

ANSWERING ATHEISTS

One of the most famous atheists of the 20th century, British philosopher, Bertrand Russell wrote: *“Why I am not a Christian.”* When he was asked what he would say if it turned out that there was a God after all, Russell replied that he would ask the Almighty: “Why didn’t you give us more evidence?”

This prompted a reaction from science teacher and author Ken Poppy that Russell “seems to be positioning himself in case he needs to shift the blame to God for the not being more convincing. (Hmmm. Did he never see a bright cool moon setting in the blue western sky while the sun rose circular red through the eastern clouds? Did he never hold a newborn baby?)”

A Hidden God

17th Century French mathematician and scientist Blaise Pascal wrote: “What can be seen on earth indicates neither the total absence of God nor His manifest presence, but rather the presence of a hidden God.”

“To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” Titus 1:15

To the willfully blind God seems to be absent, or even worse if he is there, he is cruel. But to those whose eyes have been opened there are abundant evidences of God in Creation, in our conscience and in Jesus Christ.

The classic hymn: “Holy! Holy! Holy!” reminds us that the eye of sinful man does not see God’s glory and the darkness seems to hide him:

“Holy! Holy! Holy!

Though the darkness hide Thee,

though the eye of sinful man,

Thy Glory may not see;

only Though art Holy; there is none beside Thee;

perfect in power, in love and purity.”

God has not left Himself without a witness. There is nowhere on earth, or in the universe, where His fingerprints are absent.

Confrontation

However, we are confronted today by a most virulent and aggressive form of atheism. One of the great ironies of militant atheists is how their whole existence seems to be consumed in fighting against what they claim does not exist.

Confusion

If you have read many of these vicious atheist attacks on God you will notice how they tend to blur the distinction between Christianity and Islam. They cite horrible atrocities done in the name of religion (most of which is been done by Muslim extremists against Christians!) and then they argue that the problem is with God!

Condemnation

Firstly, it is completely unfair to blame the victims for what their persecutors have done. Secondly, these atheist writers ignore the vastly worse atrocities committed by atheists. Secular humanist, atheistic political regimes turned the 20th century into the bloodiest century in all of history. The death toll left behind by secular humanist, atheist dictators such as Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Pol Pot, Haile Mariam Mengistu, Samora Machel, Agestino Neto, Fidel Castro and other communists exceed 160,000,000 victims. These were not soldiers killed in battle, but civilians killed in peace time, by their own governments, in the name of scientific socialism and atheism.

Contradiction

Now, we would not want to make every atheist share the guilt of what some atheists have done to slaughter multiplied millions. Neither would it be fair, or rational, for any atheist to blame Protestant Christians for what intolerant Catholic regimes and Muslim extremists have done to their forefathers.

The Reality of God

The fact is that there is a God. He made us. He has revealed his standards of right and wrong in the Ten Commandments. We are accountable to Him. One Day we will stand before Him and give an account of our lives.

But Why Does God Seem Hidden?

C.S. Lewis wrote that God sometimes seems most hidden to those who are the nearest to Him. Jesus Christ Himself, on the Cross, cried out: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* Mark 15:34. If Immanuel, God with us, could have cried out in anguish and loneliness of His soul, how much more should we do so in our times of anguish.

Throughout the Scriptures we see God’s people crying out to Him when He seems hidden. The children of Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness felt forsaken and cried out to God. Hannah cried out in the Tabernacle in anguish because of the shame of her barrenness, pleading with God for a child. When David was an outlaw, on the run, fleeing from King Saul, he penned the very Psalm Jesus quoted on the Cross, Psalm 22. The prophet Jonah in the belly of the fish, and many others have cried out to God when He seemed far away.

Spiritual Seasons

The Creator has placed the answer to this in nature itself. No matter how dark the night becomes, you can be sure that the morning will come. Spring always comes, no matter how cold and long the winter seems. There are seasons in our spiritual lives as well.

Revelation

God is not hidden. He has been revealing His power and majesty and truth in so many multitudes of ways. It is clearly seen in His Creation. He has spoken through the prophets. He has spoken in and through His Son Jesus, Christ.

“The Heavens declare the Glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.”

Psalm 19:1

Watersheds

If you have ever climbed the great Drakensburg Mountains then you have seen one of the watersheds of our continent. You can imagine drops of rain from the same cloud can fall on the same peak and one will flow West and end up in the great Orange River, flowing relentlessly to the Atlantic Ocean , another will end up in the Tugela River and flow East, ending in the Indian

Ocean. At one point these two drops of water are a meter apart, and then a kilometer apart, then a hundred kilometers apart. Eventually they're over a thousand kilometers apart.

The Mountains of the Moon include the great Mount Ruwenzori which, although close to the Equator, has snow on the peak. From these Mountains of the Moon some of the water flows North into the Nile, the longest river in the world, stretching over 6,600 kilometers. It takes one drop of water over 4 months to travel the full length of the Nile River from Lake Victoria through to the Mediterranean Sea. However, some of the rain that falls on the Mountains of the Moon flows West into the Congo River and empties eventually into the Atlantic Ocean. In America the Rockies are the continental divide. In South America it is the Andies Mountains. In Asia the Himalayas. In Europe the Alps.

The Watershed Question

These watersheds are important in geography and one watershed in Theology which impacts key beliefs more than any other is the question: Is there a God, or not? That question is pivotal.

The Bible begins: ***"In the beginning God Created the Heavens and the earth."*** Genesis 1:1

Atheism is based on the assumption that there is no God.

Either one believes that the world created itself or one believes in a self-sufficient Supreme Being who always was, is and ever will be.

Put another way, the question is: Is God self-sufficient and always existing? Or is the universe self-sufficient and self-existing?

The point where you start will determine where you end up.

"The fool has said in his heart, there is no God." Psalm 14:1

The God Who is There

Every tribe and culture and nation has an idea about God and a name for God. Everyone knows that God exists, but some people foolishly try to suppress that fact.

The *Great Books of the Western World* comprise 60 volumes of the greatest writings of the greatest minds in western history. Dr. Mortimer Adler, the Editor in Chief, observed that almost all of the authors of the great books, from the ancient Greek writers through to writers of modern times, deal in some way with the subject of God.

"The reason", he said, "is obvious. More consequences for thought and action follow the affirmation or denial of God than the answering of any other basic question. The whole tenor of human life is affected by whether men regard themselves as the supreme being in the universe, or acknowledge a superhuman Being whom they conceive of as an object of fear or love and a force to be defied, or a Lord to be obeyed."

More than anything else, what you believe about God will make the most difference in your thoughts, your life and your eternal destiny.

The Crumbling Foundations of Atheism

One of the reasons why we are facing such a militant and aggressive assault from atheists today is because all the pillars of atheism are crumbling. First they are crumbling from the tremendous advance of the Gospel as multiplied millions of people are being converted to Christ every year.

Secondly, at the highest intellectual levels, increasing numbers of scientists are realising that, on every point, atheism is an untenable position.

Facts are Stubborn Things

In *God, the Atom and the Universe*, scientist Dr. James Reid, declares: “*Science is preparing a surprise for mankind. At least it will be a surprise for those who have doubts about the Bible and its God. It will also come as a surprise for those who are laboring under the misapprehension that science undermines the Bible. In fact, it may even shock some scientists, who may be startled to find that their newly uncovered facts, or accepted theory, provide still another link in the chain of evidence that is showing that the facts of the universe support the Bible’s statements – including Creation.*”

Purpose in Design

In 1973, on the 500th anniversary of the birth of Copernicus, at a special celebration in Krakow, Poland, the birthplace of Copernicus, one of the key note speakers was the highly respected astrophysicist Professor Brandon Carter from Oxford University. Professor Carter startled many by pointing out that Physics and Astronomy all seem to indicate that our world – indeed the entire universe – has been constructed and maintained for a purpose. That purpose could only be the sustaining of intelligent life on this planet.

Professor Carter noted such things as consistent symmetry in the mathematical equations for gravity and the fact that if the mass of the proton were just a fraction larger or smaller, the entire solar system would collapse. All of Physics points out the fact that somehow this universe appears to have been designed for mankind. This he called he called the Anthropic Principle. Now, to the evolutionists, purpose is one of the most repugnant of words. Evolutionism insists that everything is merely an accident. To recognise purpose in Creation is to acknowledge a Creator.

An Avalanche

So many other scientists have made similar discoveries and observations that one can compare it to multiplied snowballs turning into an avalanche, which is sweeping away the pillars of evolutionism.

The Privileged Planet

The Privileged Planet, written by scientists Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards, documents how earth has been uniquely positioned to sustain human and animal life. If the earth was any closer to the Sun, temperatures would be too high for any life to survive. If we were any further away from the Sun, the temperatures would be too low to sustain life. The atmosphere around planet earth is absolutely unique to sustain human and animal life.

Celestial Mechanics

In his five volume work on *Celestial Mechanics*, Pierre Simon Laplace, concluded: “The proof in favour of an intelligent God as the author of Creation stands as infinity to zero against any other hypothesis of ultimate causation.” It is impossible to give a greater contrast than infinity to zero. Pierre Laplace observed that it would be infinitely more probable that a set of writing implements, thrown aimlessly against a huge parchment, would produce Homers *Iliad* than that the Creation originated by any other cause than an all knowing, all powerful God.

Mathematical Genius

One of the greatest astronomers of all times, Sir James Jeans, observed that the more he studied the universe, the more the universe appeared to him to be one gigantic thought of a great mathematician. It has meaning, symmetry and reason.

The Moon

Those scientists who embrace Intelligent Design point to many examples, such as the moon. If there were no moon, there could be no life on earth. For the moon is God's appointed handmaiden for the earth. It cleans up the oceans with its tides. Without those tides, and without the moon, all our shores and bays would be filled with billions of tonnes of stinking garbage and debris. No one would want a seafront property and swimming in the sea, or fishing in the sea, would be unthinkable.

Oxygen

The moon mixes the atmosphere. Just as the gravitational pull of the moon affects the tides of the seas, it works on the atmosphere and mixes oxygen into the water as the waves break upon the shore. Upon that aerated water depends the life of the seas plankton, which provides the basis of the ground level of the whole food chain without which we would all die. All of the sea creatures depend upon the plankton which could not survive without the tidal pull of the moon.

Intelligent Design

For someone who believes in evolution it is inexplicable that the moon just "accidentally" happens to be there, and "accidentally" happens to be just the right size and distance from the earth for all of these things to happen in such a way as to sustain life on this planet.

Nitrogen

Then consider the nitrogen in the atmosphere. The atmosphere is made up of 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen and 1% of other components. We should consider the fact the nitrogen mixed with almost anything becomes poisonous. However, the atmospheric nitrogen around us is extraordinarily inert. What good is nitrogen? Without nitrogen there would be no plants. So, how does God get the nitrogen to mix into the soil for the plants to feed on without mixing it into the air we breathe, which would kill us?

Lightning

Scientists inform us that the hundred thousand strokes of lightening everyday around the globe are essential to alter the molecular atmospheric nitrogen into compounds like ammonia and nitrates which are carried into the ground by rain. That system produces 100,000,000 tonnes of nitrogen plant food every year and keeps this world going. Every time we hear the thunder, and see a bolt of lightening, we should stop and think that were it not for that lightening, life would not be able to be sustained on this planet.

Dust

Scientists also point to the intelligent design in dust. To many people dust is something unpleasant, which causes sneezing and runny eyes and various allergies. Why is there such an accumulation of dust on our desks, shelves and tables? Actually, intelligent design advocates points out we should Thank God for dust. If it wasn't for dust, we wouldn't be alive either.

Blue Skies and Rain

One of the benefits of dust is merely cosmetic. We are informed that the sky is not really blue, it only appears that way because of the effect of dust on light in our atmosphere. If you go 40km straight up into the atmosphere, where there is no dust, the sky appears pitch black. Perhaps you have noticed that photographs taken from the moon show black skies. But, we are informed by the experts, dust does something even more important: Every drop of rain contains approximately 8 million tiny droplets of water, and each of these droplets is wrapped around a tiny speck of dust. If it wasn't for the dust, it could never rain. If it never rained, this whole world

would turn into something like the Sahara desert and all of us would die. Everything evidences design.

The Solar System

Athanasius Kircher, a devout Christian astronomer, constructed a complex working model of the solar system showing the Sun and the planets circling around it. One day he invited his atheist friend into his study to see this model. His friend was intrigued by the model's incredible complexity. He exclaimed: *"How beautiful it is! Who made it?"*

Kircher responded: *"No one made it. It made itself!"*

The atheist stared at him in disbelief: *"That's absurd! You don't expect me to believe that! Do you?"*

Kircher answered: *"No. I don't. But what's even more absurd is that's what you believe about the real solar system, which is vastly more complex than this simple model."*

When we consider the complexity and magnificent design of God's Creation in the universe we can see that He is not nearly as hidden as skeptics assert.

"The Heavens declare the Glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."

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