

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA**

The Very Rev. Fr. Arthur W. Ward, Jr. + Dean

Scripture: Various

***"Why I Believe" (part 2)***

**A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION**

On Easter Sunday I began a series entitled Why I Believe. If someone were to ask you why you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, how would you respond? You have heard me say it before and I will say it again, it is important to know what we believe and why we believe. And if I was going to answer the question, I would focus on seven main realities. I shared these seven on Easter. Let's look briefly what they are. In fact, let's look at our prayer book to see again how they are in fact mentioned in our liturgy, the prayer of consecration over the bread and the wine.

Please turn in your prayer books to p. 55. Look at what is said: "*We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us 1) **in creation**; 2) **in the calling of Israel to be your people**; 3) **in your Word spoken through the prophets**; and above all in 4) **the Word made flesh, Jesus, your son**...5) **In Him, you have delivered us from evil and made us worth to stand before you (life transformation)** 6) **In him, you have brought us out of error into truth**...*

And recall who is the "us"? The Church of Jesus Christ! So these are the seven reason why I believe. What I would like to do today is to look again, but in more detail, to the reality of Creation, the natural world; the world that we can physically apprehend and oftentimes see by simple observation.

And there are three areas I want to discuss when it comes to creation - 1) what God's Word says about the universe and all that is in it 2) some of what science teaches concerning the universe and the natural world and 3) what this means for us on a practical every day level.

**THE BATTLE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

But before we address these three areas, I want to answer the question that befuddles many, Are science and religion in conflict with one another? Are they incompatible? Many in the science world would say that all religion is hogwash because it has no concrete scientific evidence. They contend that religion is a world of fairy tales and make believe. And then there are others who will ignore science if it challenges or contradicts their religious beliefs. Still others contend that they address two different realities and the two should be kept separate.

All such thinking is wrong. The truth is that both science and religion seek the truth. They are two sides of the same coin. And when I speak of religion, that may be a bit of a misnomer. True religion is that which is grounded in and flows from and is reflected by the Lord of Heaven and Earth, through Jesus Christ, the Son. All other religion is false and man-made. So I will be talking about the Christian Faith. The Christian Faith is all about truth for the One who is at its center said, "***I am the way, the truth and the life.***" (Jn. 14:6) He said further that ***His word is truth.*** (Jn. 17:17)

Science therefore will find the truths about the universe and these truths will ultimately point to the author of all truth. But science is simply about finding the truth about the physical world in which we

inhabit. It can only come to conclusions based on what it can observe and test in a natural setting. It can tell us the "what" about something in the natural realm and sometimes the "how" - that is how things work and how they came to be. But what science cannot do is tell us the "why" and "who." In other words, science cannot tell us why life began or what is its overarching purpose; what is the meaning of life and even why things work in the way that they do. In addition, science cannot tell us who is behind it all.

Let's take the example of a teapot boiling water on a stove. A person who observes it will ask, "Why is the water in the kettle boiling? The scientist will tell us that the burning gas is creating heat, which raises the temperature of the water to the boiling point. But another answer is that the kettle is boiling on the stove because I am making a cup of tea for my friend. Both responses are valid and are in touch with reality. In fact, the two complement each other, providing a more complete picture of what is actually going on. The two explanations are friends not foes.

The truth of the matter is that the who and the why of nature cannot be scientifically observed. And even the how in terms of the origin of life falls short because although science can make statements about the past, they cannot be considered scientific truths because there was no one there to do scientific testing or analysis. And the problem with the fossil record is that there are literally no "missing links." Where are all the transitional life forms? The truth is, if you are going to interpret the ancient past, you have to begin with certain assumptions and if they are faulty assumptions you will end with a faulty conclusion! As a result when it comes to the ancient past, all you have scientifically are various theories and hypotheses.

### **THE CREATION ACCOUNT IN GENESIS**

I am sure everyone here is familiar with the Creation account of Genesis. It is unique among all ancient accounts in that earth and its creation is not the result of some cosmic battle between competing deities or birthed from some mythic creature, rather it is a straightforward account that highlights three things – 1) One God made it 2) He made it in an order and with diversity and 3) He made it with purpose with mankind the highest of the natural created order because man was made in the image of God. In this creation account, we have the Who - God and the why? It reflects His nature and the purpose of life.

This nature and purpose is further elaborated on in Genesis 2 with the account of Adam and Eve being made and placed in the Garden of Eden. The importance of loving relationship within the freedom to make moral decisions is set forth in this chapter where in Genesis 3 we are given the reason for sin and death in our world. In a specific sense we are given the "who" and the "why" and to a lesser degree the "what" and the "how."

Thus, when we read the words, "***In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and God said, Let there be light and there was light.***" this demonstrates that God is not only the one who does the creating, He is beyond time and space for time and space are creations of God and our natural world is limited to three physical dimensions and one time dimension. This also indicates that God makes cause and effect decisions outside of time and space. The Hebrew verb, "***bara,***" which we translate in the English as "create" literally means, "*to bring something out of nothing,*" "*to make something brand new.*" Hence, in creating the universe God did not make it from something (i.e. pre-existing matter), He made it, *period* (out of nothing!). He made it from a source *independent* of matter, energy, time, length, width, and height.

You may wonder, how so? Again we don't know the "how," but we can know the "who" and the "why."

**CONFIRMED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND BY JESUS**

Please turn now to **Ephesians 1:3-4**, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.*"

The fact that God chose us before the foundation of the world (beginning of time) means that we were in the mind of God BEFORE creation itself.

We find the same being said of Jesus in **1 Peter 1:20-21**: *For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."*

And it was why in **Jn. 17:5**, Jesus prayed on the night before He died, "*Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.*" And then in **Jn. 17:24**, "*for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*"

Thus, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed before the Creation. We can see how our present universe reflects this reality with the following scientific observations:

**1) Big Bang Theory** - states that the universe had a beginning and began with a incredible release of energy - an explosion. We all know that created order and design does not come from an explosion. Who could put the stars and planets in their courses and set the galaxies and solar systems in place and create the wonder of the plant and animal kingdoms on earth except for a Creator? As someone declared concerning the Big Bang Theory - God said, "*Let there be light... And BANG it was there!*" While the Big Bang theory may fall short when it comes to describing how complex life came from an explosion, it does confirm, however, that the universe had a beginning and since it had a beginning, who or what caused it? We know - God!

**2) The First Law of Thermodynamics** - states that energy cannot be created or destroyed. Everything in our universe is comprised of energy. The total *quantity* of energy in the universe stays the same. And yet we know that it had a beginning, it started from nothing. This again reflects the reality of a Creator. Recall that God "rested" on the Seventh Day, He is presently done creating anything new in substance. Hence, no *new* energy is being created or formed in our present universe.

**3) The Second Law Of Thermodynamics or the Law of Entropy** – the Second Law of Thermodynamics is about the *quality* of energy. It states that as energy is transferred or transformed, more and more of it is wasted. The Second Law also states that there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state. In other words, everything ultimately is breaking down. Remember learning about the half-lives of elements in Chemistry? Why does everything decay and break down? There is no scientific reason that can adequately explain why. The Bible, however, tells us why - it is due to the fall of mankind and the curse on creation. The Second Law also predicts the end of the

universe. As Boston University physicist, Andrew Duffy, noted, *"It implies that the universe will end in a 'heat death' in which everything is at the same temperature. This is the ultimate level of disorder; if everything is at the same temperature, no work can be done, and all the energy will end up as the random motion of atoms and molecules."*

Is it any wonder that we read in **2 Peter 3:10**: ***"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."***

### **THE LAWS OF SCIENCE AND THE CREATIVE GENIUS OF MAN**

Our present universe is made up of physical laws of science and mathematics. And these laws of physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics are there for our discovery. But there is something also true about our creation. Mankind, the highest form of creation in the natural world, has been made in the image of God. And this means we have been given the capacity to create and express new life. We have been given the capacity to love. Is it any wonder that the brain of humans is the most complex of any living creature and has areas for music and art and altruistic love? You can see the divine imprint in every human being that makes every person unique. Moreover, every human is not only a unique creation, but can uniquely create something new.

While the laws of science do reflect God as the lawgiver, they are just there to be discovered as they come directly from the Lord. However, when it comes to God's divine imprint on us, the spiritual is found in the reality of our own creative power. You say, how so? Take Bach, for example. Bach the gifted music composer was able to create musical pieces that could not be made or discovered by anyone else. They are unique to Bach. Or how about the artist Picasso? His paintings are not only his creation, but are also solely unique to him. If life is just a series of chemical reactions and equations that are governed by "survival of the fittest" what evolutionary purpose do such capacities like music and art serve? Are we more than "just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet" as theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking states? God's Word and life itself cry out, "Yes!"

As physicist and Anglican priest, John Polkinghorne said in *"Quantum Leap,"* an inspirational book about his life, *"the scientist can explain how music happens – sounds originate from vibrations – in vocal cords, or string made of nylon, horse hair, steel or a dried animal skin drawn tightly across a hollow log. The vibrations move into the air, as they vibrate. They spread out from the source and eventually in the ear canals of listeners. Here they vibrate the tissues within the ear, sending an electrical signal to the brain, which decodes the signal and determines whether the sound is pleasant. That's music, at least one version of it. But of course, that is not the whole story. Your understanding is limited if all you know is the scientific reduction. Music is more than the release of neurosensors in the brain. There is a timeless mystery to music. It's central to the world of metaphysics."*

God's Word declares that God not only made the universe and all that is in it, but that He upholds the universe by His power (**Heb. 1:3**) and He is the One who gives the universe its purpose and reason for being (**John 1:1-4**). It is to reflect His glory – **Ps 19:1-2**: ***"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals***

*knowledge.*" And it is to be the place where the battle between good and evil plays out and the redemption of mankind. **Is. 45:18-19**, "***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), I am the LORD, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'See Me in a waste place'; I, the Lord, speak righteousness declaring things that are upright.***" Some may wonder about the fall of mankind with the disobedience of Adam and Eve? While the reason that God allowed this may be somewhat of a mystery, could we fully appreciate the depth of God's love if we did not need to be forgiven, if Jesus did not have to die, if we didn't have to be redeemed and saved?

What Creation reveals is not only an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator, it reveals that in God through Christ, there is a beauty and majesty that defies comprehension, there is a purpose that awes the soul, and a plan that gives and sustains life. In creating, God demonstrates how He alone can bring order out of the chaos of an explosion and undefined energy. In the creation itself, God shows that only He is the source of life, and not just life but one of purpose and harmony and peace. God is holy and loving. He wants to bring order out of our chaotic lives and the only way for that to happen is for us to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us, who revealed the fullness of God to us and who gives us His Spirit, the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and to be with us forever. Why do I believe? Just look around at all that has been made, and tell me if you don't see a Creator? In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, AMEN!