

Does Creation vs Evolution Really Matter?

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”¹ All true knowledge comes from God and is based on His Word. If we deny this, we invariably say that man is capable of knowing truth of himself, or capable of judging truth of himself, and thus set up man as a god (cf Genesis 3). This is true of science also - take away God, and all you have left is pseudo-knowledge. It may present itself as knowledge, but is empty and useless. The Big Bang Theory and evolution are two examples of the disaster that strikes when man seeks to be autonomous, judging for himself what is true. We read that those "who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" become fools, despite proclaiming to be wise. "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen", and yet they deny God, they have "exchanged the truth of God for the lie."² Rather than believing in God as creator, they believe that the universe has created itself. They worship creation as absolute (materialism), and man as the master of the universe (humanism).

Volume 14, Issue 4	August 2009
Editorial – J Bosveld	1
Hello & Welcome – E Terpstra	3
The T in Tulip – E Terpstra	4
Our Political Calling – C Bosveld	7
When I Consider the Heavens – A Hordyk	8
A Point to Ponder – K Wagenaar	10
Silver in the Refiner’s Fire – L Reitsma	11
Book Review – O Mulder	12

Does Creation vs Evolution Really Matter?

continued

“Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness” and “to a debased mind”. Although here, in Romans 1, Paul specifically uses the example of sexual immorality, we read in the following verses that they are “**filled with all unrighteousness**,” “full of envy [and] murder” and they are “proud, boasters, inventors of evil things” - so these statements clearly reflect all of life. We can see the results of this debased mind in areas such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, genocide, etc. Now, for the sake of argument, if evolution was true, then shouldn't we wipe out the weaker races (genocide)³, to further the progress of humanity? If human life is no different than plant or animal life, then removing unwanted life (eg. abortion, euthanasia) is no big deal. If we are no different than animals, why shouldn't we behave like animals?

However, we know that “God created man in His own image”. This immediately leads to a radically different view in these areas. We read in Genesis 9: “Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man”. We thus see that genocide and euthanasia are clearly wrong, and the fact that abortion is wrong also readily follows. We also see here the tie between the sixth commandment (“You shall not murder”) to creation (“for in the image of God He made man”) - the sixth commandment rests on creation, and if one throws away creation, they should also be consistent and also throw away the law (and without the law there is no sin, and hence no need for a Saviour).

Thus, the issue of creation vs evolution is an important issue, with practical implications - not

merely a dispute of no importance. Moreover, it also has theological relevance. Evolution teaches that death is good - it is only by the weeding out of the weak, and the domination of the strong that progress can be made. From the Bible we know that death is a curse, it is bad, it is the result of sin, it is a punishment for sin, it is an enemy.⁴ These are two radically different, irreconcilable viewpoints. Thus, any attempt to reconcile them, as unfortunately some people do attempt, will ultimately fail.

If death, and thus the curse, is not as a result of sin, what does Christ's coming to remove this curse mean? If there is no curse, there is no need for a Saviour. If one takes away creation, one takes away the foundation of the Gospel, and he “will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”⁵

Ultimately, the issue of creation vs evolution is the issue of where you seek your knowledge. True knowledge comes from God alone, and attempting to find truth apart from God is idolatry. What we learn from creation can only be understood correctly in the light of God's Word, if we try to interpret it without God, it will only lead to falsehood.

JOEL BOSVELD

1 Proverbs 1:7

2 Romans 1:18-32

3 Not that I believe there are weaker races, but it does follow naturally from the theory of evolution.

4 Genesis 3, Exodus 21:12-17, Psalm 55:4, 1 Corinthians 15:26, to name just a few.

5 Matthew 7:26,27

Hello and welcome to the August edition,

The theme for this edition is creation and evolution. I do have to admit that this edition is a little bit light on for articles with this focus. However the topic is one that we are constantly faced with, in the secular world in which we live, and therefore I am sure that some more articles will come through in time. I would just like to mention that the article from Owen Mulder which addresses the topic of evolution, is the kind of article that you need to read undisturbed, and fully concentrating. The nature of the subject does not make for very easy reading, and it may even appear a little bit dry, but I would urge you to persist because it draws some logical and sound conclusions, and these are quite interesting.

Other than that, the edition contains a variety of articles and also some poetry which we hope you enjoy.

I need to draw attention to a couple of important things. First of all, in order to replace Julian Slobe who needed to “retire” we have appointed Annette TenBrinke to take over. We welcome her into the committee, and we look forward to reading submissions from her in the future.

Secondly, congratulations are in order for Ben and Danika Schoof who recently have been married. We wish them a blessed and fruitful marriage in the Lord. Unfortunately for the Contender, the time has also come for us to say farewell to Ben, for he and Danika will move to Canada so that Ben can study at the Theological College there. Ben has served the Contender for quite a number of years and we thank him for all his efforts. We wish you all the best in your studies as well Ben!!

That’s it for this time,

Eric Terpstra

EIC

THE T IN TULIP

T

One of the marks of Reformed Theology is the confession that human nature is totally depraved. The heart and mind of the unregenerate man is so totally corrupt and perverse before God, that he is worthy only of total damnation. If you are uncomfortable about this mark then you can rest assured, you are not the first and neither will you be the last. The Reformers over hundreds of years of church history have had to defend this doctrine as being the truth, as being doctrine which is based on God's word.

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You may wonder, why devote an article to this subject? In the last Contender we celebrated the birth of John Calvin. I hinted that it was likely that we had not exhausted Calvin just yet. In his time Calvin busied himself till he was weary, studying Scripture and applying them in his sermons. He defended and taught five points concerning the salvation of man. They are neatly remembered in the acronym TULIP. The details related to the confession of salvation are more beautiful than the tulips in Araluen, and meditating and reflecting upon

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them is as uplifting as strolling through that beautiful park.

It is also appropriate to devote an article to the subject, for in our time and culture we too can easily minimize our depravity. We live in a society that speaks of the intrinsic good in people, and law abiding citizens do not see themselves as inherently corrupt people. The confessional view of total depravity then, puts us at odds with those that live around us.

What is Total Depravity?

When we speak of total depravity we are referring to the natural condition of mankind. We are looking at what the heart and mind of human nature is like after the fall into sin and prior to the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

There we recognise that human nature is corrupt and inclined to all sorts of evil things. Both the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession as summary of what is taught in scripture, leave us in no doubt about this.

QA 8 HC: Are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined to all evil? Yes, unless...

Art 14 BC: [Man] willfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death. He corrupted his whole nature.

Perpetrator of Sin or Victim of Sin?

It is not difficult to accept that man is sinful, but what is more difficult to accept is that *everyone* is responsible for sin. Is it fair to suggest that people who are born thousands of years after the fall in

Paradise should also be responsible for original sin? Would it not be more reasonable to conclude that we are victims of Adam's sin, and that we suffer the consequences of his bad decisions? We need to be careful in answering these questions for we can easily move into a realm that is beyond the capability of the human mind.

The Bible does indeed teach that everyone is both affected and responsible for sin. One supporting passage is found in Romans 5:12 where it says, *"just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..."* How did we all sin? Adam was the head of mankind, and a representative for all men. In his disobedience he and thus all of us rejected God himself. This idea of a representative sinning and everyone still being responsible may be come clearer with an example.

Recently the Prime Minister Mr Kevin Rudd, apologized to the Aboriginal people, and especially the Stolen Generation, for the hurt and the anguish that was caused by racist Australian policies, the actions of government departments, and racist attitudes that were directed at Aboriginal people. As such Mr Rudd was not personally responsible for everything that happened. I wasn't either, (being born after this time) and probably you were not responsible either. And yet on behalf of all Australian people, you and me included, the prime minister apologised because as a nation, as Australians, we were guilty of some pretty horrible deeds.

See how in the example you are responsible for the wrong, simply by virtue of being Australian, and how this situation is rectified by the deeds of a representative of the country. In like manner, by virtue of being born you share in Adam's guilt. However Romans 5 continues its teaching: *"Christ*

*being our Head, through the one sacrifice on the cross, purchases the gift of Salvation which results in justification and life."*¹ (Romans 5:18, 19)

As Evil as Possible?

If you are a keen reader of the news, you would note that there are quite some disturbing things happening around the world. In summary they tend to be characterised by violence, rioting, murder, mass murder, rape, incest, brutality, assault, stealing, looting, thuggery, cannibalism and the list could go on. The question that presses is: the human condition that you see on display in all these news items, is that also the condition of you and me, and yes also of some of my nice neighbours even if they do not go to church?

In God's mercy and goodness, He exercises a restraining hand on the evil that is committed in this world (2 Thess. 2:7). He limits it to the extent that while a person might covet something, they stop short of stealing it. Whilst someone may lust, they stop short of the act of adultery, and whilst they might hate they do not go as far as murder. At the same time Romans 1 makes it clear that God also gives men over to the debased mind that is in them so that their lives become evil.²

As much as it hurts to say it, the human condition that you see on display when you watch the news, is common to all men. It is evil and corrupt. In His sovereign will God gives some people over, and to some people he extends a measure of restraint in their evil. To a few people, He extends the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they begin to put off the old nature and instead put on the new nature. (Ephesians 4:20)

Evil Restrained But Far From Righteous:

Whilst God holds the evilness of man in check, the Bible makes it clear that the inclination of man is to hate God and to reject Him.

Man cannot do the good that God requires, nor understand it, or even desire it. In John 15, Jesus makes it clear from the illustration of the vine that it is only when we abide in Jesus Christ that we can begin to do good; outside of that we are unable. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians writes, *“The Word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing [going to Hell]...”* That is to say, man does not understand and more often than not does not want to understand the goodness of God. On another occasion Jesus made it clear that, *“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”* (John 6:44) Here it becomes evident that we do not even desire God, but instead God chooses us, He draws us to Himself.³

The Point of Understanding All This:

Reformers have gone to great lengths to emphasise the total depravity of man, to counterattack men who taught that everyone is essentially born with a good nature or at worst with only a semi-corrupt nature. In so doing they make mankind partially responsible for his salvation, and at the same time take partial credit for that as well. By drawing on the Bible the Reformers have clearly shown that grace is extended to people of God’s own choosing, and God receives 100% of the glory for doing this.

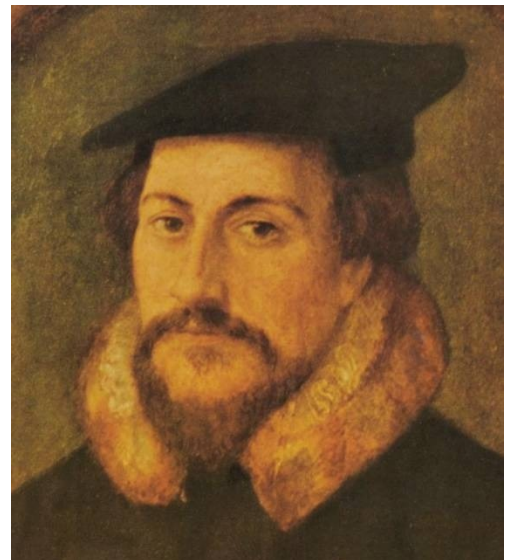
While this doctrine may sound a bit harsh, it is in actual fact of enormous comfort. Ask yourself, how would you ever get to Heaven if your salvation depended partly on your own ability? You would never know if you had done enough to make it or not!! Thank God, that He draws us

to Himself, *“that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the Day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:7)

There are two things concerning total depravity that should remain in our focus. First is that we never credit the “good works” in our life as being something that we naturally do of ourselves. This is the grace of the Holy Spirit acting upon your life. Secondly, do not be surprised at many of the things that you see around you. What you see is the corrupt human nature which God has given over; people who are ruled by Satan. Some day God will draw His people completely to Himself and at the same time destroy those who He has already given over.

ERIC TERPSTRA

- 1 Notes on the COD, C Bouwman pg 12 and Lest Any Man Should Boast, A Vandelden pg 24
- 2 The Five points of Calvinism, EH Palmer page 10
Mankinds Guilty Knowledge of God @ Romans 1 NKJV Study Bible
- 3 EH Palmer page 14-16



OUR POLITICAL CALLING – *SPYSC MEETING REVIEW*

Reformed people today are loath to mix with politics, but Christ's headship also extends to the sphere of politics, and God even commands us to participate. As Free Reformed Youth in Australia, What is our Political Calling? This was the topic discussed at a recent SPYSC meeting with a paper by Mr. Eric Hart. This review outlines the issues that were addressed and discussed in the meeting.

SPYSC Background

In 1988 SPYSC was formed by a number of brothers from the Free Reformed Churches. SPYSC was formed to try to increase the interest amongst the youth in political issues and to increase the membership of the CPSA (Calvinistic Political and Social Association).

In previous years membership of the CPSA had been relatively high due to the political issues of that time. When the CPSA was first founded in the 1950's the issue of unionism was affecting many members of the Free Reformed Churches. Membership of the union was compulsory for all employed people. However, many Christians refused to become members of the union, and because of this were either fired or not employed. This was a concern for the Church since many members were then without work.

So some brothers from the Free Reformed Church of Albany decided to do something to help and support members of the Church in fighting against compulsory unionism. They organised an association called the CPSA and they provided help with writing letters to employers and representing and supporting members in court. The association had a strong membership because at the time the concern was high. However, as the years went by and the laws changed to make unionism optional the need for help was lost and therefore the membership in the CPSA dropped drastically.

Because of the decrease in the interest in political matters, when it was no longer affecting the general population of the Churches, it was felt that to generate interest a club could be formed which would target the youth. In this club principles would be discussed rather than issues.

These principles would help the youth to make decisions in the sphere of politics, which would ultimately honour God. By learning the principles rather than issues the youth would be prepared to deal with many issues because of the overall knowledge they receive by studying the principles. A booklet was also written which included Biblical principles about politics and this booklet was to be used as a guide during the meetings.

By learning the principles rather than issues the youth would be prepared to deal with many issues

Our Political Calling

Although some Free Reformed Christians feel the calling to become politicians, not everyone will receive this same calling, and not everyone is expected to receive it. However, even if we are not dealing directly with political issues in today's society we all still have a responsibility in relation to politics.

Our minimum duty in the sphere of politics is to vote and to pray for the government. As Free Reformed Christians we need to use the responsibility to vote in a way that will honour God and benefit His Kingdom. We must also pray for the government as God has commanded us to in 1 Timothy 2: 1-2: "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence".

SPYSC Today

Although the issues discussed at SPYSC meetings are important we must consider that by studying the Biblical principles of politics we will gain a greater knowledge of how to argue our case in a way that will honour God. If we continue to study only the current issues of politics how will we be able to deal with issues that have not been discussed? We don't only need to understand the answers but also how to get to these answers!

CHANTELLE BOSVELD

"WHEN I CONSIDER THE HEAVENS..."

Last month the world celebrated the 40th anniversary since the first human beings set foot on the moon's surface. Those old enough to remember will surely recall how the world held its breath on July 20th 1969. The descent of the lunar module *Eagle* was extremely challenging, with Neil Armstrong required to over-ride the automatic computer equipment and manually guide the module to ensure a safe landing. With only 25 seconds of fuel left the *Eagle* landed safely on moon's surface and the Mission Control team in Houston, together with the rest of the world, let out a sigh of relief as they heard, "Houston, *Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.*" Six and a half hours after landing, the hatch of the lunar module opened and Neil Armstrong climbed down the ladder and uttered those now famous words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." A short while later Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin joined him, together becoming the first human beings to set foot on the moon. The third member of the Apollo 11 team, Michael Collins, remained orbiting the moon in the command module *Columbia*, and awaited the astronauts return.



For those of us who were born long after these

events took place it is easy to under-appreciate the significance of the first manned moon landing. Today we are used to the concept of manned space travel, and what was once groundbreaking technology is now found in our back pockets. The journey of the Apollo 11 mission to the moon and its safe return back to earth was a very significant historical event, not least for its political overtones. For the first time in human history, human beings set foot on the solid ground of another celestial body. This journey was not without its challenges and dangers. Early American attempts to explore the moon using unmanned vehicles had been plagued with many problems. The likelihood of failure for the mission was very real; the three astronauts in the Apollo 11 mission would have been very aware that they might never return to earth. The reality was that tragedy could strike at any moment, and the two astronauts might themselves stranded on the surface of the moon without any chance of rescue. Richard Nixon, the President of the United States at the time, was prepared for disaster. Two speeches had been drafted up before the mission; the second a speech acknowledging the extraordinary bravery of the men and thanking them for service and sacrifice. A plan was even in place for a brief ceremony by a clergyman to the two men before communication was shutdown forever. But as we know, the Apollo 11 mission was a success. Despite all the odds, or more correctly because of God's providence, the three astronauts returned safely to earth and survived to tell the story. Buzz Aldrin acknowledged that the success of the

mission relied on far more than the efforts of humankind. On the return journey to earth he commented on a televised broadcast,

"This has been far more than three men on a mission to the Moon; more, still, than the efforts of a government and industry team; more, even, than the efforts of one nation. We feel that this stands as a symbol of the insatiable curiosity of all mankind to explore the unknown ... Personally, in reflecting on the events of the past several days, a verse from Psalms comes to mind. 'When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the Moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man that Thou art mindful of him?'"

Before they returned back to the orbiting Columbia, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin left a stainless steel plaque with signatures and the words, "Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon July 1969, A.D. We came in peace for all mankind." A small silicon disk with goodwill messages from the leaders of 73 countries around the world was also left on the moon's surface.

The Apollo space program lasted from 1963 through to 1972 and totalled six manned missions to the moon, with twelve people actually stepping foot on the moon's surface. Over the years the space missions have captivated the imaginations of hundreds of millions. The success of the space missions and the presence of a permanently manned International Space Station are an extraordinary example of what can be achieved by the collective will and effort of human beings. The exploration of space is now an international effort, involving thousands of people and costing billions of dollars. The space program received

renewed interest this year with the highly publicised 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission, and recent media attention has turned to promoting a race for a manned trip to the planet Mars.

For many people, the success of the Apollo missions and the subsequent expansion of space exploration mark one of the pinnacles of human achievement. For many, the successful landing of humans on the moon stands out as the greatest event in human history. And while it would be almost impossible to over emphasise exactly how great an achievement this actually was, there is another event which is even more amazing. James Irwin, an astronaut on the Apollo 15 mission and the eighth person to walk on the moon, put things into perspective when he said, "Jesus walking on the earth is more important than man walking on the moon." What could be more amazing and inconceivable than "God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him"? (1 John 4:9)

ADRIAN HORDYK



The plaque left on the moon surface by the Apollo 11 mission

A P O I N T T O P O N D E R

Miracles

The blind:

Why are there no miracles today?

Why are illnesses not healed like Jesus once did?

Why are there no amazing things happening every day?

Why is no one brought back to life?

Why can I not see miracles?

The believer:

There are miracles today!

The miracle of modern medicine to heal illnesses.

The miracle of the birth of a baby.

The miracle of creation- each little thing is connected for the other to survive.

The miracles of modern science and technology- can you believe it takes a split second for someone to receive an email and how in the world does a tonne of metal fly in the air?

There is the miracle that God answers your prayers- have you ever prayed and then actually thought about the answer God gave you, even for the littlest thing?

And...People are brought back to life every day when they repent and believe in the gospel of Jesus!

The biggest miracle of all is the miracle that we, sinners, are chosen to be children of God through Jesus Christ! WOW!

SILVER IN THE REFINER'S FIRE

How many times have you wondered to yourself why God causes such suffering and pain on His children? It is a hard thing to comprehend, and often we cannot understand it. However, I recently found a story: a friend of mine gave it to me who got it from her Pastor. It is beautiful, warming and up-building. Read it, and remember: God refines us. Remember: Jesus has suffered everything, so when we feel sorrows, we can go to Him in prayer and ask Him for strength. Remember: that one day there will be no more suffering or pain; one day there will be perfection.

“He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver”
– Malachi 3:3

Sometimes, we find ourselves surrounded by trials and sorrow. At such times we find it hard, very hard, to understand what God is doing. We can't work out why, if God loves us, that He causes us to endure real suffering and pain. Yes, God causes it! He wills it to be so – otherwise it couldn't possibly happen. He purposed it in his eternal counsel else it could never have come to pass. God, we know, brings it to pass by his everywhere present power as his Fatherly providence in our lives. Undoubtedly, God is the first cause – he uses many second causes and means and instruments to fulfill his purposes – but it is His hand that we feel! God is willing that we should experience that exact hardship and suffering – he wills that it should wound us and thwart our plans, sometimes break our hearts, melt us down, and bring us sometimes completely to the end of ourselves. A time of trial can confront us with a most challenging experience of our Christian life. Why? If God loves me, does he do this to me? That is the question we must all face in one way or other, and some time or other.

Well, here is an illustration which makes the answer perfectly clear! Be encouraged to read it – digest it well – then go on to read Isaiah 43:1-2, Romans 5: 1-5 and 8:14-18, 28-30, 2Corinthians 4:15-18, 1 Peter 1:3-9, and James 1:2-4 and 12.

“He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

This verse puzzled some saints in a Bible study and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God.

One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible Study.

That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining Silver.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot; then she thought again about the verse that says: “He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time.

The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, “How do you know when the silver is fully refined?”

He smiled at her and answered, “Oh, that's easy – when I see my image in it.”

If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has his eye on you and will keep watching you until He sees His image reflecting in you.

And, whatever you're going through, you'll be a better person in the end.

The story is from Pastor Chris Connors - a Minister at the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches and it is used with permission.

BOOK REVIEW: IN THE BEGINNING WAS INFORMATION

Werner Gitt, 3rd English Edition, 2003

I should start by admitting that this is not so much a book review as it is a summary of what I consider to be the most important aspects of this book. I sincerely hope that this summary will give you a basic grasp of ‘Information 101’, and will whet your appetite for more – in which case I’d highly recommend this book.

Firstly, regarding the title of this book: ‘The title is a reference to the first verse of the Gospel written by John: ‘In the beginning was the Word ...’ The argument developed in the book is that information is required before or at the start of any controlled process, including those processes that define life. However, the reference to John 1:1 is an acknowledgement that all information is preceded by the Prime Source of all information, namely ‘the Word’.

The purpose of the book is to demonstrate that information is a ‘fundamental entity, on equal footing with matter and energy’ (pg 9). Modern, evolutionary science claims that matter and energy are the only fundamental entities, and that everything boils down to chemistry and physics. But since all life processes require information, any attempt to explain life processes only in terms of chemistry and physics, will always be unsuccessful.

To prove his point, Gitt sets out to find laws of nature which apply to the fundamental entity of information. Laws of nature, such as the conservation of energy, carry a lot of weight in the scientific community, and need to meet several criteria to qualify as such. Laws of nature must be universally valid, must apply equally to living beings and inanimate matter, and must describe reproducible results (i.e., they enable us to make predictions).

Gitt identifies at least 3 reasons why information is a fundamental entity, distinct from matter and energy (pg 47):

1. Information is non-material, and hence material processes can not be sources of information. Matter is required to carry information (eg paper and ink), but is not the information itself. Using the same ink, many different messages (information) can be composed.
2. Information only arises due to the intention of the sender – thus it has a mental source. Information does not arise spontaneously from either matter or energy.
3. Information is the non-material foundation of all designs. Designs don’t come into existence through some form of self-organisation of matter – information (intelligence) is required.

*information is required before
or at the start of any controlled
process, including processes
that define life*

Gitt further develops the laws of information by breaking information down into 5 levels.

The lowest level of information: statistics.

At this level, we are only concerned with a statistical

description of the information. For example, the number of letters employed in a particular alphabet (eg, 26 letters in the English alphabet, or 4 letters in the genetic code (G, C, A, T)). At this level it is ‘immaterial whether we are dealing with meaningful text, pure nonsense, or random sequences of symbols and words’ (pg 54). Grammatical correctness is also excluded at this level.

The second level of information: syntax.

At this level we address the rules of how the letters/code can be



constructed. For example, only certain combinations of letters are allowed (agreed-upon) to make up the words of the English language. Likewise, the words are not arranged randomly; rules for construction of sentences and phrases (i.e., syntax) must be adhered to.

At this level, we are still not concerned with whether the combination of words has any meaning. For example, the following sentence meets the requirements of the first and second level, but is still meaningless:

“The green freedom prosecuted the happy brick”

That brings us to ...

The third level of information: semantics. In reality, we are not interested in the statistics or the grammar, important as these may be, but we're interested in the meaning of the contents.

The third level, the semantic level, addresses the significance or meaning of the message. For an entity to be considered as information, it must include semantics, it must be meaningful. It is interesting that this property of information does not change, even though the statistics and syntax may (eg, when a message is translated from English to Chinese, the meaning does not change).

Gitt goes on to describe two more levels of information, namely 'pragmatics' (information causes actions) and 'apobetics' (the purpose of the information). For the purposes of this review, it is not necessary to consider these levels in any detail.

It is necessary to be clear about what is meant by 'information'. Does the crystalline structure of a salt, or 'information' gathered by a detective at the scene of a crime, fit the scientific definition of information? The short answer is no. 'Information always plays a substitutionary role' (pg 84). Whenever any reality is observed directly by seeing, hearing or measuring, then that does not fall within this domain of information.

Gitt's analysis of information science brings him to identify several properties of information, the most important of which are summarised as follows:

- there can be no information without a code
- any code is the result of a deliberate convention
- there can be no information without a sender
- any given chain of information points to a mental source
- there can be no information without volition (will, intent)
- information cannot originate in statistical processes
- **there is no known natural law through which matter can give rise to information, neither is any physical process or material phenomenon known that can do this.**
- Information does require a material medium for storage (paper/ink, chalk/blackboard etc)

All of these conclusions are based on observed/empirical reality, and may thus be regarded as natural laws. If a single counter example is found, they can be rejected. But no such counter example has been found.

APPLICATION TO THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

Having explored the field of information science in some detail, Gitt goes on to apply this to the question of the origin of life.

Consider matter, information and life: Information is nonmaterial (although it requires material media for storage and transmission). While life is more than information, the information in cells is essential for all living beings. Thus information is a necessary prerequisite for life.

In the evolutionary view, information and life itself are regarded as purely material phenomena.

“life is just a physical phenomenon. All manifestations of life are based on mechanical, physical, and chemical causes, being properties of organic matter” (pg 81)

However, the properties of information, especially that it is nonmaterial and that matter can not give rise to information, clearly demonstrates the folly and futility of the evolutionary position.

*information is a necessary
prerequisite for life*

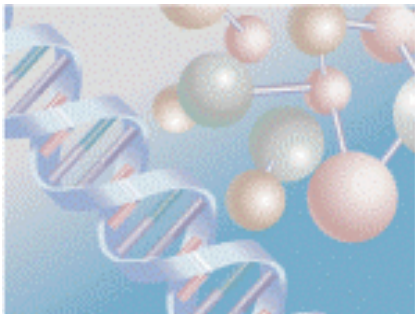
This question of whether the properties of information apply to living systems, i.e. the biological processes of life, warrants further consideration.

The basic building blocks of life are proteins. Proteins are made up of various combinations of 20 different amino acids. Whilst there are inconceivably many possible sequences, only a limited number are meaningful.

If a certain protein must be manufactured in a cell, then the chemical formula must be communicated to the cell as well as the chemical procedures for its synthesis. This requires at least the following:

- A coding system to compile the information
- Precisely defined semantics
- A physical carrier to store the required information

The storage medium is the DNA molecule. The coding system involves only four chemical letters (A, C, G and T) and each of the 20 amino acids is a different 3-letter 'word'. Gitt actually demonstrates that this coding system (4 different letters and 3 letters per word), is optimal from an engineering standpoint, further strengthening the argument for purposeful design. (pg 95)



It is important to note that the 3-letter word only represents a particular amino acid. The amino acid itself is not present, and will only be synthesised at a later stage for incorporation into the protein (recall that a protein is a chain of amino acids).

Thus this biological process very much fits the requirements and definition of true 'information'.

Since the properties of information apply equally to biological information, it follows that this information must have an intelligent source.

Since this intelligent source must exist 'outside' of this biological information, the only remaining possibility is that there must have been a creator.

'Anybody who wants to make meaningful statements about the origin of life [is] forced to explain how the information originated' (pg 99). As Christians we have such an explanation – the God of the Bible! However, evolutionary science, with its insistence on material (matter, energy) explanations only, can thereby not arrive at an explanation for the origin of life.

This doesn't mean they don't try ...

Renowned atheist Richard Dawkins has attempted to demonstrate that information could originate in matter by mutation and selection. Using a simple computer program, and starting with 28 letters, he sets out to produce a phrase from Shakespeare's writing: "Methinks it is like a weasel". The initial random sequence of 28 letters is copied repeatedly, with random copying errors (representing mutations) allowed to occur. The computer checks each new sentence and selects the one that most represents the target sentence. The process is repeated until the target sentence is achieved – taking 43 'generations'.

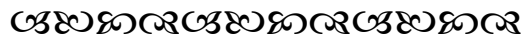
However, the flaw in this scenario is readily identifiable. This 'game can be played with any random sequence, and the goal will always be reached, because the programming is fixed' (pg 102). Information is not generated, but is rather pre-determined (i.e., the target sentence). Unfortunately for Dawkins, he can't escape the fact that the pre-determined target needs an intelligent (non-material) source.

The laws of information developed by Gitt have withstood rigorous challenge for a long time. Perhaps they make for somewhat dry reading, but they are powerful tools that we can use to affirm our confession that 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made'. (John 1:1,3).

OWEN MULDER

He's not just right, someone did say
 He walks and talks in a different way
 But what is right asked a different voice
 What type of a person? Is there a choice?
 Tall, short, frail or strong? Who is right and who is wrong?
 The shy, the mighty, or those with fame?
 No two persons are just the same!
 He's not just right? Can we not see?
 God makes us all quite differently.
 And should some need Our extra care
 It's up to us this burden to share.

ANONYMOUS



God has not promised,
 Skies always blue,
 Flower-strewn pathways,
 All our lives through;

God has not promised,
 Sun without rain,
 Joy without sorrow,
 Peace without pain.

But God has promised,
 Strength for the day,
 Rest for the labour,
 Light for the way,

Grace for the trials,
 Help from above,
 Unfailing sympathy,
 Undying love!

ANONYMOUS

Aim:

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people:

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

This magazine will encourage its readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. Its basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the Una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

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Article Deadline for Next Issue: 10 September 2009

Next Issue Distributed: 4 October 2009