

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face

#4 – DOESN'T SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE CONFLICT? NOTES

I. Introduction

Since the Enlightenment (late 1700's) and the advent of *Modernism*, *Rationalism* (autonomous human reason) and *Empiricism* (all truth is discerned by the senses) have eclipsed the influence of the Christian worldview. Divine revelation as the source of truth has been replaced by man and nature as the source of truth. This has led to the denial of the supernatural, including miracles, and the need to invoke God in explaining the universe. Naturalism and Materialism (Naturalistic Materialism) rule the day. Even though, Postmodernism has rejected the notion of objective truth that Modernism retained, most scientific disciplines still operate on the presuppositions and worldview of Modernism. Most believe modern science is strictly a product of the Enlightenment and that science is in conflict with Christianity. However, men like Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564-1642), and Isaac Newton (1642-1726) were Christian theists who all predated the Enlightenment and held that the God of the Bible is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and therefore, his works are worthy of study. Thus, Christianity provided the basis for modern science. The Enlightenment brought about the slow process whereby science was highjacked by thinkers who were not theists (rather deists and atheists) and thus, turned science into a strictly naturalistic discipline. The peak of this turn is represented by Charles Darwin (1809-82) and his naturalistic theory of evolution that did not require God or the supernatural as an explanation for the origin of life.

II. Different Views on Origins

1) Naturalism, Materialism, and Empiricism:

Darwinian Evolution – The origin life came about from the simplest organisms via undirected natural processes whereby natural selection selects various traits (biological mutations/ adaptations) that randomly arise in organisms that serve some advantage to that organism's survival and as these developing traits are passed down via reproduction they eventually result in the emergence of more complex and varied organisms.

2) Supernaturalism:

A) **Intelligent Design** – Denies Darwinian evolution. Seeks to explain how the universe shows signs of being designed by an intelligent source, likely, God. ID has value in as much as it appeals to Natural Revelation for the existence of God as Creator, but it stops at using Special Revelation (the Bible) to make its case for a Creator.

B) **Creationism** – Seeks to show how scientific evidence does not conflict with the Bible:

i) **Day Age Theories** – Accepts general scientific consensus on the age of the universe and interprets the Bible to respect that consensus. This usually means denying that Genesis 1-2 records literal history.

ii) **Young Earth Creationism (YEC)** – Starts with straightforward interpretation of Genesis and shows how the scientific evidence can be interpreted to fit that interpretation.

YEC takes special revelation as the standard by which to address questions of origins.

3) Syncretistic Worldview:

Theistic Evolution – Tries to bridge the gap between Darwinian Evolution and theism (whether Biblical or otherwise). Holds the view that the Bible is a non-scientific book, and

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face

that invoking God stops at merely being the guiding mechanism behind evolution. God guided the emergence of life entirely through the naturalistic process of evolution.

He who marries himself to the findings of science today will find himself a widower tomorrow. Variation on this famous quote: “Whoever marries the spirit of this age will find himself a widower in the next.” — William Ralph Inge

III. Fundamental Problems with Modern Science and Evolution

1) Hume on Miracles and Laws of Nature

The Enlightenment thinker David Hume (1711-76) defined miracles as a violation of the laws of nature but then he turns around and defines the laws of nature as principles governing nature that cannot be violated. This is circular argumentation; it rules out miracles at the outset (*a priori*). He assumes what he sets out to prove. It is better to define laws of nature as *describing* the normal patterns in nature not *prescribing* them. Laws of nature are descriptive not prescriptive. Hume defines a miracle as a “violation” of the laws of nature, but what gives us reason to accept this definition? We could simply assert that a miracle is an “exception” to the laws of nature. Furthermore, Hume said a criterion for accepting miracles would be someone with good sense, but if someone with good sense reported a miracle, then it must be that he did not have good sense. Again, this begs the question. Hume’s argument also assumes that the laws of nature must operate necessarily, but he gives no argument for this assertion. On what basis can one say the laws of nature must always operate as they do? This is the problem of induction which ironically, Hume raised: How do we know the future will be like the past?

2) Biblical Defining Laws of Nature and Miracles

- A) **Laws of Nature** – Descriptions of God’s ordinary and normal patterns whereby he providentially governs and sustains all events in the universe. These patterns are consistent, predictable, repeatable, and do not arbitrarily change given specific conditions. Laws of nature describe secondary causes God uses to govern and sustain the universe. These laws of nature correspond to the normal uniformity of nature that allows us to discover and study them via scientific (empirical) methods and make use of this knowledge for technology, medicine, engineering, building, etc.
- B) **Miracles** – God’s rare and extraordinary acts of providence whereby he temporarily suspends his normal patterns of sustaining the universe to make his power and presence known in an undeniable way through an extraordinary event. Miracles represent God’s immediate (direct) actions that cause the extraordinary event to take place and cannot be explained by the normal means of scientific (empirical) inquiry.

3) Chance, Nothing, and Spontaneous Creation

The notion of *chance* has been a fundamental presupposition of any belief in natural causes for the source of origins. Chance is accorded a kind of causal force. But does chance have causal force to do random things? Chance is really *nothing* and nothing has no power to do anything. Many physicists have tried to argue that the universe is self-created and that something came out of nothing, which is absurd. But it turns out in their quest to describe *nothing* that nothing is actually

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face

something! Before[!] space and time (spacetime) there was empty space[!] and gravity and quantum fluctuations randomly occurring. Then “magically” somehow space, time, and matter popped out of this nothing via other elementary laws of nature somehow present in this pre-original state and resulted in the Big Bang. Respected scientists like Lawrence Krauss admit that they cannot explain the laws of nature that caused spacetime and matter to pop into existence from nothing. Keith Mathison rightly says, “If there was ever a ‘moment’ when there was *absolutely nothing* then there would be absolutely nothing now.” Likewise, we could say that if there is something now, then there never was a moment when there was not something, or more precisely...Someone!

4) Kuhn’s Paradigms

Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962, 1970, 1996) demonstrated that all scientific theories are structured around a set of presuppositions (paradigms) that govern the way theories are developed, how data is interpreted, and even what kind of data is looked for. If anomalies cannot be reconciled, then they are rejected. When enough anomalies challenge the reigning paradigm eventually it collapses and a new paradigm that better explains the anomalies is established. For example, Ptolemaic Cosmology (geo-centric) shifted to the Copernican model (heliocentric) / Newtonian Physics to Einstein’s Physics. This shatters the notion that progress in science is a slow accumulation of knowledge.

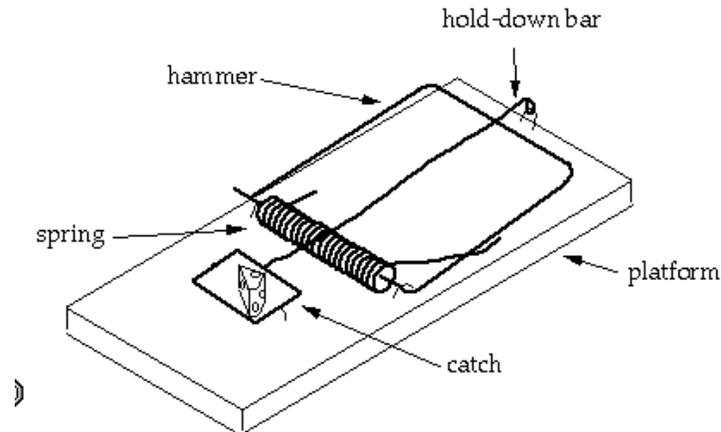
IV. Intelligent Design

1) DNA – Like an instructional manual containing information to build organisms. There is no known way information can come from anything but a mental/ non-material, intelligent source (i.e., a mind). Subsequently, it is not possible that information somehow evolved thru natural selection and mutations. No mutations have been discovered that add new information to an existing organism. Organisms adapt to environments through limited natural selection but without adding new information or changing from one kind to another. Note inconsistencies here. Many evolutionists embrace SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) by looking for coherent information in radio waves from distant galaxies but deny that DNA has an intelligent source.

2) Irreducible Complexity – Even the simplest single cell organisms contain extremely complex little biochemical machines that are interdependent and necessary. Without a heart, blood, and blood vessels a circulatory system is useless and necessary right from the outset. Each component needs the other to survive or have any use. If one is missing or malfunctions, the whole organism fails. Consider a simple mouse trap (illustration borrowed from Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Hole*). Each component of the mouse trap is absolutely essential for it to function properly, including the staples that hold each component on to the wooden base. Furthermore, the size, shape, and careful placement of each component is necessary for its function. If the trap is any missing part or if the size, shape, and placement of any part is not precisely as it should be, then the trap is completely useless. Therefore, there can be no such thing as particles-to-people evolution. All living things require the features essential for their existence and function. There can be no gradual evolutionary development of systems. This lends to the notion of fully functioning spontaneous creation of living things.

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face



The Irreducibly Complex Mouse Trap

V. Biblical Creationism

The primary evidence for a young earth created in six days comes from the straightforward text of Genesis 1-2 whose interpretation was virtually undisputed until the later 19th century and the advent of Darwin's theory of evolution.

1) Interpretation of 24-Hour Days in Genesis 1-2

- A) Genesis 1-11 has all the literary hallmarks of historical narrative that marks the rest of the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the OT written by Moses) and all other OT historical narratives. This is reinforced by the key phrase "this is the account" (2:4) which is the same as "these are the generations" (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; cf. also Gen. 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2; Heb. *toledot*) that link all of Genesis 1-11 together as a cohesive narrative unit. See especially the language of Genesis 5:1-2 as it recalls the language of creation in Genesis 1, tying the life of Adam to the creation account.
- B) Day (Heb. *yom*) can mean a 24-hour period of time, or it can refer to the daylight portion of a day (see 1:5a, 14, 16, 18), or to an indistinct period of time (2:4). However, there is no instance in the OT when the word "day" is marked with an ordinal (first, second, etc.) that does not refer to a 24-hour day (see 1:5b, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:2).
- C) The pattern of "Let there be...and it was so" (1:3, 6-7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 24) indicates an instantaneous response to the word of God.
- D) The pattern of "evening" (sunset) to "morning" (till sunset again) is the normal way a full 24-day is construed by Hebrew tradition (see 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). There appears to be no other reason to add this descriptor than to emphasize the uniquely short time period in which God accomplished each creative act.
- E) Genesis 20:11 explicitly grounds the command to obey the 24-hour period of the sabbath (i.e., the seventh day of the Hebrew week) to the fact that he created the heavens and the earth in six days. If the six days of creation are not literal 24-hour days, then what reason would the Jews (or anyone else!) have to regard the sabbath as a 24-hour day? None. It would make God's argument for the sabbath incoherent.

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face

2) Mature Creation (Appearance of Age)

It is clear that the creation account describes the creation of everything in a mature state having the appearance of age. This is much like Jesus turning water into “good wine” (John 2:10) which is always wine that has been aged. The wine the people drank at the wedding of Cana had the appearance (i.e., taste) of aged wine, even though it was only seconds old.

VI. Defending Biblical Creation

1) Worldview – Provides a set of presuppositions (lenses) about the world that informs the way you see the world and interpret data (evidence: things we observe). Evidence is always the same, but the interpretations of the evidence and the conclusions drawn from it are different. If you wear red glasses, then you conclude all evidence points to something red, etc. This is at the heart of the impasse between creationists and evolutionists. Some are tempted to think that in the evolution-creation debate we aren't looking at the right evidence when it really goes back to the presuppositions of the respective worldviews. We all interpret facts in light of our worldview. Facts/ evidence do not speak for themselves.

2) Pretended Neutrality Fallacy. This is the idea that we can find common interpretive ground and come to the same reasonable conclusions. There is no neutral ground (Matt. 12:30). Everything must be judged by an ultimate standard that cannot be compromised or give ground to a different standard. The natural mind is blind to the things of God (1 Cor. 1:18-31; 2:14-16; Eph. 4:17-21).

3) Judging the Truth of Worldviews

In order to judge any worldview it must:

- A) **Be Logically consistent.** If it has internal contradictions, it fails.
Laws of logic: Universal, invariant, inviolable laws of reasoning.
The laws of logic undermine modern worldviews. For example:
Relativism: Consider the statement, “There is no objective truth.” Is that statement objectively true? It is self-defeating. It uses an objective truth claim to deny that truth is objective (true for all people no matter what). Likewise, “You should not force your morality on others.” Response: “Are you saying that is morally wrong?” “Yes.” Response, “Then you are trying to force your morality on me.” This appeals to a moral absolute/ obligation to deny moral absolutes/ obligations.
Empiricism: Many scientists claim, “All knowledge/ truth is gained by observation.” However, is that truth gained by observation? Since when do we observe knowledge? Knowledge is mental/ metaphysical (beyond the physical)
- B) **Provide the Preconditions for Intelligibility.** Without establishing the very foundation and source of coherent truth claims then we cannot justify what we claim is true. For example, we assume (and take for granted that) our memory and senses are basically reliable. But how do we know that we can trust them? Furthermore, we assume the laws of logic are true and trustworthy, but how do we know this? How do you prove the laws of logic without appealing to the laws of logic? We assume they are true, but what justifies this belief?

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face

A huge problem in science is assuming the *uniformity of nature* (*principle of Induction*). This is the idea that laws of nature (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) are consistent, predictable, repeatable, and do not arbitrarily change given specific conditions. How can we know for certain that uniformity of how laws of nature operated in the past will continue in the future? To say there was uniformity in the past, therefore there will be uniformity in the future is circular. It fails to answer why the past was uniform. In other words, this begs the question. This has been one of the thorniest issues in science and philosophy. Ironically, David Hume (who denied miracles) first raised the problem of induction, and it continues to dog evolutionists today. One cannot appeal to probability either, because it begs the same question. Thus, evolutionists have no way to justify that the laws of nature will be *certain* in the future nor even *probable*. Furthermore, this question is interrelated to the laws of nature themselves. What are laws of nature? Where do they come from and how do we know they won't change or time?

Scripture/ the God of the Bible provide justification for knowledge, laws of logic, the uniformity of nature, and the laws that govern nature:

“The fear of the LORD [submitting to God as the ultimate authority and standard] is the beginning of knowledge [rationality/ justified true beliefs]; Fools despise wisdom and instruction [objective morals and truth]” (Prov. 1:7; cf. 2:5; 9:10).

If we do not have a reason for something we believe to be true knowledge, then we cannot claim to know it. In order for knowledge to be true knowledge, it must be a justified belief. There must be an ultimate standard/ authority which justifies our beliefs and knowledge.

To do science we need laws of logic (rationality) to understand the orderliness of the universe. In order to study it and quantify our findings in any meaningful way there must also be a uniformity to nature (i.e., regularity and repeatability). Furthermore, rationality for one's worldview is an obligation (if one wants to argue their beliefs are true) making it a moral imperative and this leads to moral absolutes. Both a rational mind and moral imperatives have been stamped upon the human soul being created in the image of God. Only, the God of the Bible can justify objective truth and morals, including the reliability of the senses, memory, laws of logic, and the uniformity of nature that allows it to be studied.

Some might say, “I don't believe I need God or the Bible to reason logically, I can reason without them just fine.” But this is no different than saying, “I don't believe I need air to breathe, I can breathe without it just fine.” Unbelievers must assume the standards that are only justified in a Christian worldview, but then turn around and seek to undermine that worldview by those standards. Unbelievers borrow from the Christian worldview to try to destroy it.

Christianity and Hot Button Issues

Biblical and Cultural Challenges Christians Must Face

VII. Answering the Critic:

Challenging the Evolutionist (See Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*)

- 1) Arbitrariness:
 - a) Mere Opinion. Statements made without any argumentation or rational/ scientific evidence.
 - b) Relativism. There is no need for debate if there is no objective truth.
 - c) Prejudicial Conjecture. Guessing at what must be true without really knowing.
 - d) Unargued Philosophical Bias. Assume without even knowing what their presuppositions/ worldview is. Naturalism is true without arguing for it.
- 2) Inconsistency:
 - a) Logical Fallacies. Learn to detect.
 - b) *Reductio Ad Absurdum*. When an argument is taken to its logical conclusion and leads to an absurd result. EX: Empiricism – truth/ knowledge only gained thru senses. This assertion cannot be proved by the senses and so it means we could know nothing at all.
 - c) Behavioral Inconsistency. Says one thing but really believes another. EX: humans are mindless collection of molecules and nothing more/ rearranged pond scum. Then goes home to kiss his wife and kids.
 - d) Presuppositional Tensions. EX: Belief in objective morality but also naturalism.
- 3) Preconditions (things we assume and take for granted and are necessary for science):
 - a) Laws of Logic.
 - b) Uniformity of Nature (and Laws of Nature).
 - c) Objective Morality.
 - d) Basic Reliability of Senses. How do we know this? Do we test using senses? How do we know we are not living in a *Matrix* world (an illusion)?
 - e) Basic Reliability of Memory. Do we take a memory test to test memory?
Truth: God put us in charge of creation and gave us all the resources we need.

Resources:

Book: R. C. Sproul, *Not a Chance*. Shows how scientific naturalism is irrational.

Intelligent Design:

Book: Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*. Interviews top ID proponents.

Website: The Discovery Institute – www.discovery.org. Flagship ID organization.

DVD: *The Privileged Planet*. Shows how earth is uniquely designed for life.

DVD: *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*. Shows the amazing design and complexity of human cells.

Young Earth Creationism (YEC):

Book: John MacArthur, *Battle for the Beginning*. Gives careful explanation of Genesis 1-3.

Book: Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof*. Shows how to defend Biblical creation.

Book: Paul Garner, *The New Creationism*. Shows evidence from all scientific disciplines for YEC.

Website: Answers In Genesis: <https://answersingenesis.org>.

Website: Institute for Creation Research: www.icr.org.

Website: Creation Ministries International: <http://creation.com>.

DVD: *Is Genesis History?* Amazing evidence for YEC by top YEC scientists.