

“Doubts because of Science”

Room For Doubt Seminar – March 1-2, 2014 Christian Church of Clarendon Hills

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Rich Knopp, M.A., M.Div., Ph.D.
Prof. of Philosophy & Christian Apologetics
Project Coordinator, Room For Doubt (www.roomfordoubt.com)

Email: rknopp@lincolnchristian.edu
Lincoln Christian University

Introduction¹

A. Biblical considerations (Gen 1:1; Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-32)

Gen 1:1 “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Gen 1:27-28 “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; ...”

Ps 19:1-2 “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.”²

Rom 1:20 “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

B. Doubts because of science: Preliminary thoughts

C. Let’s ask questions

I. What about Science and Its Relationship to Christianity?

A. Prominent images of science and religion (including Christianity)

1. They necessarily _____ **CONFLICT**.
 - a. E.g. Galileo
 - b. E.g. Charles Darwin
 - c. E.g. Richard Dawkins: “When one person suffers from a delusion, it is called insanity. When many people suffer from a delusion, it is called religion” (*The God Delusion*).
2. They are totally _____ **SEPARATE** (so no conflict is possible).
3. Neither view is acceptable for a biblical Christian.
 - a. There is some overlap between science and Christianity—so conflict is possible.
 - b. But there is a “positive” relationship between science and biblical Christianity.

B. Important considerations about science.

1. “Science” is sometimes a *philosophy* (of Naturalism) dressed up in “science” clothes.
 - a. “Science” describes and attempts to explain what is empirically accessible.
 - b. “**Scientism**” is a *philosophy* that fuses the philosophy of Naturalism (only physical matter exists) with the methods of science.
 - (1) Only physical phenomena and causes are legitimate.

¹ The seminar handouts provide more information than time will allow for the presentations. Please use these as follow-up resources. Handouts (with answers) will be made available on the event webpage.

² See my sermon with slides on Psalm 19 for Lincoln Christian Seminary’s chapel at the following web address:
http://www.worldvieweyes.org/videos/Ps-19-R_Knopp-640.mov

- (2) Appeals to “intelligence” to explain the cosmos or the origin of life must be rejected.
- c. Christianity will necessarily conflict with “scientism,” but not with “science.”
- d. We need a “hat detector” to determine when someone is speaking as a “scientist” or as a “philosopher” of scientism.

Richard Dawkins: “Any creative intelligence, of sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence only as the end product of an extended process of gradual evolution. Creative intelligences, being evolved, necessarily arrive late in the universe, and therefore cannot be responsible for designing it. God ... is a delusion;...” (*The God Delusion* [Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2006], 31).

Stephen Hawking: “... quantum theory predicts the multiverse—the idea that ours is just one of many universes that appeared spontaneously out of nothing, each with different laws of nature” (emphasis added; Hawking is speaking of his position in his book, *The Grand Design*, 2010).

- 2. Science is not totally objective, purely empirical, or entirely rational.
 - a. Philosophers of science have effectively argued this (e.g. Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend).
 - (1) Science incorporates a variety of metaphysical or philosophical assumptions.
 - (2) Scientists are often influenced by strong commitments.
 - b. Various sciences differ in the extent to which they are empirical and repeatable.
 - (1) Some sciences use repeatable experiments on obviously empirical realities.
 - (2) Some sciences are “not-so-repeatable” and “not-so-empirical” (e.g. detection of dark matter, gamma rays, “strings” in string theory, the evolution from one specie to another).
 - (3) Some sciences deal with apparently one-time events (e.g. historical events, theories about the origin of the cosmos [e.g. Big Bang] and the origin of life [spontaneous generation or abiogenesis—life arising from non-living matter]).
 - c. Yet, many who speak *in the name of science* categorically reject any appeal to “intelligent design,” because it is presumably not empirically testable and repeatable. (Note the 2005 court decision in Dover, PA case against Intelligent Design in the public school science classroom.)

Judge Jones (*Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School Board*): “While supernatural explanations may be important and have merit, they are not part of science. This self-imposed convention of science, which limits inquiry to testable, natural explanations about the natural world, is referred to by philosophers as “methodological naturalism” and is sometimes known as the scientific method. Methodological naturalism is a “ground rule” of science today which requires scientists to seek explanations in the world around us based upon what we can observe, test, replicate, and verify” (John Jones, *Kitzmiller et al. v. Dover Area School District*, Case No. 04cv2688, document 342, filed 12/20/2005; Memorandum Opinion, p. 65). (Emphasis added.)

C. The positive _____ **HISTORICAL** relationship between science and Christianity: The pioneers of early modern science were strong creationists and many were devoted Christians.

- 1. Galileo (1564-1642)
- 2. Isaac Newton (1642-1727)
- 3. Robert Boyle (1635-1703)
- 4. Michael Faraday (1791-1867)

D. The positive _____ **PHILOSOPHICAL** relationship between science and Christianity.

- 1. Biblical creationism explains the presuppositions necessary for science that science itself cannot justify.
 - a. Nature is _____ **REAL**.

- b. Nature is _____ **RATIONAL** (orderly; uniform).
- c. The human _____ **MIND** is rational and can understand nature (i.e., they are adequately correlated).

Albert Einstein: “The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible” (*Einstein: A Biography* (1954) by Antonina Vallentin, p. 24).

- d. The physical senses are sufficiently _____ **RELIABLE**.
2. Biblical creationism supplies a strong _____ **MOTIVATION** for doing science.
- a. Nature is “good” and worthy of study (Gen 1:31).
 - b. Nature must be studied empirically (because God did not have to create it in any particular way; we need to look to see what He did).
 - c. Humans have the capacity and responsibility for supervising nature (Gen. 1:26,28 “let them rule” and “subdue” the earth).
 - d. “Fallen” humanity and loving one’s neighbor prompts care and compassion through science and other avenues.

II. How Do We Account for the Existence of the Universe?

A. Christian claims:

- 1. God brought the universe into existence.
- 2. The universe is not eternal, self-explanatory, or self-sufficient.

B. Two important arguments from cosmology for God’s existence (*cosmos* = nature; universe):

- 1. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and his “Five Ways” to prove God’s existence.³
 - a. Assumed, for the sake of argument, that the universe was eternal.
 - b. E.g. Motion:
 - (1) Whatever moves must be moved by another.
 - (2) But the chain cannot go infinitely.
 - (3) Must be some uncaused, unmoved Mover. (This was also Aristotle’s argument.)
- 2. Kalam version (*kalam* = Arabic for “speech”)⁴
 - a. P1: Everything that begins to exist must have a cause.
 - b. P2: The universe began to exist.
 - c. Conclusion: Therefore, the universe must have a cause.
 - d. Scientific point: Big Bang cosmology confirms that the universe _____ **BEGAN**.

C. Modern cosmology’s **Big Bang** affirms a temporal beginning to the universe.

- 1. 19th – early 20th century: universe widely held to be eternal by many.
- 2. “Big Bang” idea **surfaces**.
 - a. Einstein’s general theory of relativity (1915) implied either an expanding or contracting universe.
 - b. Georges Lemaitre (1927): Gave mathematical calculations for an expanding universe.

Sir Arthur Eddington: “Religion first became possible for a reasonable man of science in the year 1927.”

³ See <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1002.htm>, *Summa Theologica*, especially Article 3.

⁴ This argument is prominently used by William Lane Craig, a leading Christian philosopher and apologist. See his website at www.reasonablefaith.org.

- c. Edwin Hubble
 - (1) 1924: Observed other galaxies.
 - (2) 1929: The “cosmic Doppler” effect: The universe is EXPANDING.

- 3. Big Bang idea is **suppressed**.
 - a. Arthur Eddington, British astrophysicist, wrote, “Philosophically, the notion of a beginning of the present order of Nature is repugnant to me.... I should like to find a genuine loophole.”
 - b. Fred Hoyle rejected the Big Bang idea primarily because the “big bang theory requires a recent origin of the Universe that openly invites the concept of creation” (*The Intelligent Universe*, p. 237).
 - c. Einstein contrived a “cosmological constant” to make the universe “static” and avoid an expanding universe. (He later admitted that this was his “biggest blunder.”)
- 4. Big Bang idea eventually **succeeds**.
 - a. 1965 Arno Pensias & Robert Wilson: Unexpectedly discovered “background radiation” throughout the universe.
 - b. Subsequent Cosmic Background Explorer satellites confirm Big Bang models.

D. Impact on scientists (including atheists and skeptics).

- “What we found is evidence for the birth of the universe.... It’s like looking at God” (George Smoot, COBE project leader).
- “It is the discovery of the century, if not of all time” (Stephen Hawking, Cambridge University).
- “We have found the Holy Grail of cosmology” (Michael Turner, University of Chicago).
- “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” (Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 116).

E. **Apologetic significance** of the BIG BANG

- 1. The universe **BEGAN** (cf. biblical creation).
- 2. The Naturalist’s major challenge: **Began FROM WHAT and HOW** (if there was “nothing”)?
- 3. The Naturalist’s alternatives
 - a. Oscillating universe. (Repeated “big bangs” with ongoing expansion/collapse)
 - b. Infinite universes exist—Multiverse notion.
 - c. Universe is simply “uncaused”; it just “happened”; things can come “from nothing” and for “no reason.”⁵
- 4. Note the apostle Paul’s significant claims in Romans 1:18-32.
 - a. Humans have a **SENSE** of God.
 - b. Many **SUPPRESS** this awareness.
 - c. They **SPECULATE** alternatives.
 - d. They **SUBSTITUTE** some replacement for God.

III. How Do We Account for the Characteristics of the Universe?

A. Considerations from **teleology** (e.g. William Paley, 1743-1805)

- 1. Argument from design (“teleology” < *telos* = end; purpose; design)
- 2. E.g. A discovered watch in the forest.

⁵ Unbelievably, this is the essential position of some atheists like Alex Rosenberg (*The Atheist’s Guide to Reality* [2011]) who recently debated William Lane Craig at Purdue University. The debate is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhfkqhq-CM84>.

B. The “Anthropic” Principle (*anthropos* = man; humanity)

1. Numerous physical constants and the ratios among them are amazingly precise to make the existence of human life possible.
2. Or, without this “fine-tuning” of these numerical values, human life could never exist.
3. The universe began _____. **JUST RIGHT**
4. How do we explain this?

C. Examples of the Anthropic Principle.⁶

1. Expansion rate of universe “must be fine-tuned to an accuracy of one part in 10^{55} ” (Hugh Ross, in Moreland’s *The Creation Hypothesis*, p. 163).
2. The ratio of proton mass to electron mass (1,836 times heavier).
3. Ratio of number of electrons to number of proton:
 - a. Must be accurate to 1 in 10^{37} power.
 - b. Hugh Ross illustration of piling coins to the moon (see Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, p. 109).
4. Strength of gravity in relation to other primary forces. (See Robin Collins in Strobel’s *Case for a Creator*, pp. 131-132.)

D. Impact on “non-creationists”

Fred Hoyle (agnostic/atheist): “A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect as monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature.”

Stephen Hawking: “The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers [e.g. ratio of proton to electron mass] seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life” (*A Brief History of Time*, p. 125).

Arno Penzias (Nobel in physics): “Astronomy leads us to a unique event, a universe which was created out of nothing, one with the very delicate balance needed to provide exactly the conditions required to permit life, and one which has an underlying (one might say ‘supernatural’) plan” (quoted in Margenau and Varghese, eds., *Cosmos, Bios, and Theos*, p. 83).

George Greenstein (Astrophysicist at Amherst College): “As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some super-natural agency—or, rather, Agency—must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being? Was it God who stepped in and so providentially crafted the cosmos for our benefit?” (*The Symbiotic Universe*, p. 27). [Note: Greenstein admits that the “theistic hypothesis” seems to be the most sensible, but he rejects it because he asserts that “God is not an explanation” (p. 28)].

Antony Flew (at age of 81 converted from atheism to theism. He had “to go where the evidence leads”): “I think the most impressive arguments for God’s existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries...” “I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe’s intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God” (*There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, p. 88).

E. Biblical connections (Isa 45:18; Ps 19:1-2; Rom 1:20)

Isa 45:18 “For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited)” (NASV).

⁶ For introductory explanations, see Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*; J.P. Moreland, ed., *The Creation Hypothesis*; Hugh Ross, *Fingerprint of God*; John Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?*, 71-77; Guillermo Ganzalez and Jay Richards, *The Privileged Planet* (also available on DVD).

IV. How Do We Account for the Origin of Life?

A. Naturalism's claim:

1. Life arose through blind, undirected, non-intelligent natural forces and random chance.⁷

Richard Dawkins (atheist and evolutionary biologist at Oxford): "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose" (*The Blind Watchmaker*, p. 1)

2. Charles Darwin (and neo-Darwinism) does not address or explain the origin of life. Life must already exist for natural selection to have anything to act on.

B. The origin of life requires:

1. The right **materials** (i.e., 20 amino acids).
2. The right **sequencing** of the materials to form proteins.
3. **Information** (and a communication system) to direct the process of sequencing (e.g. DNA).
4. DNA specifies the order of very complex sequences of amino acids and proteins.
5. This is "complex specified information" (CSI).

C. The Naturalists' main challenges:

1. Dilemma: Existing information (DNA) is necessary for life; but existing life is necessary for DNA.
2. How did the information originate?
3. Purely naturalistic processes cannot generate CSI (complex specified information).

D. The wonders of the DNA molecule: A "signature" of intelligence?

1. One gram of DNA can store 700 terabytes of data (= 14,000 fifty-gigabyte Blu-ray discs!)
2. Four "bases": A,G,C,T (3 billion pairs in humans).
3. A "triplet" of three consecutive bases gives the code for each specific amino acid to form a protein.
4. 20 different amino acids are thereby "instructed" to form proteins (from 40-27,000 amino acids for ONE protein).
5. Even "simple" organisms have many proteins (e.g. E. coli has 4,300 proteins).
6. Each human cell has DNA (which, if stretched out, would be approximately 6 feet long). By consequence, a human's DNA (with 100 trillion cells) would reach 613 BILLION miles.

E. Acknowledgment from skeptics and atheists.

1. **Francis Crick** (co-discoverer of the DNA molecule): "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have been satisfied to get it going" (*Life Itself*, p. 88; emphasis added).
2. **Fred Hoyle**: "Life could not have originated here on the Earth. Nor does it look as though biological evolution can be explained from within an earthbound theory of life. Genes from outside the Earth are needed to drive the evolutionary process. This much can be consolidated

⁷ This is a completely different issue from Darwin's claims about natural selection (evolution), which I will discuss in session 5. Darwin said nothing about the *origin* of life. "Natural selection" *presupposes* the existence of biological organisms before natural selection has anything to work on.

by strictly scientific means, by experiment, observation and calculation” (*The Intelligent Universe*, p. 242]

- a. Estimated the chances of life originating on earth: 1 in 10 to the _____ **40,000th** power!
 - b. Number of estimated atoms in the visible universe: 10 to the _____ **80th** power.
 - c. “Panspermia Hypothesis”: Life came to earth from elsewhere in the universe.
3. **Richard Dawkins’ “admission”**: A “signature?!” (See the interview segment with Richard Dawkins in the movie “Expelled” with Ben Stein.)

V. What about Evolution?

A. Overview of positions:

1. **Naturalistic (Non-Theistic) Evolution: Darwinian Evolution**
 - a. All forms of life on earth are the result of chance mutations and natural selection from earliest life without any purpose or intelligence guiding the process.
 - b. Key advocates:
 - (1) Charles Darwin (*Origin of Species*, 1859; *The Descent of Man*, 1871).
 - (2) Richard Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*, 1976; *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*, 1986); *Climbing Mount Improbable*, 1996.
2. **Theistic Evolutionary Creationism**
 - a. God has continually “directed” the cosmological and biological process of evolution.
 - b. Some versions see “God” as little more than an impersonal power or force.
 - c. Some view God as a personal creative agent.
 - d. Advocates: Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* [New York: Free Press, 2006] and Denis Lamoureux, *I Love Jesus and I Accept Evolution* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock], 2009.)
3. **Deistic Evolutionary Creationism**
 - a. God creates the universe with the built-in capacity to evolve cosmologically and biologically.
 - b. The universe had “functional integrity” to evolve without additional and distinct creative acts by God (e.g. Howard Van Til, *The Fourth Day: What the Bible and the Heavens are Telling Us about the Creation*).
4. **Periodic Creationism** God periodically creates at distinct times.
 - a. **Young Earth Creationism** (YEC): The universe is 6,000-10,000 years old. (Advocates: Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis)
 - b. **Old Earth Creationism** (OEC): The universe may be as old as most cosmologists say—about 14.7 billion years. (Advocates: Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time: A Biblical and Scientific Perspective on the Creation-Date Controversy* [1994])
 - c. Both YEC and OEC hold that God performed distinct actions to create e.g. the heavenly bodies and various kinds of life.

B. Problems with Darwinian Evolution (Naturalistic Macro-Evolution)

1. **The EVIDENCE (and fossil) problem** (see Phillip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* and Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution*).
 - a. Darwin acknowledged the fossil problem.

“Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory. The explanation lies, as I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record” (Darwin, *Origin of Species*, in chap 6, “On the Imperfection of the Geological Record”).

- b. The paradigm problem: *Gradualism* VS. *Punctuatedism*.
 - (1) Richard Dawkins: Evolution must be gradual (see *Climbing Mount Improbable*).

- (2) Stephen Gould: Evolution cannot be gradual and the fossil record shows this. (>> “punctuated equilibrium”)
- c. Problems and limitations with classic evolutionist examples (e.g. Peppered moths, Darwin’s finches, Haeckel’s drawings, four-winged fruit flies). (See Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution*.)

2. The TIME problem and the Cambrian Explosion

- a. 19th century: earth about 100my—not nearly enough time for Darwinian evolution.
- b. Big Bang in cosmology (universe is 14byo; earth 4.5byo) gives much more time.
- c. But the “Big Bang” in geology (the “Cambrian Explosion”) occurred within about 10my, and almost all major phyla appear in the fossil record. (See the book by Stephen Meyer, *Darwin’s Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design*, 2013.)
- d. If 100my was not nearly enough time, the Cambrian era allows only 1/10 of that time.

3. The MECHANISM problem

- a. Charles Darwin (gradualism) vs. Michael Behe (irreducible complexity)

Darwin: “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” (*Origin of Species*).

Behe: “An irreducibly complex biological system, if there is such a thing would be a powerful challenge to Darwinian evolution. Since natural selection can only choose systems that are already working, then if a biological system cannot be produced gradually, it would have to arise as an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have anything to act on” (*Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, p. 39).

- b. Behe: Even the “simplest” organisms are incredibly complex units with many interdependent parts (e.g. a mousetrap; the bacterial flagellum).
- c. See Dean Kenyon, *Of Pandas and People*.
 - (1) Kenyon was once a leading evolutionist and co-author of *Biochemical Predestination* (1969), a widely used naturalistic evolutionary textbook.
 - (2) He has since rejected this view, claiming that the problems are insurmountable for “chemical evolution” to “self-organize” the raw chemical materials.

Conclusion

- A. No necessary conflict exists between science and Christianity; in fact, Christianity provides the presuppositions necessary for science and the motivation to do science. If science is wedded to Naturalism, then conflict is inevitable.
- B. Modern cosmology confirms the biblical notion that the universe had a beginning.
- C. Modern science confirms the biblical idea that the universe is amazingly conditioned for the unique existence of human life.
- D. Origin of life studies point to the need for an intelligence for the existence of life.
- E. Darwinian (purely materialistic, unguided) evolution has severe problems.