

NATURAL HISTORY IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

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Chapter 1. The Role of Worldviews in Creationism

Debate around the topics of evolution and creation has become common in recent decades largely because of the modern creation movement. This movement is noted for its scientific rather than theological leadership and the resulting technical emphasis. Much good has come from this emphasis to date, as scientific arguments are the only explicit bulwark for evolutionists. However, this emphasis, though very successful, has an inherent danger. Because of the absence of philosophical and theological leadership in this arena, these important areas have not been deeply explored. Such a focus is needed, because the ultimate debate is not between competing scientific models, but between competing worldviews. Thus even the methodology of debate may be adversely affected by hidden assumptions in opposing worldviews.

What is a worldview? A *worldview* is a comprehensive and integrated understanding of all reality. All realms of knowledge - theology, philosophy, history, science, politics, ethics, etc. are joined by a unifying understanding of how the world works and how each one of us relates to it. The last two centuries have seen the ascendancy of the worldview of Naturalism in many facets of western culture. While many are aware of its expression in popular entertainment, education, social and political arenas, few realize that much of its underlying strength is derived from its dominance in the life and earth sciences. Naturalism expressed in its natural history achieved this status in the nineteenth century, well before its manifestation in popular culture.

Since the worldview behind this alternative history was shrouded by the nineteenth century's euphoria with scientific progress, many Christians have only recently come to realize the true extent of challenges posed by evolution and uniformitarian natural history. As mentioned earlier, the modern creation movement has been led by professional scientists rather than professional theologians or the organized church. This has resulted in strengths and weaknesses in the movement. One strength is the element of surprise to a culture that had long been educated to believe that a scientific challenge to Naturalism was impossible. However, this strength has bred weakness in other areas. Because Naturalism is an integrated worldview, underlain by metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions, empirical attacks on the false conclusions of evolutionary natural history are incomplete. Theological and philosophical foundations must be addressed, too. Even in 'scientific' arguments, presuppositions must be evaluated to prevent an unconscious incorporation of aspects of Naturalism into a Christian response to evolution.

For a variety of reasons, once our perspective of the conflict shifts from empirical data to worldviews, it becomes quite evident that Christianity has great theological and

philosophical strength in areas of corresponding weakness in Naturalism. In an ultimate act of self-deception, Naturalism ignores its defects by denying the existence of these areas. Christianity's weapons are no less effective just because many of her theologians have refused to exercise them. Since Naturalism denies reality beyond the physical and denies knowledge beyond the empirical, it admits a *de facto* defeat to revelatory theism in these areas. It depends upon the presumption that no link exists between empirical knowledge of the physical world and any other reality. From Immanuel Kant's distinction between "noumenal" and "phenomenal" to Carl Sagan's nothingness beyond the cosmos, Naturalists have consistently sought to deflect the millennia-old strengths of Christian thought in these areas. Although this disguise has been effective for many years, it ultimately must fail. Both the New Testament and Old Testament (*Romans 1:19-23, Psalm 19:1-4*) assume the existence of natural theology, and thus contradict this faulty premise of Naturalism.

A major theme of the following chapters is the unusual use of similarities, rather than differences, between Christianity and Naturalism. Striking similarities between the two worldviews reveal that many areas of apparent invincibility in Naturalism obtain their power from a surreptitious pilfering of Christian doctrines. This being true, Naturalism has left itself wide open to refutation by formal, rather than empirical arguments. Although I encourage attacks on both fronts, formal attacks on presuppositions and logical consistency have been comparatively rare in the modern creation movement. One purpose of this monograph is to fire a salvo in that attack. It is my sincere hope and desire that professional theologians and philosophers will seek to engage Naturalism's paradigms of the earth and life sciences from this perspective, and supplement the empirical arguments with which many of us are familiar.

If natural history must be performed within the context of an integrated worldview, then the approach must hold for both Naturalism and Christianity. The following chapters will show that Naturalism fails to provide an adequate context for natural history by inherent contradictions between its presuppositions and conclusions. Although Christianity succeeds in passing formal tests failed by Naturalism, there must be a conscious effort on the part of Christians to explain and defend the theological and philosophical context for natural history.

Although the following chapters were originally written as individual articles, they were written as a series, and there are logical ties between them. Chapter 2 outlines the most important themes of this monograph. These include

- (1) Defining the origins debate within the context of competing worldviews.
- (2) Advocating the primacy of a formal over an empirical critique of Naturalism.
- (3) Establishing the resulting conclusions of validity or invalidity as superior to conclusions based upon empirical data.

Chapter 3 shows that Christianity succeeds at the very points that Naturalism fails. It also explores some epistemological parameters for natural history within the Biblical Worldview. Chapter 4 then discusses how empirical models of historical geology can be derived within the Biblical Worldview. Perhaps the most significant point made in Chapter 4 is the *philosophical* necessity of the rejection of the uniformitarian geologic

column as an integrating matrix of natural history. Because of that rejection, Chapter 5 explores one alternative method of stratigraphy through the relative correlation of rock units to geologic energy, a template for which is derived from the Bible. Chapter 6 explores the concept of uniformitarianism, defines its relationship to Naturalism, and describes both its formal and empirical flaws. Chapter 7 explores the question of whether natural history is history or science. Because it is history, it is shown to be invalid as currently practiced within Naturalism. Natural history can be saved, but only by transferring it from the false worldview of Naturalism into biblical Christianity. To accomplish this transfer, certain methodological assumptions about natural history require alteration. Finally, Chapter 8 reprises the key themes of the monograph.