the view that nature is all there is; there is no supernatural being or realm. Everything must be explained in terms of the natural order; the "Total System," Lewis calls it.{14} If there's any one thing that *cannot* be given a satisfactory naturalistic explanation, then naturalism falls.

Lewis contends that reason *itself* is something that can't be explained in naturalistic terms. This is an especially pertinent matter, because reason is one of the primary tools of science, and science is the great authority for evolutionists.

Science, Lewis says, depends upon logical inferences from observed facts. Unless logical inference is valid, scientific study has no basis. But if reason is "simply the unforeseen and unintended by-product of mindless matter at one stage of its endless and aimless becoming," how can we trust it? How do we know our thoughts reflect reality? How can we trust the random movement of atoms in our brain to reliably convey to us knowledge of the world outside us? "They ask me at the same moment to accept a conclusion," Lewis says, "and to discredit the only testimony on which that conclusion can be based."{15}

In short, then, if reason is our authority for believing in naturalistic evolution, but the theory of evolution makes us question reason, the whole theory is without solid foundation.

The science of the evolutionist cannot explain reason. Christianity, however, can. In fact, it explains much more than that. Lewis ends the lecture with one of his famous quotations, one that is hanging on my office door: "I believe in Christianity," he says, "as I believe that the Sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."{16}

Notes

1. C. S. Lewis, "The Poison of Subjectivism," in *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 73.
2. Lewis, 73.
3. Lewis, 77.
4. Lewis, 79.
5. C. S. Lewis, in *The Weight of Glory and Other Essays* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1980), 116.
6. Ibid., 117.
7. Ibid., 118.
8. Ibid., 133-34.
9. Ibid., 131.
10. Ibid., 123-25.
11. Ibid., 125-26.

12. Ibid., 134-35.
13. This argument is found at the end of "Is Theology Poetry?" A lengthier discussion is found in C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), chap. 3.
14. Lewis, *Miracles*, 17.
15. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 135-36.
16. Ibid., 140.

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Darwinism: A Teetering House of Cards



Steve Cable examines four areas of recent scientific discovery that undermine evolution.

The Origin of Life: A Mystery

Confidence in Darwinism erodes as new discoveries fail to produce supporting evidence. Three books released in 2017,

- *House of Cards* by journalist Tom Bethel
- *Zombie Science* by biologist Jonathan Wells
- *Undeniable* by biologist Douglas Axe



address areas where Darwin's grand idea is weaker now than 150 years ago. As Bethel states, "Today, it more closely resembles a house of cards, built out of flimsy icons rather than hard evidence, and liable to blow away in the slightest breeze."{1} It is not just critics who recognize this weakening. In 2016, the Royal Society in London convened a meeting to discuss "calls for revision of the standard theory of evolution."{2}

Four areas where Darwin hoped future work would support his theory will be examined. The first area is the origin of reproducing beings.

Darwin only hoped that life may have originated in a "warm little pond." But as one scientist states, "The origin-of-life field is a failure—we still do not have even a plausible coherent model, let alone a validated scenario, for the emergence of life on earth."{3}

Darwin assumed the first reproducing cells were very simple. In truth, the simplest cells are composed of impressively complex machines which could not have arisen directly from inorganic components. But there are no known simpler life forms. As Michael Behe commented, "The cell's known complexity has increased immeasurably in recent years, and points ever more insistently to an intelligent designer as its cause."{4}

The probability of even one of the amino acids necessary for life appearing by random mutations is effectively zero even given billions of years. As Doug Axe writes, "(Examining how) accidental evolutionary processes are supposed to have invented enzymes without insight, we consistently find these proposals to be implausible."{5}

Another professor states, "Those who think scientists understand the issues of prebiotic chemistry are wholly misinformed. Nobody understands them. . . . The basis upon which we . . . are relying is so shaky we must openly state

the situation for what it is: a mystery."{6}

Facing insurmountable odds against life appearing, some materialists propose an infinite number of parallel universes.{7} With infinite chances, even the most unlikely events could occur. But, as Axe points out, "The biological inventions that surround us (are) fantastically improbable, with evolution explaining none and the multiverse hypothesis explaining only those absolutely necessary for wondering to be possible, . . . this hypothesis fails to explain what we see."{8}

Even after resorting to unobservable fantasy situations, the challenges presented by the origins of life cannot be overcome. A Darwinian model begins with a self-replicating life form. Currently, this appears to be a hill that no one knows how to climb.

An Example of Macro-evolution: Still Searching

Darwin's theory is dependent upon the unobserved concept of macro-evolution, i.e. intergenerational differences accumulating into different species over time. Darwin believed his magic wand of natural selection could direct this process toward increasingly complex beings. Has further research confirmed his belief?

Let's begin with fossil evidence.

The number of fossils studied has blossomed over the last 150 years. All the types of species which exist today appear in the fossil record over a relatively short period of time.{9} And, in most cases, with no transitional forms between them undermining Darwin's theory. As science historian Stephen Meyer concludes, "As more . . . fossils are discovered (failing) to document the great array of intermediate forms, it grows ever more improbable that their absence is an

artifact of either incomplete sampling or preservation."{10}

And evolution proponent Stephen Gould wrote, "The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees . . . have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference."{11} *Nature* editor Henry Gee put it this way: "To take a line of fossils and claim that they represent a lineage is not a scientific hypothesis that can be tested, but an assertion that carries the same validity as a bedtime story."{12}

Cleary, the fossil record challenges rather than supports conventional evolutionary theory.

Let's continue by looking at experimental evidence.

Perhaps someone has recreated macro-evolution in the lab. Studies of fast replicating populations have shown no ability to accumulate multiple changes. Attempts to create macro-evolution in fruit flies, bacteria and viruses concluded "Neither in nature nor under experimental conditions have any substantial effects ever been obtained through the systematic accumulation of micro-mutations."{13}

Bethel points out, "The scientific evidence for evolution is not only weaker than is generally supposed, but as new discoveries have been made . . . , the reasons for accepting the theory have diminished rather than increased."{14}

Yet biology departments still spout their unfounded belief in the "magic wand" ability to produce an unimaginable array of advanced creatures in what "amounts to the triumph of ideology over science." Even some materialists see through this charade. One geneticist at Harvard wrote, "If scientists are going to use logically unbeatable theories about the world, they might as well give up natural science and take up religion."{15}

“Darwin might well have been dismayed (at) the meager evidence for natural selection, assembled over many years. . . . It is worth bearing in mind how feeble this evidence is any time someone tells you that Darwinism is a fact.”{16}

The Challenge of Irreducible Complexity

Darwin wrote his theory would “absolutely break down” if an organ could not be formed by “numerous, successive, slight modifications.”{17} Have such organs been found? Irreducible complexity and functional coherence say yes.

Irreducible complexity means that some known functions require multiple parts that have no purpose without the other parts. For a Darwinian process to create these functions would require useless mutations to be indefinitely maintained until combined with other useless mutations. Michael Behe’s analysis has shown the 4 billion years of the earth’s existence are not sufficient for such complex functions to be created by random mutations.

Even if an improbable series of events occurred allowing **one** of these complex forms to arise through a set of random mutations, it would need to happen thousands, if not millions, of times to produce our complex life forms.

In *Undeniable*, Axe introduces “functional coherence,” defined as “The hierarchical arrangement of parts needed for anything to produce a high-level function—each part contributing in a coordinated way to the whole.” Axe examines the role of functional coherence as a microscopic level and concludes, “The fact that mastery . . . of protein design is completely beyond the reach of blind evolution is . . . evolution’s undoing. . . . The evolutionary story is . . . something much less plausible than hitting an atomic dot on a universe-size sphere over and over in succession by blindly dropping subatomic pins.”{18}

In *Zombie Science*, Jonathan Wells considers the number of irreducibly complex subsystems required to evolve fully aquatic whales. These features include flukes with specialized muscles, blowholes with elastic tissues and specialized muscles, internal testicles with a countercurrent heat exchange system, specialized features for nursing, and many others. For Darwinism, these changes are insurmountably large. Whales certainly appear to be the product of design, not unguided evolution.

He also points to advanced optical systems. The process by which light detection becomes an intelligent signal to the brain is irreducibly complex. Two scientists wrote, "the prototypical eye. . . cannot be explained by selection, because selection can drive evolution only when the eye can function at least to a small extent."{19} These scientists determined the eye was irreducibly complex and could not be developed by natural selection.

Richard Lewontin, a committed materialist, does not believe natural selection can explain complex life forms. He cannot conceive of any gradual set of useful incremental changes resulting in a flying being. Unless a small change gives an advantage, "the change won't be selected for, and obviously, a little bit of wing doesn't do any good."{20}

So we can agree with Darwin on this issue: his theory "absolutely breaks down."

DNA and Molecular Science Muddy the Scenario

Has uncovering the role of DNA filled the gaping holes in Darwinism or created more?

A species's DNA sequence, we are told, contains all the information needed to create new members. But Douglas Axe states, "(We) would be shocked to know the . . . state of

ignorance with respect to DNA. The view that most aspects of living things can be attributed neatly to specific genes has been known . . . to be FALSE for a long time."{21}

The higher-level components making up a species are not entirely specified by its DNA. As Wells explains, "After DNA sequences are transcribed into RNAs, many RNAs are modified so they do not match the original transcript. . . . (changing) over time according to the needs of the organism." The claim that "DNA makes RNA makes protein" is false."{22}

Creating new complex functions requires multiple changes in the DNA sequence AND in other elements making the chance of random mutations creating new species untenable.

The original conflicting "trees of life" were created examining the morphology, i.e. the structures of species. These trees suggest different major nodes but almost no transitional forms. Can DNA analysis help? Research has shown that groupings based on morphology are not supported by DNA analysis. As Wells notes, these conflicts "are a major headache for evolutionary biologists."{23}

This disconnect from recent gene research is not limited to a few cases. As reported in 2012, "incongruence between (trees) derived from morphology . . . , and . . . trees based on different subsets of molecular sequences has become pervasive."{24}

But DNA analysis alone has a great degree of uncertainty. In one study looking at fifty genes from seventeen animal groups, multiple conflicting ideas on the evolutionary relationship between the animal groups were proposed.{25} All had seemingly absolute support from the DNA evidence, but all could not be true.

Originally scientists thought DNA was primarily junk sequences not contributing to the characteristics of a species. This junk represented functions which were replaced or had no

current usefulness. As Francis Crick, one of the discoverers of DNA's structure, said, "The possible existence of such selfish DNA is exactly what might be expected from the theory of natural selection."{26}

But recent research shows at least eighty percent of the human genome contributes. As Wells reports, "The evidence demonstrates that most of our DNA is transcribed into RNA and that many of those RNAs have biological functions. The idea that most of our DNA is junk, . . . is dead."{27}

The facts uncovered about the functioning of DNA and other elements in passing on characteristics to the next generation appear to make more holes in evolutionary theory.

A Philosophy Props Up Its Poster Child

Recent, scientific insights have weakened Darwin's theory. Yet many are unwilling to discuss its weakness. Why this reluctance? It falls into two camps: 1) a commitment to materialism and 2) a desire for academic acceptance. Materialism is a religious viewpoint where everything has a natural explanation. A spiritual component or events resulting from an outside force are rejected. Science is not materialism. Science attempts to identify and quantify the forces that make the universe. A materialist scientist adds a religious restriction: only natural forces can be considered.

Bethel states, "Although Darwinism has been promoted as science, its unstated role has been to prop up the philosophy of materialism and atheism."

Wells suggests, "Priority is given to proposing and defending materialistic explanations rather than following the evidence wherever it leads. This is materialistic philosophy masquerading as empirical science, . . . zombie science."{28}

Atheist Colin Patterson offers an honest view regarding the theory of evolution as "often unnecessary" in biology.

Nevertheless, it was (taught as) “the unified field theory of biology,” holding the whole subject together. Once something has that status it becomes like religion.”{29}

Until they have a better theory, they will stand behind it rather than consider alternatives. They fear any uncertainty will lead to questioning other aspects of materialism, such as that free will and love for others are simply a façade promoted by natural selection.

Bethel points out, “If our minds are . . . accidental products of a blind process, what reason do we have for accepting materialist claims as true?”{30} After all, our minds are selected to improve our survivability, not to discern what is true.

Many scientists are not die-hard materialists. They believe there may be a spiritual aspect of our existence. Yet they promote the materialistic view. For most, this inconsistent approach is a reaction to the threat of censure from the establishment.

Axe claims, “The religious agenda is the enemy that threatens science. . . . Everything that opposes the institutionalized agenda is labeled ‘anti-science.’”{31}

The same arguments used against intelligent design apply more accurately to Darwinism. Bethel states, “(Some) have said that design can’t be measured and therefore it is a religious belief. . . . They might also have said the macro-evolution has not yet been measured, or so much as observed.”{32}

In this review, we have seen

1. No materialistic concept for life’s origin
2. Little evidence f transitional life forms
3. Strong evidence complex functions could not arise through random changes
4. DNA playing havoc with the basic tenets of Darwinism.

Now we wait for the façade raised by supporters of a flawed concept to collapse.

Notes

1. Tom Bethel, *Darwin's House of Cards: A Journalist's Odyssey Through the Darwin Debates*, Discovery Institute Press, 2017, page 20.
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4. See Behe, back cover comment for Thomas E. Woodward and James P. Gills, *The Mysterious Epigenome* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2012).
5. Douglas Axe, *Undeniable: How Biology Confirms Our Intuition That Life Is Designed*, HarperOne, New York, 2016, page 63.
6. James Tour, "Animadversions of a synthetic chemist," *Inference* 2:2, May 19, 2016.
7. Axe, page 227.
8. Axe, page 230.
9. Meyers and other quotes on the Cambrian.
10. Stephen Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt*, New York, Harper Collins, 2014, page 70.
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12. Henry Gee, *In Search of Deep Time: Beyond the Fossil Record to a New History of Life*, New York: The Free Press, 1999, p. 32, 113-117.
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15. Richard Lewontin, "Testing the Theory of Natural Selection," *Nature* 236 no. 5343, p. 181-182.
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19. Gehring and Ikeo, "Pax6: mastering eye morphogenesis and eye evolution," *Trends in Genetics* 15, 1999, 376.

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23. Wells, page .
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26. Francis Crick, *What Mad Pursuit: A Personal View of Scientific Discovery*, New York, Basic Books, 1988, page 147.
27. Wells, page 128.
28. Wells, page 17.
29. Bethel, page 149.
30. Bethel, page 174.
31. Axe, page 54.
32. Bethel, page 161.

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