

*In the beginning  
God created ...*



*James A. Fowler*

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## **Chapter One**

# **The Etiology of Creation**

From his disputed beginnings man has attempted to understand the beginning, the phenomena and the purpose of the world in which he lives. Despite all that science has explained about the operations of the universe, the questions of origin and objective have been the more difficult to address.

Recent research and discoveries, especially in the area of astrophysics, have taken scientific inquiry into cosmological considerations of the commencement and duration of the universe, as well as considerations of an ontological dynamic which along with the "anthropic principle" may point to teleological purpose in the universe. In these short studies it will be our objective to briefly consider some of the cosmological, philosophical

and theological issues pertaining to the universe in which we live.

Our first study will consider the origin of all that exists. There is undoubtedly a causality to all the effects we observe. The study of causality is called "etiology." One of the chief objectives of scientific study is to attempt to explain the cause of the observed effects. Philosophy keeps pushing the question back to the "first cause." Theology points to the "uncaused cause" of all things in a personal, powerful God. The etiological source from which all is derived is a concern to all disciplines of study.

Since traditional explanations of cause and derivation have often used phrases which include Greek and Latin terminology, our first consideration might well be to examine two prepositions. The Latin preposition, *ex*, and the Greek preposition, *ek*, both have a root meaning of "out of, from within." A primary usage of these two prepositions has been to denote derivation, source and origin. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* lists the prime meaning of *ex* as "out of, from within,"<sup>1</sup> and proceeds to note that it was used as "source, origin or derivation."<sup>2</sup> *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* explains that "originally *ek* signified an exit 'from within' something with which there had earlier been a close connection,"<sup>3</sup> therefore "it naturally came to be used to denote origin, source, derivation or separation."<sup>4</sup> These

propositions have been employed in the writings of thinkers within varied disciplines over several millennia to explain the source, origin and derivation of all that exists.

Exclusivistic naturalism, which begins with the presupposition that the natural realm is the only realm of reality, limits itself to the observation of natural phenomena and attempts to explain such phenomena by natural causes through natural processes of "natural selection." The explanation of origin and "first cause" can only be *ex natura* – everything is derived "out of nature." This premise is necessarily based on the supposition that an ambiguous concept of "nature" existed before all other things in the natural realm. Such an abstract of "nature" was therefore eternal, infinite and self-existent. The personification of such a deified abstraction is required in order to explain how "Nature" made the "natural selections" to choose which of the fittest would survive. The evolutionism of contemporary scientism must posit such an abstract of "Nature" to explain how all the natural order is derived *ex natura*.

Otherwise, naturalism must revert to the illogicality of explaining that everything was originally caused spontaneously "out of nothing." An uncaused "big bang" spontaneously generated all that now exists in a causation *ex nihilo*, "out of nothing." The "something," which is "everything" in our universe, came from "nothing." Such is



an illegitimate explanation of causality; it explains "nothing."

What is the difference, then, between this non-explanation of naturalism and the traditional explanation of religion which indicates that a personal Creator, God, caused all things to come into existence, *ex nihilo*? If the "causation *ex nihilo*" of naturalism is an absurdity, why is the "creation *ex nihilo*" of religionism not equally absurd? Though there are pertinent differences, the explanation of "creation *ex nihilo*" does indeed often mire down in some of the same logical absurdities, which we will henceforth set out to expose.

You can't get something out of nothing! One wag suggested that "If you think you can get something out of nothing, then I will give you my paycheck."

Magicians often give the impression of getting something out of nothing, but it is an illusion. God is not a deceiving illusionist who pulled the universe out of His hat!

Semantic confusion is almost inevitable when we attempt to use "nothing" as an object. In the phrase *ex nihilo* the object of the preposition *ex* is *nihilo*, "nothing." When "nothing" is a grammatical object, the human mind logically tends to objectify "nothing" into a substantive "something," in order to conceptualize such an abstraction. What is derived from nothing? Nothing. Yes, nothing is derived from nothing.

Why then was this philosophical construction of *ex nihilo* ever applied as an explanation of creation? The theistic thinkers wanted to avoid the extremes of monistic pantheism as well as detached dualism. To explain creation as *ex Deus* would lend itself to the Greek idea that the natural order was an emanation or projected extension of God. They also wanted to avoid the dualistic idea that pre-existent matter existed alongside of a pre-existent God, and the pre-existent God used the pre-existent matter to form everything else. The idea of *ex nihilo* was a denial of the Greek idea of eternally pre-existent matter. Little did they realize that in the formulation of creation *ex nihilo*, they would be creating a subtler form of dualism which has existed for centuries.

The Greek philosophers had used the concept of the natural world's derivation *ex nihilo*.<sup>5</sup> Their concepts ranged from the nihilism of Xenocrates, who wrote that "the world is created from nothing; it is a sham," to the Platonic idea that the world was an emanation of God and came into being *ex nihilo*, i.e. out of the non-substantiality of the divinized spiritual abstract.

A few of the early Christian writers utilized the phrase of "creation *ex nihilo*." The *Shepherd of Hermas*, for example, refers to "God...who brought the universe out of nothing into existence." As they tried to distance Christian thought from Greek Gnosticism and the docetism thereof, it

appears that most of the early Christian apologists avoided referring to creation *ex nihilo* because of the false impressions it might engender. It was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 AD that the Roman Catholic Church adopted *creatio ex nihilo* as the standard explanation for creation.<sup>6</sup>

Protestant theological explanations have, for the most part, adopted this Medieval extension of Greek thinking. Several have questioned the legitimacy of the explanation, though:

H.E. Ryle states in his commentary on Genesis, that "it is a mistake to suppose that the word *bara* necessarily means 'to create out of nothing.'"<sup>7</sup> George Bush likewise explains in his commentary on Genesis that "it is a matter of rational inference rather than express revelation that this means 'created out of nothing.'"<sup>8</sup>

Systematic theologian, Louis Berkhof states clearly that "the expression 'to create or bring forth out of nothing' is not found in Scripture. It is derived from the Apocrypha, namely, II Maccabees 7:28."<sup>9</sup> The apocryphal account, though possibly historical, refers to a mother who lost seven sons in one day to the butcherous genocide of Antiochus, and she says to the last son in her native language, "I beg you, child, look at the sky and the earth; see all that is in them and realize that God made them *out of nothing*, and that man comes into being in the same way."<sup>10</sup>

This is no biblical ground for a theological concept of creation *ex nihilo*; in fact, it can be interpreted as the pessimism of nihilism.

We have previously noted the tendency of man's thought to objectify "nothing" into a substantive "something," in order to conceptualize the abstraction. A.H. Strong notes in his *Systematic Theology* that "Creation is not 'production out of nothing,' as if 'nothing' were a substance out of which 'something' could be formed. The phrase is a philosophical one for which there is no Scriptural warrant."<sup>11</sup> Emil Brunner likewise explains that "Creation 'out of nothing' does not mean that there once was a 'NOTHING' out of which God created the world – a formlessness, a chaos, a primal darkness. This idea of creation as the shaping of formless matter, is the content of all creation myths. God is conditioned by nothing, not even a 'NOTHING' – He is self-determining."<sup>12</sup> These theological reactions against the objectification of the "nothing" in *ex nihilo*, are certainly warranted when one notes the apparent objectification of *Das Nichtige* in the writings of Karl Barth, and statements such as that of Paul Tillich when he refers to "the nihil out of which God creates."

Rather than explaining the creative process as *ex nihilo*, the more accurate Biblical explanation is that of creation *ek theos*. All things were brought into being "out of

God." God created "out of Himself." Such is the clear statement of the New Testament. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul explains that "there is one God, the Father, out of (*ek*) Whom are all things..." (I Corinthians 8:6). Again in his epistle to the Romans, Paul states that "out of (*ek*) Him, and through (*dia*) Him, and unto (*eis*) Him are all things" (Romans 11:36). These are clear Biblical statements on which to base a theological understanding of creation *ek theos*.

The writer of the Hebrew epistle amplifies this concept when he explains that "the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3). God is indeed not visible; "No man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18; I John 4:12). All visible things have been derived out of the invisible God, *ek theos*. "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Romans 1:20).

Theologians have apparently shied away from the Biblical statement of creation *ek theos* because of their philosophical fears of monism and pantheism. Granted, that which is derived from God as source is not constituted of the same essence as God. God did not create God-extensions or divine emanations which are constituted with deity or are partakers of divine nature or essence. Creation

does not imply any form of essentialism wherein the resultant product is of the same essence of that from which it is derived or caused. God, as the greater, can create that which is lesser than Himself and distinct from Himself.

Neither do we want to so detach and disconnect the Creator from His creation as to create a dualism of separation between Creator and creature. Having created all things *ek theos*, the Creator God maintains a vital connection with His creation, sustaining them *ek theos*. This reveals the ontological necessity of the *ek theos* creation interpretation. The divine Being is the ground of all being. It is illogical to think that being can be derived from non-being. Out of the "I AM" Being of God (Exodus 3:14), all ontological "being" is derived *ek theos*. Paul explains that "God calls the things not being as being" (Romans 4:17), and "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). In the creative action, God said "let there be...." (Genesis 1), and in that creative process all other being was derived out of His Being. All being was expressed into being out of the Being of God and is sustained by the ontological presence of God. The *ex nihilo* interpretation provides "nothing" to make the connection between Creator and creation, and thus establishes a dualistic detachment.

In like manner we can note the teleological necessity of understanding creation *ek theos*. If all things are created *ex nihilo*, "out of nothing," then the logical conclusion is

that they are progressing unto the same end, unto nothing. Such is the nihilism that explains that there is no teleological purpose to existence, but that all is meaningless and purposeless. On the other hand, when we recognize that all things are created *ek theos*, "out of God," we can understand that all things exist for the teleological purpose of glorifying God. Derivation determines direction and destiny. Origin establishes operation and objective. Source determines sustenance and significance. That which is derived *ek theos*, "out of God," is directed *eis theos*, "unto God" (Romans 11:36). Etiology is the foundation of teleology.

The theological necessity of creation *ek theos* is made evident when we consider that if all things were brought into being from a source other than God, that originator would supersede God. The derivation of all things is from God, or else a greater than God exists. When traditional religious explanation has reverted to creation *ex nihilo*, they are apparently using the Latin preposition *ex* in a secondary meaning other than derivation, source or origin, in order to explain how God's process or technique of creating employed no pre-existing material. Most certainly they have not used *ex* in the sense of derivation and meant to imply an equation that "God is nothing," although it might be argued that God is not a "thing." It could also be explained that in the assertion of creation *ex nihilo*, the

reasoning was that God created out of "nothing other than Himself," in which case the argument is really creation *ek theos* and should be thus expressed.

When we understand that all things are derived *ek theos*, from God as source and origin, it becomes apparent that all things in the created order remain contingent upon God for their continued operation and sustenance. Man is a derivative creature intended to derive his nature, life, identity, behavior and immortality from God in order to function as designed by God and to experience the destiny God intended.

The Creator acted as Redeemer in His Son, Jesus Christ, and the resultant "new creation" of Christians emphasizes creation *ek theos* even more explicitly. When Christians are regenerated and become "new creatures" in Christ (II Cor. 5:17), they are "created in righteousness and holiness of the Truth" (Eph. 4:24). In this new creation, that which did not exist in the individual now exists in that person (Romans 4:17). It is not that this life did not previously exist at all, for it has always existed in the essence and character of the living God, who "has life in Himself" (John 5:26). God imparts His own life, *ek theos*, to cause that life to exist in the spirit of an individual, so that the character of that life can be derivatively expressed and imaged and made visible in man's behavior to the glory of God. The difference in this spiritual "new creation" is



that the life is not lesser than Himself, but the spiritual life created in the Christian is the presence of God's very own life dwelling in the spirit of a receptive individual. Though a "partaker of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4), this does not cause the Christian to become deified, to become God, for the Creator remains distinct from the creature. Christ remains distinct from the Christian, though in spiritual union with the Christian, who is contingent upon the life of Christ for Christian character expression. The distinction of Creator and creation remains alongside of the vital connection of contingency in both physical and spiritual creation.

God's action, whether as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, Savior, Regenerator, Justifier, Sanctifier, Glorifier, Immortalizer, etc., is always *ek theos*, out of Himself. The contingency of cosmological function as well as Christological function is always *ek theos*. "Not that we are adequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from Him," *ek theos* (II Cor. 3:5).

## Chapter Two

# The Chronology of Creation

In Genesis chapter one the creation narrative records the sequence of God's creating all things in six "days." Throughout the history of Biblical interpretation there has been diversity of understanding concerning whether these "days" refer to six twenty-four hour days, or whether they refer to six extended periods of time. This study will briefly consider the evidence for interpreting the "days" of creation, and the subsequent dating of the creation events.

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* indicates that the Hebrew word *yom* used throughout Genesis 1 "can denote (1) the period of light (as contrasted with a period of darkness), (2) the period of 24 hours, (3) a general vague "time", (4) a point of time, (5) a year."<sup>1</sup> Obviously the latter three usages are the more figurative

usages of the word. Figurative does not necessarily imply allegorical or metaphorical. Nor does the figurative usage of a word imply that its usage is not literal. The literal usage of words has to do with the literary usage of a particular word as employed by the author and interpreted in accord with the author's intent in the literature. All five of the stated usages of the Hebrew word *yom* can be used and interpreted as "literal."

Throughout the Bible the word "day" is used in both the Hebrew and Greek languages in a figuratively literal sense. In Psalm 118:24 within a distinctively Messianic prophecy, the Psalmist writes, "This is the *day* which the Lord has made." The meaning is obviously not just that particular 24 hour period, but the "day of salvation" that is made available by the Messianic Savior. Christians seldom realize this when they sing the popular chorus based on these words.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul explains that "now is the *day* of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2), quoting from Isaiah 49:8. The present period of time between the crucifixion, resurrection and Pentecostal outpouring and the second advent of Jesus is the "day of salvation" when the saving significance of Jesus' life is available to mankind. That "day of salvation" has extended far beyond 24 hours unto almost 2000 years.

On Pentecost Peter explains in his first sermon of the early church that the "day of the Lord" is inaugurated by the events of that day (Acts 2:16-21). He interprets the phenomena of Pentecost to be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2:31.

The "day of salvation" and the "day of the Lord" are equivalent phrases to explain the period of time when the salvation of the Lord Jesus is efficacious for mankind. Jesus seems to refer to this period of time as "My day" in John 8:36. The concept of "day" is understood to be a lengthy period of time with nearly 2000 years having now elapsed. Peter, in accord with Psalm 90:4, explains that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day" (II Peter 3:8).

Approximately 25% of the usages of the word "day" throughout the Bible are employed in a figurative yet literal sense, wherein they do not refer to a 24 hour period of time. Honest exegetes of Scripture must consider this option of interpretation whenever they come to the word "day" in their Biblical studies.

The history of the interpretation of Genesis 1 records that Jewish and Christian commentators and theologians have long allowed for the interpretation of the creation "days" as indefinite periods of time. Josephus, the Jewish historian, in the first century, Irenaeus in the second century, Origen in the third century, Basil in the fourth

century and Augustine in the fifth century, all allowed for the interpretation of the creation "days" as extended periods of time. They recognized that the Hebrew language allowed for such an interpretation.

Some of the biblical interpreters who have objected to allowing for longer periods of time have noted that since the Genesis account repetitively refers to the "morning" and "evening" of each creation "day" (Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31), this evidences that a 24 hour day is the intended meaning. The Hebrew words for "morning" (*boger*) and "evening" (*ereb*) also allow for figurative meaning of "beginning" or "dawning" and "ending" or "twilight." Their usage in conjunction with "day" does not definitively demand a 24 hour interpretation.

It might also be noted that the explanation of the "beginning" and "ending" of each of the six time periods of creation is not repeated for the seventh "day." The seventh period of God's "rest" has no "closing." God's "rest" continues even unto the present and is therefore an indefinitely long period of time. The Psalmist refers to God's "rest" (Psalm 95:11). The writer of Hebrews explains that all Christians are to participate in God's "rest" (Heb. 4:1-11).

Some interpreters have noted the connection of the "days" of creation to the admonition within the ten commandments to work for six days and "remember the

Sabbath," the seventh day, "to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8-11). The parallelism does not demand a direct parallel of six 24 hour days, but rather a proportional ratio of six to one. This is evidenced in Leviticus 25 when the same proportional ratio is applied to years (Lev. 25:21) and to blocks of seven years (Lev. 25:8). The "sabbath rest" of Hebrews 4:1-11 is obviously an indefinitely extended period of time when Christians are to "rest" in the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

When considering the interpretation of the Hebrew word *yom* in Genesis 1, the interpreter must allow for an interpretation that allows for the "days" to be indefinite periods of time. The sequential progression of the creation narrative in six "days" may not be a precise daily diary, but rather a chronologue of the sequential order within extended time. This would allow "day" to represent an epoch, an era or an aeon of time.

Genesis 2:4 seems to provide an overview of the creation account: "These (all the foregoing sequential explanations from Genesis 1:1 through 2:3) are the generations (always used for a lengthy period of time) of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the *day* that the Lord God made earth and heaven." The figurative usage of the word "day," the Hebrew *yom*, is employed to refer to the entirety of the creation time period.

The recap of the sixth "day" of creation in Genesis 2:5-25 includes such a comprehensive series of events that it is almost inconceivable that they could take place within one 24 hour day. Between the creating of the male and the female, God "planted a garden" (2:8), "caused it to grow" (2:9), and asked man to "cultivate and keep it" (2:15). Then man had to inspect and name all of the animals (2:19,20), naming them according to their observed characteristics. After the formation of the woman, Adam's response is "This is now (at long last) a being just like me" (2:23).

Francis Schaeffer seems to have concluded that the sixth "day" of creation was longer than a 24 hour period.

"What does *day* mean in the days of creation? The answer must be held with some openness. In Genesis 5:2 we read: 'Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the *day* when they were created.' As it is clear that Adam and Eve were not created simultaneously, day in Genesis 5:2 does not mean a period of twenty-four hours. In other places in the Old Testament the Hebrew word *day* refers to an era, just as it often does in English. ...we must leave open the exact length of time indicated by *day* in Genesis. From the study of the word in Hebrew, it is not clear which way it is to be taken; it could be either way."<sup>2</sup>

Some have speculated that God compressed time during the "days" of creation and supernaturally caused man to operate with superhuman speed during the sixth "day" of creation. Such speculations have no place in legitimate biblical interpretation. The "apparent age" hypothesis which attempts to explain the geological evidence of rock strata, continental drift and the fossil record by asserting that "God created the world in six 24 hour days and made it appear to look older" is such an invalid speculation.

God reveals Himself and His works in the natural created order (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19,20). He reveals Himself truthfully and accurately. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Even Einstein admitted that "God is deep, but not devious," deceitful or deceptive. If God created the natural order to appear older than it is, then He was deceptive and misleading and contrary to His character – May it never be! The order and design of the created world point to the invariant orderliness of the Divine Designer. There could be no scientific study of the universe if God were a deceiver! Those who insist on an interpretation of a 24 hour "day" in the creation account must not revert to such illogical explanations which impinge upon the character of God.

Believing the creation "days" to be 24 hour days Bishop James Ussher (1581-1656) attempted to calculate



the dating of the creation of the universe by genealogical calculations of the ages of biblical personages back to Adam. In 1642 John Lightfoot calculated that Genesis 1:1 had occurred in 3928 B.C., but Bishop Ussher adjusted his calculations to 4004 B.C., the date that is still printed in some Bibles to this present day. The fallacy of such calculations becomes apparent when one realizes that the Hebrew words for "father" and "son" can be understood figuratively referring to grandfather, great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather as well as grandson, great-grandson, or great-great-grandson. Such reasoning also assumes that every generation is mentioned in the Biblical record. The precision of genealogical detail that we would employ today was not practiced by the Hebrews.

If the "days" of creation are understood to be longer periods of time, then the dating of the commencement of the universe might be in accord with the abundance of scientific measurements which date the beginning of the universe at approximately 20 billion years ago and the beginning of our planet earth at approximately 4.6 billion years. Some Christians are so "conditioned" against scientific explanations that they are reticent to accept such calculations because they have adopted a "warfare mentality" between science and Christianity. Such need not be the case. God reveals Himself both through His natural creation and in written revelation.

A brief history of previous occasions when Christian religion has been suspicious of scientific discoveries will be instructive to many Christians.

Prior to the 15th century A.D., the prevailing cosmological understanding was that the earth was the center of the universe; it was stable and permanent and did not move; everything else in the universe revolved around the earth. Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo (1564-1642) demonstrated scientifically and mathematically that the earth was part of the solar system and the earth moved around the sun while at the same time rotating on an axis. The church responded with adamant opposition, banning the writings of Copernicus and Galileo as modernistic science. The position of the church was that "The Scriptures cannot be wrong. They are absolute and inviolable. Christians must accept the literal significance of the words of the Bible." Some of the particular interpretations on which the church took its stand were from Psalm 93:1 - "the world is firmly established, it will not be moved;" Psalm 104:5 - "He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter forever and ever;" Ecclesiastes 1:4,5 - "the earth stands forever...the sun rises and the sun sets..." Needless to say, the naturalistic observations of science were finally conceded by the church to be accurate, and the Roman Catholic Church finally forgave Galileo in 1981.

Also prior to the 15th century the earth was regarded to be flat and square with four corners. The observations of Copernicus and Galileo convinced Columbus of the feasibility of sailing around the world. But the church reacted with the same absolutizing of their interpretations of the Bible. They argued that Isaiah could not have been wrong when he wrote of "the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12), nor was John when he wrote of the "angels standing at the four corners of the earth" (Rev. 7:1). The church also argued that the earth was flat based on Psalm 104:2 and Isaiah 40:22 where the Bible reads that God "stretched out heaven like a curtain." The church could only conceive of a flat "curtain," failing to recognize that the Hebrew word had reference to a "tent," and they certainly had no concept of the "dome tents" that are available today. The church has likewise had to concede that the natural observations of science were accurate and the earth is not flat.

Would you believe that there are still people today that believe that the earth is flat? Yes, there is an organization called The Flat-Earth Society. The members of this association still argue that the earth is flat and at the center of the universe. Some people are not easily convinced; they hold on to their epistemological belief-system at all cost! Despite conclusive evidence to the

contrary, they "grab at every straw" to support their increasingly absurd assertions.

As the scientific evidence becomes increasingly conclusive concerning the dating of the universe and of our solar system, will the religious institutions rigidly adhere to their absolutized interpretations of Genesis 1 as the church of the 15th and 16th centuries did to their absolutized interpretations? Will we see an organization called The Young-Earth Society which will likewise "grab at every straw" to support their pre-conceived ideas? Will the arguments of the "young-earth" supporters become increasingly absurd? Some are arguing today that if a Christian does not believe that the earth was created in six 24 hour days and is approximately 6000 years old, then such a person does not believe in the literal absolutes of Scripture, does not believe in the moral absolutes of Scripture, and is therefore identified with those who are morally degenerate, with homosexuals, murderers and abortionists.<sup>3</sup>

Surely intelligent and spiritual Christians can rise above such narrow rigidity and recognize that God reveals Himself both supernaturally and naturally. Science is not the natural enemy to Christianity, but can serve as an ally in our cosmological considerations of God's creation. Christians today must exercise an openness toward the evidence for the length of the "days" of creation and the

dating of the commencement of creation. Such openness does not impinge upon the accuracy of any Biblical statement, and in no way denies the supernatural acts of God in creation.

## Chapter Three

# Creation and Evolution

Notice that the subject of consideration is not "creation *or* evolution" or "creation *versus* evolution," but rather "creation *and* evolution." These two conceptual realities have often been cast as antithetical premises, with a "warfare mentality" adopted by exclusivistic proponents of each idea. It is the objective of this article to attempt to eliminate the artificial battle-lines, to explain the compatibility of creation and evolution, and to suggest that Christianity and science can function as allies in man's search to understand the origin and operation of that which exists in the world in we live.

Semantic clarification by some brief definitions of terms will serve as foundation for further explanation:

**"Creation"** refers to the action process whereby all that exists came into being from a self-existent divine source. The resultant product of God's creating, "the creation," is distinct from the Creator and does not partake of the same essence of the Creator, but is sustained by and contingent upon the Creator for its intended function.

**"Creationism"** is a label applied to an organized system of thought associated with Christian fundamentalism and the presupposition of exclusive supernaturalism of God's creating all things in six twenty-four hour days.

**"Evolution"** is etymologically derived from the Latin which means "to unroll" or "work out." Evolution refers to the changes that are "unrolled" or "worked out" in the context of time. These changes may be enacted by natural or supernatural processes, either in progressive development or punctuated by divine fiat.

**"Evolutionism"** is the developed belief-system that attributes all change in the universe to progressively developmental natural causes alone. The presupposition of exclusive naturalism allows only for material and physical causes.

**"Science"** is an English word transliterated from the Latin *scientia* which means "knowledge" or "understanding." Science is the disciplined efforts of man "to know" and "to understand" everything.

**"Scientism"** is the aberration of true science which isolates and absolutizes knowledge within exclusive naturalistic parameters. It limits evidence for knowledge to empirical observation by sensory perception.

Naturalistic scientism and its premise of evolutionism has been so elevated by the institutions of knowledge acquisition in our society to the point of deification of the "naturalistic scientific method" and the disallowing of any other knowledge claims. In their epistemological exclusivism, they have "rigged the game" by disallowing all evidence except for natural, physical phenomena and all interpretation of such except within their predetermined categories of acceptable causal explanation. British astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle wrote, for example, that "it is against the spirit of scientific enquiry to regard observable effects from 'causes unknown to science.'"<sup>1</sup> Such thinking indicates that the "deck is stacked" with closed-minded inbred circular logic allowing for no different evidence or opinion.

Though the naturalistic premises of scientism and evolutionism are often traced back to Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the concepts pre-date Darwin by thousands of years. The Greek philosophers posited an infinite universe which existed eternally. The Roman philosopher, Lucretius, in the first century B.C., suggested that the random assembly of "atoms" within an infinite number of



cycles could produce life forms as we observe them. The "molecules to man" theory is not new!

Charles Darwin did propose that life forms could naturally evolve. Having traveled on the survey ship, the H.M.S. Beagle to Patagonia, Chile, Peru and elsewhere, he returned to England to formulate his observations in a book, *On the Origin of Species*. The last sentence of the concluding chapter of that book is a synopsis of Darwin's position. It reads, "There is grandeur in this view of life,... having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and...from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."<sup>2</sup> This is not the exclusivistic evolutionism proffered by scientism today. The recognition of "the Creator" evidences that Darwin allowed for origins supernaturally derived from God.

It is the "neo-Darwinian evolutionism" of modern scientism that demands exclusivistic naturalism for the explanation of the origin and operation of all existence. Having deified "Nature" as infinite and eternal, the hypothesis suggests that if given an infinite quantity of eternal particles with infinite energy to allow for infinite and random motion and mutation, the infinite variety of random processes might conceivably by chance produce what exists today. Jacques Monod explains that

"Chance alone is at the source of every innovation, of all creation in the biosphere. Pure chance, absolutely free but blind, at the very root of the stupendous edifice of evolution."<sup>3</sup>

More particularly it is suggested that the basic building blocks of the material universe, such as quanta, atoms and molecules evolved into simple life forms, which by the natural processes of favorable mutations evolved into complex life forms and eventually into human form, solely by the random chance of natural, physical laws without any supernatural agency of a Divine Being. The quantum quagmire allowed for atomic attraction which developed a molecular mush which was transformed into a living plankton soup which becomes the fishiest story that the resultant moronic man could have ever dreamed up concerning his own origins.

British naturalist and theologian, William Paley, used the famous "watch" illustration to expose the absurdity of the origin of complex form by the processes of naturalistic chance. <sup>4</sup> If a watch is found on a sandy beach is there any chance that its formation was caused by the random interaction of the sand particles? No, the watch was constructed by a personal and intelligent watchmaker! Scientists have also been forced to admit that random chance is untenable. Sir Fred Hoyle has calculated that the chance of random amino acids producing workable enzymes

for life is so minuscule as to be outside the realm of feasibility.<sup>5</sup>

When you take away the "infinite time" factor for infinite variables of chance, then evolutionism does not have a chance at being an intelligible explanation of cosmic origins. The observations and measurement of astrophysicists have done just that, revealing that the universe is not infinite and eternal, but that a "singularity" of commencement must be posited. The "beginning" of the universe has been scientifically established by the astrophysicists. Now they must re-educate the biologists and geologists who are still relying on their out-dated concepts of naturalistic evolutionism. Even if the universe is calculated to have its commencement 20 billion years ago, there is insufficient time for evolutionary processes to have generated life. Using mathematical probability, Hugh Ross explains that the remotest possibility of  $10^{100,000,000,000}$  would be inadequate to expect naturalistic chance to produce life.<sup>6</sup>

What is the response of scientism to this new scientific evidence? They are adamantly unwilling to engage in genuine science and to follow where the evidence leads for knowledge. For example, Sir Arthur Eddington's response was, "Some people would like to call this non-random feature of the world 'purpose' or 'design,' but I will call it 'anti-chance.'"<sup>7</sup> It is obvious that many so-called

scientists are so fixated in their closed-minded exclusivistic belief-system of scientism as to forestall genuine science. Neo-Darwinian evolutionism has developed a rigid epistemological belief-system with the illogical "faith" premise that "the natural world is all there is," and their defense of such is akin to the most superstitious religionism.

Remember that Charles Darwin was not necessarily guilty of being the propagator of such "Darwinism" or "evolutionism." Darwin suggested a mental metaphor as a picture of the natural observations he had made. Science often uses theoretical models to attempt to explain observed phenomena. The problems come when the models are assumed to be reality itself.

Charles Darwin was a pigeon breeder. He employed the metaphor of the breeder's selective activity in changing the natural ability of pigeons into progressively more satisfactory racing forms as an analogy to the "natural selection" of plants and animals into progressively higher forms. Analogies always break down because they do not correspond at every point. The breeder's selective activity is personal and intelligible for a specific purpose. "Natural selection" is only equivalent if "Nature" is personified in order to be able to "choose" and "make a preference from a plural number of options." The metaphor from "breeder's selection" to "natural selection" was flawed, but the

analogous model was absolutized as reality from the time of Darwin to the present exclusivism of evolutionism which deifies "Nature" as the random selector and manipulator.

Evolutionism and its premise of "natural selection" processes of progression unto higher forms has been adopted philosophically into many other realms of thought. The material/physical evolutionism which suggests that physical inorganic material evolved by "natural selection" into all forms of physical life, was transformed into social/cultural evolutionism which suggests that societies evolve from the primitive to the highly developed as the natural "struggle for existence" allows for the "survival of the fittest." Epistemological evolutionism suggests that there is a natural collective selection process among mankind which progresses toward higher knowledge and ultimately toward infinite knowledge. Ethical/moral evolutionism is based on the premise that whatever is useful for survival is "good," and mankind naturally selects such "good" and progresses toward what is "best" for all. Spiritual evolutionism posits that by the natural recognition and selection of the "god" within us, we evolve into deified humanity. The discussion of evolutionism is muddled when such varying categories and premises are not carefully differentiated. David Livingstone concludes that

"When the devotees of evolutionism begin to wax lyrical in their claims to have found in natural selection an axiom for ethics, a warranty for social progress, a scientific theory of knowledge, or a new metaphysics, they need to be reminded that their theory is assuming mythic proportions."<sup>8</sup>

The cult of naturalism which deifies "Nature" and its alleged "natural selection" has many worshippers today.

There are extremist positions, though, on each side of the issues of creation and evolution. They have developed epistemological belief-systems of competing exclusivistic ideologies. On the one side is scientism with its premise of naturalism and hypothesis of evolutionism. Scientism adopts an exclusivist position which evaluates all phenomena by empirical observation interpreted by human reasoning in accord with their self-limited "scientific method" to ascertain the natural causes and effects. On the opposite side of this ideological gulf is the religionism of fundamentalism with its premise of exclusive supernaturalism and hypothesis of creationism. Fundamentalism adopts an exclusivist position which evaluates all phenomena by Biblical revelation employing a self-limited exegetical method demanding the acceptance of the interpretation by "faith" in the supernatural causes and effects. These extremist positions have blurred the genuine realities of both creation and evolution, and by their

exclusivisms have polarized thinking on these subjects into an either/or situation which often stigmatizes those with differing opinions as their "enemy."

Is it not time for thinking people to rethink and adopt a balanced moderate position which recognizes that the creation processes and the evolutionary processes are not necessarily incompatible? "Creation" and "evolution," as defined at the beginning of this article, need not be considered as antithetical realities. A brief historical review will be helpful at this point.

The theological reaction to Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species* during the latter part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century in both Britain and the United States was not one of fear and antagonism. David Livingstone points out in his book, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought*, that Charles Hodge (1797-1878), theological professor at Princeton,

"accepted the idea that Christians could responsibly believe that one kind of plant and animal had evolved from earlier and simpler forms so long as they also affirmed that everything was designed by God and that it was due to His purpose and power that all the forms of vegetable and animal life are what they are. Evolution with design was Christian,

but evolution without design was atheism. Hodge showed that the metaphorical character of Darwin's theory induced the irrepressible tendency to capitalize and personify Natural Selection."<sup>9</sup>

Scottish theologian, James Orr (1844-1913), indicated that "the theory of evolution ought not to be equated with its specifically Darwinian formulation."<sup>10</sup>

American Baptist theologian, A.H. Strong (1836-1921) explained that

"If we were deists, believing in a distant God and a mechanical universe, evolution and Christianity would be irreconcilable. But since we believe in a dynamical universe, of which the personal and living God is the inner source of energy, evolution is but the basis, foundation and background of Christianity, the silent and regular working of Him who, in the fulness of time, utters his voice in Christ and the cross."<sup>11</sup>

Through the first decade of the twentieth century evangelical theologians accommodated organic evolutionary biology with their Biblical interpretations of creation. Not until fundamentalism was generated by a series of books entitled *The Fundamentals* published between 1910 and 1915, did an anti-evolutionary backlash develop.<sup>12</sup> Adhering to a particular "literalistic" understanding of



Biblical interpretation, and given leadership by Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses and Dispensationalists, the fundamentalists engaged in bitter polemics against any concept of evolution. This was evidenced most publicly in the famous Scopes trial of 1925 where William Jennings Bryan led the legal defense against evolutionary education. Fundamentalism became increasingly defensive and sectarian, suspicious of science in general, and pessimistic about society. In the 1940s Henry Morris spearheaded the fundamentalist understanding of exclusivistic creation under the banner of "creationism," eventually establishing the Institute for Creation Research in southern California.

So it is that we have the polarized antagonism between the extremist positions of exclusivist creationism and exclusivist evolutionism today. To suggest a moderating position is to risk the wrath of both camps, for they have both narrowly defined their predetermined categories of acceptable causal explanation. Scientism accepts only natural causes. Creationism accepts only supernatural causes. Scientism is a perversion of genuine science and its open-ended search for knowledge without limiting the parameters and options. Fundamentalism and Creationism are an aberration of traditional Christian thought. Historic Christianity has accepted both supernatural and natural

causes and processes, both Biblical fundamentals and science, both creation and evolution.

Eschewing the exclusivism of the competing ideological belief-systems, a thinking individual can logically and intelligently believe that the universe did have a "singularity" of beginning, a "genesis;" and that its origin was orchestrated by a personal, intelligent Being who was self-existent and outside of the created order. Furthermore, a unified contingency of existence and function of the entire created order upon such a personal and intelligent Being is logically required, as well as a teleological purpose and destiny. Genuine scientific observation is increasingly in accord with the Biblical account of the creation and sustenance of all things by the Creator, Jehovah-God. The "selection" of created forms was not made by a personified and deified "Nature," but by a personal, intelligent God who had a divine purpose for every selection and preference that was made. The Living, Creator God punctuated the creative process with His unique self-generative acts of creation, particularly in giving life (Nehemiah 9:6) at the points of the introduction of physical life, psychological life and spiritual life. He undoubtedly employed the natural processes of change, evolution, within His creative process, for such is as well-attested historically, within its own realm of observation and evaluation, as are any historical events, including the life of

Jesus Christ. By the historic "singularity" of God's redemptive action in His Son, Jesus Christ, God has continued to function as Creator to allow those individuals who are receptive to His activity in "faith" to become "new creatures" (II Corinthians 5:17) by His creation of spiritual life in man "out of Himself," *ek theos*; and that with the resultant contingency of the Christian's deriving all from God in Christ with the hope of teleological fulfillment in God's glory.

The foregoing is a logical explanation of God's supernatural creative and redemptive activity incorporative of His employment of natural evolutionary change. Such an explanation does not impinge upon or contradict open-minded scientific observation, nor does it violate open-minded Biblical interpretation and Christian understanding. Christianity and science should be able to function as allies in man's search to better understand the origin and function of the world in which we live.

## Chapter Four

# The Contingency of Creation

God is the only one who is self-existent, self-generative, self-sustaining, autonomous, independent, eternal and infinite. He is a non-contingent Being.

Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century expanded Augustine's cosmological argument for God's existence to include the logical sub-thesis that "contingent things demand a non-contingent Being." A non-contingent Being is required as their source, or else contingency of origin keeps extending backward indefinitely, and as their functional correlative, or else there is a vacuous determinism. God, the non-contingent Being, created all things to be contingent upon Himself.

The created order is not self-existent, self-generative, self-sustaining, autonomous, independent, eternal or infinite. Only God is such; and what God is only God is.

If God is not the sustainer of all that He created, then He created something that is autonomous, independent, self-sustaining, self-actualizing. This would attribute to a created object what only God is, and impinge upon the exclusivity of God's autonomy and independence. Such is the basis of idolatry!

God did not create something which could be self-sufficient, self-sustaining or self-generative. ALL that God created is contingent on His continued and on-going sustenance. The created order was derivative (*ek theos*) in its origin, and the created order is continuously derivative (*ek theos*) for its existence, order, function and operation. Everything that God created is contingent or dependent on the ontological dynamic of the all-powerful, eternal, living God in order to function as intended.

To illustrate the "contingency of creation" we might note two concepts of "creativity" which are inadequate analogies of God's relation to His creation:

First, the illustration of the artist. With talented "creativity" the artist crafts his work. Once completed, the marble figure or the painting on the canvas is independent

of the artist. The artist might die, but the work of art remains.

The relationship of the Creator to His creation is *not* like that of an artist to His work. The created order would disintegrate and vanish upon the withdrawal of the Divine presence. "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). "In Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). "He upholds all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3). Creation would not exist autonomously and independently from God, apart from His sustaining providence, maintaining power and sovereign control. This is known as the "general immanence" of God in His creation. The "particular immanence" of God in His creation is the indwelling of Christ in the Christian.

A second inadequate illustration is found when the male and female of a particular kind of living organism join together, and the union issues forth in the "creativity" of reproduction. It is the birth of another of the "same kind," for "like begets like," after their kind, the same in nature and essence.

God's creating activity was *not* the creativity of reproduction. God did not create a creation that was essentially God, an extended God phenomena, an emanation or extension of the essence of God, of the "same kind." The creation does not become the existence-form of God, or the phenomenal appearance of the Absolute. The creation is

not divine, and does not become "god." That which derives its origin from God is not necessarily of the same nature as God, for the greater can create the lesser, which is not one with Himself. God is not contained in, absorbed by or possessed by His creation.

God is distinct from His creation, but He is not divorced, disconnected or detached from His creation. He is vitally connected to His creation, which must derive from Him (*ek theos*) in order to be sustained and maintained in its existence and function. That is the continuing contingency of the created order.

The English word "contingency" is derived from two Latin words, *con* meaning "together with," and *tangere* meaning "to touch." From the latter word we get the English word "tangible" and the word "tangential" which is sometimes used as a synonym for "contingent."

Contingency has to do with how two things "relate to, come in touch with, or in contact with one another." We are using "contingency" to refer to the relation of the creation to the Creator; to explain how the created order is connected with, inter-related with, associated with, conditioned by, subject to, and dependent upon God. God is necessary for the sustaining and function of the created order.

The creation is contingent upon God, but God is not contingent upon the creation. God did not "need" the

world. He was and is self-sustaining and self-sufficient. The creation was not necessary for God's existence or well-being, or to fulfill His "needs." God does not have any "needs" outside of Himself; not even a "need" for creation to be contingent upon Him. He lacks nothing! Some Christians have inadvertently explained that God created man because He was lonely and needed fellowship and social interaction. Impossible! That makes God's well-being contingent upon man. Never! God is not contingent upon creation. Creation is always contingent upon God.

The realization of the contingency of the world upon God is a specifically Christian concept. The Greek scientists and philosophers sometimes explained the universe in monistic terms wherein "Nature" was deified and time was viewed as cyclical and eternal. Other Greek thinkers developed a very dualistic concept of the universe, wherein the immaterial was so removed from the material, the spiritual from the physical, that God was detached from the physical world. The early Christian thinkers rejected the extremes of Greek thinking, and explained the dynamic contingency of creation upon God and His grace. So convincing was their argument that Greek naturalism was put aside for many centuries.

There was a resurgence of dualistic thinking in the writings of Augustine in the fifth century, as he emphasized the deterministic "will of God" separated from the actions



of God. Thomas Aquinas fortified such dualistic arguments by separating faith and reason. The thirteenth century was a revival of interest in Aristotelian concepts. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Francis Bacon emphasized empiricism, Rene Descartes separated mind and matter making reason supreme, and Immanuel Kant asserted that the mind can only know what it is subjectively involved with. These philosophical foundations led to a materialistic science that viewed the universe as mechanical, instrumental and deterministic, to be observed with rational empiricism.

Only now in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries are the observations of science forcing scientists to give up their faulty philosophical foundations. The principle of relativity and quantum theory have shown the fallacy of strict empiricism and positivism. There is a tendency, though, for science to swing to the opposite extreme of spiritualistic science with monistic emphases of a self-sustaining universe.

Recent scientific studies are documenting the contingency of the universe. Science is having to admit that the best scientific evidence is against any hypothesis of an infinite, eternal universe. A "singularity" occurred; there was a beginning, a "genesis." There is design and order and purpose in the universe. There is an invariant dependability, constancy and faithfulness to the universe,

to which all other things relate. There is an ontological relatedness to all that happens in the universe; a personal Being to which/whom all must relate to function as intended.

We are seeing in our day the greatest explosion of scientific discovery of the universe in the history of mankind and his cosmological observations. The previous great period of revolutionary scientific discovery was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when Copernicus and Galileo made their astronomical observations. Copernicus wrote a treatise *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*. It explained the solar system and the planetary orbits, repudiating the theories of a stationary earth that dated back to the Greek philosophers and Ptolemy. The institutional church of that time reacted with repudiation, ostracism and excommunication of those who advocated the new scientific theories. The church defended their traditional, literalistic interpretations of Scripture, but eventually had to admit that the observations of science were correct.

Now in the twentieth century we have had a "quantum leap" in scientific discovery. The astrophysicists are measuring the universe and evaluating the inter-relations of the micro and macro cosmological phenomena.

Whereas Copernicus and Galileo discovered the *revolutions* of the planets, modern scientists are discovering

the *relativity*, the *relations* of the universe. Whereas Copernicus and Galileo observed the *design* of the solar system, modern scientists are observing the *derivation* and *dependency* of the universe upon a dependable invariant. Whereas Copernicus and Galileo recognized the *conformity* and *consistency* of the bodies in space, modern scientists are recognizing the *contingency* of the universe. Whereas Copernicus and Galileo saw the *patterns* of the planets and stars, modern scientists are seeing the *personal* factors in control of the universe. Whereas Copernicus and Galileo explained the *heliocentricity* of the solar system, modern scientists are explaining the *ontocentricity*, perhaps even the *theocentricity* of the universe. These are amazing times!

Science is reluctantly having to conclude that the origin and operation of the universe demands a singular, intelligible Being in a continuously sustaining ontorelational connection with the cosmos. This is but a return to Christian thinking about the "contingency of creation."

The concept of "contingency" has been expressed in various ways by scientists and theologians. Michael Polanyi, chemist and philosopher, referred to the ultimate relationality between Creator and creation. Albert Einstein is known for his "theory of relativity," which explains that light, space and time are not absolute, but are *related* to something else, an invariant. All the created order seems to be relative to an invariant, some power or energy, some

One, who is absolute. T.F. Torrance, the Scottish theologian, has been the primary author to use the word "contingency" to explain the relation of the creation to the Creator.

In essence this study on the "contingency of creation" is an attempt to apply Einstein's "theory of relativity" to a Christian understanding of cosmology and theology. No wonder it is not easy to understand! The established, eternal, immutable invariant to which all else is related or relative is God. God is the absolute, non-contingent Being. Christians need to understand that science and Christianity can be allies instead of antagonists, especially now as science is willing to admit the relativity, contingency and dependency of the universe. Einstein himself said that "science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind."

The contingency of creation is being ever more clearly documented and explained as science observes the evidence for the "singularity" of the origin and commencement of the universe. Science is recognizing the necessary contingency of order, design, constancy and dependency upon a relational invariant that is omnipotent and personal. As they move closer to verification of Einstein's proposed "unified field theory," they move closer to recognizing the ontological contingency of an ultimate Being. But natural revelation alone and the "natural

theology" based upon such will never bring science to the recognition of the greater understanding of contingency.

The contingency of the creation is even more specifically documented, defined and explained by the evidences for the "singularity" of the incarnational redemptive action of God in Jesus Christ. The creation of the physical world "set the stage," so to speak, for the "new creation" in Jesus Christ. The cosmological "singularity" was the context for the redemptive "singularity."

The ultimate meaning of God's creation and the contingency thereof is in the special revelation of God through Jesus Christ. In Christ there is the "new beginning" whereby man can experience "re-gensis," the spiritual regeneration (Titus 3:5) necessary to become a "new creature" (II Cor. 5:17) and a participant in the "new creation" (Gal. 6:15) and the "new humanity" (Eph. 2:15), restoring the "image of God" in man (Col. 3:10) so that man might function as intended. As the epitome of God's created order, man is the creature who can allow for the highest expression of God's character and Being, deriving such behaviorally.

Christians, who are "new creatures" in Christ, are "created in righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24) and "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10) which God prepares and for which He provides complete

sufficiency. God sustains the "new creature" with enabling empowering. "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). Christian living, the expression of God's character in the behavior of the Christian, is contingent upon God in Christ. No one can live as a Christian except by the grace provision of God, responding to such in faith which is our receptivity to His activity. The Christian life is a derived life, a derived righteousness. "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our sufficiency is in Him" (*ek theos*), as Paul explains in II Cor. 3:5. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the "singularity" that makes available the dynamic of divine life, the life of Christ Himself, to dwell in man and function through man. By such man is "saved" from dysfunction in order to function as God intended, contingent upon the life of the risen Lord Jesus.

It is indeed regrettable that science is perhaps more willing to recognize the cosmological ramifications of the contingency of the universe, than theology is willing to recognize the theological ramifications of divine contingency in the Christian life. Christian religion stubbornly remains committed to static epistemological belief-systems rather than recognizing the ontological basis of a relationship with Jesus Christ wherein contingency on His Being comprises Christian living rather than "belief" in the "benefits."

Science and theology have both been guilty of adhering to a dualistic "container model" of thinking. Science used to think of the universe as a big receptacle. In that big box they could not find God by empirical observation, even though the box seemed to be getting bigger and bigger. Science had a self-limited perspective, and eventually had to recognize that what was going on inside the box was related to and influenced by, contingent upon, something or Someone beyond the box.

Popular theology seems to think that they have God figured out, and He is boxed up in their belief systems. "God in the box" of the Book, of their doctrinal/theological formulations, of their ecclesiastical actions and pronouncements, of their moral standards. The incentive for living has often been that "if we love the God in the box, we should behave so as to please Him." Such is the religion of performance and "works" with its resultant guilt and shame. Popular Christian teaching must "let God out of the box" and join with science in recognizing Him as the sustainer of all creation. Particularly they need to recognize the ontological relationship that the Christian has with God, and that the Christian life is only derived contingently from the life of the risen Lord Jesus.

Science seems to be at the forefront of explaining the "relatedness" and "relativity" of the created order upon God. Religion, on the other hand, is running in circles trying

to be socially "relevant" to the world. Rather than trying to relate the ecclesiastical institution and its practices to the fallen world, Christians should be at the forefront of interpreting the newest scientific observations of how God in Jesus Christ relates to everything in the world, and all the world is contingent and dependent upon God. More specifically Christian theology must consistently explain the contingent relation of the Christian "new creature" upon Christ for all Christian living.





## Chapter Five

# The Teleology of Creation

The English word "teleology" is derived from two Greek words: *telos* meaning "end," and *logos* meaning "word," but linguistically extended to mean "logical considerations of." Teleology therefore pertains to the "logical considerations of the end" of creation. By "end" we do not mean the "termination" or "cessation" of creation, although the Greek word *telos* could have such a meaning, but we are using it in the other sense in which the word was used, to refer to the end-purpose, the end-objective, the end-goal. We are referring to the logical-end rather than the chronological-end.

Back in the fifth century, Augustine (354-430 AD) proposed to prove God's existence. One of his logical "proofs" was the "teleological argument" for the existence

of God, by which he argued that the design of the universe implies a purpose or direction behind it. The universe does not exhibit random chaos and purposelessness. The design of the universe demands a Designer. Despite the fact that it is not possible to "prove God" logically, and the "natural theology" based on such logic and observation does not bring one to a personal knowledge of God, there is still an element of truth in what Augustine presented about the teleology of creation.

Popular cosmological considerations today often lack any concept of teleology. Consider these adaptations of a verse of Scripture which will demonstrate the illogic of two philosophical systems, naturalism and nihilism, and their absence of teleology.

Naturalism might explain that "from nature and through nature and unto nature are all things. To nature be the glory forever."

"From nature," out of nature, *ex natura*, would be to imply that the derivative source and origin of all things is "nature." That requires "nature" to be before all things, and requires "nature" to be infinite and eternal, to have always existed, to be self-existent. Such a thesis deifies "nature" with a capital "N," usually personifying "Nature" as "Mother Nature."

"Through nature" might imply that all things became what they are through nature. They evolved into their

present forms through natural processes alone. The personified and deified "Nature" made the selections of "natural selection" to allow the fittest and highest forms to survive. "Nature" is thus presented as self-generative and self-actualizing. Such an idea is inherent in the evolutionism that is part of the naturalistic scientism advocated by many today.

"Unto nature" implies that everything is proceeding toward a continued natural state. Everything recycles. Everything reincarnates. What goes around, comes around. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The direction and destination of everything is "back to nature."

"To nature be the glory forever." Having deified "nature" in this ideological system of exclusive naturalism, "nature" is considered as infinite and eternal, forever. The natural product worships its natural source. Nature worship.

Consider this point. The "unto" is determined by the "out of." The significance is determined by the source. The operation and objective is determined by the origin. The direction and destination is determined by the derivation. If everything starts with an infinite, eternal "nature" operating by natural processes, then it all ends up "back to nature." What is the purpose? What is the objective? Where is the meaning? Exclusive naturalism lacks

a *telos*, an end-goal. Everything just goes around and around monotonously but naturally.

Consider another adaptation of the Biblical verse:  
"From nothing and through nothing and unto nothing are all things. To nothing be the glory forever."

"From nothing," out of nothing, *ex nihilo*. This has been the traditional explanation of creative commencement by dualistic theology through the centuries. Since both the Greek preposition *ek* and the Latin preposition *ex* have a root meaning of "out of, from within," implying derivative source and origin, this explanation becomes illogical. You do not get something, or anything, or "all things" from nothing. To make sense of the "out of nothing" doctrine, men's thought processes have made the "nothing" into "something" called "nothing." It is still illogical for the derivative source of all things to be "nothing."

"Through nothing" implies an operational process utilizing nothing. This would be a totally random process of chance circumstances.

"Unto nothing." Is there no purpose and objective to all things? Is everything purposeless, meaningless, hopeless? Such is the basis of the philosophy of nihilism, which asserts that existence is senseless and useless. It is going nowhere. This is Buddhist ateleology. The ultimate objective in Buddhism is "nothingness," *nirvana*, the

extinguishing of existence in oblivion, the negation of existence.

"To nothing be the glory forever." Nihilism indicates that there is nothing glorious about this existence. "Stop the reincarnation wheel." "Stop the world; I want to get off!" There is no purpose to continue to exist.

Notice again, that the source determines the significance, the origin determines the objective, the derivation determines the direction and destiny. If all things are "out of nothing" and "though nothing," then it all ends up meaning nothing, "unto nothing." Nihilism lacks a *telos*. It is ateleological or antiteleological.

Now we shall consider the verse as Paul wrote it in Romans 11:36. "For from Him (God) and through Him (God) and unto Him (God) are all things. To Him (God) be the glory forever."

"From Him," out of God, *ek theos*, implies that the derivative source and origin of all things is God. The invariant, immutable God, who is self-existent, self-generative, self-sustaining, eternal, infinite, autonomous, independent and non-contingent is the source and origin of all things. The greater can create the lesser. Therefore the Living God could create all lesser forms of living things (Neh. 9:6). The Infinite could create the finite. The Supernatural could create the natural. The Spiritual could create the physical. The invisible Existent One, God, could

create visible, as well as invisible, existence lesser than Himself.

"Through Him," by means of His omnipotence and sovereignty, all the created order is sustained, held together (Col. 1:17). "Through Him" the operational processes of the universe function as constant and dependable order. God is the faithful invariant that allows science to see the dependable design and function of the cosmos, which they call the "laws of nature." Through God, the divine and personal "selector," the natural world has unrolled, evolved, in accord with His purposes. God is the agent through Whom all has developed as it has developed in the universe.

"Unto Him," implies that the end-objective toward which all things are directed is God. The *telos* is *theos*! This is not to say that everything "becomes God." Everything does not turn "into" God, but is directed "unto" God, in terms of its purpose and goal. The teleology of creation, the objective and purpose of creation, is to glorify God. "To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

Notice again that the beginning determines the end. Etiology determines teleology. Derivation determines direction and destiny. Origin determines operation and objective. Source determines sustenance and significance. What the universe is derived "out of" determines the purpose that it proceeds "unto." The *ek* determines the *eis*.

If you know where it comes from, you can know where its going.

A brief history of how Christian theology has emphasized the teleology of creation should be beneficial. We have already noted that Augustine, in the fifth century, proposed the "teleological argument" for God's existence, explaining that "design demands a Designer." Thomas Aquinas amplified the "teleological argument" in his writings. Western schools of philosophy even established an educational discipline in the universities called "teleology," the study of the design and purpose in nature.

Though there was a dualistic tendency inherent in such teleological arguments for God's existence, the argument of design and purpose remained as one of the major tenets of "natural theology," being the church's "stock-in-trade" explanation of cosmological considerations at least through the nineteenth century. It was in the eighteenth century that William Paley wrote his famous book on *Natural Theology*, using the teleological argument as a major tenet of his thesis.

In the nineteenth century, after Charles Darwin wrote his book on *The Origin of Species* (1859), the major argument in response to Darwin by the theologians, was that "evolutionism" as a theory to explain all natural causes, lacked teleology. The naturalism of evolutionism does not have anything to give it purpose, to explain the direction



which it is going, to provide any sense of significance and destiny.

American theologian, Charles Hodge (1797-1878) explained that in evolutionism the selection of natural causes is "without design, being conducted by unintelligent causes."<sup>1</sup> He concluded that "the ateleological explanation of evolution is atheistic."<sup>2</sup> Scottish theologian, James Orr (1844-1913), likewise objected to the "antiteleological bias in Darwin's theory."<sup>3</sup> P.T. Forsyth (1848-1921), another Scottish theologian, wrote that

"everything turns on the kind of teleology. ...There is nothing in evolution fatal to the great moral and spiritual teleology of Christianity. ...It is not in nature at all that we find nature's end. ...In Jesus Christ we have the final cause of history, and the incarnation of that kingdom which is the only teleology large enough for the whole world."<sup>4</sup>

Christian theologians in the half century following Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species*, recognized that to overstate evolution in the exclusivistic natural selection premises of evolutionism, was to deny the teleology of God's purposeful selective action. The earliest Christian protagonists against evolutionism saw that the teleological issue was the foremost issue.

From the second decade of the twentieth century and the popularizing of fundamentalism and creationism, the arguments used by Christians to refute evolutionism have become increasingly less cogent. They have blurred the issue. Instead of using the teleology of God's purpose and design in creation, the evangelical reactions to evolutionism have evolved into a defense of the Bible, a defense of ideological epistemology, and a defense of morality.

Whereas naturalism or evolutionism is ateleological or antiteleological (having no purpose or contrary to purpose), the popular arguments of fundamentalists and creationists are misteleological or dysteleological (mistaken and distorted as to purpose). In the writings of fundamentalistic creationists the purposes of understanding creation in accord with their interpretations are often explained as (1) the upholding of the absolute, infallibility of the Bible as the "Word of God," (2) the preserving of the Christian belief-system, and (3) the affirmation of moral absolutes of behavior. These religious tenets comprise an invalid, even idolatrous, teleological direction. The purpose of recognizing God in the origin and operation of the universe is not to assert the absoluteness of particular interpretations of the Bible, nor the absoluteness of a particular doctrinal belief-system, nor the absoluteness of a particularly defined morality. Rather, we want to recognize the exclusive absoluteness of God Himself as Creator and

Sustainer, allowing no other alleged "absolutes" to be substituted and deified by the absolutism of religion in place of God. We must not allow God's divine purposes for the universe to be substituted and undermined by man's religious purposes.

The only meaningful explanation of the teleological purpose of creation is that of historic Christianity which recognizes the contingency of creation upon the Creator, and allows for God's purposeful selective actions in the development of the cosmos and the continuing natural processes of the universe. God has acted, and is acting, in the primal origins, the procedural operations and the purposeful objective of the universe. The origin of all created things is "out of God" (*ek theos*). The operation of all created things is "through God" (*dia theos*). The objective of all created things is "unto God" (*eis theos*). To God be the glory forever! (Romans 11:36).

Therein we discover the purpose, the teleology of creation. "To God be the *glory* forever!" "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive *glory* and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

Misconceptions abound as to God's teleological purpose in creating the world. Most of them are based on the fallacious premise that God had a "need" that was fulfilled by the creation. Variations of this premise include

the explanations that (1) God had a "need" for creation to be contingent upon Him, an authority-need or a control-need, a need to "lord it over" something lesser than Himself. (2) God had a "need" for fellowship and socialization with other personal beings. He was lonely, so He created mankind with which to have personal relationships. (3) God had a "need" to express His love. "God is love" (I John 4:8,16), and such unselfish love requires active expression unto others, so He created other personal beings who could be the recipients of His love. (4) God had a "need" to be glorified, a need for ego-satisfaction in expressing Himself and having the created order recognize who He is. All of these explanations make God contingent upon His creation. If there were anything or anyone on whom God's well-being was contingent or dependent, then such would supersede God, for the lesser is usually dependent on the greater. God is uncontingent, complete in Himself, self-sufficient, lacks nothing and has no "needs." A complete and perfect fellowship of love existed in the inter-relations of the Triune Godhead, and did not necessitate creation to fulfill such.

The purpose of God's creating is not based on any necessity or need that God has. He did not create in order that He might be fulfilled, perfected, socialized, or to become functional in expression of His character. Creation was not forced upon Him. He did not have to create. God is

absolutely self-determinative. "What His soul desires that He does" (Job 23:13). "He does whatever He pleases" (Psalm 115:1). What He does is always consistent with His perfect character, for He cannot contradict or misrepresent Himself. He does what He does because He is who He is!

God's character is glorious. He is the absolutely all-glorious One. There is no greater end or objective for God than to manifest Himself, communicate Himself, express Himself. In so doing He is glorified by His all-glorious character expressed through His creation. Acting "out of Himself," *ek theos*, God acts "for His own sake." "For My own sake, For My own sake, I will act: for how can My name be profaned?" (Isaiah 48:11). There is no egocentricity in such an expression of His character, for He is merely acting as who He is. There is no self-orientation in God, therefore the expression of His character is not an empty exhibition or show of pride, just a glorious expression of His glorious character.

God's character is expressed throughout the natural universe. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). He has "displayed His splendor above the heavens" (Psalm 8:1). "The glory of the Lord is revealed" (Isa. 40:5); "the work of His Hands, that He might be glorified" (Isa. 60:21). "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal

power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made" (Romans 1:20).

God's glorious character is expressed in all of creation, but even more particularly in mankind. Man, being the crown of creation, can serve God's purpose in ways that no other part of creation can do. As a personal being, man can express features of God's character behaviorally, which the rest of creation cannot. God intended that His character of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5:22,23), might be expressed through the behavior of man. Through Isaiah, God refers to "everyone...whom I have created for My glory" (Isa. 43:7).

It is important to recognize, though, that the expression of God's glorious character by which He is glorified is never distinct from, detached from, or external of Himself. He is glorified only by the expression of His own glorious character. It is not any alleged self-generated actions or "works" of man that glorify God, but only His action of expressing His own character in the actions of man unto His own glory. "I am the Lord, that is My Name; I will not give My glory to another" (Isa. 42:8). "My glory I will not give to another" (Isa. 48:11). Glorification, the on-going purpose of creation, requires the ontological presence of God, His Being expressing His character.

By the "singularity" of God's redemptive activity in His Son, Jesus Christ, we have the revelation of the ultimate teleological fulfillment of creation. To remedy the sin consequence of alienation between man and God, Jesus Christ became man in order to take the death consequences so that He might re-impart the ontological presence of divine life in the spirit of man, thereby giving man the provision to fulfill the purpose for which he was created. This Christological re-creative act issues forth in a spiritual "new creation" (Gal. 6:15) as men become "new creatures in Christ" (II Cor. 5:17) by receiving the Spirit of Christ in faith.

Jesus Christ, "the beginning and the end," *telos*, (Rev. 21:6; 22:13), personally indwells the Christian with His "divine nature" (II Peter 1:4), the ontological provision for the expression of God's glorious character. The Christian is "created in righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24), "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). Such behavioral expression is always and only the result of man's contingency upon God by the receptivity of faith that allows His character to be expressed in our behavior. Thus we are encouraged to "glorify God in our body" (I Cor. 6:20), and to "do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31).

Christian worship is the recognition of the "worth-ship" of the worthy and glorious character of God in Christ.

We may sing "praises to His glory" (Eph. 1:6,12), but the foremost expression of worship for Christians today is the behavioral lifestyle that evidences the all-glorious character of God unto His glory day-by-day and moment-by-moment.

The "end," the teleology of creation, gives meaning and purpose to our existence today. As we understand the derivation of creation, we understand the direction and destiny of creation, inclusive of our own created being. Even science is being forced to consider the "why" questions and the "who" questions; the "why" of relativity and design and dependability, and the "who" of an ontological Designer with an "anthropic principle" pointing to the teleology of creation.

The ultimate ontological and teleological bases of God's creation will only be found in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the "new creation" available by His presence and activity. Creation is derived "out of" God and proceeds "unto" God. The *telos* for all of creation, and particularly for the Christian is the glorious expression of the character of God. The eternal extension of that expression of glory is experienced by the Christian in the derived immortality from the One "who alone possesses immortality" (I Timothy 6:15).

"To God be the glory forever. Amen!"





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