

"Reflections on the Creation Debate.

Must it be either 'conversation stopping' or 'shoulder shrugging' "?

CBF

24 May 2012

Russell Clark

Introduction In contemporary society, many choose atheism as a world view and a personal philosophy, for many and varied reasons, and many look to the discoveries and insights about our world, that have come from the application of the scientific method, to justify this position. It is frequently proclaimed that "science has disproved God". Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed it is much more the other way. The discoveries from science have increased the probability that there must be a designer creator.

For that group of atheists in our Christian- influenced cultures, who seek to persuade others that atheism is the truth and Christianity a delusion, the two areas for attack are on the historicity of the Christ event and on our understanding of our existence. The Bible is dismissed as fable, and it is proclaimed that scientists can explain every aspect of our present state without ever needing to resort to an almighty creator being to satisfy intellectual integrity.

In this talk I will explain how I have satisfied myself as to the reasonableness of an orthodox Christian faith, and that in doing so I am not a fool, nor someone who has a defective understanding of science. I am a trained medical scientist, and have been applying this form of science as a clinician for the past 45 years in an acceptable manner as far as my peers and employers are concerned.

I will not address the issue of Biblical authority. Others better qualified can do that. It seems prejudice, ignorance and obscurantism are the dominant reasons for dismissing the Bible as fable. It is certainly reasonable, indeed intellectually necessary, to accept the historicity of Jesus, and by faith I accept the Bible as a book inspired differently from all other -- indeed as the very Word of God.

Medical people are trained in the biology of humans and spend their lives interacting with human anatomy, physiology and biochemistry. We develop a profound respect for the way we are, and the way we function. It is very natural for us to be thankful for the design we see in our bodies, and very easy for doctors to sense awe and wonder as we keep discovering deeper and more wonderful aspects of our biology. To claim this to be accident, and to have been brought about by blind, undirected chance is against our natural inclinations, as we perceive amazing complexity and interdependence through our research and practice, capable of existing only by design.

Firstly I will say something about what the Bible says about our origins and the development that has happened to bring us to where we are today. Then I will express four laws of life as derived from the Bible. I will then look at what science has shown to date concerning our origin and development, and point to seven significant gaps, that will certainly remain gaps in our lifetime, and I think forever.

My talk next week will give more specific details. This talk will be more to do with broader issues.

My position is that we can trust the Bible in what it has to say about our existence and our creation, that science expands our knowledge but in no way removes God from the operation, and that there are serious gaps in our knowledge that cannot be explained without the aid of an intelligent agent.

1 Seven Principles concerning Creation, as told by the Bible.

These seven principles can be seen as ancient wisdom of the Hebrew people or as revealed information from the Creator. Faith takes the second position. If atheists will not accept revelation from God, they should at least credit supreme intelligence to these Babylonian- pagans- cum-descendants-of-Abraham-cum- Egyptian -educated -ancient people, who developed an alphabetical language and used it to express their ideas! It is interesting that neither the Babylonians nor Egyptians produced such a simple creation account as is found in Genesis. The ideas are found in ancient documents, all older than 2,000 years (extant copies exist), including Genesis, various creation Psalms (eg Ps 104), Job 38-41 and in the ancient *Christian* writings as in the prologue to John's gospel. It is worth reminding us moderns how ancient, and necessarily pre-scientific these writings are, and how different are the Biblical accounts of creation from **all** other creation accounts-be they sophisticated ancient societies such as Egypt, China, Babylon., Persia, India and Greece, or pagan societies, including our ancient indigenous Australians. Creation legends may have common reasons for construction and existence but the content is what matters, and the Biblical accounts are unique.

These are the seven principles easily discerned:

1. Once there was no existence, but a beginning happened, to start what we call our universe, or more immediately our planet, our earthly home.

2 Once there was nothing of a physical nature, but there was in existence a different all-powerful being as a spirit, we call "God"-an almighty creative entity, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and eternal. From, or through this spirit, and from a physical "nothingness", a very physical universe came into being.

3 All created entities, dead or living, are derived from the initial creation event followed by a period of development. This initial creation was the source of everything, and all future development came from this source, and was dependent upon this source. A sequence of varied entities from simple to complex and from inanimate to living has occurred, over time. All of creation did not happen instantly but progressively and in a dependent manner, requiring the previous stage as a source. Thus the six days of creation in the prologue of Genesis.

4 The end of creation was an animal species bearing the image of God, presented as a couple, Adam and Eve. The Bible presents this couple as the first humans. The name Adam means "from the earth" or "earthling". Other animals were also derived from the earth, so

there is a common derivation for animals and humans on earth, but humans differ as image bearers of the creator. This can be called the anthropic principle--we humans are the end of creation.

5 "Information", and the *transmission* of information, was the immediate event preceding each stage of creation, contained in the Genesis phrase "And God said... let there be....". The words precede the formation, and the information contained in the words of God lead to formation of physical structures. This shows the necessity of information and transmission in our creation.

6 Design can be seen during this creation process, as each event occurs and is completed as God intended, expressed by the Genesis phrase "and it was so."

7 Purpose and delight can be ascribed to the creation as each event occurs in an intended sequence with an ultimate purpose to produce an animal being bearing the image of God, who can take responsibility for the creation, made for Adam and Eve. The theophony to Job conveys God's delight in His creation. The end of the prologue in Genesis declares the creation to be "very good".

Summary:

- 1 Time began. The universe did not always exist.
- 2 Something came from nothing. The initial existence was inanimate-matter, light and water.
- 3 Earth was formed and developed from preceding stages.
- 4 Humans represent the end of creation--there is an Anthropic principle.
- 5 Creation developed through information transmission --the information coming from God.
- 6 Creation was designed by a designer.
- 7 Creation is purposeful, a delight to God, and declared "very good".

In my previous talk last year I spoke to the prologue in Genesis, indicating that I believe God dictated this to Moses on Mt Sinai, and set it as seven days. I believe He did that as He wanted us to follow a seven day cycle, so that the seventh day would be a special day of rest--the Sabbath. I do not think this is meant to be a scientific account and I think that God had other purposes for this transmission to us through Moses. Fundamentally it is the understanding that we are not here by accident but are created, along with everything else. Nevertheless, other principles can be seen and I believe these seven above can be seen in this prologue, with a little support from other Biblical passages.

The discoveries through the scientific method in astrophysics and biology confirm these principles to an amazing degree--and only in the last 50 years! Atheists may state these

principles a little differently, but have no opposition to them. Indeed, they would say there are these seven principles:

1 Time had a beginning. The dominant scientific view just 50 years ago was there was no beginning but a steady state universe. Hubble and the red shift changed all this. Science finally agreed with the Bible. Time started 13.7 billion years ago-the best estimate today.

2 Matter and energy have come from nothing. It is possible to use sophisticated mathematics which may satisfy some people that something can come from nothing! Ordinary physics and chemistry deny it!

3 The sequence of events on earth goes something like this: Primitive earth formed linked to a star, the surface environment was liquid and received light energy from the sun. Initially the atmosphere was opaque to light and sun, moon and stars could not be seen from the surface of the earth. A very precise set of physical constants allowed the conditions for life to develop and this happened as bacterial prokaryote life from basic chemicals (abiogenesis). Photosynthetic activity altered the atmosphere, allowing transparency and viewing of the sun, moon and stars, and oxygen to be present at a fixed concentration. Much variation happened in the bacterial world, with adaptation to different environments. Then formation of eukaryote cells through bacterial fusion occurred, and then visible multicellular entities in the sea and land formed as fungi, plants, fish and marine animals, birds and land animals. There was an explosion of life with great variety and adaptation in the sea, on the land and in the air.

4 Humans developed from ancestral primates in recent times, appearing as a defenceless "runt" primates compared to other primates. Yet these humans have conquered the planet despite their physical deficiencies.

5 Critical to all stages of development of living entities has been transmission of information, initially and most powerfully through a code on DNA. The transmission of information can be seen through the presence of certain replicating macromolecules, then the single circular chromosome of prokaryotes, then the linear chromosomes of eukaryotes and multicellular animals, and in higher animals through sounds and speech with language and writing. Transmission of information is the necessary step before development occurs.

6 Our universe and life on our planet has the appearance of design, but this is a false perception.. It is "pseudo-design" and all the stages are accident.

7 Although it is true that humans keep insisting that there is a purpose to their existence, this is a deception. The processes and mechanisms involved in our formation are blind and have no direction. There is "purpose delusion".

I consider there is an excellent match between the first five of these Biblical principles and what astrophysicists and biologists have discovered. The Bible is silent on mechanisms but strong on ultimate issues and purposes. The Bible provides an understanding of the human desire for design and purpose, and dismisses "pseudo-design" and "pseudo-delusion" as false and really bizarre interpretations.

2 Four Divine Laws of Life

It is our human way of managing our lives to construct aims, visions and values, followed by methods. Applying this type of process to God, the existence of our universe could fit within the following four laws, as if decreed by God. These ideas are Biblical.

Law 1 There shall be an initial creative event, where space and time will commence, and the products of this event shall be constructed to produce life, which will be generative.

Law2 This life will be expressed as individual entities and life on earth will be rich in variety. There will be matching of life to various environments.

Law 3 These living entities will be social and relate in different ways to each other.

Law4 There will be time limits to individual living beings.

Scientifically these four laws can be stated as follows:

Law 1 All living beings are physico-chemical entities, have a common origin ultimately in the Big Bang, although more immediately from the chemicals of primitive earth, and are capable of reproduction allowing initially clonal survival, and later generative offspring.

Law 2 Variety exists in living organisms as a result of changes over time in a universal genetic code. This allows gradual change (evolution from genetic mutations), and adaptation to varying environments (natural selection). These genetic changes will produce disease and disability, as well as variety. You cannot have one without the other.

Law 3 Symbiosis is a reality of living entities, with mutualism, parasitism and commensalism modes. These relationships may produce benefits in some situations, but in other situations competition, development of food chains, harm and disease. Not all relationships can be commensal.

Law 4 Individual death occurs for all living entities, and maximum life spans exist for individual living entities, most commonly preceded and regulated by an ageing process

I think many issues that are raised today as issues for doubting God because of what certain "scientists" say, or because of the pain that comes from the existence of disease ageing and death, would be more readily understood if these Four Laws had been presented in the Bible in a similar format to the Ten Commandments. In a sense, like it or not, this is how God has decreed how life will be on planet Earth!

Things could have been different for us humans if we were able to fulfil the requirements of living in Eden, where there is no disease, ageing or death. But we did not, and we will not accept the Creator's authority, and so we must bear the consequences of this rebellion, for we all rebel. Indeed, many deny God's existence- an extreme form of rebellion indeed! So, we live the life of all created animals as physical beings. Our bodies have been part of the grand story of life on Earth, developed from the chemicals on primitive Earth, including the development of information in a genetic code, modified through changes in that

code that have allowed rich, indeed extravagant, variety, but also disease and disorder. All living beings exist in relationships that vary, and so do we humans. And we all have a time limits placed upon us. For us humans it is a maximum of 120 years. But other processes may intervene that considerably reduce this.

But despite our rebellion, created life remains very good. If you doubt it, spend more time looking at such wonderful film productions as Planet Earth and its ilk. We are all fearfully and wondrously made, as Psalm 139 declares! Do not be deceived by the atheists with their hopeless pessimism and the meaninglessness in their life philosophy. Life on earth as nature far removed from human involvement is amazing and beautiful. And there is much of beauty in us humans as well, although we also do harm, as well, sadly! But the Bible helps us understand that as well!

I see these Four Laws as excellent descriptors of how we see and understand life in its broadest sense. It fits well to being that way because I can think of it being a Divine Decree for life on Earth. This is what the Creator intends, and so it will be.

3 Seven Major Gaps in the story of life

Our current atheists are confident in their view, but their confidence is not well based. There are many gaps in our knowledge and understanding. I will say more of this in my next talk, but let me now bring to your attention just seven. I happen to think these are very big gaps and any one of these gaps is enough to undermine the story of our existence by chance. All need an intelligent designer to do something-actually to do a lot. But God is not restricted to involvement in these gaps. He is continuously involved in all stages of the story of our universe. That is the Biblical declaration. He is the creator of all things that we call our universe, and for such a great spiritual entity outside of time, 14 billion years are as a day! We struggle to understand what it can mean to be outside of time. Some parts of the story seem to us inordinately long, other parts so breathlessly rapid-but that is our problem, not God's. He is not dependent on us for entertainment or for something to do, nor controlled by earthly rotations imposing time upon us!

In the attachment, pages 5 and 6 are extracts from John Maynard Smith's book, co-authored with Eors Szathmary called "The origins of Life". I will refer more to this next talk. They speak of transitions-I prefer gaps. They suggest bridging the gaps with Information. I agree-the information is from God, however!

Seven Gaps

1 The Big Bang. Something from nothing! Even with mathematics, there is a problem with what existed before 10^{-43} of the first second. There is a silence in mathematics. I recommend John Polkinghorn's "Science and Christian Belief" and David Wilkinson's "God, the Big Bang and Stephen Hawking". Page 1 of the attachment sketches the Big Bang

2 The development of order occurred from such an all-powerful, incredibly hot, incredibly brief and highly unstable entity. The order has been revealed through the study of physics (including quantum and astrophysics) and chemistry (including biochemistry). How can there

be such order from a Big Bang? An improbable fine tuning of the constants of physics and chemistry exists that makes planet earth "just right" for life to develop. Paul Davies has called this the "Goldilocks Enigma" and has developed this theme in his book of the same name.. The reaction of most scientists today, he informs us, is to shrug shoulders .They cannot explain it. Pages 2, 3 and 4 provide some interesting viewing and reading

3 The development of cellular life (prokaryotes) occurred through abiogenesis on primitive planet earth. This means "spontaneous generation "must have occurred, and life was immediately capable of replication and reproduction .Despite simulation of primitive earth environments, and supplying all the required chemical ingredients, all experiments in producing life have failed totally and have been abandoned by most scientists.

4 Cellular life developed, becoming eubacteria, with intra-cellular chromosomes containing expanded genes, nuclei, mitochondria and mitotic reproduction. The Lynn Margulis hypothesis of fusion of bacteria remains theoretical and cannot be simulated, but remains the only explanation offered for this essential transmission in the story of life on earth. Page 7 supplies more information.

5 Multicellularity (metazoan living beings) developed, with tissue and organ differentiation, regulated by hormones and neural tissue. No worthwhile theoretical hypothesis for its initial formation has been offered, and no support from experimentation given. Once an ancestral invertebrate with adequate genetic information has formed, it then becomes possible to accept evolution by continuing genetic change with adaptation to environments through natural selection. This certainly can explain variety, although much fine tuning of genetic mechanisms is essential, as disease, disability and death are the more common outcomes of mutations.

6 The human brain developed from the ancestral primate, and more recently from the hominids, but there is no worthwhile or testable hypothesis for its development a mere 200,000 years ago. Despite the romantic view of some biologists and primatologists, the capacity of the human brain is radically different from chimps and gorillas, although structurally, biochemically and physiologically similar, most obviously differing only in size. The human brain has allowed survival of Homo sapiens, in a challenging world. We could not have survived relying on our physical attributes.

7 A change in the human life cycle, in terms of proportions of time spent in growth, maturity and ageing, has occurred compared with other primates. We can live to 120, but have two thirds of this life span in an ageing process, with a definite menopause preventing fertility, at less than half of the maximum life span. This contrasts with gorillas and apes that have a maximum life span of 60, with a short ageing phase (eg10%) and no definite menopause. There are no hypotheses for mechanisms for this alteration compared with other primates, although worth can be seen in the changes, so value can be seen in grand-parenting and wisdom transmission. The very fact that ageing exists at all, controlled by late acting genes, is not compatible with traditional Darwinian mechanisms, as defective genes should be removed from the genome. Natural selection selects for vitality and survival, not frailty and

death. The fact that these genes are ancient, and have not been removed over three billion years, undermines a simple reliance on Darwinian mechanisms.

- Summary:*
- 1 Big Bang from nothing
 - 2 Order from a "bang"
 - 3 Spontaneous generation of life on primitive earth
 - 4 Development of eubacteria
 - 5 Development of metazoa regulated by hormones and brains
 - 6 Development of the human brain
 - 7 A unique pattern for human ageing.

Conclusion

1 Ancient copies of even more ancient documents, kept in Jerusalem, provide data that allow the interpretation that our very existence has come about as a creative activity of an Almighty Being, revealed to us as Yahweh, and that this event:

- 1) marked the beginning of time;
- 2) came from nothing;
- 3) developed in a dependent manner from a preceding source material
- 4) produced humans as image bearers of Yahweh;
- 5) required transmission of information to achieve progressive development
- 6) is designed;
- 7) is intended.

2 This information, now readily available for us in our modern Bibles, conforms to the discoveries of science, so that there is no disharmony between the Bible and science, in fundamental areas. Atheists demand "pseudo-design" and "pseudo-purpose", deny an anthropic principle and rely on accident and chance instead of a creator.

3 Four patterns in living entities can be seen by observation of life on Earth, and could be considered as "Biological Laws". Acceptance of these patterns by individuals as God's intentions, would make life less confusing, more delightful, and minimise much of the angst currently present in the Western community at large.

4 Scientific understanding of our existence has many serious gaps in explanations of causal mechanisms required to move from the Big Bang to our present state. There are no grounds for confidence that these mechanisms will ever be found.

