



“The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1)



REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

FEBRUARY 2003

CHAPTER INFORMATION

Volunteers Wanted!

We're looking for people who want to help us spread the word science and the Bible agree. If you want to learn more about the chapter, contact us at seattle@reasons.org.

Dr. Ross to Return

Dr. Ross will be visiting the Seattle area in April. Currently, he is scheduled to speak at the University of Washington on the 23rd and Highlands Community Church in Renton on the 25th. For more information see the chapter webpage at www.reasons.org/chapters/seattle/index.shtml?main. We'll keep you advised as more details are available.

RTB Conference

Mark your calendar for RTB's 3rd International Conference, June 26-28 in Cypress, California. This year's focus is on design as evidence for the Designer. Much more to come on this exciting opportunity!

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

JOHN BATTLE

Traditionally, Christians believed the Bible and Christian theology are agreeable with science. This especially has been the case since the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant countries boasted the greatest scientific progress and the world's most accomplished scientists. These scientists shared a deep faith in the Bible and believed they could discover more of God's greatness and glory through studying His creation scientifically. This was based on the belief biblical revelation and observations of the universe should harmonize since God's special and general revelation would agree.

The Bible Interprets Science

Science works from observation and experimentation. Initially discoveries are referred to as raw data. From this data the scientists seek to detect patterns and relationships that can be expressed as hypotheses. These are then tested by more observations and experiments. When this is done to general satisfaction, they are called theories. A theory is stronger if it is simple, it can be explained by other accepted theories, and it can predict other phenomena that can be tested. Theories are provisional and science does not claim they are infallible.

When scientific theories contradict the Bible, there needs to be an adjustment. One way this adjustment occurs is the scientific process is scrutinized to make sure the conclusion is correct. Was the data sufficient? Was critical data overlooked by the theory? Is there another explanation to account for the data? By asking these questions, Christian scientists have helped correct many faulty scientific theories.

Here are several examples that illustrate how science corrects itself due in large part to influence of the Bible and the desire by Christian scientists to seek harmony between the two:

See SCIENCE AND BIBLE, next page

Inside This Issue

- Young-Earth Apologetics . . . page 3**
- A Focus on Youth page 4**
- Apologetics Tool Kit page 4**
- Book Review page 5**
- The "Just War" Doctrine . . . page 6**

- Science theorized the universe is eternal while the Bible teaches it had a beginning. Discoveries now confirm the Bible's position – the universe had a beginning.
- Science theorized the different races evolved separately while the Bible teaches mankind descended from one pair of humans. Studies have now led most scientists to agree with the Bible's position – all human beings had the same parents.
- Science theorizes life began by the random mixing of chemicals while the Bible teaches life was specially created. This theory is now crumbling as scientists and mathematicians subject it to further scrutiny.

Science Interprets the Bible

Theologians begin with the Bible text and formulate doctrines. Since the Bible was written in popular, not technical, language, it must be interpreted. This can be problematic. As the vast variety of denominations and opinions attests, many passages are interpreted differently by different groups of people.

This is where science comes in. Christians believe God inspired the words of Scripture to convey certain ideas and these ideas must agree with all of His truth. We also believe the creation reveals God and His works convey certain truths to us. This being the case, we expect our interpretation of the Bible to agree with the truths revealed through the creation. If it does not, either the truth we believed is false, or our interpretation of the Bible is incorrect.

There are several examples showing how our knowledge of the world (e.g., science) has changed our interpretation of biblical statements:

- In the Old Testament, bats are included in the list of unclean "birds." We now know that bats are mammals. This means our interpretation of the Hebrew words for "bird" must be broader than it is in English (*oph* in Lev. 11:13; *sippor* in Dt. 14:11).
- In the Middle Ages, the church interpreted the Bible to mean the earth was flat and the sun and stars traveled around the earth. When scientific evidence demonstrated this interpretation to be false, Christians realized the Bible's passages were being interpreted from the wrong perspective.

- In Luke 13:32, Jesus calls Herod Antipas "that fox." Archeology has established Herod was a human being not a literal fox. Therefore, we interpret this statement is a figure of speech by which Jesus was referring to Herod's unsavory qualities.

Finding the Balance

True science and true exegesis will ultimately agree, although we may not always have sufficient information see that harmony. Of particular concern is the creation account of Genesis 1-2 (and other passages). We must balance what is certain from science with what is certain from biblical exegesis. Too often scholars put too much weight on one or the other— scientific conclusions (which may not be fully proved) or biblical exegesis (which may go beyond the text).

Modern opinions against supernatural events such as the creation, Flood and miracles, should not bias our interpretation of the Bible. However, sound exegesis should take into account "scientific" knowledge. At the same time, we need to be careful that our biblical exegesis does not bias our interpretation of the revelation of nature.

John Battle is a trained apologist and a member of the chapter steering committee. He is president of Western Reformed Seminary in Tacoma.

RTB's Message of the Month

If you're serious about science apologetics, RTB's Message of the Month is a must. For a monthly contribution of \$20, you will receive an audio cassette that will help support the Reasons to Believe ministry while fostering your own spiritual growth:

KEEP UP with the frontiers of research and the exciting spiritual impact of RTB.

GET INVOLVED as a financial partner in helping to expand the Reasons to Believe Ministry.

REACH OUT to loved ones, friends, co-workers and others who need fresh reasons to believe.

For subscription information and a free sample of a Message of the Month tape, contact the local chapter at seattle@reasons.org.

THE PROBLEM OF YOUNG-EARTH APOLOGETICS

GREG MOORE

In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said, “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” (John 3:12, NIV). Jesus’ question to Nicodemus raises an important communications issue: how are we to describe spiritual reality to someone who has no personal experience of such a reality? To put it another way, how can we get unbelievers to accept the Bible’s truth claims about spiritual matters that are not empirically verifiable and require a faith response?

This underscores the value of science apologetics. By using evidences from the natural world, we can point unbelievers to the supernatural realities of the Bible. For example, since the universe had a beginning, we can demonstrate there must be a Beginner who exists outside our physical reality (i.e., the space-time dimensions of the universe). However, while science apologetics can be extremely effective, we need to use them responsibly.

If our testimony on scientific matters that are subject to verification by unbelievers is unreliable, how can we expect unbelievers to accept our testimony on the Bible’s statements about spiritual matters? The answer is clear: we cannot. If our science is incredible or manifestly false, then, rather than pointing unbelievers to God, it may drive them further away. Demonstrably false “science” gives unbelievers “reasons to disbelieve” rather than “reasons to believe.”

This is a serious obstacle to the efforts of the young-earth movement to reach unbelievers, particularly scientifically literate unbelievers. Much of the young-earth apologetic depends on the idea that the universe is no more than several thousand years old. This position is impossible to reconcile with any reasonable interpretation of the data. Young-earth claims on the age issue are so obviously mistaken, in fact, that many non-Christians do not believe they are honest people, which gives them yet another reason to reject the Gospel.

Perhaps the clearest instance of the impossibility of young-earth “science” is the light-travel problem, a problem that characterizes the entire young-earth position on the age of the universe. In *Starlight and Time*, Dr. Russell Humphreys proposes an alternative cosmology which claims to explain how light could travel

billions of light years from distant galaxies during the passage of only a few thousand years of Earth time. From our perspective, it is one of the most glaring examples of the erroneous “science” offered by the young-earth movement. The errors are elementary and almost entirely in the arena of comparatively simple mathematics.

We hold no animosity towards our young-earth brothers and sisters. We recognize the positive contribution they have made to the origins debate and admire their zeal in defending the Bible. Nor do not believe any young-earth leader has engaged in conscious deception. The failure of the young-earth movement to detect and act on erroneous “science” is not a failure of moral integrity but a failure of scientific judgment and discernment. However, if the young-earth movement is unable or unwilling to rid itself of its scientific errors, how can it guide the church on scientific matters. Equally important, how will we reach non-believing scientists and other informed unbelievers?

In the interests of the credibility of its own Gospel witness and the witness of the wider Church, it is time for the young-earth movement to abandon its revisionist science. That these glaring errors have been widely accepted within the young-earth movement and widely propagated in the Church casts doubt on the credibility, reliability and trustworthiness of the leadership of the young-earth movement and, by association, the entire church. We pray God will bless the young-earth movement with discernment and the humility to admit when they are wrong.

Greg Moore is president of the Seattle-Area Chapter of Reasons to Believe. He is a trained apologist and works for the City of Everett.

NOTES

1. Adapted from the article “The Unraveling of Starlight and Time” by Samuel R. Conner and Hugh Ross, Ph.D.
2. For a complete assessment of Dr. Humphrey’s model, see the above referenced article at www.reasons.org/resources/apologetics/unravelling.html.

FOCUS ON YOUTH

MARK RAMBO

I'm in awe when I consider the effects of Christianity on the world, not only spiritually but socially. Consider how the value of human life increased as the Gospel spread throughout Roman Empire. Consider how the Christian worldview was the impetus for modern science. Then, consider the fruits of naturalism: the belief there is no God. One of the darkest "isms" that comes to mind is Nazism. But, there are countless other "isms" that enslave people and blind them to Truth.

When and where are these ungodly beliefs formed? For many, the process begins in public schools where children are conditioned to believe what they are taught is the absolute truth. Usually, they are presented only one viewpoint (i.e., naturalism) and they are discouraged, or even prohibited, from presenting other opinions. Of course, most children don't understand the naturalistic bias of what they are being taught. More importantly, they are not made aware of the infeasibility of the naturalistic model and the powerful evidence for special creation.

This last November I attended a seminar for public school teachers at Azusa Pacific University titled, "Teaching Science from a Biblical Perspective." It was hosted by the Christian Educators Association International (CEAI), the Center for Research in Science (CRIS) and Reasons to Believe (RTB). The purpose of seminar was twofold: to inform teachers of legal issues related to the teaching of creation in public school classrooms, and to arm teachers with the latest evidence for design and a Designer. One of the speakers was an award winning public school teacher who regularly brings biblical truths into the classroom without violating the law or antagonizing administrators and parents.

We live in exciting times when the scientific evidence for creation is steadily mounting. Shouldn't our school children be aware of this evidence and the serious problems it poses for naturalistic evolution? We think so. As a result, we are working with CEAI and the staff at RTB to plan seminars in this area, like the one at Azusa Pacific. We are also working to develop training courses for teachers on science and the Bible. One of our goals is that both the seminar and training will provide Continuing Education Units (CEU) for teachers.

If you are an educator or school administrator, there are

APOLOGISTS TOOLKIT

Apologetics Training

Want to be a trained apologist? RTB's Science and the Bible Apologetics Training Course is available free through the chapter. Interested? Contact us.

Websites to Check

Want to explore the age of the earth issue? Here's some good websites:

www.accuracyingenesis.com
www.answers.org/newlook/NEWLOOK.HTM#top
www.arn.org
www.asa3.org/ASA/resources/Wiens.html
www.bibleandscience.com
www.christianity.co.nz/science.htm
www.doesgodexist.org
www.evidence.info
www.evidenceofgod.com
www.genesisfoundation.org/ie4.html
www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/8830/index.html
www.geocities.com/athens/thebes/7755/index.html
www.geocities.com/darrickdean/relsci.html
www.geocities.com/vr_junkie/thebibleandscience.htm
www.geocities.com/reformedscience/index.html
www.gira.ca
www.glenn.morton.btinternet.co.uk/
www.god.andmuchmore.com
www.godandscience.org
www.gps.caltech.edu/~tisco/yeclaimsbeta.html
www.kiva.net/~kls/index.html
www.lordibelieve.org
http://members.ozemail.com.au/~sjdando/CE.htm
www.newcreationism.org
www.swordandspirit.com

several ways you can help. First, we need your involvement in developing the training. Second, we need to find a local college that will sponsor the seminar and provide CEUs. Third, and most important, you can pray for these efforts, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Hebrews 6:12, NIV). If you are interested in helping this ministry take root, contact us.

Mark Rambo is a trained apologist and member of the chapter steering committee. He lives in Silverdale.

BOOK REVIEW

Nature's Destiny — How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe

Michael J. Denton, 1998

Reviewer: Dave Ouellette

The author, a molecular geneticist, depicts in great detail the chemical and biological properties observed in the universe, to support the basis of the anthropic principle. He describes in layman's terms how finely tuned all the known properties of the universe are for life. From the basic properties of light and water to the elements of the periodic table, all seem to be composed and structured for the sole purpose of supporting carbon-based life.

Although Denton uses the "teleological argument" throughout the book, he seems to imply that life could have evolved on earth-like planets if left only to the observed natural laws. For example, at the end of *The Fitness of Elements on Earth*, he states:

"It is hard to escape the feeling that planets fit for our type of life will not only have seas and booming surfs and gentle rain, they will also have volcanoes and great mountain chains on which glaciers will form and from which rivers will emerge and carry the vital nutrients of weathering into the seas and throughout the hydrosphere. There will be continental drift and plate tectonics. It is a familiar picture, and not in the least contingent, but rather the inevitable and determined outcome of natural law."

Thus, according to Denton, there is nothing unique about planet Earth. If a planet can be found that has similar location and properties as Earth, the same geological events will arise, based on the "determined outcome of natural law." He does admit and point out the uniqueness of Earth and its location in the cosmos, but he says this is expected, due to the laws of physics and chemistry:

"The impression gained from these considerations is there is nothing unusual about Earth and that, given the cosmic abundance of the elements, the laws of nature will generate a planet with chemical and physical characteristics very similar to those of Earth, with a hydrosphere supremely fit for life.

The fact other rocky planets, Mars, Mercury, and Venus, and the Moon appear to have undergone analogous changes serves to support the conclusion. ...The fact that two adjacent planets in our own solar system, Mars and Earth, are so strikingly similar, provides strong evidence in support of the notion that life-supporting planets are the inevitable end of natural law."

Denton points out that the physical characteristics of animals seem to be optimally designed, especially the human body (e.g., muscles, movement, vision, nerve cells, etc.). He also explores the uniqueness of vital gases and the mammalian respiratory system. And he has several chapters devoted to explaining the "fitness of cells," nanomanipulators, and DNA's unique double helix structure.

A theory that Denton proposes in later chapters is of "directed evolution," where the entire process of biological evolution, from the origin of life through the emergence of man, was somehow directed from the beginning. As to the origin of life question, Denton goes into detail, explaining the uniqueness of the DNA structure. Here again, however, he leaves room for a materialistic means for life evolving, with such comments as this:

"The early evolution of life, for example, may have proceeded via a series of simpler replicating systems—on RNA or RNA analogues. Teleology only implies that the partnership should be uniquely fit for self-replication of a biochemical system as sophisticated and complex as the current cell system."

Compared to his previous book, *Evolution, a Theory in Crisis*, Denton seems to have altered his opinion on the subject, giving more leniency to the Darwinian theory, albeit a "directed evolution" by some yet unnamed creator. He puts forth a vast array of evidence to support the teleological argument, but he allows enough room for evolutionists to keep alive the Darwinian theory, even though the laws of nature have been directed for human origins as opposed to a "chance" occurrence.

And that is what Denton is ultimately stating, I believe. Evolution is more of a fact as depicted in this book, but is it driven by purely materialistic means or was it purposefully directed? Denton believes the scientific evidence points to the latter.

Dave Ouellette is a trained apologist and member of the chapter steering committee. He lives in Snohomish.

"JUST WAR" DOCTRINE

GREG MOORE

With the prospects of a war with Iraq, many Christians are struggling to understand where they should stand on this issue. Is it permissible to wage war? What is the proper use of military action? Is it unchristian to support America's war on terrorism?

Historically, Christians have adopted one of three positions on war. The first is the activist view – it is always right to participate in war. The second is the pacifist view – it is never right to participate in war. The third view is selectivist view – it is right to participate in some wars. The third view, selectivism, is known as "just war" theory and was developed by Augustine as a logical extension of Romans 13:1-7.

According to Augustine, "it makes a great difference by which causes and under which authorities men undertake the wars that must be waged." Augustine developed a seven-point framework for evaluating military action. The first five points apply to a nation that is contemplating war. The last two points apply to military forces that are engaged in war. Here they are:

Just cause – All acts of aggression are condemned. Participation must be prompted by a just or defensive cause. No war of unprovoked aggression can ever be justified.

Just intention – War must be waged to secure a just peace for all parties involved. Revenge or conquest are not legitimate motives.

Last resort – War must be engaged as a last resort only after diplomacy and economic pressure have been exhausted.

Formal declaration – War must be initiated with a formal declaration by the properly constituted authorities.

Limited objectives – War must have limited objectives such as peace. Complete destruction is an improper objective and hostilities must cease once peace is attainable.

Proportionate means – Combatants may not be subjected to greater harm than is necessary to secure victory. The types of weapons and force used should be limited to what is needed to repel aggression and secure a just peace.

Noncombatant immunity – Military forces must respect individuals and groups not participating in the conflict. Only governmental forces or agents are legitimate targets.

Some argue the "just war" concept applies only to nations, not terrorists. This is incorrect. The "just war" theory predates the concept of modern nation-states. Some argue, since terrorism is an international threat, a "just war" requires an international declaration of war. This is also not true. The U.S. or any other country does not need international approval to defend itself.

My purpose is not to advocate a particular position on war but to merely provide a balanced perspective on "just war" doctrine. As Christians we may not always agree on non-doctrinal issues but I hope we can base our views on an informed position.

*Adapted from "Terrorism and Just War" by Kerby Anderson.
A complete version is available at <http://www.probe.org/docs.justwar.html>*

**FOR INFORMATION AND
COMMENTS, CONTACT THE
LOCAL CHAPTER AT
seattle@reasons.org**