

Creationism vs Evolution

A Christian Perspective

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A new receptivity toward Creationism in the American culture has emerged after more than a century of growing doubt. The source of the doubt was the advocacy of evolution by the scientific community, and a seemingly endless series of archeological discoveries which were presented by that same community as definitive confirmation of evolution. Conversely, the renewed interest in Creationism has developed in response to a regression in the stature of science. Though it is impossible in this essay to set forth the full case for the decline of science, it is sufficient to identify its most appropriate symbol . . . the decline of the medical profession. That profession reached its zenith in the late 1950's. Medicine had triumphed over polio, and the discovery of penicillin held forth the promise that infection would soon be eliminated from human experience. Both were billed as miracles. There was broad expectation that medicine would soon vanquish cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Some still believe genetic research will deliver the resounding triumph necessary to restore the prestige of medicine, but their number has dwindled, and control of the profession has passed over to business executives under the label, "managed health care." A galling condition for a once proud profession, and clear evidence the social stature of medicine is in steep decline.

But the demise of medicine has helped create the "atmosphere of receptivity" toward Creationism. Being that so, the first question that must be asked is, 'why has the differences between science and Christianity distilled down to the debate over evolution? Certainly Christianity has eagerly embraced nearly all of science. Christians have forcefully defended 'Western medical practice' against the likes of acupuncture and herbs. Christians have served in the militaries of Western Civilization, eagerly used the weapons designed by western scientists, and pronounced God's blessing on Western economic success. In spite of this broad acceptance of science by Christianity, science has maintained a persistent and belittling criticism of Creationism. Why? Evolution has been the one area that Christianity dared challenge science . . . dared challenge? . . . why would one use such a phrase? Along with such proclamations as 'the miracles of modern science,' the scientific community has grown fond of statements such as, "we have absolute proof," "definitive confirmation." "we have identified the source of all life," and "we have a clear understanding of how, and when the universe was created." In short, scientists have grown accustomed to appropriating the language of the divine in

describing their own successes, and their own right to use “science” as a platform to regulate knowledge and arbitrate truth and error. That presumed right has not been embraced gently, nor has it been communicated with respect. On the contrary, doctors have sued Jehovah Witnesses for refusing to allow their children to be given chemotherapy . . . yelled fraud at those outside the medical fraternity who claimed success in treating injury or illness . . . and complained bitterly when their authority began to weaken.

It is now possible to ask a question unthinkable in the 1950's . . . at what point in history did science acquire, or by whose authority was science given, the absolute right to control the gates of knowledge? Well it was certainly not in Galileo's time, for though science looks with favor upon his work, it has been judged rudimentary. It wasn't triggered by the publication of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. Yes, Einstein was a genius, but his theory of relativity could not be integrated with quantum physics, and quantum physics remains a most essential tool in the study of atom particles. It didn't happen in the 1950's when medicine was at the top of it's form. That was the period when doctors proclaimed that “formula” was better for babies than mother's milk because, “We know the right nutrition is in the formula . . . we don't what's in mother's milk.” They were right in saying they did not know what was in mother's milk. Research forced upon the medical establishment by mothers and others who loved babies, showed that mother's milk gave the baby its immunity. The fear that babies might not get enough to eat when breast feeding was dispelled with the discovery that the mother's system automatically adjusted to the baby's changing needs.

The scientific response to such a challenge might be, “Our theories are not yet complete, but we have achieved spectacular results . . . through the application of method . . . the “scientific method.” Ok . . . but is there anything in the scientific method that might be convenient assumption? Well good science is supposed to rely on “facts” . . .”our conclusions are factual” . . . “we have established the facts” . . . “we have measured . . . tabulated . . . observed . . . computerized . . . the facts.” What is a fact? . . . a good theological definition might be . . . “a packet of information derived from an abstraction of reality which is independent, self-contained, self evident, and can be expressed in a statement of identity.” For example, “the infection is caused by the virus known as . . .” or “the atom weight of the particle is . . .” Such statements of identity are a cornerstone of the scientific method, and portray a universe of separate particles, pieces, and/or entities held together by force. But there was no prior revelation which established that the universe is so constructed, that “facts” are the most relevant description of that reality, or that the assembly of facts will lead to ultimate knowledge. It truth, the endeavor to describe and regulate reality though an assemblage of facts represents nothing more than an arbitrary embrace of Aristotelian philosophical categories.

Facts, of course, are only one of the tools available to science. Scientists also regularly extol their use of reason . . . “pure reason.” Once again we see the appropriation of divine language in describing their activity, and once again that activity warrants closer scrutiny. Reason can be deductive, or inductive. Deductive reasoning is investigative . . . looks for an explanation of an event or condition . . . looks for the cause of that event or condition. Many of medicine's most significant achievements resulted from the exercise of deductive reasoning . . . the vaccine for polio . . . and smallpox . . . and various corrective surgeries. These successes, and a disproportionately large number of the successes of science which depended on deductive reasoning, resulted from problems

which had a singular cause. For example, the illness is caused by “a” virus . . . by “a” bacteria . . . the condition can be corrected by removal of “the” appendix . . . by “the” transplant of the heart.”

Most scientific research is done in laboratories because it allows for control of the environment affecting the experimentation. In other words, it allows the researcher to reduce the number of variables affecting the outcome of the experiment to one, and that, in turn, constitutes an attempt to structure the research to identify a singular cause. Though it has been an important process for science because it has led to many successes with relatively simple problems, it has been notably ineffective in understanding phenomena which result from multiple causes. Weather prediction is, of course, the most simple and obvious example of phenomena resulting from multiple, interrelated causes. Cancer, the unpredictable side effects of medicines, and the unexpected environmental consequences of various industrial processes are additional examples.. Should we assume the human spirit is a manifestation of a structure of singular causes? . . . or might the human spirit be the subtle, brilliant, flowing, life giving manifestation of a force infinitely more complex than the crude assumption of singular cause and effect? Is it not ironic that science attempts to describe for us the creation of the universe millisecond by millisecond from the instant of the “Big Bang,” while simultaneously demonstrating complete ineptitude in dealing with any of the difficult social issues facing modern culture?

Inductive reasoning is, of course, the companion to deductive reasoning. It attempts to formulate general principles from the observation of given phenomena. Inductive reason has given us Newtonian Physics, the General Theory of Relativity, Quantum Physics, and Evolution, to name a few. The so called successes within each field are constantly paraded before the public in an unrelenting solicitation of praise, and though all are labeled “scientific,” there is very little connecting the separate theories. Newtonian physicists tenaciously resisted Einstein, and even after the development of the atomic bomb made him a cultural hero, there was little confluence between Newton and Einstein. After all, Einstein and Newton espoused different, and completely incompatible theories of gravity. Einstein may intellectually own the vast reaches of the heavenly, but when it comes to sending a rocket to the moon the calculations are derived from Newton’s theorems. Quantum physics is yet another example of incompatible, yet useful physics. How would we understand electrons, and neutrinos, and the purpose of cyclotrons, if it weren’t for quantum physics? Out of this caldron of incompatible physics has come such esoteric challenges as: a light wave can exist at two places simultaneously; an experiment will show light to be a particle if the experiment seeks to prove that light is a particle, but will show that light is a wave if the experiment seeks to prove that light is a wave; and matter can, in certain special circumstances, travel faster than light. The scientific community advertises these mind bending contradictions as temporary problems which will soon be resolved, but isn’t it far more likely we are witnessing the limits of the scientific model? History is riddled with the remnants of structured bodies of knowledge which played vital roles in cultures of the past, but reached the limit of their extensibility and then receded. Nevertheless, the more pertinent question for this discussion is, “how can science claim the absolute right to arbitrate truth and error when they embrace several incompatible theories within their own ranks? Why should the several incompatible theories embraced by science be deemed more truthful, or more absolute, than the numerous other incompatible theories which populate the human experience? If quantum physics is incompatible with the general theory of relativity, why should the theoretical pinning of acupuncture be judged foolish just

because it is completely incompatible with western science?

The key, of course, is “western.” Science is western, acupuncture is oriental. Science can’t claim the right to regulate the absolute based upon the epistemology of science, nor can they claim that right based upon any scientific method. The truth is that western culture, under the leadership of the United States, has given science a mandate to establish the absolute. A most essential enterprise for any culture which itself claims to be the carrier of absolute truth. Indeed, the last century was a period during which it appeared science would succeed in transforming the secular gloom into a divine manifestation. But all of that has passed. American medicine, once the high priest of the secular order, has been defrocked, and is in the process of being relegated to insignificance. Astronauts are close behind, for once they carried the banner for American heroism, but the explosion of the space shuttle “Challenger” revealed an unseemly side of the space program from which it has never recovered. Will the “high tech billionaires” succeed where those before them failed? . . . not a chance. The younger generation in America is already exhibiting a lack of interest in computer science, which has forced high tech companies to import employees from abroad. Genetic research is probably the last opportunity for science to establish the absolute. Certainly enough scientists have appeared before the public claiming, in no uncertain terms, that genetics will succeed in eliminating disease and infirmity, and soon be capable of producing a superior human species. Well, we have already established that deductive reasoning as implemented by science has shown considerable success in those instants where there was a singular cause, and demonstrated very little success in situations characterized by multiple causes. There are, by the geneticists’ own proclamation, 160,000 genes within humans. That means there are, at least, 160,000 variables effecting human construction. But even the assumption of 160,000 variables is arbitrary, because the assumption that each gene represents a singular cause is arbitrary. Will science succeed in dealing with 160,000 variables . . . 320,000 variables . . . 1,120,000 variables? And what about the true motive of the geneticists. Will their success produce altruism, or despotism? . . . healing? . . . or self-aggrandizement?

The mandate to establish the absolute given to science by the American culture in particular, and by Western Civilization in general, is not unique. Every culture remembered by history laid claim to the absolute during its ascendancy. The Spanish Crown, emboldened by riches from the Americas, laid its claim to the absolute through the Inquisition. The British, during their ascendancy, subjugated much of the world, and used that Colonial Empire to enrich themselves and impoverish the rest. Charles Darwin appeared during that ascendancy, and one is compelled to ask, “was his doctrine of the ‘survival of the fittest’ a mere projection of the British claim to genetic superiority, and its perceived absolute right to dominate the world? The most accurate and revealing account of the British aristocracy’s perception of themselves is contained in Edgar Rice Burroughs’ novel, Tarzan of the Apes, written in 1912 in reaction to the decline in the stature of aristocracy during the Edwardian Period.

Tarzan of the Apes appears at first to be nothing more than a story about a British male baby lost in the jungle, who is taken in by a tribe of apes, and raised as one of their own. Not only does Tarzan survive the impossibly arduous ordeal, but rises to become “Lord of the Apes.” He is later discovered by the British, and learns he is actually a British Lord. The real message of Tarzan is that the “blood lines,” of the British aristocracy, or as we would say today, “genes,” are so strong, and so superior that a British aristocrat would rise to the level of Lord even in the most impossible of circumstances. The common people’s view of the aristocracy during that same period is captured

eloquently in the character of the Toad in Wind in the Willows (1908). The Toad is an aristocrat, but definitely not Tarzan. He is a narcissistic, socially dysfunctional person, who never grasps that he needs to respect others, abide by any law, or refrain from doing exactly what he wants.

Whether or not Darwin was captured by the British delusion of superiority, there is no evidence to support his theory of the survival of the fittest. The dinosaurs are extinct. How many other dominate species are now extinct? Some in the scientific community have defended the notion of survival of the fittest by declaring that whatever, or whoever survived is the fittest. But that position has no merit, because meaning derived only after the defined event is illogical expediency at best, and at worst, intellectual fraud. Either “survival of the fittest” is not true, or the words have no discernable meaning. Science would have us shift the debate from the present, million of years back in time, to a period accessible only through the fossilized evidence controlled by science. Can we . . . should we . . . debate them on their own terms? No. A more potent challenge to evolution begins with a reconsideration of the confrontation between the Pharaoh and Moses (*New Jerusalem Bible, Exodus 4:22-23*). “Then you will say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what Yahweh says: Israel is my first-born son.’” To grasp the importance of that sentence you must understand the Pharaoh believed himself to be the “son of god” . . . the “first born of god,” and he had the whole of the Egyptian culture to support that claim. All of the great pyramids had been constructed by the time of Moses, Egypt was the dominant military and economic power, and Pharaoh even had his own cadre of miracle workers. Nevertheless, Moses won the theological battle and led the “first born of God” out of Egypt. After their departure, Pharaoh and his advisors must have understood the consequences of what had just happened and sent the Egyptian army to crush the Hebrews. It was too late. The theological battle had been lost, and the only possible fate for Egypt was social disintegration. In deed, historians would use “the thousand years of trouble,” to describe Egypt’s later history. But the story reveals four very important principles for the subject at hand. First, two absolutes can not co-exist. They will war against each other until one prevails, and at that point the loser will recede into the silent memory of history. Second, every society which had social order, and is remembered by history had, during its period of ascendancy, a seemingly legitimate claim to absolute truth. Third, once the forces of revelation or history exposed the untruth of the claim, that culture disintegrated into nothingness. Fourth, the people caught within that false definition of the absolute did not evolve to a new, more truthful world view. Rather, they tried in vain to reassert the false absolute . . . only to be overwhelmed by social chaos and death.

Least we think such drama applies only to ancient history, it is well to examine similar modern examples. Germany entered World War I believing fully in their own superiority, only to experience complete humiliation with the Treaty of Versailles. The reaction to the humiliation was not an evolution away from their previous ideals, but a more strident, determined reassertion of those same ideals. That strident, determined reassertion led to the Holocaust, World War II, and an even more complete devastation. Fascism did not evolve, but ceased. Only the reconstruction finance program initiated by the allied powers after the war saved Germany from extinction.

A similar pattern applies to Russia under communism. First, the excitement with the emergence to a new, and seemingly more just absolute. Second, a period of despotism during which the culture strives to make a false absolute work. Third, a slow but inexorable descent into social chaos.

The human propensity to affirm a false absolute with ever more grim and violent determination until all semblance of social order is destroyed, stands in stark contrast to the Judeo-Christian experience. The cultural form of the Hebrew people was re-engineered no fewer than five times through divine revelation: the Patriarchal Period, Moses, Monarchy, Restoration after the Babylonian Exile, and Rabbinic Judaism. Out of that incomparable ability to survive has come the study of history as known in the modern world. Other cultures of the ancient world had no interest

in history because they did not understand themselves as a product history, or evolution, or with a future different than the present. They understood themselves as an immediate and perfect expression of the divine that needed neither change or improvement. When it became obvious the perceived divinity was mere delusion, ancient humanity walked away from memory, and the reality, with scarcely a look back. Christianity has been even more nimble in its ability to survive and to influence diverse cultures, but, more impressively, in a spirit of compassion and forgiveness, help the fallen find new meaning, and took on the responsibility of preserving the memory and knowledge of cultures which had self-destructed.

So what is the more excellent way manifest in the Judeo-Christian Tradition? Scriptures of old say that a human cannot look upon God without being destroyed, and that fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. A modern analogy of that experience would be a 12 volt appliance unexpectedly finding itself in the presence of a trillion volt power supply. The 12 volt appliance knows full well the consequence of connecting to that power source, and, for humans, the eyes are the point of connection. The experience marks the beginning of wisdom because never again will the appliance have to search for the power source, never again doubt the existence of God, and never again waste its life striving to create a new god. The God of such magnificence and power does not communicate in the dry, staccato language of science, nor hide in an ancient fossil accessible to a few. God is present with us “even to the end of the age,” and communicates with a beauty and a Spirit that gives life.

The lesson to be learned from the American culture’s vain striving through science to establish the absolute and define all truth . . . from the beginning of the universe . . . to the creation and evolution of life . . . to the control of future life . . . only proves humans desperately need an absolute.

If we have a need for an absolute truth, and an absolute authority, and did not know it . . .

Does that mean we were created with that need, and had just not understood it?

If we were created with that need, does that mean there exists in creation an answer to that need?

Is that need a need for God?

If we were created with a need for God, and knew it not, does there exist a God who knows of that need, and has been trying to communicate with us? “*How blest are those who know their need of God, the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*”

Matthew 5:3, The New English Bible