

THE THEOLOGICAL NECESSITY OF A YOUNG UNIVERSE

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It is shown that sound Christian theology requires belief in a young universe. For, to suppose a Creation untold ages ago is really to dismiss the notion of Creation, as a serious matter; and to do that, in turn, is to play down, and eventually ignore or deny, the difference between the Creator and His Creation. Thus doctrines which, for euphemism, may be called progressive creation, for instance, but which, in everything which matters, are really a form of evolution, are almost certain to lead into some vague deism, and thence into either agnosticism or pantheism.

Introduction

What bearing does it have on theology that the universe is young?

There are many who would be quick to reply, none at all.

Such persons have found no difficulty in supposing that all the general speculation about gradual evolutionary progress and improvement is not contrary to acceptance of God as Creator of heaven and earth. That God was Creator of heaven and earth, and all that is therein, is the basic and controlling premise of all theology. Again, God is He who made everything that was made.

In other words, some people would say that the work of Creation might have been done, every bit as well, by an enormously long process of gradualism as by a sudden, instantaneous command.

Aside from the fact that such radically diverse ways of God's working must postulate radically different notions of the existence and attributes of God (for God is known by His works, and his ways were made known unto Moses), talk about gradualism merely deflects attention from the real matter. Any discussion of gradualism avoids the question of how, and more to the point here, when material existence came into being in the first place.

Theology, Young Universe, Special Creation

Traditionally attention is kept focused on the true meaning of Creation by insisting that it speaks of creation *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. The reshaping and rearranging of preexistent form and matter is plainly something else again from giving existence where there was none. When gradualism is presupposed, the question of creation *ex nihilo* is never faced.

Another point to make is that there can be such a thing as creation *ex nihilo* only once. Once there is something, there can never again be nothing. True, it has been allowed that God's power would enable Him to reduce back to nothing all that He had made; yet such an act would be contrary to Himself, it would be repugnant to the meaning of His work, and so is one of those things that God cannot do. Therefore it would seem necessary that the act of creating *ex nihilo* cannot have been anything other than instantaneous. There can have been no gradualism between nothing and something. All in a flash, there was the beginning.

I suppose one cannot dismiss out of hand the notion that God might from time to time call into

being that which was unseen, and so add to the stock of the universe continually. In fact the six days of God's creative work seem to involve, for some persons, something very like that in regard to that first glorious week. Yet this notion, beyond the first week, so flies in the face of universal human experience and reason, as well as of the plain statement in Genesis that God ceased from his work of creating after six days, as to be out of the question.

But, someone will object, what does gradualism have to do with the age of the universe?

Everything!

If the universe is less than 10,000 years old (or 50,000 years for that matter), things cannot have come to be what they are by gradual processes in time. There just isn't enough time for it all to have happened, and I think there is no opposition to this statement.

Theology, Young Universe, Time

To postulate a young universe, then, rules out both evolution and progressive creation as a possibility: neither could have occurred in the time allowed. Inversely this requires acceptance of the traditional doctrine that all things were made; and that, therefore, there is the Maker who is Himself unmade and eternal, and that all things were made by divine fiat to which response was instantaneous. This is the beginning of theology.

Next, both in reason and in importance, the fact of a young universe draws the distinction between time and eternity as cannot be done on the assumption of billions of years. Any concept of time implies limits, since time is forever coming and passing away. Augustine speaks directly to the point:

If the idea of so short a time upsets them, and the years since man's creation, as recorded in our authorities, seem so few, they should consider that nothing which has a limit is of enormous duration. (City of God, Bk XII, Chapter 13)

Contrariwise it may be said that all that is conceived of as having enormous duration (in terms of millions of years, to say nothing of billions) is really thought of as having no limit.

As important to theology as the identification of God as the Creator is the distinction between time and eternity: God, being uncreated being, and therefore without beginning or limit, is also of necessity unchanging; all else, having a beginning and therefore changing at least from nothing into something, is subject to time and change. The distinction is fundamental and has governed Christian thought always. Again to quote Augustine:

If we are right in finding the distinction be-

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tween eternity and time in the fact that without motion and change there is no time, while in eternity there is no change, who can fail to see that there would have been no time, if there had been no creation to bring in movement and change, and that time depends upon motion and change, and is measured by the longer or shorter intervals by which things that cannot happen simultaneously succeed one another?

God: NO Beginning, NO Change

It may be observed here that men grow in the knowledge of eternity by the process of coming to an understanding of time. It is axiomatic that most of what men can say about God (Theology) is in the negative—that is, it is to say what God is not. Finite and created minds are reduced to knowing about God by understanding wherein He is unlike what He has made. For example, I have said of God chiefly that He is NOT created, that He has NO beginning, that He does NOT change.

It is not beside the point here to emphasize that modern scholarship, of which Oscar Cullman may fairly be said to be one of the more capable representatives, having tacitly accepted evolutionary postulates about enormous stretches of time, and being concerned to develop a theology which is silent about special Creation, has also advocated the proposition that in Biblical thought there is no room for any idea of eternity, and that where the Bible seems to speak of eternity it means time without end.

Were this true, then the Biblical doctrine of God as Creator must dissolve. In Cullman's view, God must BE time, for there is no eternity outside time; therefore God himself is dissolved in the mist of endless stretches of that which by definition is always passing. God cannot be the sum of all time, for time without limit cannot be summed.

The modern total disregard for time as the ruling factor under God in what we call the natural order has brought us perilously near to intellectual bankruptcy.

"A second of time in the motion of the vault of heaven corresponds to a definite length on earth," is a truth, the realization of which has led to the astonishing and richly productive work of several modern scholars!

There is reason to believe that the path to the knowledge of God (Theology) is through a thorough understanding of time, the governor of things temporal.

"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" asked Jesus.

If we learn about God chiefly by understanding what He is not, then our learning must be guided by a precise knowledge of time and things temporal which embrace what God is not.

Suffice it to say that although time is measured by the movement of the heavens, that measurement must be made and recorded by human beings. That is, there is no record of time, no possible record of time, apart from a recorder and there is no recorder in time apart from mankind.

It is no mere happenstance that religious learning among all men in all ages is dominated and characterized by an obsession with precise measurements of time.¹ Christianity is no exception.

Theology, Young Universe, Evidence

This touches upon a third important connection between theology and a young universe, which is indirect but no less important. That is an understanding of the nature of evidence.

"At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall the matter be established," said Moses; and the rule applies to this day.

The much touted "scientific method" rests upon total dependence upon this principle—personal observation alone can furnish data.

This rule banishes "vain speculations" deplored in the New Testament, and anchors theology in history— in observed and recorded data.

God is notoriously known by His works; and His works are known to man only by the mouth of two or three witnesses, written for our learning. More and more scholarly disciplines are closing in on an outside limit for the possibility of human observation, especially any that has been recorded for our learning, and that limit is uniformly under 4,000 B.C. A most astonishing conclusion of the authors of *Hamlet's Mill* is that "time Zero" (whatever the full implications of that term) is precisely 4,000 B.C., remarkably close to Archbishop Ussher's much maligned scheme.²

At any rate, any talk about time before that date must be relegated to the realm of "vain speculations" and the only conclusion we may draw from *bona fide* evidence is that of a young universe, probably now 6,000 to 7,000 years old. Conversely the postulation of a young universe coincides very well with all acceptable evidence, and ratifies the rules of evidence by which God is known by man.

I conclude, then, that theology and a young universe go hand in hand in that (1) a young universe demands special creation by fiat; (2) a young universe accords reasonably with the nature of time as having limits and so gives the clue to the knowledge of earthly things necessary before the understanding of heavenly; and (3) a young universe accords with the rules of evidence which govern all disciplines including theology.

References

- ¹Tompkins, Peter 1971. *Secrets of the great pyramid*. New York, Harper & Row, p. 291.
²De Santillana, Giorgio and Hertha Von Dechend 1969. *Hamlet's mill*. Gambit, Inc., Boston, Mass. (The authors present a striking view of time and "mythology.")