

CHECKING YOUR BRAIN AT THE CHURCH DOOR?

**To invest our faith in a creationist viewpoint
does not mean that we are
no longer using our God-given intellect.**

While I was in my teens, my father subscribed to the journal *Scientific American*. I loved science and read it avidly and continue to read it to this day. However, the magazine uniformly condemns Creationism, a cherished tenet of my faith. John Rennie, the editor, characterizes creationists as irrational, superstitious, benighted, ignorant, and obstructionist.¹ He also likened us to ostriches with our heads in the sand, fearing we might see something that conflicts with our faith or shatters our treasured beliefs.

Is that how we as Seventh-day Adventist creationists come across? Do we indeed stop thinking when we read our Bibles or darken the doors of the sanctuary? Are we afraid of the truth? Or do we have a reason (not mere conviction) for the hope within us (1 Peter 3:15)?

Evidences for Theism?

Just how many have fallen for this “irrational, superstitious, nonsense”?

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The vast majority of Americans profess to believe that God created the heavens and the Earth. About 50 percent hold to a literal seven-day creation, though this theory is excluded from the schools and ridiculed by the media and scientific community. Another 35 percent believe in God-directed evolution. About 10 percent do not believe that God had a hand in it, and another small percentage state that they do not know.

Among scientists, the percentage of believers is less, but even among them, 40 percent believe in a God who answers prayer.² Throughout history, almost all humans have believed in a god, whether Babylonian mystics, Baal worshipers, Greek philosophers, human-sacrificing Mayans, or fundamentalist Christians. It is as if it were (to put it in evolutionary terms) selectively bred into us. Atheism has held little attraction for the vast majority.

But perhaps this huge multitude simply longs with all its heart to believe, and “brave new world” atheists are the only ones willing to face the cold hard facts of reality. Are the rest of us just attempting to ameliorate the anxiety caused by the harsh meaninglessness of the universe? Or are there evidences for belief in a Creator? Despite what several prominent members of the scientific community say, there are logical reasons for believing that God created the heavens and the Earth. The most amazing

are the characteristics of our universe favoring human existence.

The Fine Tuning of the Universe

Over the past century, it has become apparent that the universe is finely tuned to the needs of life on Earth. Although several have written on this topic, called the anthropic principle, a recent and easily readable book is “Just Six Numbers,” by Martin J. Rees,³ which lists six qualities of the universe described by six fundamental physical constants. Each seems to have been honed to the finest of tolerances so that humans might exist. The most amazing is Ω (Omega), the number describing the expansion rate of the universe, or the balance between gravity and outward expansion. This number is accurate to one in a million billion (1,000,000,000,000,000:88)! This is incredible precision. Rees discusses this astonishing finding and how each of the numbers impacts life on our planet. We could not exist without this accuracy.

He does not subscribe to belief in a deity, but his reason for skepticism is telling. He gives no logic for his rejection of this idea, but merely states a preference and begins to speculate about “multi-verses” (other universes besides ours). There is no evidence presented, however, to support the existence of other universes. In fact, he suggests that we are unable to know of them, even if they do exist. So his thinking is based on specula-

tion he chooses to believe and a presupposition that eliminates God.

Aside from Scripture, this fine-tuning is the strongest evidence for God's existence. Order, elegance, design, and the Big Bang also point to a Creator.

Order and Elegance

There is much order seen in the universe and in living organisms. The laws of physics and life show thoughtful synthesis. But most impressive is the order inherent in the Periodic Table of the Elements. This arrangement of the 92 naturally occurring atoms (along with the several manmade ones) was discovered by Mendeleev in the mid-19th century. As he grouped the families of elements together from lightest to heaviest by examining their shared characteristics, he recognized a repetitive sequence. He then placed them in an order that predicted some that had not yet been discovered. Discovery of these confirmed the table's validity.

The whole material universe is made of these elements. We humans are made of the same stuff as the stars. The elements' electron properties allow for the construction of a wonderful array of chemical compounds (as especially seen in the chemistry of life: proteins, DNA, etc), while characteristics of the nucleus allow fusion to release massive amounts of energy, giving light

and warmth (the stars burn hydrogen in their nuclear reactors, forming helium and heavier elements).

But these diverse elements with all their amazing combinations and derivations are concocted using three forms of matter: protons, neutrons, and electrons; and three forces: the weak and strong nuclear forces and the electromagnetic force. A few basic laws govern their actions. This is an elegant order. Such beauty and complexity from such simplicity!

During my career as a surgeon, I have seen some who operate with finesse and others who, shall we say, perform with lesser skill. I know the thinking and planning and experience it takes to make an operation look easy. It does not happen by accident. It is deliberate and intentional. And we praise surgeons who devote their lives to perfecting their craft in the service of others.

The elegance and beauty in the order of the very atoms of our being do not give the appearance of the workings of chance, but rather of careful thought and intention, like a well-planned operation. This is strong evidence for a Creator who knew the nature of His medium and used it with grace and skill.

The Big Bang

Although not all would agree with various details of the Big Bang theory, it has been accepted by most cosmologists as a fairly accurate

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description of the origin of the universe. It has a very interesting feature: a beginning. This theory of origins is consistent with Genesis 1:1. It also argues against an eternal or cyclical universe. This makes atheists uncomfortable. Arthur Eddington, a British physicist and atheist who experimentally confirmed Einstein's general theory of relativity in 1919, said, "Philosophically, the notion of a beginning to the present order is repugnant to me. I should like to find a genuine loophole."⁴ If the universe had a beginning, who initiated it? A Creator outside the universe itself is a logical deduction.

Design

The biological realm shows amazing design. The eye has most often been cited to demonstrate this property of nature. But there are many examples: wings, hands, social structures, etc. Michael Dickinson recently reviewed experiments on insect flight.⁵

This extremely complex skill is carried out by a creature with the proverbial brain of a fly. Yet these tiny living machines can maneuver like nothing else known to humanity. How did they develop the ability to do these astounding feats? The belief that this could happen by gradual change through natural selection (this is no explanation, mind you, but mere assertion) is a true act of faith.

Skeptics have claimed that the design argument is of itself not strong enough to support belief in the existence of God. I do not hold to this view. As my partner in practice said, "Things just look too good to have happened by chance." In combination with the order and accuracy seen in the deep realities of the universe, a very strong cognitive position can be taken and defended.

Three Further Points

Some atheists, after listening to these points, have said, "Why doesn't

God calls us to take a biblical position: We are to warn the world of the near coming of our Lord, admonishing them to return to their Creator and show their allegiance by keeping the seventh day holy as a memorial of a literal six-day creation. Holding this ground requires something more than scientific evidence, for even believing scientists by and large subscribe to an ancient Earth and Darwin's theory of evolution.

God reveal Himself to us? Why doesn't He just show Himself (as one suggested) by writing His name in the sky so that we could know? Why isn't it simple?"

God has revealed Himself in nature and Scripture and has given us minds to see and eyes to read. The example of the Israelites at Sinai warns us (Ex. 32). They saw the smoke and fire and heard God speak, but in 40 days they were worshipping a golden calf. Jesus cautioned those who were looking for a sign (Matt. 12:39) and said that they would not believe even if someone rose from the dead (Luke 16:19–31). Apparently God feels that people must decide on the basis of evidence and the witness of another who writes what he has seen. And who said life would be simple?

Second, some have said, "How can we know which God this creator is? There are many gods. How do

you know it is the Christian God who creates?" The implication is that since it is impossible to know, it is of no consequence.

This is shallow thinking. Human beings have explored the atom and sent probes deep into space. Are they unable to search out the most significant Being in the universe? Besides, we can simplify the quest by considering only those gods who claim to be Creator. Even the Phoenician sailors taking Jonah to Tarshish knew that the Creator was of a different order. Let questioners examine the various gods' claims. I think it will be clear.

And third, some have said, "Well then, who created God, and who created God's creator, etc.?" This is called an endless regression, and it sidesteps the issue. The question under consideration is whether the universe shows signs of intentional creation or the mere workings of chance. It shows the

characteristics of intention by its fine-tuning and design. From our experience in daily life with cause and effect, only one entity we know can be intentional: a mind. Therefore, it is the product of Mind. If we have established this, then we can discuss by what means and where the Mind came from, etc. However, these musings do not change the answer to the primary question: the appearance of intention.

This evidence leads me to believe in a Creator, one who possesses consummate ability. I have excellent evidence for this belief and can stand without shame when called on by my God to do so. I do not fear the purveyors of purposelessness that some in modern science would endorse.

The findings of science support belief in a Creator, but belief in a literal six-day creation is not so clearly sustained. Scripture says, however, that our knowledge of this comes through faith (Heb. 11:3). This, though, does not mean that there is no evidence.

God calls us to take a biblical position: We are to warn the world of the near coming of our Lord, admonishing them to return to their Creator and show their allegiance by keeping the seventh day holy as a memorial of a literal six-day creation. Holding this ground requires something more than scientific evidence, for even believing scientists by and large subscribe to an ancient Earth and Dar-

win's theory of evolution. The Catholic Church and most Protestant bodies no longer accept the literal truth of the story in Genesis 1.

Can we defend our position logically?

There are some who hold to various combinations of these two systems (theistic evolution, for example). Any combination will share in the strengths and weaknesses of each and may involve internal contradictions.

Creation: Pro

The Bible supports this theory. Although this may seem elementary, the Bible has great persuasive power, so much so that it has stood, in spite of the assaults of atheists and agnostics, for centuries. As mentioned before, about 50 percent of Americans believe in a literal six-day creation, despite reported scientific evidence against a literal reading of Genesis 1, and even though the media and most scientists reject it. Two pillars of objective reality support the Bible: (1) the changed lives of those who believe, and (2) the fulfillment of prophetic predictions such as those found in Genesis 12, Daniel 2, 7, 9, and those describing the character and work of the Messiah.

Jesus, the disciples, and Paul assumed the truth of this theory. See Matthew 19:4–6; Mark 10:6–9; Acts 17:24; Hebrews 11:3; 2 Peter 3:3–7;

Revelation 4:11 and 14:7. For some Christians and Jews, their endorsement is pivotal.

The story of redemption makes no sense without the stories of Genesis 1–3. In his small book *New Testament and Mythology*, Rudolph Bultmann noted the close relationship between the story of the Fall and the need for salvation. If there were no Fall, why need there be salvation and atonement?⁶ By rejecting a Creation and Fall, Darwin’s theory undermines the doctrine of salvation.

The story gives purpose. In Genesis 1, God works with intention and deliberation to make a world suitable for the crown of creation, humankind. Humans have a role to play, and God has given them a work to do and a place under the Sun. They are the children of the Most High, rather than the offspring of the scum of the Earth. They are legitimate beings, not an accident. God comes at eventide each day to speak to the man and woman. He talks personally to them at the Fall. All this shows more than casual concern. This contrasts starkly with the purposelessness at the foundation of evolutionary theory, where there is only chance and ultimate meaninglessness. Stories of redemption are present throughout all great literature and have an appeal to all that is good and great in the human spirit.

There is a certain incompatibility

between evolutionary theory and the character of God revealed in Scripture. Natural selection ruthlessly culls the infirm and weak, while Jesus stoops to care for the “least of these my brethren” (Matt. 25:40, NKJV). Millions of years of death by an uncaring universe, contrasted with numbered hairs and Heaven’s interest in fallen sparrows.

Notice that these pros are not based on evidence that is strictly scientific in nature. But there is other evidence besides that which can be tested using the scientific method. The claims of God in the Bible are of such a character. God challenges the other gods to tell the future (Isa. 41:21–24). This is evidence that can be checked against history but does not fall under the rules laid down by science. The testimony of a changed life is outside the measurement of science, yet remains a powerful incentive to belief.

Creation: Con

The Creation story in Genesis is not a scientifically stated theory. It is, rather, more like rhythmic prose. It does not lend itself to dissection by using the scientific method, as this technique was not practiced by the ancients. Moses knew nothing of radiometric dating, fossils, sedimentary layers, or pseudogenes. Of course, no one was present at the beginning, so neither theory is demonstrable, nor, in the strictest

sense, refutable. (A scientist has to repeat an experiment to tell whether it is true or false.) All arguments on each side are inferences from the data.

There is, however, one statement in the Creation story that can be tested: God said that all the animals and plants would produce after their kind. The theory of evolution disputes this statement, asserting that over long periods of time, a “kind” will gradually change into another: that is, it will become a different kind. Strictly speaking, the fossil record seems to support the creationist view. In other words, few transitional forms are found. Macroevolution has not been demonstrated. Geneticists have been exploring the very edges of the genetic makeup of some kinds to see if they can show where transition into another kind occurs. Yet they come to a boundary they cannot cross.

The Creation theory has minimal explaining power. For example, an occasional whale is caught that has vestigial legs that do not seem to have a specific purpose. Creationists would say that God just made them that way, while evolutionists would postulate that the ancestors of whales must have had useful legs and walked on land. The theory of evolution thus has power to explain something that seems strange and is unaccountable according to the creation theory.

Situations such as this put creationists in a defensive position.

There have been some successes here, but the overall impression is a kind of tentativeness and jury-rigging that makes for embarrassment. Michael Behe argues, however, that we cannot plumb all the reasons why a Designer would do what He does and therefore cannot use so-called design flaws or apparent abnormalities to postulate the lack of a Designer.⁷

The Earth appears old. Huge layers of fossil-containing sediment, moving continents, radiometric dating, fossil magnetic imprints, etc., all seem to speak of an ancient Earth. In his book, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture*, however, Ariel A. Roth gives an excellent creationist answer to this problem.⁸

Almost no scientists accept a literal six-day Creation as a viable theory. The intellectual elite of the world do not even consider Creation a “real” theory. Even believing while working in an unrelated area of science has caused “banning.”

Evolution: Pro

The theory is accepted as truth by the scientific establishment. There is a broad consensus that there is no other explanation for the facts of biology. Those who accept this theory can avoid conflict with scientific thought and literature. I have not seen a mainstream scientific article defending Creation.

There are many evidences for the great age of the Earth. A long age for

Some might argue that philosophy is irrelevant to this discussion. This is not so. Atheism and materialism are not attractive, in spite of what their proponents say. These theories, when taken to their logical conclusion, embrace a purposeless existence or fatal relativism. The governments with the worst human-rights records have been atheistic (the French Revolution, Communism, and Nazism).

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There appears to be a continuity of life or common descent. The plants and animals all have the same genetic code and use the same basic molecules to construct their bodies, trunks, fibers, etc. Creationists would say that God created it that way, while evolutionists claim that this is evidence that all came from a simple common ancestor.

The geologic column suggests progression. Fossils begin as less complex organisms at the deepest layers and become more complex as one ascends to shallower levels. There seems to be a more-or-less orderly progression. It is not smooth, but it does not seem to be random, nor does order progress from more complex to simpler. If geologists could find a dinosaur bone firmly and unmistakably embedded in the Precambrian layer (one of the earliest fossil layers—the dinosaurs are

thought to have lived hundreds of millions of years later), it would be strong evidence that both existed at the same time. This would destroy the theory. No one has found such a fossil, though Roth has a good discussion of this issue from a creationist viewpoint.⁹

Evolution: Con

This theory tends to support materialism and atheism. Richard Dawkins, the prominent British evolutionist, feels it became much easier to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist after Darwin's theory. Theists who embrace this theory accept a God who is more distant and more peripherally involved in His creation. Atheists will enquire of them, Why do you need God if it all works without Him?

Some might argue that philosophy is irrelevant to this discussion. This is not so. Atheism and materialism are not attractive, in spite of what

their proponents say. These theories, when taken to their logical conclusion, embrace a purposeless existence or fatal relativism. The governments with the worst human-rights records have been atheistic (the French Revolution, Communism, and Nazism). Atheists have often accused theists of grave atrocities, not without some justification, but their own hands literally drip with blood. The world has seen no greater and more efficient murderers than atheists in power. The Marxist and Nazi experiments of the 20th century are sobering evidence of the bankruptcy of atheistic social theory.

Evolution has no theory for the origin of life. Much speculation is presented as if it were true, but there is no good theory. Speculation abounds.

A *Scientific American* article demonstrates this.¹⁰ The author argues that certain minerals may have been essential in the formation of life. He suggests one of them, calcite, as a catalyst that would have helped sort the amino acids in the primordial organic soup. But careful thinking shows that this mineral is inadequate for the task. There is no way that more than one protein could form by the chance sorting of amino acids.

A creationist has responded: "What do you get after cooking primordial soup for a billion years? Very old primordial soup."

There is nothing wrong with

speculation. It has opened up vast areas of knowledge unknowable without these flights of imagination. But the above idea has strong arguments against it. However, whenever the popular scientific press reviews new "evidence" on the origin of life—from Stanley Miller's bell-jar experiments in the 1950s to Hazen's "Mineral Stars in the Movie of Life" in 2001—there is wild optimism about the "breakthroughs" that have been made. These are uniformly overstated.

There is evidence of design. Darwinians tell us that we are not using our minds when we believe that there is a Creator. But they must deny the use of their senses when viewing the cosmos. The universe and the life on our planet have a purposeful look. They appear as if they were made the way they are for a reason.

Social Darwinism has failed. A few years after Darwin, Herbert Spencer described ideas to harness the theory to improve the human species. If the rule is "survival of the fittest," why not help survival along with a little cognitive input? Thus we saw the birth of eugenics and the "Super Race." This thinking was one foundation of Hitler's social program to exterminate what was considered to be defective races and individuals.

Second Peter 3:3-7 seems to describe the doctrine of uniformitarianism that has been held by many scientists since the beginning of the

18th century and is a basic assumption of Darwin's thesis. This theory states that the processes we see active on Earth today are the only ones that have operated in the past. Many scientists now include some forms of catastrophism (such as meteors striking the Earth), though few believe in a universal flood. These verses tell us that in the last days, people would be scoffers, saying the world has lasted a great length of time and that the Flood story is a myth. They thus seem to confirm the description found in Scripture.

Darwin said: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."¹¹ And Behe seems to have demonstrated this with his ideas about irreducible complexity.¹²

Putting It All Together

I have met God. I have seen Him work in my life and in the lives of others. I particularly remember experiences as a colporteur in central California between my first and second years of medical school. God's Spirit appealed to the people through us as we went from door to door. This answered any lingering doubts in my mind about His existence. The reasoned responses to atheism's arguments came later, but confirmed my experience.

I have seen God speak to the most basic human needs through His Word, the Bible. There is a solace there that exists nowhere else. I have also seen that if the church had only adhered firmly to Scripture, much error and many conflicts could have been avoided. This is not an anti-intellectual position, for study of the Bible requires careful thought, and its deepest secrets open only to the diligent seeker.

I have seen how the theory of evolution has shaken the faith of old and young alike in the truth of the Bible. Some recover and rethink their doctrine of the Bible or adjust their view of science. But others are unable to do this and leave the church in body or, if unable to do so, in mind. This theory causes such destruction of faith that I cannot see that it is part of the truth of God.

I therefore give more weight to the evidences for Creationism and set aside those interpretations of science that support Darwin's theory. I have made a conscious decision to give greater weight to arguments supporting Scripture than to the findings of science that conflict with revelation. I have not ignored science or denied its findings, but accept revelation as a higher, more complete knowledge. This is an informed decision after looking at all the evidence, including that of the scientists and my own experience. There have been days and nights of prayer and struggle.

Both theories have gaps in their science that must be bridged by belief in something that cannot be proved. Creationism has difficulties with the apparent age of the Earth, the continuity of life, and the geologic column. Evolution has problems with the origin of life, the order seen in living things, and the origin of the laws of the universe (molecular laws, etc.). Both are logical if one accepts certain assumptions. Each depends on a leap of faith of some kind. The Bible is up front about this. It confesses that belief in Creation is an act of faith (Heb. 11:3). There *is* evidence, but faith is required. Many scientists are less transparent, refusing to see that their position also requires a faith that science will in the future be able to answer all the questions of life for which it has no answer now.

For those struggling with science, John, in his first letter, describes Christ as One seen, heard, and touched, that is, scientifically examined. He then writes his thesis on the findings: "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5, NKJV).

And what is the conclusion of the skeptics after all their careful research? "The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pitiless indifference."¹³

I have chosen a life colored by faith. Habitual faith is a treasure I have fought for. It requires exercise to become strong and to remain healthy. We cannot let the world rob us by its sophisticated arguments and caustic ridicule.

The majority of evolutionists would not be convinced by these arguments, but it is clear that creationists are still using their brains—not as atheists use theirs, but using them nevertheless. □

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