

The End of Faith? - Chris Surber

Introduction

One day the zoo-keeper noticed that the orangutan was reading two books - the Bible and Darwin's Origin of Species. Surprised, he asked the ape, "Why are you reading both those books?" "Well," said the orangutan, "I just wanted to know if I was my brother's keeper or my keeper's brother."

We live in an age of increasing secularism and skepticism. Science is worshiped as though it was a god, and the very notion of faith is disregarded as fiction. Sociologists call our time postmodern, because in our day truth tends to be regarded as simply whatever you make it. In our day, the concept of anything as absolute is absolutely unacceptable.

As a society, It is as though we are standing at the intersection of faith and reason, and must decide which way to go. The culture has wrongly insisted that faith and reason are incompatible. One of the classes that I took in my undergraduate degree in Religion at Liberty University was a biology class which dealt with the issues of evolution and creation from a scientific and a biblical view point. The professor held a Ph.D. in biochemistry, he is a brilliant man, and he is also a committed Christian. He used to say that he was the most worshipful of God when he was looking into a microscope.

He would say that was when he was filled the most awe and wonder of the power and nature of God. God is a God of order and design. He has wonderfully arranged the stars in the heavens as well as the cells of a human eye. Following after Christ has nothing to do with abandoning reason and intellect; it is in following after Christ that our hearts and minds are opened to using the minds which God gave us to comprehend the depths of all that God has created.

The premise of this essay is simply this; in order to accept reason as valid, one need not reject faith in Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to reject religion to embrace the mind. Faith and reason are not at odds with one another, faith gives reason substance and reason points us toward the need for faith. C. S. Lewis once wrote, "In science we have been reading only the notes to a poem; in Christianity we find the poem itself."

Scripture

Psalms 14:1-7 says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call on the LORD? There they are in great fear, For God is with the generation of the righteous. You shame the counsel of the poor, But the LORD is his refuge. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad." (NKJV)

In this passage of Scripture the Psalmist is making three general statements. First, that only a fool denies the existence of God. Second, that those who deny God tend to have a natural bent toward immorality. The Psalmist makes this statement through the use of hyperbole. Hyperbole is a literary device which simply means overstatement. Clearly not every atheist or agnostic is morally bankrupt as the Psalmist declares. Through his overstatement, though, his message is plainly understood – those who turn away from God abandon their moral compass, they are like a ship in the storm with no ruder, no ethical or spiritual direction.

To the person who denies God, the Psalmist says, there is no standard in the universe, and if there is not a standard for morality or ethics, then anything goes. And we should not be surprised that where we find the denial of God in society or in personal lives, we tend to find selfishness, sin, and corruption. When you cast aside the moral law giver, is it any surprise that the moral law is cast aside as well?

Just look at what is happening in our own culture. The highest principals of the Scripture are mercy and justice, yet we don't have to look very far even in our own lives to find cruelty and injustice. Finally, the Psalmist declares that in the end God's mercy and salvation will reign supreme. The Psalmist reminds us of the eternal hope that we have as children of God and followers of Christ. Revelation 21:4 says, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (NKJV)

Cosmological Argument

God has written His divine order into the very fabric of the universe. He has penned His signature all over that which He has made. In Romans 1:19-20 the Apostle Paul writes, "Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen..." (NKJV) God has left His fingerprint on His creation. All that we need to do to catch a glimpse of the majesty of God is to look around us with open eyes.

The enormity of the power of God is seen in the sheer size of the universe. Modern science estimates that in the visible universe there are as many as 500 billion galaxies. And who knows how many may lie beyond our ability to see? How could something so wondrous have come into being all on its own? How can there be an effect with no cause? You can not have an infinite regression of causes. A domino effect must be started by a force making the first domino move.

In other words, if life on earth sprung forth by the random process of evolution and the earth is a result of the formation of the universe which started with the big bang, then where did the stuff of the universe come from in the first place? The medieval theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas called this "the argument from contingency." He held that God is the uncaused cause of all things. You see, it is not a new thing to dismiss God; Aquinas made these arguments during the middle ages. God has been defending His existence for centuries!

Genesis Account (*Reference NIV Archeological Study Bible*)

The ancient world produced many creation stories outside of the biblical account. Perhaps the biggest difference though, between other ancient accounts and the creation account in the book of Genesis, is that other creation accounts focused almost entirely on the elevation of nature. For example, Egyptian creation myths emphasized some type of primordial mound out of which a specific God created the world out of the material present in that mound. The common motif in most of the ancient creation stories was to assert the primacy of their particular god.

Sometimes these creation myths would relate battles between their particular god and some monster of a primordial watery chaos. They would elevate the god of the moon or the god of the sun. In nearly every case the point was to elevate their god over other gods. Greek creation myths are similar. After a time of initial chaos a pantheon of gods arises who are selfish and spoiled. Their family lives are like soap operas and they treat humans as incidental creations of mediocre value. The creation account in Genesis, though, is altogether different. The emphasis in Genesis is that there is but one true God. That He alone created all things ex nihilo – that is, out of nothing.

Everything that exists in the physical universe was caused by Him and He stands separate from His creation and at the same time intimately concerned with His creation. There is a debate among Christians about how best to interpret the book of Genesis. The question is posed, “Did God create the universe and all life in seven literal days? Should we understand the seven days of creation metaphorically as ages of evolution? Is there some other way to understand the biblical creation account?”

While I am convinced that a literal interpretation of the Genesis account is the most accurate, it must be noted that there are very committed followers of Christ who view this account in a non-literal fashion. Our understanding of Genesis does affect our understanding of the Scriptures as whole. At the end of the day all believers should be able to agree on what is perhaps the most important thing for us to learn from Genesis; God created the universe intentionally. He loves His creation and is intimately concerned for it. And He created us to be His children.

Unlike other ancient creation stories, the biblical account presents a picture of a loving God who is the creator and sustainer of all things. God has a purpose for His creation and He has a purpose for our lives. Our lives are not devoid of meaning. We are not the result of random forces. We were created by a loving father who calls us His own.

Inner Witness

As I read the pages of the New Testament it occurs to me that the primary way that a believer knows the truth of the Christian faith is the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. In Romans 9:1 it says, “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.” (NKJV) At the end of the day, logical arguments and historical evidence is unlikely to draw someone to faith in Christ.

While they do have the power to strengthen our faith, by reminding us of mentally satisfying reasons for faith, it is only the Holy Spirit indwelling us that fills us with eternal assurance.

The greatest of all of the possible arguments for the existence of God - the one which is the most convincing - is to know Him!

Conclusion

Dear saints of God do not believe the lies that this increasingly secular culture would have you accept! In order to be a person of faith you need not abandon the mind which God gave you. And in order to be a person of reason you need not abandon faith in God!

To follow after Christ is not to leap blindly into the abyss of intellectual denial. We worship the God who created both the mind with which we comprehend Him and the heart with which we know Him. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (NKJV)

Knowledge, scientific discovery, these things are not the end faith! Let us continue to diligently seek God in faith and let us celebrate the mind which he gave us.