A BIBLICAL APPOACH TO ORIGINS

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Yesterday, we talked about "believers" and "science", and part of that discussion was careful definition of the terms. Today, we need first to examine what we are talking about when we say the word, "origins", and why there is an argument about the subject.

We'll spend a good deal of time examining the Darwinist stories about the origin of the macromolecules of life, of the first living cell, of the major body plans of the animals, and some of the organs found in the animal kingdom.

As previously discussed, our view of origins, as of so much else, is dependent on our world view. Until fairly recently, which world view we adopted was essentially a matter of preference. There was very little scientifically credible evidence to depend upon when making a decision about accepting the Darwinist explanation of where the universe and everything in it originated, or embracing the alternative of a theistic origin. (Please note that a "theistic origin" does not necessarily entail the Bible story.) This situation has changed, with the advent of the modern Intelligent Design Movement, and its rigorous and scientific formulation of the biological case for design, and later we'll spend some time talking about this exciting change.

Despite everything that eager scientists have been able to uncover; despite even the recent revelations coming from the Intelligent Design Movement; adopting a world view, with its story about the origin of all things, involves a significant amount of faith for everyone concerned. We simply cannot "know" what occurred in the remote past. Scientific naturalists have the evidence of the rocks, of the DNA codes of various organisms, and other sources of data that they interpret to produce their "origins myths". Their stories about how these things came about have changed radically over time as more data have come to light. They will continue to change, and Baconian science has no power to guarantee the truth of any particular story, only to give us an idea of the odds in its favor. Theists have all of the empirical evidence available to the naturalists, and they add to this the stories from their holy books, or from tradition. I believe with all my heart and soul and mind that God created the living part of this earth in seven literal days a relatively short time ago, but I also freely admit that I cannot show definitively that this story is true. Unlike a new design for an airplane wing, there is no "wind tunnel" for stories about origins. I can use a lot of indirect evidence, and a lot of circumstantial evidence, to show people that the Bible is God's word and should be trusted. But, it is the Spirit Who gives each of us the faith to believe.

The question of Origins begins with the origin of the universe. Christians are actually a bit at sea here, because it is not at all plain that the Genesis story of Creation intends to tell us how God set the universe in motion. Considerable disagreement exists between scholars with equally strong commitments to the text. In any case, many committed Christians concede that if God wanted to, He could have set up the initial conditions and created the universe via a Big Bang. In fact, one of the important arguments against the

Bang, when it was first proposed, was that it implied a "beginning", a moment when God could easily be imagined to have stepped in and put things in motion. Nevertheless, today the Big Bang is the most popular scenario for the origin of the universe, despite its many problems, and the questions for which it doesn't seem to have good answers.

When it comes to the origin of the earth and the solar system, again there is some controversy about whether Genesis is explicitly giving us an account of their creation, or whether they may have been here earlier, and Genesis is telling us how God made the earth ready for life, and then created the biosphere and all it contains. We aren't going to get into that argument this morning, just move on to the origin of life on this earth.

How life began has been a subject of interest since history has been recorded, and speculation about the answers has existed at least as long. However, only in the 19th century were any of these ideas actually tested. "Spontaneous generation" was the universally believed proposition that non-living things could directly give rise to life. A series of experiments, by Redi, Spallanzani, and others refuted* the idea that mice were spontaneously generated from old rags, or flies from rotting meat. Finally, in 1864, Louis Pasteur reported the results of his experiments with "swan-necked flasks"[2]*, definitively showing that microbes cannot be generated spontaneously from a nutrient medium. In Paris, he addressed the faculty of the Sorbonne with these words

> "Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from the mortal blow of this simple experiment."

However, if science limits itself to dealing with observations, then the most that Pasteur should have said was that spontaneous generation is impossible *under the conditions of his experiments*. This distinction is really important, because a materialist story of origins demands spontaneous generation, and without it, the history of "origin of life" experiments would have been ended before it had even begun.

Only seven short years after Pasteur's words were spoken, Charles Darwin (1871) wrote that:

> "It is often said that all the conditions for the first production of a living organism are now present which could ever have been present. But if (and oh! What a big if!) we could conceive in some warm little pond, with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts, light, heat, electricity, etc. present, that a protein compound was chemically formed ready to undergo still more complex changes, at the present day such matter would be instantly devoured or absorbed, which would not have been the case before living creatures were formed."

Perhaps Darwin's faith can be excused, given the primitive state of knowledge about what constituted life. In the 1870s, protoplasm, the "stuff of life", was believed to be a simple substance; a mixture of water, protein, sugar, fats, etc. Little was known of the complex internal structure and organization of living cells, and it was assumed that if the proper mixture of chemicals could be brought together under proper conditions, life would automatically emerge.

A more rigorous presentation of the presumed requirements for abiogenesis (the origination of living from lifeless matter) was made by the Russian biochemist Alexander

Oparin, in 1924. He described the chemical composition of the atmosphere he thought necessary, as well as the elements needed in the "primordial soup", if molecules leading to life were to emerge, presumably sparked by the flashes of lightning on the early earth. Later workers contributed details considered to make the construction of the molecules characteristic of life more likely, including the exclusion of oxygen, which would have broken up most, if not all, of the molecules of interest that were actually formed. Until the early 1950s, this was merely speculation based on philosophical assumptions. At that time, Stanley Miller, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, built a simple apparatus[3]*, filled it with a mixture of chemicals suggested in the literature, and using an electric spark for energy and a water trap to collect any molecules produced, simulated the "early earth" for a week at a time.

Miller's experiments, and subsequent work by others over the next three decades, used different mixtures, catalysts, temperatures, energy sources, and other conditions, and produced various combinations of amino acids, sugars, nucleic acid bases, and other molecules such as urea, formaldehyde, etc. The production of many of life's bio-monomers, as well as other molecules considered likely constituents of living things, in these prebiotic experiments, led to growing confidence in the reality of the "primordial soup." There was also considerable optimism about the future success of the effort to produce biological macromolecules, if not life itself, from inorganic molecules.

Into the general triumphalism of this Darwinist scene, Charles Thaxton, Walter Bradley, and Roger Olsen (1984) dropped a ground-breaking book, *The Mystery of Life's Origin: Reassessing Current Theories*. (This book now appears to have been the opening salvo in a renewed battle between those who espouse materialism and those who oppose them with Intelligent Design Theory.) After rigorous analysis and argument, Thaxton, et al concluded that

> "the undirected flow of energy through a primordial atmosphere and ocean is at present a woefully inadequate explanation for the incredible complexity associated with even simple living systems, and is probably wrong."

This was startling news, not least because the authors included a mechanical engineer and a physical chemist, both with PhDs in their fields, rather than the usual Christian ministers or other apologists with limited credentials.

The book was so atypical of the usual anti-materialist writing that it garnered praise even from some of those who disagreed entirely with its conclusions. Two separate chapters dealt with the "myth of the prebiotic soup" and a reassessment of the early earth and its atmosphere. These showed that thirty years of research since Miller's simulation had produced an explosion of knowledge about geochemistry, about the identification and age of microfossils, and about the likely composition of the early atmosphere. The new information indicated that whatever "soup" was available would have been far more dilute than in any of the simulations; that fossilized microbes of various kinds were alive only 100-200 million years (a geological moment of time) after the earth cooled; and that it was virtually certain that the early atmosphere contained free oxygen. The implications were clear to anyone acquainted with the Darwinist scenarios for the origin of life: Miller's experiments, and those that followed, did not realistically simulate the early

oceans or ponds; there was NOT "plenty of time" for highly unlikely origin of life scenarios to take place; and the exclusion of oxygen from the atmosphere by Miller and subsequent experimenters might make chemo-synthesis more likely, but it misrepresented the scientific consensus on what the early atmosphere was actually like.

The reason for the mismatch, between the conditions in the origin of life simulations and what appeared to be the actual conditions on the early earth, was also plain – an "intelligent designer" (the simulation scientist) was planning the experiment, and choosing conditions that promised to produce the maximum level of the desired results. Since the simulations were intended, and were represented, to show what the unguided and unplanned processes found in the natural world could produce when limited by the laws of nature, they were "simulations" in name only, given their radical dissimilarity from the best information about the conditions they claimed to simulate.

The next three chapters deal with the claim commonly made in the scientific literature, and in textbooks, that in an "open system" (like the earth) with sufficient energy flow (from the sun), the origin of life is plausible, despite the second law of thermodynamics. This law states that in the universe as a whole, the distribution of energy always tends to become less concentrated. In other words, without the action of intelligence, systems break down, always becoming less and less orderly. However, the move from inorganic molecules to a living cell reverses this trend. Thaxton, et al (page 144) first showed that some of the work needed to assemble biological macromolecules

> "...could *potentially* be accomplished by energy flow through the system", but "...energy flow is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the polymerization of the macromolecules of life. Arranging a pile of bricks into the configuration of a house requires work. One would hardly expect to accomplish this work with dynamite, however."

They then identify the different components of the work needed to make the polymerizations occur, and clarify that in constructing biological macromolecules, there must be something that couples the energy flow to the specific work requirements. Otherwise, "energy flow" through the system is no more useful than sunshine on the body of an animal lying dead by the side of the road, or a dynamite blast in the construction of a house. The reason for this is the "configurational entropy" that must be overcome in order to produce the complex and highly specified sequence of the monomers that is essential for the very specific shape of a protein, or that makes up the "code" that is carried by DNA and RNA. There is an enormous amount of information embedded in biological macromolecules, and undirected energy flow cannot account for it. Any random sequence of amino acids will not make a protein that functions as an enzyme...or as anything else. Nonspecific sequences of nucleic acids will not produce RNA molecules capable of coding for a protein, or DNA strands capable of storing the mass of information needed to make the essential enzymes and other proteins that are essential to life. Every observation and experiment to date indicates that the "control systems" needed to direct energy flow in accomplishing specific types of work require pre-existing intelligence.

Thaxton, et al concluded that: 1) simulations to their date of publication were largely invalid due to unrealistic conditions and illegitimate investigator interference; 2) the crucial weaknesses in prebiotic simulations were intrinsic to the theory, and not subject to solution with more time; and 3) gains in scientific knowledge were increasing the problems for the Darwinist theory of how life arose on earth. It is not a matter of ignorance that we need to overcome; it's what we know and are learning, that makes abiogenesis appear to be impossible. Finally, they argued that since we can never *falsify* any particular model of the origin of life, science does itself (and society) a disservice when it presents only one side of the issue. Limiting the exposition and discussion in textbooks and journals to materialistic models is a bit like considering only natural causes in an unexplained death. When a man is found at the bottom of a cliff, he may have stumbled and fallen accidentally. However, unless the possibility of a push (intelligent design) is considered, a murderer will never even be looked for, much less apprehended.

The opening shot represented by *The Mystery of Life's Origin* was followed in short order by another. Working entirely independently, Michael Denton, a non-religious molecular biologist working in New Zealand, published *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* in 1986. His book began by explaining the social and scientific milieu in which Darwin grew up; how he lost his faith on the fateful voyage of the Beagle; the theory of evolution he devised to replace the Biblical story he had grown up with; and how his theory hardened into scientific dogma.

Next, Denton wrote his judgment that Darwin was correct at the "micro-" level. This is at the level of speciation – the evidence comes from the breeding of various kinds of ducks, dogs, pigeons, horses, etc. – a process that can virtually be seen occurring in the real world, as well . On the other hand, the truly interesting claim that Darwinists make is at the "macro-" level. They teach that the major groups of organisms all originated in a common ancestor. From the original cell, by a process of unlimited divergence and change, was derived every form of life now seen on earth. There is simply no credible scientific evidence that supports this idea. In fact, the evidence that we do have, notably the breeding of domestic animals and plants, argues against the process of major change that is the essence of macro-evolution.

As a thought experiment, think of trying to change, one word at a time, a single paragraph of this paper into a different paragraph, saying something distinct from the original. Remember that each and every change of a letter or a word must maintain meaning in the paragraph being modified. At no time can you allow the message to be corrupted. However, this isn't even as difficult as Darwinism's problem. The words only sit on a page – they have no dynamic function. Imagine instead riding a bicycle, competing in a race – as if you were a mouse competing with other mice for food, mates and hiding places to avoid predators. Your task in your race is to gradually change the bicycle into a motorcycle, tiny change by tiny change (just like a mouse that must grow longer legs, bigger ears, along with the proper muscles, nerves, circulation, body temperature control circuits, etc. etc. that will allow him to compete more effectively with his fellows). Not only must you continue to ride (and the mouse to eat, reproduce and escape) as you make the needed changes, but you must remain fully competitive in the

race at each step, or you will lose (go extinct). Keep in mind that even this thought experiment, impossible as it is, seriously underestimates the difficulties. Changing the sentence, or transforming the bicycle, would occur through the action of an intelligent agent. The Darwinist transformation must occur through a series of random changes, without direction from intelligence of any kind.

Denton wrote about most of the standard Darwinian arguments, including homology (anatomical similarities believed to be due to common ancestry), and the fossil record. He spent an entire chapter (9) dealing with a number of the most difficult and best-known examples of gaps in the fossil record that have nothing whatever to fill them. The origin of birds, as well as of their flight feathers[4]*, and their peculiar respiratory organs, offer a problem that is, so far, without solution, despite numerous ingenious but implausible attempts to explain their origins. In fact, Denton says (p.213):

> "The avian lung and the feather bring us very close to answering Darwin's challenge: 'If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.'"

These two examples are precisely what Darwin asked for. They are complex structures that no one can even imagine, much less find examples illustrating, how they might develop step by tiny step.

The basic issues dealt with in Denton's first nine chapters were all raised during the years after the publication of The Origin of Species, well within Darwin's lifetime. Various defenses have been offered, none of them totally satisfactory. Darwin predicted that increasing knowledge would bring additional data to support his theory. Unfortunately for the Darwinist origins scenario, this has not occurred. These "old" objections are intact, and in some cases, worse than ever. Furthermore, the advance of scientific knowledge has turned up new and even more devastating arguments against a comprehensive evolutionary theory driven solely by natural law, random events, and natural selection.

Since about 1950, advances in the understanding of the biochemistry of the cell have established an entirely new branch of science. The increase of knowledge in this field is nothing short of phenomenal. The 1953 paper by Watson and Crick describing the structure of the DNA molecule solved the puzzle of heredity, and touched off an explosion of learning and application that continues until this day. Denton spends four entire chapters on molecular biology, showing how what we have recently learned about living systems provides us with a body of information precisely suited to assessing Darwinian claims about origins.

Proteins are large molecules, consisting most commonly of 100 to 500 amino acids (of the hundreds of amino acids known, only 20 different kinds are utilized by living things), bonded together in a linear arrangement, with varying numbers and types of "side groups" attached here and there along the chain. The easiest way to think of the structure and diversity of proteins is to compare them to sentences. The amino acids are like the letters of the alphabet – 20 amino acids for proteins, 26 letters for English sentences. It is

the specific arrangement of the 26 letters, plus spaces, that makes the difference between a "non-functional" string of symbols signifying nonsense, and a functional English sentence that conveys meaning. Similarly, it is the specific arrangement of the 20 amino acids in a molecule that determines whether it will function as a protein or not. The complexity of the protein is actually greater than that of English sentences, because the crucial determinant of function is the 3-dimensional shape of the molecule, once it has "folded" into its final form. This folding is partially determined by the identity and order of the amino acids in the chain, and partly by the types, the numbers, and the positions of the "side-groups" that have been attached.

Many proteins are "structural" in nature, something like bricks or stones for building a house. There is a certain amount of flexibility allowed with these structural proteins; just as a good builder can accommodate odd-shaped stones or bricks and still build a solid house, our bodies have little problem with an occasional "odd" structural protein. However, many proteins function as "enzymes", making possible the many chemical reactions that are vital to keeping our bodies alive and functioning properly. These proteins are more similar to a house- or a car-key, in that the precise three-dimensional shape is crucial to their ability to function at all. Small differences in certain parts of a house key will not prevent it from opening the back door, but there are other places that must be precisely correct, or the homeowner will not be able to get into the house. In proteins that function as enzymes, each has one or more "active sites", whose very specific shape is absolutely essential to ANY enzymatic function. Any change that affects the active site: whether a change of amino acid type or position in the chain; or an addition, deletion, or change in a crucial side group; will render the enzyme non-functional, and threaten the organism with death.

DNA and RNA are also long, chain-like molecules, but instead of being used in the cell's structure, or as enzymes taking part in the myriad of chemical reactions going on in the cell, these two molecules carry the "codes" that are needed for the protein construction essential to cellular life. The DNA stores the information needed to make all of our protein molecules – hundreds or thousands of them. While in the protein alphabet there are 20 letters, in the DNA alphabet there are only four. Nevertheless, with these four letters, arranged into three-letter groups, we can form 64 (4^3) different "code words". Each of the amino acids used to build protein molecules is represented by at least one DNA code word – some amino acids have several -- and there are also codes to mark the start and the end of each DNA message. The RNA we will be talking about is a "messenger" molecule. It picks up the coded message for a particular protein from the DNA in the cell nucleus, and carries it out into the cell where the protein is constructed. RNA has its own code consisting of three-letter code-words, and an "alphabet" of four letters, one of them different from the DNA alphabet.

If the cell is like a factory (and it is), then we should think of DNA as being like the "master blueprint" that is carefully conserved in a safe place, where it cannot be smudged, torn, or otherwise harmed. The RNA is like a "photocopy" of the original blueprint, one that is carried out onto the "shop floor" in the factory, where the actual work is carried out. The proteins that are produced by the cell are like the product of a

factory – automobiles, computers, plywood, garden hoses, or whatever. One really big difference is that most factories produce a single product, while many of our cells are churning out scores, hundreds, or even thousands of distinctly different proteins every single minute of their (and our) lives.

The key to understanding what all of this has to do with Darwinism is in realizing that the DNA code is something like a "library" of information. In fact, it is estimated that the coded information contained in the DNA of a single cell, if it were printed up in books, would occupy as much space as is contained in several sets of encyclopedias. No one with a rudimentary understanding of the mathematics of probability thinks that any non-intelligent process could produce the information in even a single volume of an encyclopedia, yet the Darwinist story of origins requires us to believe that the entire DNA code was produced in exactly that way. Nobel Prize winner, Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, wrote (1981):

> "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going."

Crick's opinion has not changed over the years, and he is not alone. Quotations of this sort can be found from many of our leading scientists as they face up to the real challenge that the data present to their theory.

Denton devotes a later chapter to illustrating, in detail, the sheer mathematical impossibility of the Darwinist scenario for generating the information contained within the DNA. He demolishes what are presented as analogies for mutations leading to useful information, rigorously showing that each time, the story-teller smuggles in a guiding intelligence to produce the results they claim for unguided chance in the natural world. He sums up with this paragraph (p.324):

> "Neither Darwin, Dawkins nor any other biologist has ever calculated the probability of a random search finding in the finite time available the sorts of complex systems which are so ubiquitous in nature. Even today we have no way of rigorously estimating the probability or degree of isolation of even one functional protein. It is surely a little premature to claim (as Dawkins does) that random processes could have assembled mosquitoes and elephants when we still have to determine the actual probability of the discovery by chance of one single functional protein molecule!"

Advances in biology have only increased the Darwinist's problems, and Denton opens to his reader the modern view of the cell as "a world of supreme technology and bewildering complexity". Far from being a simple lump of jelly, it is more like (p.329)

> "an immense automated factory...larger than a city...carrying out...all the manufacturing activities of man on earth....capable of replicating its entire structure within a matter of a few hours."

If this is not enough, consider the brain, with ten thousand million nerve cells, each with ten thousand to one hundred thousand connections to other brain cells, yielding perhaps

one thousand million million connections in your brain, and in mine. This number is impossible to conceptualize, but Denton helps us (p.330):

> "Imagine an area about half the size of the USA (one million square miles) covered in a forest of trees containing ten thousand trees per square mile. If each tree contained one hundred thousand leaves the total number of leaves in the forest would be...equivalent to the number of connections in the human brain!"

These connections are not simply a jumble, but an organized communications system with more specific connections than in the entire communications network on earth. Neil Campbell (1999, p.960), in his popular college textbook, *Biology*, tells students that:

> "The nervous system is probably the most intricately organized aggregate of matter on earth. A single cubic centimeter of the human brain may contain well over 50 million nerve cells, each of which may communicate with thousands of other neurons in data-processing networks that make the most elaborate computer look primitive."

Unbelievably, in the same book (p.787) Campbell urges students not to even consider the evidence of their own eyes:

> "Use of the term *plan* and *design* in no way implies that animal body forms are products of a conscious invention. The body plan or design of an animal results from a pattern of development programmed by the genome, itself the product of millions of years of evolution due to natural selection." (Emphasis in original)

No rational person would accept the proposition that a single computer, much less the entire telecommunications network of the whole world, could emerge from random events, even if the entire 12-20 billion years since the Big Bang is allowed. Yet, this would be a simpler task than the production of a single human brain.

There are many other examples, and Denton finally contends that David Hume's refutation of Intelligent Design Theory, largely based on the alleged "non-analogy" between a living body and a machine (such as the watch in Paley's essay), has been overtaken and resoundingly invalidated by our current knowledge of the cell. Modern cell biology has shown that the cell is filled with miniature machines, made of molecular-size parts precisely comparable to gears, bearings, etc. Paley could hardly have chosen a better analogy for the extreme perfection of living things than the pocket watch – but it took almost 300 years for science to learn enough to vindicate him. In Denton's words (page 342):

> "To those who still dogmatically advocate that all this new reality is the result of pure chance one can only reply, like Alice, in the face of the contradictory logic of the Red Queen: 'Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said. "One can't believe impossible things." "I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the queen. "When I was your age I did it for half an hour a day. Why sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."'"

In his last chapter, Denton explains why, in the face of the evidence he presents throughout his book, science continues to hold on to Darwinism, indeed to indoctrinate every schoolchild with it, and to include it in any article, book or television program that says anything about science. In short, as the chapter title tells us, the explanation lies in Professor Thomas Kuhn's concept of "The Priority of the Paradigm". What Kuhn said,

in his influential book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, was that science advances when the scientific community adopts a particular way of looking at the world, and then works together within that framework. Only when two circumstances occur together will the community change its "world view" – the first is that a large enough number of "anomalies" (pieces of data that simply can't be rationalized using the paradigm in place) must turn up to produce a "crisis" among scientists working in the field; and the second is that an acceptable alternative must be available. When Denton wrote his book, it was largely ignored by the scientific community. In part, this is because, although there a multiplicity of anomalies in the Darwinist stories, there are no strictly naturalistic alternatives to Darwinism, and these are the only ones deemed "acceptable". Regardless of the strength of the evidence, Intelligent Design is simply not "acceptable" to those whose world view is naturalism.

Some would ask why Christians should care about this – for what reason should we get involved in a struggle with the naturalists over what the "origins myth" for our culture is going to be? We looked briefly at this issue yesterday when talking about the danger in which the weak find themselves in a society governed by naturalistic principles. If you ever say this, you will immediately be told that it's not necessary to be religious in order to have good morals. It is certainly true that many people who identify themselves as atheistic do good deeds, care for the less fortunate, and generally act unselfishly. However, the essential point is that no one has any *obligation* to do these good things, and when we look at history we see that in secular societies, this kind of moral behavior breaks down when times are bad, because there is no obligation to any particular course of action.

A group of people who accept theism have an authority to which they may refer to solve fundamental disagreements about what is right or wrong to do. Almost invariably, the authority is some form of Holy Scripture. Some of those in the group may interpret the "revelation" differently than others, but there is an actual text to be interpreted; the people all agree that the text is their authority for faith and practice; and the text provides a set of principles that everyone agrees should to be used to make decisions in whatever situation comes up, in bad times as well as in good. One of the reasons the United States has retained its liberty for over 200 years is that the Founding Fathers established the nation upon a "sacred text", the Constitution, which limits what the government may do. Watching the Supreme Court interpret the Constitution is a lot like watching theologians deciding what the Bible means.

On the other hand, a group of people with a secular worldview have only "common sense", or utilitarianism, or any one of a number of other rationales, in order to decide what is right or wrong. What we can see today is that there is no general agreement on which one to use. Even among those who accept one particular way of looking at things, there is no "authority" to refer to in case of disagreement – about what is "fair", or which course will produce the greatest good for the greatest number. In fact, almost everyone looking at any particular situation may see it a little bit differently, and since there is no final authority to appeal to, eventually, every disagreement gets reduced to who has enough power to get his way. This may be by threats of violence, by promises of future

benefits, by frightening people with some form of magic, by the power of persuasion, or perhaps by brute force directly applied. These modalities are in stark contrast to the theistic view, which emphasizes every human being's value as a child of God, to be treated as an end rather than a means, and never to be used for the benefit of others without his permission.

The theistic worldview, and the story of Origins that follows, gives us protection because of our obligation to obey the law of God, which actually turns out to require us to do what is best for us. Non-theists have asked why we need God or a law to do what is best-– we can simply do those things on our own. However, in the real world, just knowing what is best doesn't seem to be enough – since we often refuse to practice what we concede would be in our own best interest. Even secular people are aware of this problem.

In short, the Biblical approach to Origins is quite clear. God created a perfect world, including humankind and all other life. Sin entered the sinless economy of this earth and spoiled it, but God arranged for man's redemption through His own incarnation, Christ's living of a perfect and sinless life, and then His death on the cross. Our eventual salvation was prefigured by Christ's Resurrection and return to heaven, and we look forward to His second coming to take us home to live with Him forever.

This Story of Redemption is both coherent and convincing, as has been shown by Christian evangelists ever since the disciples preached their sermons on the Day of Pentecost. Today, scientific naturalism offers an alternative story about Origins, but (in my opinion) accepting it will inevitably lead to a disaster for human equality and for the sacredness of human life. Unfortunately, even from within Christianity itself, many are urging the rest of us to compromise the Biblical story in order to produce a story about origins that is more compatible with the one being told by the Darwinists. We are told that we should abandon the Genesis story for "theistic evolution", or "continuous creation", or "multiple creations", all of these extending God's creative efforts over millions of years. I urge you to reject this seductive appeal – it may look good in the short run, but over time I'm convinced that it will produce only loss, and lead to disaster.

Historically, churches that have abandoned the Genesis story eventually "mature" until they also refuse to accept the factual nature of the miracles reported in Scripture; that Jesus was God incarnate; and that He experienced a bodily Resurrection and return to heaven. Sometimes this progression takes many years, other times it happens quite quickly, but the position of accepting the Gospels as history while rejecting the historical status of the first 11 chapters of Genesis has always been unstable. Invariably, those who refuse to believe that Creation occurred in seven literal days or that there was a Flood that destroyed the earth, cite the scientific evidence as their reason. Having accepted the proposition that scientific data and interpretation should be used to determine what to believe about the stories told in Scripture, it is not long before the New Testament stories about miracles of healing, feeding the five thousand, raising the dead, and so on are also rejected, to be explained by some natural means. From there, logic (or "intellectual honesty") demands that they be consistent in their Biblical interpretation – and science,

both historical and empirical, rejects the proposition that a dead person can come back to life. So, the Resurrection of our Lord must be reinterpreted to fit the current scientific consensus, and the process is complete. Reason has triumphed over Revelation.

In closing, please take the traditional Biblical approach to Origins. When you are urged to consider something else, tell the person you are talking to that you'll discuss the possibility AFTER they tell you the Story of Redemption within the framework that they are suggesting. A coherent and convincing story of Sin and Salvation must be more important to Christians than adjusting our beliefs about Origins to align them more closely with the current scientific consensus.

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