

CREATION

A study of where we came from and why it matters in the 21st Century

LESSON 3: The Genesis Sunset

A bit of clean-up from Sunday morning's ramblings. We were discussing the logical demand for something or someone to set all of the cosmos in motion. Logic, too, demands that that One has within itself the power of existence. I tossed out a term I had heard a biblical thinker used and failed to give it clear definition. The term was *asceity*. It's definition is that which has the power of existence within itself. It is a characteristic found only within God. That would seem to be far less of a stretch than what we've read from Hawking or Davies.

In this lesson, we will be examining why the account of a six-day creation has fallen out of favor in science, in culture, and most distressing, in the church.

READING

- Scripture: **Genesis 1 and 2**,. [Note: I will be asking you to read these chapters a lot. Please take the time, when they are part of the assignment (at the very least), to read again and meditate on the passage in light of the study for that week.]
- John MacArthur "**The Battle for the Beginning**," (2001, John MacArthur) pp. 11-17.

QUESTIONS

1. Think about recent battles over school textbooks. Generally two sides emerge in such debates. As objectively as you can, identify and characterize both sides.
 - a. One side –
 - b. The other side –
2. Dig back into your knowledge of history. Have scientists and the church always been at odds?
3. Why do you think that God is not allowable as an answer to the "scientific" mind? Should he be? Why or why not?
4. In your mind, what would most people say was the one event that began to drive God from science? What would you say?
5. Do you think in our life time we will see more or less of God in science? Explain.

Pray that God would guide us in our study and conversations toward the truth and thereby toward Him!!

INTRODUCTION

THANKS TO THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION, naturalism is now the dominant religion of modern society. Less than a century and a half ago, Charles Darwin popularized the credo for this secular religion with his book *The Origin of Species*. Although most of Darwin's theories about the mechanisms of evolution were discarded long ago, the doctrine of evolution itself has managed to achieve the status of a fundamental article of faith in the popular modern mind. Naturalism has now replaced Christianity as the main religion of the Western world, and evolution has become naturalism's principal dogma.

Naturalism is the view that every law and every force operating in the universe is natural rather than moral, spiritual, or supernatural. Naturalism is inherently atheistic, rejecting the very concept of a personal God. Many assume naturalism therefore has nothing to do with religion. In fact, it is a common misconception that naturalism embodies the very essence of scientific objectivity. Naturalists themselves like to portray their system as a philosophy that stands in opposition to all faith-based world-views, pretending that it is scientifically and intellectually superior precisely because of its supposed non-religious character.

Not so. Religion is exactly the right word to describe naturalism. The entire philosophy is built on a faith-based premise. Its basic presupposition—a rejection of everything supernatural—requires a giant leap of faith. And nearly all its supporting theories must be taken by faith as well.¹

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(1) Under the dogma of evolution, for example. The notion that natural evolutionary processes can account for the origin of all living species has never been and never will be established as fact. Nor is it “scientific” in any true sense of the word. Science deals with what can be observed and reproduced by experimentation. The origin of life can be neither observed nor reproduced in any laboratory. By definition, then, true science can give us no knowledge whatsoever about where we came from or how we got here. Belief in evolutionary theory is a matter of sheer faith. And dogmatic belief in any naturalistic theory is no more “scientific” than any other kind of religious faith.

Modern naturalism is often promulgated with a missionary zeal that has powerful religious overtones. The popular fish symbol many Christians put on their cars now has a naturalist counterpart: a fish with feet and the word *Naturalism* embossed into its side. The Internet has become naturalism’s busiest mission field, where evangelists for the cause aggressively try to deliver benighted souls who still cling to their theistic presuppositions. Judging from the tenor of some of the material I have read seeking to win converts to naturalism, naturalists are often dedicated to their faith with a devout passion that rivals or easily exceeds the fanaticism of any radical religious zealot. Naturalism is clearly as much a religion as any theistic world-view.

The point is further proved by examining the beliefs of those naturalists who claim to be most unfettered by religious beliefs. Take, for example, the case of *Carl Sagan*, perhaps the best-known scientific celebrity of the past couple of decades. A renowned astronomer and media figure, Sagan was overtly antagonistic to biblical theism. But he became the chief evangelist for the religion of naturalism. He preached a world-view that was based entirely on naturalistic assumptions. Underlying all he taught was the firm conviction that everything in the universe has a natural cause and a natural explanation. That belief—a matter of faith, not a truly scientific observation—governed and shaped every one of his theories about the universe.

Sagan examined the vastness and complexity of the universe and concluded—as he was bound to do, given his starting point—that there is nothing greater than the universe itself. So he borrowed divine attributes such as infinitude, eternity, and omnipotence, and he made them properties of the universe itself.

“The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be” was Sagan’s trade-

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mark aphorism, repeated on each episode of his highly rated television series, *Cosmos*. The statement itself is clearly a tenet of faith, not a scientific conclusion. (Neither Sagan himself nor all the scientists in the world combined could ever examine “all that is, or ever was, or ever will be” by any scientific method.) Sagan’s slogan is perfectly illustrative of how modern naturalism mistakes religious dogma for true science.

Sagan’s religion was actually a kind of naturalistic pantheism, and his motto sums it up perfectly: He deified the universe and everything in it—insisting that the cosmos itself is that which was, and is, and is to come (cf. Revelation 4:8). Having examined enough of the cosmos to see evidence of the Creator’s infinite power and majesty, he imputed that omnipotence and glory to creation itself—precisely the error the apostle Paul describes in Romans 1:20–22:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools.

Exactly like the idolaters Paul was describing, Sagan put creation, in the Creator’s rightful place.

Carl Sagan looked at the universe, saw its greatness, and concluded nothing could possibly be greater. His religious presuppositions forced him to deny that the universe was the result of intelligent design. In fact, as a devoted naturalist, he had to deny that it was created at all. Therefore he saw the universe as eternal and infinite, so it naturally took the place of God in his thinking.

The religious character of the philosophy that shaped Sagan’s world-view is evident in much of what he wrote and said. His novel *Contact* (made into a major motion picture in 1997) is loaded with religious metaphors and imagery. It’s about the discovery of extraterrestrial life, which occurs in December 1999, at the dawn of a new millennium, when the world is rife with Messianic expectations and apocalyptic fears. In Sagan’s imagination,

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the discovery of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe becomes the "revelation" that affords a basis for the fusing of science and religion into a worldview that perfectly mirrors Sagan's own belief system—with the cosmos as focal and scientists as the new priesthood.

Sagan's religion included the belief that the human race is nothing special. Given the incomprehensible vastness of the universe and the imperscrutability of it all, how could humanity possibly be important? Sagan concluded that our race is not significant at all. In December 1996, less than three weeks before Sagan died, he was interviewed by Ted Koppel on *Nightline*. Sagan knew he was dying, and Koppel asked him, "Dr. Sagan, do you have any pearls of wisdom that you would like to give to the human race?" Sagan replied:

We live on a hunk of rock and metal that circles a humdrum star that is one of 400 billion other stars that make up the Milky Way Galaxy, which is one of billions of other galaxies, which make up a universe, which may be one of a very large number—perhaps an infinite number—of other universes. That is a perspective on human life and our culture that is well worth pondering.¹

In a book published near the end of his life, Sagan wrote, "Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves."²

Although Sagan resolutely tried to maintain a semblance of optimism to the bitter end, his religion led where all naturalism inevitably leads: to a sense of utter insignificance and despair. According to his world-view, humanity occupies a tiny outpost—a pale blue speck in a vast sea of galaxies. As far as we know, we are unnoticed by the rest of the universe, accountable to no one, and petty and irrelevant in a cosmos so expansive. It is fatuous to talk of outside help or redemption for the human race. No help is forthcoming. It would be nice if we somehow managed to solve some of our problems, but whether we do or not will ultimately be a forgotten bit of comic trivia. That, said Sagan, is a perspective well worth pondering.

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All of this underscores the spiritual barrenness of naturalism. The naturalist's religion erases all moral and ethical accountability, and it ultimately abandons all hope for humanity. If the impersonal cosmos is all there is, all there ever was, and all there ever will be, then morality is ultimately moot. If there is no personal Creator to whom humanity is accountable and if the survival of the fittest is the governing law of the universe, all the moral principles that normally regulate the human conscience are ultimately groundless—and possibly even deleterious to the survival of our species.

Indeed, the rise of naturalism has meant moral catastrophe for modern society. The most damaging ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were all rooted in Darwinism. One of Darwin's earliest champions, **Thomas Huxley**, gave a lecture in 1893 in which he argued that evolution and ethics are incompatible. He wrote that "the practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence."³

Philosophers who incorporated Darwin's ideas were quick to see Huxley's point, conceiving new philosophies that set the stage for the amorality and genocide that characterized so much of the twentieth century.

Karl **Marx**, for example, self-consciously followed Darwin in the devising of his economic and social theories. He inscribed a copy of his book *Das Kapital* to Darwin, "from a devoted admirer." He referred to Darwin's *The Origin of Species* as "the book which contains the basis in natural history for our view."⁴

Herbert Spencer's philosophy of "Social Darwinism" applied the doctrines of evolution and the survival of the fittest to human societies. Spencer argued that if nature itself has determined that the strong survive and the weak perish, this rule should govern society as well. Racial and class distinctions simply reflect nature's way. There is therefore no transcendent moral reason to be sympathetic to the struggle of the disadvantaged classes. It is, after all, part of the natural evolutionary process and society will actually be improved by recognizing the superiority of the dominant classes and encouraging their ascendancy. The racialism of such writers as **Ernst Haeckel** (who believed that the African races were incapable of culture or higher mental development) was also rooted in Darwinism.

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Finally, **Nietzsche's** whole philosophy was based on the doctrine of evolution. Nietzsche was bitterly hostile to religion, and particularly to Christianity. Christian morality embodied the essence of everything Nietzsche hated; he believed Christ's teachings glorified human weakness and were detrimental to the development of the human race. He scoffed at Christian moral values such as humility, mercy, modesty, meekness, compassion for the powerless, and service to one another. He believed such ideals had held weakness in society. Nietzsche saw two types of people: the "master-class," an enlightened, dominant minority; and the "herd," sheeplike followers who were easily led. And he concluded that the only hope for humanity would be when the master-class evolved into a race of *Übermenschen* (supermen), outnumbered by religious or social mores, who would take power and bring humanity to the next stage of its evolution.

It's not surprising that Nietzsche's philosophy laid the foundation for the **Nazi** movement in Germany. What is surprising is that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, Nietzsche's reputation has been rehabilitated by philosophical spin-doctors, and his writings are once again trendy in the academic world. Indeed, his philosophy—or something very nearly like it—is what nationalism must inevitably return to.

All of these philosophies are based on notions that are diametrically opposed to a biblical view of the nature of man, because they all start by embracing a Darwinian view of the origin of humanity. They are rooted in anti-Christian theories about human origins and the origin of the cosmos, and therefore it is no wonder that they stand in opposition to biblical principles at every level.

The simple fact of the matter is that all the philosophical fruits of Darwinism have been negative, ignoble, and destructive to the very fabric of society. Not one of the major twentieth-century revolutions led by post-Darwinian philosophers ever improved or ennobled any society. Instead, the chief social and political legacy of Darwinian thought is a full spectrum of evil tyranny with Marx-inspired communism at one extreme and Nietzsche-inspired fascism at the other. The moral catastrophe that has disfigured modern Western society is also directly traceable to Darwinism and the rejection of the early chapters of Genesis.

At this moment in history, even though most of modern society is already

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fully committed to an evolutionary and naturalistic world-view, our society still benefits from the collective memory of a biblical world-view. People in general still believe human life is special. They still hold remnants of biblical morality, such as the notion that love is the greatest virtue (1 Corinthians 13:13), service to one another is better than fighting for personal dominion (Matthew 20:25–27), and humility and submission are superior to arrogance and rebellion (1 Peter 5:5). But to whatever degree secular society still holds those virtues in esteem, it does so entirely without any philosophical foundation. Having already rejected the God revealed in Scripture and embraced instead pure naturalistic materialism, the modern mind has no grounds whatsoever for holding to any ethical standard, no reason whatsoever for esteeming "virtue" over "vice," and no justification whatsoever for regarding human life as more valuable than any other form of life. Modern society has already abandoned its moral foundation.

As humanity enters the twenty-first century, an even more frightening prospect looms. Now even **END HERE** we be losing the will to defend what Scripture teaches about human origins. Many in the church are too intimidated or too embarrassed to affirm the literal truth of the biblical account of creation. They are confused by a chorus of authoritative-sounding voices who insist that it is possible—and even pragmatically necessary—to reconcile Scripture with the latest theories of the naturalists.

Of course, theological liberals have long espoused theistic evolution. They have never been reluctant to deny the literal truth of Scripture on any issue. The new trend has also influenced some evangelicals who contend that it is possible to harmonize Genesis 1–3 with the theories of modern naturalism without doing violence to any essential doctrine of Christianity. They affirm evangelical statements of faith. They teach in evangelical institutions. They insist they believe the Bible is inerrant and authoritative. But they are willing to reinterpret Genesis to accommodate evolutionary theory. They express shock and surprise that anyone would question their approach to Scripture. And they sometimes employ the same sort of ridicule and intimidation religious liberals and atheistic skeptics have always leveled against believers: "You don't seriously think the universe is less than a billion years old, do you?" The result is that over the past couple of decades, large numbers of evangelicals have shown a surprising willingness to take a completely

“Genesis in Space and Time” by Francis Schaeffer (cont.)