



Beginning and Ending: Controversy and Dialogue

In the early 1960s as a pre-teenager, I remember the anxiousness I felt when I heard a prominent evangelist proclaim that Christ will surely return before or at the turn of the calendar from 1999 to 2000. The evangelist affirmed the clarity of the Scriptures and the discernment of the times as strong evidences of his prophecy. At that time our little congregation was in dialogue over eschatology—the Premillennialists versus the Amillennialists. No one espoused Postmillennialism, but we had the token “Pan-millennialists” who irreverently said that they believed “it would just all pan out.” While the discussions were intense and peppered with supportive biblical texts and contemporary illustrations, they were also amicable, realizing that our understanding of God’s method and timetable reflect human interpretation.

In this issue, we encounter a similar dialogue—not over our ending, but over our beginning. The comparison of “natural world events” with Scripture fuels the discussion. How did the world begin? What is the evidence for Divine doing? Within the American Scientific Affiliation, much of the debate for the last couple of years has focused either on the pros and cons of two positions: Howard Van Till’s idea of a “Robust Formational Economy Principle” (RFEP) or “Intelligent Design” (ID) as advocated by William Dembski, Michael Behe, and others.

In the following Dialogue section, Mark Discher initiates a discussion by challenging some of the critiques Howard Van Till has made concerning ID. Then Howard Van Till responds to Mark by affirming RFEP as the superior model when comparing the merits of RFEP and ID. Finally in concluding this dialogue stage, Mark responds again to Howard suggesting some problems remain with RFEP.

In the Articles section, other authors contribute to the origin discussion. The case study by Tim Johnson and Karl Giberson suggests that teaching evolution in the public school system neither undermines traditional religious values nor promotes atheistic naturalism. Richard Thornhill conjectures that historical evidence demonstrates a parallel development of intelligent design and Darwinian evolution views. In the Communications section, Gordon Mills uses an example in biochemistry to defend intelligent design. Finally a Young Scientist, John Bracht, raises the information issue as a problematic one for Darwinianism.

You are invited to contribute to the next stage of this dialogue by submitting your Letter to the Editor as a follow-up to one of the issues raised by any of these authors.

Primogenial reading,
Roman J. Miller, Editor

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