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Introduction

“A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said:

“What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.”

The scientist gave a superior smile before replying,

“What is the tortoise standing on?”

“You’re very clever, young man, very clever,” said the old lady, “But it’s turtles all the way down!”

There is a vast array of ideas about why and how we are here on the earth, ideas from “turtles all the way down” to God’s creation.

The story of the turtles is from the book “A Brief History of Time” written a few years ago by Steven Hawking the famous theoretical physicist. It was a popularized description of some of the implications of quantum mechanics.

In his introduction of the book Carl Sagan said, “This is also a book about God... or perhaps about the absence of God. The word God fills these pages. ... Hawking is attempting, as he explicitly states, to understand the mind of God.”

People who are exploring the existence of God are not just the philosophers and theologians but it is also the scientists. As they push back the edges of the physical Universe they bump up against the question of origins.

In his closing chapter Steven Hawking repeats questions: “We find ourselves in a bewildering

world. We want to make sense of what we see around us and to ask:

- What is the nature of the universe?
- What is our place in it and where did it and we come from?
- Why is it the way it is?” p. 171

Scientific theories like the big bang are attempts to answer the question of origins. Where did we come from?

Everyone who has a sense of personal identity confronts the question, “Where did I come from?” And the answers arrived at have covered the spectrum from storks to God. The question of origins is asked by little children “Where did I come from Mommy?” and it gives opportunity for “the birds and bees talk” or if you aren’t up to it “the Stork talk.”

The question “who am I” and “where did I come from” has been asked by mankind since the beginning of recorded history. And there are many voices seeking to answer that question today. From

Shirly McLaine, to Mormonism, to Natural evolution, to reincarnation.

Most every time you visit a state park, museum, or display of archeological evidence you are confronted with the question as you read:

“one million years ago”

“Ten Million Years ago”

“Five hundred thousand years ago.”

Creation.

One of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. How do we approach this topic. A variety of ways?

1. I might ridicule anyone who believed that they came from a monkey.

There is a tendency to ridicule that which you are not able to rationally argue against. If you can't answer the arguments then expose them to ridicule.

III. United States District court Judge William R. Overton who declared the Arkansas creationism law

unconstitutional received death threats and many letters, one of which enclosed a picture of a monkey with the comment, “you can hang it in your office and show everyone how proud you are of your relations,”

Not a very productive approach It doesn't take other people or ideas seriously. It is reflective of a person who has a great deal of fear about what they believe.

2. I might seek to give you all the scientific arguments that I could find for believing in creation.

e.g. 2nd law of thermodynamics

-things tend toward disorder rather than order

-my wife can witness to that

That might be a helpful approach but I am not really the qualified person to do that. The qualified people to give you those arguments are here this weekend. You may wish to attend the meeting this afternoon on the limitations of science, at 3 PM in the Academy chapel.

3. I might review all of the Biblical data that presents God as the creator. I certainly have more expertise in making that presentation From Genesis to Revelation God is presented as the Creator. I am sure that it would be interesting but it would not help us confront issues of evolution.

4. I could list the problems that the evolution theory has.

e.g.

- missing links
- spontaneous generation - or even matter from non-matter
- development cold Vs warm blooded animals

It is nice to see holes in the opposition's arguments but it could make some feel inappropriately smug.

Some of you may be thinking that if I continue at this rate I can fill all of the sermon time telling you what I am not going to do.

In the light of the fact I am not a science teacher what I prefer to do is:

1. Talk briefly about the history of science and religion as they relate to each other.
2. Discuss the teaching of creation as a doctrine of faith.

History

Early in the history of civilization anything not understood was attributed to the miraculous intervention of God or a mysterious vital force attributed to God. Everything was a miracle. Man, through observation and experiment began questioning.

William Harvey discovered that blood flowed through the body as a result of muscular contraction and it was a serious blow, to some, eroding away the power of God. Chemistry became known as one of the “seven devilish arts” because it was explaining the reason - the cause of things and so, God was not the cause. People were called infidels and atheists

when they explained things by natural laws.

When Roger Bacon, in the 13th century, explained the rainbow as resulting from refraction of light he was condemned “on account of certain suspicious novelties” Of course, the rainbow was a sign from God and could, therefore, not result from natural laws.

There was opposition to placing lightening rods on churches because it was “attempting to control the artillery of heaven.” And when Copernicus suggested the rotation of the earth and the fact that the earth was not the center of the Universe, Pope Paul V decreed that “the doctrine of the double motion of the earth about its axis and about the sun is false, and entirely contrary to the Holy Scripture.”

You might ask what scripture?

Psalm 93:1 reads: “the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.”

Religion has frequently fallen into the trap of affirming more than the Bible required.

e.g.

- earth the center of the universe

The Bible doesn't require that belief. We could fall into the same trap today.

In the early sixties there were some who said, "on Biblical authority" that man would never land on the moon.

We don't need to say that Adam was created at 9:00 a.m. on October 23, 4004 BC. as does Archbishop Usher - the Bible does not demand that, or that the earth is exactly 6,000 years old.

Nor does the Bible demand fixity of species. One of the reasons that Darwin expanded the idea of evolution was because the church at the time took scripture to mean that species were fixed. They based it on the Genesis statement "After its kind." Darwin went out into the field and simply found that that wasn't true.

We must be careful not to make the Bible say more than it really says. The Bible is not a piece of scientific literature, that doesn't mean that what it says is not compatible with true science but it does mean that we should not require too much of a book that was written in a different era in a different language.

The message we get from the Bible is not primarily scientific but Salvific. Its focus is the salvation story.

Science as Religion

Today for some science is becoming an alternate to religion, a kind of humanistic science as god.

Science gives man the omnipotent feeling that we can do anything-

e.g.

- flew to the moon yesterday
- fly to Mars tomorrow

Genetic science gives god like power to produce genetically engineered food and portends adjusting

human genes to prevent disease. Science's manifold blessings are in our homes and offices.

There is a natural tendency to give credence or belief to that which has so dramatically enhanced our lives.

So how can we live as a people of faith in a scientific world. Actually the question of origins requires faith whether in science or theology.

FAITH

The fact is that none of us were around when it began

Whether our explanation is

- space garbage
- a giant tortoise,
- a big bang,
- a creator God, or
- a superstring theory

all of the ideas we might have are not supportable by observational evidence, neither can the event be replicated in the laboratory.

The only way of knowing about what did happen is by faith. Faith either in

- The turtle theory
- The natural evolution theory.
- The creator God theory
- or whatever.

One way or another we are going by faith. What about mathematics? - no faith there!

As John Polkinhorne says in his book in the discussion of some of Godel's theorems, "Even the exercise of Mathematics involves an act of faith."

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So I choose to accept by faith the account of creation that we read in the Bible.

Psalm 33:6

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. (NIV)

That doesn't mean I will be blind to what happens in the world of science but it does mean that I will

not sit on pins and needles waiting to see what impact some laboratory discovery will have on my faith in God.

I am uncomfortable basing my faith in God as creator on what recent scientific arguments that can be developed by Geo-Science, Creation Research or any scientific body.

That is not to suggest that thoughtful research by Christian scientists into evidence for creation is not helpful, but it is to say that I am not ready to make my faith in a creator God dependent on what they find.

In fact, let me go out on a limb.

III.

What could science discover that would destroy my faith in a Creator God. Nothing!

If they created a person in a test tube and found the mechanism for bringing life from in-organic matter it would still not prove that man wasn't created by a loving creator God.

In fact if a person was created from a test-tube it would do no more or less than demonstrate one possible means by which God created man originally.

I will not put my faith in God on trial in a laboratory.

III.

I can look at another person and see:

- an accumulation of atoms
- a biochemical system in interaction with the environment
- a specimen of homo sapien
- an object of beauty,
- a brother
- one for whom Christ died

It is a whole person and I look at that person in different ways at different times.

We must not be like Michael Faraday the great 19th Century experimental physicist. He was a committed Christian and it is said that when he went

into his laboratory he forgot his religion and when he came out again he forgot his science.

We must not so separate the two worlds of science and faith. We live in one world and science and theology explore different aspects of it.

There is a reality that is beyond the tools of the scientific method.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (KJV)

More is going on in the universe than what can be placed in a test tube or under a microscope.

It is like seeking to understand a three dimensional world when you live in a two dimensional world or a four dimensional world when you live in a three dimensional world.

III.

There are things that we can't explain through the scientific method;

- love
- beauty
- morality - sense of right and wrong.

Faith is not a leap into the dark but a leap into the light. It is a way of knowing things that can't be known through test tube experimentation.

Conclusion**III. -**

You have heard the expression, "Well, you would understand if you knew where they came from."

It is a way of explaining the behavior of some people. It is suggesting that if you understood their background then you wouldn't be too quick to pass judgment on their behavior.

Knowing where you came from has a lot to do with who you see yourself as being. Nothing is more

important to a person's sense of identity as their sense of origin, their family.

III.

When you get acquainted with someone you usually ask them where they are from to get a sense of who they are. Where I came from has a lot to do with who I am.

The Doctrine of Creation is a teaching that tells me who I am.

III.

I once asked my daughter:

“Who are you?”

“Julie,” she said.

“But who is that?” I pestered

“Me”, she said with some confusion.

“Who are you?”

“Julie,” she said.

And as I continued to press her she finally said in exasperation

“I am your daughter!”

That is who she is - my daughter

It is there that she finds her identity.

The doctrine of creation gives us our ultimate identity for in our belief in a creator God we find our deepest heritage.

Created in the image of God.

- Who am I?
- Child of God

Benediction

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever.

Amen. (**1 Timothy 1:17** NIV)