

## WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

### I. Introduction..

#### A. Where did I come from?

Every human being asks certain basic questions about the meaning of life: Who am I? Why am I here? What happens when I die? One of the most persistent questions is this: Where did I come from? Where did it all begin?

Children's books will sometimes offer an answer to the question. But such books may be a cover for teaching our children **philosophical naturalism**. For example, in a book titled *The Bears' Nature Guide* (New York: Random House, 1975) we find the following.

*As the book opens, the Bear family invites us to go on a nature walk; and after turning a few pages, we come to a two-page spread with a dazzling sunrise and the words spelled out in capital letters: "Nature... is all that IS, or WAS, or EVER WILL BE!"*

*Where have we heard those words before? You might remember them from Carl Sagan's PBS program "Cosmos." Its trademark slogan was: "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be." Those who attend a liturgical church will recognize that Sagan was offering a substitute for the "Gloria Patri" ("As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be"). The authors of the Berenstain Bear books have now repackaged Sagan's naturalistic religion for young children. (told in Nancy Pearcey. P. 157).*

#### B. The first step.

Every journey begins with a first step. The reason understanding our beginning is so important is that where we begin determines both who we will be and where we will end. No one illustrates this better than Jesus Christ.

*Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had **come from God** and was **going back to God**, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel... began to wash the disciples' feet... (John 13:3-5).*

Because Jesus knew that he had come from God (his origin), he:

- knew his **destiny** (he was going back to God).
- knew his **identity**... and therefore was able to serve others.

#### C. What's at stake.

##### 1) Ideas have **consequences**.

Choosing what we believe about origins is a decision laden with consequences that touch almost every area of life. It is a choice between two competing worldviews. The following chart helps to clarify what is at stake in what we believe.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although there are other theories and beliefs about origins, this study will focus only upon the two worldviews that have most impacted our western world: the Judeo-Christian worldview and the Naturalistic/Materialistic worldview.

	Judeo-Christian Worldview	Naturalistic/Materialistic Worldview
<b>Ultimate Reality</b>	An infinite, personal God; <b>transcendent</b>	Finite, impersonal matter; if there is a "god" he/it would be part of the created order; <b>immanent</b>
<b>Universe</b>	Is coherent and understandable because it is created by God	Is the result of <b>random</b> forces, <b>chance</b> events, without meaning or purpose
<b>Man</b>	The pinnacle of creation; made in the image of God and therefore <b>qualitatively different</b> from animals	The product of time plus chance plus matter. A complex animal.
<b>Morality</b>	Based in the character of God and therefore can be <b>absolute</b>	Morality is defined by individuals and communities and is therefore relative
<b>Afterlife</b>	Heaven and hell	Annihilation
<b>Scripture</b>	The Word of God; God's self-disclosure	The word of men about who they think God is
<b>Meaning of Life</b>	To know and please God	There is none

## 2) A world of difference.

Indeed, there is a world of difference between these two positions. William Provine of Cornell University states the difference plainly when he said that if Darwinism is true, then there are five inescapable conclusions:

- There's no evidence for God
- There's no life after death
- There's no absolute foundation for right and wrong
- There's no ultimate meaning for life
- People don't really have free will <sup>2</sup>

*The truth is that much of Darwinism is not science but naturalistic philosophy masquerading as science. So an honest debate between Darwinism and Christianity is not fact versus faith but philosophy versus philosophy, worldview versus worldview. (Colson, How Now Shall We Live? p. 96.)*

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *The Case for a Creator* by Lee Strobe, page 16.

## 3) Winner takes all?

It is difficult to see how these two worldviews can coexist. They seem to be diametrically opposed to one another. Whichever side gains the ability to shape our culture's understanding of origins will become the new "priesthood" and have the power to **shape our civilization's destiny.**

## II. Genesis 1-2.

## A. The uniqueness of Genesis.

It is impossible to fully appreciate the message of Genesis until one compares it to other creation accounts written coming from the Ancient Near East.

1) The Akkadian creation myth (*Enuma Elish*) is a good example.

Briefly, the story is that originally there was a male fresh water ocean and a female salt water ocean that mated and produced a multitude of lesser deities, which were various aspects of nature. Apsu, the fresh water ocean, became angry because of the noises of his offspring and decided to destroy them. Instead, one of them, the god of wisdom, killed Apsu and produced the remarkable storm god, Marduk. The salt water ocean, Tiamat, became angry and mothered a host of dragons to fight Marduk.

Other high gods were frightened and commissioned Marduk as their leader during a huge banquet. The battle was fierce, but Marduk killed the dragon, Tiamat, and split her body in half. The upper half was made into the sky and the lower half into the earth. Out of chaos came order, with stars and the moon, and a calendar was created. The field marshal of Tiamat's army, Kingu, was killed, and some of his blood was mixed with earth to produce man, who was to serve all the needs of the gods and goddesses. (Quoted in *The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment.* G. Herbert Livingston. P. 88).

## 2) So, what's the difference?

<u>Pagan creation</u>	<u>Genesis creation</u>
Myth	<u>History</u>
<u>Polytheistic</u>	Monotheistic
Creation out of pre-existing stuff	Creation <b>out of nothing</b> ( <i>ex nihilo</i> )
Sexual themes	Sexuality is absent
The gods form and shape matter	God speaks creation into existence

## B. The purpose of Genesis.

Genesis is written primarily to answer the question **Why?** rather than the question **How?** It is a religious text, not a scientific one. It answers questions such as *Who am I? Where did I come from? And Why am I here?* More than the question *How did it all happen?*

This does not mean it is scientifically inaccurate, it simply reminds us that we should study the text in accordance with its author's purpose.

## C. The structure of Genesis 1-2.

## 1) Genesis 1:1-2:3. Seven Days of Creation.

- a. Day 1 (1:3-5). Creation of light.... separation from darkness.
- b. Day 2 (1:6-8). Creation of the canopy of heaven... separation of waters.
- c. Day 3 (1:9-13). Creation of earth and sea.... vegetation.
- d. Day 4 (1:14-19). Creation of sun, moon and stars... separate day and night.
- e. Day 5 (1:20-23). Creation of fish and birds...
- f. Day 6 (1:24-31). Creation of land animals... and mankind in the image of God...
- g. Day 7 (2:1-3). All is finished! God rested.

NOTE: "The earth was without form and void (*tohu* and *bohu*)..." (1:2). So, God creates a form/structure and then he fills it.

<u>God creates the form (days 1-3)</u>	<u>God fills the form (days 4-6)</u>
Day 1 - Light (Dark)	Day 4 - Sun, moon, stars
Day 2 - Canopy of heaven... waters	Day 5 - Fish and birds
Day 3 - Earth	Day 6 - Creatures of the land

The author seems to be motivated, at least in part, by literary style as much as by chronological order. This almost seems to be a "poem" or a "song." This does not mean the passage is not historical. Indeed, it clearly intends to be understood as such. But it does mean that some **caution** may be in order in pressing the text too far for scientific details.

## 2) Genesis 2:4-25. The Creation of Man &amp; Woman and their Home.

- a. Adam (2:4-7).
  - The Lord **formed** man of dust.
  - The Lord **breathed** into his nostrils the breath of life
- b. Eden (2:8-17).
  - A very pleasant place.
  - The tree of life. "You **may** eat."
  - The river... which becomes four rivers.
  - Adam's labor... to **work** the garden and keep it.
  - The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. "You **may not** eat."
- c. Eve (2:18-25).
  - "It is **not good** that the man should be alone..."
  - Animals are brought to Adam to be named.
  - Eve is made from Adam's rib.
  - Two become one . . . which later become three.
  - Naked and **unashamed**.

D. The meaning of the word "day" (*yom*) in Genesis 1.

Does this refer to a literal 24-hour period or a time period of unspecified length? How you answer determines whether you are a "young earth" or an "old earth" creationist.

## 1) In favor of the 24-hour day.

- This is how *yom* is typically used in the Old Testament.
- It coincides with references to "evening and morning" in Genesis 1.

But notice:

- The sun was created on day 4. Can there be a 24-hour day without the sun?
- In Genesis 2:4 "day" has a very broad and unspecific reference.
- The events of the 6th "day" (as seen in Genesis 2:4-25) involve far too many activities for one 24-hour period (caring for garden, naming animals, creation of Eve, etc.).

## 2) In favor of an indefinite period of time.

- Other places in Scripture where "day" is indefinite (Ps. 90:10; Isa. 4:2; II Pet. 3:8).
- The points mentioned in #1 above.

Conclusion: Don't be **dogmatic!** Don't make this a spiritual litmus test.

## E. The meaning of Genesis.

"The consequences of this idea of creation are revolutionary. A world created by God is **real**, not a dream either of God or of man. And that world is **rational**. Finally, it is **good**. Christianity is a realistic, rational, and world-affirming religion rather than a mystical, mythical, or world-denying religion because of its Jewish source. It is no accident that a disproportionate number of the world's great scientists have been Jewish (or Christian)." (Kreeft. *Fundamentals*. p. 82).

### TABLE TALK

1. Talk about some of your own personal struggles in coming to an understanding of the question "Where did it all begin?"
2. People feel passionately about this issue. Describe an encounter (conversation, school classroom, small group, etc.) when you experienced firsthand the emotions associated with the question of origins.
3. Do you think that most Christians today understand the issues at stake in this question? Why not?
4. Do most creationists today help the cause? Or hurt the cause? Why? What should be done about this?

### III. Chinks in Darwin's Theory.

Naturalistic evolution is the theory of origins embraced by most of the secular world today. Those who dare to challenge this Darwinian understanding of where it all began, are often ridiculed and ostracized from scientific discussions. However, many today are discovering weaknesses in a Darwinian explanation of origins. Three books have been especially influential in introducing the broader public to these chinks in Darwin's theory.

#### A. *Darwin on Trial* by Philip E. Johnson (InterVarsity Press. 1991).

##### 1) The author.

Philip E. Johnson is a graduate of Harvard and the University of Chicago. He was a law clerk for Chief Justice Earl Warren and taught law for over 20 years at the University of California at Berkeley. He became a Christian as an adult and is considered to be one of the founders of the Intelligent Design movement.

##### 2) Basic Argument.

In the book, Johnson shows that the theory of evolution is based not so much on fact as it is on faith – faith in philosophical naturalism. *The question I want to investigate is whether Darwinism is based upon a fair assessment of the scientific evidence, or whether it is another kind of fundamentalism. (p. 14).* Johnson then examines how Darwinism handles the data related to issues such as natural selection, mutations, the “fossil problem”,

##### 3) Conclusion.

*Darwinian evolution with its blind watchmaker thesis makes me think of a great battleship on the ocean of reality. Its sides are heavily armored with philosophical barriers to criticism, and its decks are stacked with big rhetorical guns ready to intimidate any would-be attackers. In appearance, it is as impregnable as the Soviet Union seemed to be only a few years ago. But the ship has sprung a metaphysical leak, and the more perceptive of the ship's officers have begun to sense that all the ship's firepower cannot save it if the leak is not plugged. There will be heroic efforts to save the ship, of course, and some plausible rescuers will invite the officers to take refuge in electronic lifeboats equipped with high-tech gear like autocatalytic sets and computer models of self-organizing systems. The spectacle will be fascinating, and the battle will go on for a long time. But in the end reality will win. (pp. 169f).*

#### B. *Darwin's Black Box. The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution.* Michael J. Behe. (Free Press. 1996).

##### 1) The author.

Michael Behe holds a doctorate in biochemistry from the University of Pennsylvania. He is a professor at Lehigh University. He is a senior fellow at the Discover Institute and a major proponent of Intelligent Design.

##### 2) Basic Argument.

When Darwin lived and wrote, scientists knew very little about the cell. It was a “black box” (a system that is interesting but about which little is known). Today however, we know that the cell is tremendously complex. In fact, the cell and many of its components are “irreducibly complex.” Darwin himself admitted that if it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous,

successive, slight modifications, then his theory would collapse. Behe's book claims to have made precisely that demonstration!

3) Conclusion.

Darwin's Black Box makes an overwhelming case against Darwinism on the biochemical level. Naturalistic evolution simply cannot account for hundreds of organisms that are irreducibly complex.

C. *Icons of Evolution* by Jonathan Wells (Regnery Publishing, Inc. 2000).

1) The author.

Jonathan Wells has earned two Ph.D. degrees: one from Yale University (religious studies) and the other from the University of California at Berkeley (molecular and cell biology). He is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, the hub of the Intelligent Design movement. He is a member of the Unification Church (Sun Myung Moon).

2) Basic argument.

In his book, Wells describes a number of the examples used to illustrate biology textbooks in support of Darwinian evolution as being grossly exaggerated, distorting the truth, or in some cases, patently false. These examples ("icons of evolution") are examined, critiqued, and dismissed one by one. For example:

a. The Miller-Urey Experiment (1953).

Scientists claimed to have produced amino acids (life!) by artificially recreating the atmosphere of the primitive earth, then shooting electric sparks through it (simulating lightning).

b. Darwin's "tree of life."

In this graphic, the development of life is depicted as a tree, starting with the most ancient primitive ancestors at the roots, and the blossoming upwards into limbs and branches, showing ever advancing degrees of diversity and complexity. Fish become amphibians which become reptiles which become mammals.....

c. Ernst Haeckel's drawings of embryos.

By placing drawings of embryonic fish, salamander, tortoise, chicken, hog, calf, rabbit and human side by side, Haeckel demonstrated how remarkably similar they are in their earliest stages of development. The conclusion was obvious: common ancestry.

d. The missing link – archaeopteryx.

The discovery of archaeopteryx seemed to provide science with the missing link she craved. This animal had wings and feathers but also a lizard-like tail and claws on its wings. Voila! This is surely the connecting link between reptiles and birds.

e. Peppered moths.

Moths in England appeared in two forms: light gray and dark gray. We are led to believe that during the Industrial Revolution, pollution darkened tree trunks so that birds could more easily spot the light gray moths and eat them. Thus we see one example of how natural selection might have worked.

- f. From ape to human: the ultimate icon.  
Many textbooks have shown the picture of a parade of ape-like creatures that morph over time, into modern man.
- 3) Conclusion.  
*Much of what we teach about evolution is wrong. This fact raises troubling questions about the status of Darwinian evolution. If the icons of evolution are supposed to be our best evidence for Darwin's theory, and all of them are false or misleading, what does that tell us about theory? Is it science, or myth? (p. 8).*

Astronomer Robert Jastrow summarizes his own view of the current state of affairs:

*For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak. As he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries. (Quoted in D'Souza. P. 124).*

#### IV. Six ways science points to God.

##### A. The Big Bang.

Formulated in the 1960s, the "Big Bang Theory" created a big bang in the scientific community. The new theory tended to suggest a moment when things **began**.

*In a stunning confirmation of the book of Genesis, modern scientists have discovered that the universe was created in a primordial explosion of energy and light. Not only did the universe have a beginning **in** space and time, but the origin of the universe was also a beginning **for** space and time. Space and time did not exist prior to the universe. If you accept that everything that has a beginning has a cause, then the material universe had a nonmaterial or spiritual cause. (D'Souza. P. 116).*

Another way the argument has been stated is sometimes called the *Kalam* Cosmological Argument.<sup>3</sup> It can be stated in three propositions:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a **cause**.

##### B. The Finely-Tuned Universe.

Recent scientific discoveries underline the fact that our universe in general and the earth in particular seem to be perfectly suited for human habitation. We seem to inhabit a world specifically crafted for us. This is called the "**anthropic principle**." Some even call it the "Goldilocks universe".... it is "just right." Could this just be a coincidence? For example, consider:

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<sup>3</sup> The argument was promoted by the Muslim philosopher al-Ghazali (1058-1111). The word *kalam* means "doctrine" but it came to characterize the whole medieval movement of Islamic theology.

- The earth's orbit... Just the right distance from the sun with an orbit that is circular, not elliptical like most other planets in our solar system.
- The tilt of the earth's axis (23.5 degrees). This makes the seasons possible and our climate stable.
- Water. Life as we know it would be impossible without water. Our planet seems rather unique in having this life-affirming substance. And consider this: ice floats rather than sinks whereas all other liquid-solid pairs do just the opposite. If ice sank, aquatic life would be impossible in cold climates.
- Gravity. Too much or too little and life would be impossible. But again, on earth, the force of gravity is just right.
- Atmosphere. Earth's atmosphere is composed of just the right amounts of nitrogen, oxygen, and carbon dioxide. This provides air that is breathable and makes life possible. Contrast our atmosphere with that of other planets.
- A scientist's paradise. Our world seems to be designed for observation. Unlike most planets, the atmosphere is clear. Furthermore, our placement in the galaxy gives us an excellent view of the heavens. And why is it that only the earth can experience a total solar eclipse? The moon is 1/400<sup>th</sup> the size of the sun and the sun is exactly 400 times farther away from the earth than the moon (meaning, in an eclipse, the sun is fully blocked out by the moon).

*More and more scientists are observing the stunning ways in which our planet – against all odds – manages to fulfill a large number of finely balanced criteria that are absolutely crucial to supporting a habitat suitable for humankind. (Strobel, P. 156f).*

#### C. DNA Research.

Progress in DNA research has made us aware of the intricate complexity of life at the molecular level. Human DNA stores more information in a tiny space than that in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* – all 30 volumes. If that much information arrived in computer form from outer space, we would surely consider it proof of extraterrestrial intelligence. But in a human cell, most regard it as the result of random forces.

Moreover, this information is a type of **language**. Since language implies the intentional communication of rational information, this research provides strong support for Intelligent Design. Responding to the work of the Human Genome Project, President Clinton said "We are learning the language in which God created life." (Collins, p. 2). It's almost as if God personally autographed each cell!

Imagine driving into a city and seeing a garden of flowers on a hillside that spells out, "Welcome to Greentown." Would you think that occurred by chance? No. We immediately recognize this as a piece of information, not the work of random forces. And this is the kind of information we find in DNA.

## D. Irreducible Complexity... Especially at the cellular level.

When Darwin first proposed his theory, living cells were thought to be quite simple: a mass of protoplasm enclosed in a cell wall. Today, however, the intricate complexity of this most basic component of life, is just beginning to become fully known. One cell is a maze of complexity and a vast storehouse of information. In many ways a single cell is like a small city filled with factories... each one producing materials essential for life.

Michael Behe has devoted his life to the study of cells and notes that many components in the cell are "irreducibly complex." This means that the interacting parts all work together in a way to contribute to the basic function so that if any one of the parts were removed, the function would be lost. Darwinism states that living structures must evolve in small, gradual steps. But if something is irreducibly complex, it cannot have evolved in gradual steps.

Behe's classic illustration of irreducible complexity is the **mousetrap** with its five component parts (platform, hammer, spring, bar to hold the hammer, catch). But if any part is removed, the mousetrap simply cannot function as a mousetrap. It is very difficult for evolutionary theory to account for organisms that are irreducibly complex... and yet, there are hundreds of them. For example:

- The eye. This organ has no functional value unless all of its parts are together and working in harmony.
- The bacterial flagellum. Some have called this the most efficient machine in the universe. It has a rotary motor with a propeller and many other parts. It looks somewhat like an outboard motor but this molecular motor can rotate at speeds up to 10,000 rpm. Not only that, the propeller can stop spinning within a quarter turn and instantly start spinning the other way at 10,000 rpm.
- Blood-clotting. For blood to clot there must be a highly choreographed cascade of ten steps that use about twenty different molecular components. Without the whole system in place, it simply won't work (Strobel, p. 209).

## E. Summary.

The Darwinist must be able to account for the fact that:

- Non-life produces **life**.
- Unconsciousness produces **consciousness**.
- Non-reason produces **reason**.
- Chaos produces **information**.
- Randomness produces **fine-tuning**.
- The brain produces the **mind**.

## V. What difference does it make?

### A. So what's the big deal?

Does it really matter what we believe? Whether the universe began as the result of random forces and human life is the result of chance mutations or whether God put it all together... does it really matter?

Indeed! Ideas have consequences! What you believe determines **how you act!** No idea in the history of human thought has more impact on the way we live than what we believe about creation! What you believe about origins will determine what you believe about:<sup>4</sup>

#### 1. **God.** Belief in a Creator-God means that God must therefore be:

- a) Infinitely **powerful**.
- b) Immeasurably **wise** (think of the design, complexity, laws, structures present in the universe).
- c) Artistically great (a lover of beauty).
- d) Totally **generous** (an infinite God would not create out of "need" (boredom, loneliness, etc.) so he must have created all this for someone else!).

#### 2. **Nature.** Since nature is created by God, nature is therefore:

- a) **Comprehensible** (Because God is a rational being, we can understand what he has made. It is no accident that science arose in the theistic West, not the pantheistic East.)
- b) **Good** (Matter is not evil. Biblical faith is world-affirming, body-affirming. Gnosticism is a heresy.)
- c) **Real** (Eastern religions regard this world as an illusion, the projection of an unenlightened consciousness.)

#### 3. **Man.** If we owe our very existence to God, then:

- a) God is the one who **defines human existence** even as an author defines the lives of the characters in the book he is writing.
- b) Life has **meaning**. It is not the result of random and meaningless forces. There is a story and God has written us into the plot.
- c) We **owe everything** to God. Nothing is our own: property, money, time, other people, even our thoughts.

### B. Who is this Guy?

In William Steig's *Yellow & Pink*, a delightfully whimsical picture book for children, two wooden figures wake up to find themselves lying on an old newspaper in the hot sun. One figure is painted yellow, the other pink.

Suddenly, Yellow sits up and asks, "Do you know what we're doing here?" So begins a debate between the two marionettes over the origin of their existence.

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<sup>4</sup> Most of the following outline comes from Peter Kreeft's *Pocket Handbook of Christian Apologetics* (p. 37).

Pink surveys their well-formed features and concludes, "Someone must have made us."

Yellow disagrees. "I say we're an accident," and he outlines a hypothetical scenario of how it might have happened. A branch might have broken off a tree and fallen on a sharp rock, splitting one end of the branch into two legs. Then the wind might have sent it tumbling down a hill until it was chipped and shaped. Perhaps a flash of lightning struck in such a way as to splinter the wood into arms and fingers. Eyes might have been formed by woodpeckers boring in the wood.

"With enough time, a thousand, a million, maybe two and a half million years, lots of unusual things could happen," says Yellow. "Why not us?"

The two figures argue back and forth. In the end, the discussion is cut off by the appearance of a man coming out of a nearby house. He strolls over to the marionettes, picks them up, and checks their paint. "Nice and dry," he comments, and tucking them under his arm, he heads back toward the house.

Peering out from under the man's arm, Yellow whispers in Pink's ear, "Who is this guy?" (quoted from Charles Colson, *How Now Shall We Live?* p. 97).

That indeed is the question! Who is that Guy? Knowing **that** there is a Creator is only part of what one needs to know to have a meaningful life. Knowing **who** he is the other part! And that makes all the difference!

#### TABLE TALK

1. The "Old Man in the Mountains" is a rocky projection in the White Mountains of New Hampshire that resembles the profile a human face when looked at from the right angle. And when visiting South Dakota one can detect the likeness of four American presidents also worked into the rocky side of a mountain. Which one is the work of random forces? Which one indicates design? Why?
2. We've looked at a lot of evidence for God and creation. What can the evidence do? What is the evidence incapable of doing?
3. How has the study today impacted you personally?
4. Does faith precede understanding? Or does understanding precede faith?

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