

TITLE: "Suprarationality"

TEXT: Genesis 1:26-27 (OT pp. 1, 2)

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image,
 in the image of God he created them;
 male and female he created them.

Introduction – Christian faith and evolution

I know many people who are atheists or agnostics. Atheists believe there is no God. Agnostics believe that God is unknowable. Many of these folks believe that life came into being by chance and evolved over millions of years into their current life forms. Since this runs counter to Christian belief in a God who created the universe and all living things, they simply write off Christianity.

God LOVES atheists and agnostics. The Bible says that God, "...wants everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Christianity, after all, is NOT about how the universe in general, and human beings in particular, came into being. The Bible says: "...if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). The basis of our belief as Christians is faith in Jesus Christ, not our view of creation.

Arguing or debating with atheists and agnostics is usually futile. So the key is to lead them to Jesus Christ. So, how do we do this?

1. Reaching rationally-minded atheists and agnostics
 - a. We need to expand our level of tolerance

First of all, we need to accept the fact that a person can be a Christian and also accept the process of evolution. It does not mean that you have to accept evolution. For me this means accepting that if there IS evolution, then GOD came up with it.

Does this mean that it is OK for people to disregard large chunks of the Bible, such as the creation account? No. Once again, I am not saying that you need to accept this. But we do need to be tolerant of those who interpret the Bible differently. Most Christians who accept evolution believe that the biblical account of creation in the Bible is a parable of creation rather than an historic account. They believe that Jesus used stories to convey truth that went far beyond the literal meaning of the story itself and that God used the same type of parable to explain the way God created everything.

Well, what about where the Bible says that God created the universe in 6 days? ...The Hebrew word for day can mean a 24-hour day or it can mean an age. So, yes they believe the Bible, but they believe God's creation took place over many ages rather than 24-hour days. After all, they say, 2 Peter 3:8 says: "...with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day."

We do not have to agree with them in order to accept the possibility their belief. And I can accept them because there is a more important matter at stake. That is eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. As I said earlier, accepting or not accepting evolution should NOT be the issue that prevents a person from faith in Jesus Christ.

If accepting that the creation account is a parable will lead a person to faith in Jesus Christ, I am more than willing to cut them that slack. Once a person has faith in Jesus, God may or may not change their hearts and minds. There certainly is a MUCH greater chance of this AFTER a person knows the Lord than before he or she knows Jesus.

b. Prayer

The next step is prayer. God often inserts a believer into the lives of non-believers, and that person may be you. So, if you know someone who refuses to have faith in Jesus Christ, start praying for her or him.

Keep at it. Carol and I have prayed for family members who I would have said had as chance of accepting Jesus as their Lord as a stuffed mule. One of them is now a pastoral counselor and very active in his church. ...God's Holy Spirit can do from the Inside, what we may fail to do from the OUTside.

c. Let God go to work

Be patient. Let God do the work. Allow God's Holy Spirit to convict the person of God's reality. Sooner or later God WILL get through to the person.

The way God often does this is by making the person uncomfortable. In the fourth century, St. Augustine wrote, "Our hearts are restless till they find themselves in Thee, O Lord." No matter how sure, how confident, how stubbornly convinced an atheist is that he or she is right, there is a chink in their armor. God will make sure that there is at least one thing they really desire that is beyond their grasp.

Don't pressure people. The Bible says: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is within you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (I Peter 3:15b-16a). If you are loving, accepting and kind, rationally-minded will listen to you. Drop a seed when appropriate, pray, and leave the germination up to the Lord.

Let me read you a story. It's titled "Back to the origin":

A New Orleans lawyer sought an FHA loan for a client who lost his house in Hurricane Katrina and wanted to rebuild. He was told the loan would be granted if he could prove satisfactory title to the parcel of property being offered as collateral. The title to the property dated back to 1803, which took the Lawyer three months to track down.

After sending the information to the FHA, he received the following reply.

"Upon review of your letter adjoining your client's loan application, we note that the request is supported by an Abstract of Title. While we compliment the able manner in which you have prepared and presented the application, we must point out that you have only cleared title to the proposed collateral property back to 1803. Before approval can be accorded, it will be necessary to clear the title back to its origin."

Annoyed, the lawyer responded as follows.

"Your letter regarding title in Case No. 189156 has been received. I note that you wish to have title extended further than the 194 years covered by the present application. I was unaware that any educated person in this country, particularly

those working in the property area, would not know that Louisiana was purchased, by the U.S., from France in 1803, the year of origin identified in our application.

For the edification of uninformed FHA bureaucrats, the title to the land prior to U.S. ownership was obtained from France, which had acquired it by Right of Conquest from Spain. The land came into the possession of Spain by Right of Discovery made in the year 1492 by a sea captain named Christopher Columbus, who had been granted the privilege of seeking a new route to India by the Spanish monarch, Isabella.

The good queen, Isabella, being a pious woman and almost as careful about titles as the FHA, took the precaution of securing the blessing of the Pope before she sold her jewels to finance Columbus' expedition. Now the Pope, as I'm sure you may know, is the emissary of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and God, it is commonly accepted, created this world.

Therefore, I believe it is safe to presume that God also made that part of the world called Louisiana. God, therefore, would be the owner of origin and His origins date back to before the beginning of time, the world as we know it AND the FHA. I hope you find God's original claim to be satisfactory. Now, may we have our [darn] loan?

He finally got the loan.

The guy had a problem: he needed a loan to rebuild his home. He did not get his problem resolved until it was traced all the way back to God the Creator. It is the same with each and every person. Each person will encounter problems that he or she cannot overcome until they go all the way back to God the Creator through faith in Jesus Christ.

d. Encourage them to seek the reality of God

The final recommendation I have is to dare scientific atheists and agnostics to try to prove God exists in the same way they would try to prove a scientific theory.

Francis S. Collins is a world renowned biologist. He was raised by non-religious parents and turned into what he calls "an obnoxious atheist" ("Ex-atheist biologist..." *Ithaca Journal* 7/22/06 p. 5B). But as a medical student he wondered why patients who were suffering and dying retained their faith in God.

He realized that as a scientist ‘you’re not supposed to decide something is true until you’ve looked at the data. And yet I had become an atheist without ever looking at the evidence whether God exists or not.”

He began looking, and early in the process read C. S. Lewis’s concise classic *Mere Christianity*. “In the very first chapter,” he says, “all my arguments about the irrationality of faith lay in ruins.”

Yet he was besieged by doubts during two years of struggle and study. Finally, he went hiking in Oregon’s Cascade Mountains and one morning, “I fell on my knees and asked Christ to be my Lord and Savior. And Jesus has been there ever since, the past 28 years, as the rock on which I stand.”

Conclusion – Suprarationality

God loves atheists and agnostics. In *The Shack* by Wm. Paul Young (Page 69). The main character Mack says:

There are times when you choose to believe something that would normally be considered absolutely irrational. It doesn’t mean that it is *actually* irrational, but it surely is not rational. Perhaps there is suprarationality: reason beyond the normal definitions of fact or data-based logic; something that makes sense only if you can see a bigger picture of reality. Maybe that is where faith fits in.

That IS where faith fits in. And God wants each and every person to experience God’s suprarationality. So, if you know a rationally-minded person who refuses to believe in Jesus ...Pray for them. ...Humbly and reverently share your faith. ...Encourage them to try to prove that God DOES exist. ...Ask them to read C. S. Lewis’s book *Mere Christianity*.

YOU may be the one God has chosen to lead that person to faith in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

NOT USED

The sauce or the Cook?

To me it's like a famous chef who had the world's best recipe for spaghetti sauce. The recipe was a secret so he always ordered everyone out of the kitchen when he made it, except for his son, who ran the restaurant with his dad.

Many chefs tried to reproduce the sauce, but it was never quite the same. Finally a group of chefs brought samples of the sauce to a laboratory to be analyzed. The scientists at the lab provided a list of ingredients along with the proportions of each. The chefs each reproduced the sauce in their own restaurants, and their patrons thought it was great. The only ones who had doubts were those who had actually eaten at the famous chef's restaurant.

Eventually, the famous chef's son opened up a chain of restaurants and announced that he used the famous recipe. Low and behold, even those who had eaten at the famous chef's restaurant said that the sauce was just as good. The restaurants soon spread all over the country and all over the world.

One day the CEO of a spaghetti sauce company offered to buy the recipe for a million dollars. The son said, "There IS no recipe. My father just made the sauce by feel. I was there when he made it, so I know how it was done. Those who to whom I give a franchise, become like one of our family and my father shows them how it is made."

The moral to the story? ...Don't settle for a recipe when you can get to know the chef.