

God gave the Bible for all times and all cultures, and he may have had his reasons for preventing avoidable offenses for later readers. This expectation of harmony cannot be proved, but it seems significant that no unambiguous case of explicit incompatibility with known facts has been documented. Accommodationism leads to unnecessary or even destructive offenses, particularly if moral accommodation is included. There is sufficient unavoidable offense in the cross of Christ.

Notes

¹Paul H. Seely, *PSCF* 56 (March 2004): 75.

²A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); personal communication by P.H. Seely. For my commentary on Rofé's book, see my post of 25 Nov 2002 on "The Pentateuch dissected and revised" to the ASA internet discussion group, archived under www.calvin.edu/cgi-bin/archive.

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Would God "Play" This Way?

Robert Boomsma's article "Embryonic Stem Cells and a Reformed Christian World View" (*PSCF* 56, no. 1 [2004]: 38–48) is a helpful and insightful review of Christian arguments for hES research, but I respectfully disagree with his conclusions. Boomsma begins by discussing the creation and our God-ordained stewardship over it. He suggests that "humans are called to play God, to be his agents in developing the creation," as long as this is done "as God plays God." I would grant that biotechnology can be a part of our stewardship over creation, but there are clearly-defined scriptural limits.

A powerful and compelling counter-argument can be made by a proper understanding of the word "play" in this context. "Playing God" is usually used in a much stronger sense, where "play" means to act in a role or to play a part. Used in this way, "playing God" means "to act in a role as God," or even "to usurp God's place." This is clearly prohibited. After all, this is the sin to which the serpent tempted Adam: "You will be like God, knowing good and evil"¹ Here, "knowing good and evil" means having moral autonomy or making one's own decisions independent of God.² Such a way of playing God goes beyond stewardship to hubris, and is seen in attempts to manipulate the nature of human life itself. This defies God's own declaration of human persons as "very good."³

Boomsma too quickly rejects the conception view of human personhood traditionally held by the Christian church. He claims this "places too much emphasis on an individual's genetic composition." He adds that "A human person is more than his or her genetic code." I agree, but a person is *at least* that. The uniqueness of an individual begins at the moment of *syngamy*, the establishment of the diploid order. This happens during fertilization/conception. Boomsma correctly points out that fertilization is a process that extends over thirty hours. Yet the fast block to polyspermy that occurs at the union of sperm and ovum is a three-second process that "locks in" the genetic material so that syngamy will inevitably happen, making this a strong candidate for the moment of personhood.⁴

In moving away from fertilization/conception as a decisive moment, Boomsma discusses the idea of twinning, as a possible counter-example to the idea of human uniqueness from conception. He cites my analogy that if a clone were made from an adult cell, no one would doubt that a full individual existed prior to the creation of such a "twin." But he claims that this doesn't help, because it is not clear which individual is "continuously present before and after." Here, Boomsma confuses epistemic certainty with ontological reality: our knowledge of something does not change its nature. It is clear from the cloning analogy that one individual is present from conception and the other is present from the moment of the split. It does not matter if we know which one is which.

The larger issue here is the dualistic nature of human beings, that persons are both body and soul. On this view, there is both a physical side and a spiritual element that lives on after bodily death. Surely Christianity depends upon this metaphysical reality. A corollary to this view is that persons have continuity back to their earlier selves. This means that an embryo is the necessary substantial precursor to the adult individual, and that this continuity extends back to the moment of syngamy.⁵

Human beings begin at their biological beginnings, and there are no philosophically or theologically compelling reasons to reject their moral value at this point other than sheer utilitarianism. That is why Christians should not accept such a cold calculus, but should reject hES research. Jesus said that all men shall know us as His disciples if we love one another.⁶ Our fidelity to this principle will be demonstrated by the way we love the smallest and most defenseless in our midst.

If, as Boomsma suggests, "Humans are called to play God," then we must ask regarding hES research, "Would God play in this way?"

Notes

¹Genesis 3:5b.

²See, for example, V. P. Hamilton, "The Book of Genesis," in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

³Genesis 1:31.

⁴For an extensive discussion of these ideas, see D. M. Sullivan, "The Conception View of Personhood: A Review," *Ethics and Medicine* 19, no. 1 (2003): 11–34.

⁵For an in-depth development of Christian substance dualism, see J. P. Moreland and S. B. Rae, *Body and Soul* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

⁶John 13:35

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Articles Lack Real Science and Faith

The articles in this journal are becoming more and more philosophical and theological, that is, they are removed from the realities of science and the Christian faith. Science is the study of the physical world from quantum physics to the cosmos. If we accept that God is the Creator, then we do not need philosophy to study science; we should actually study science as it is. It is God's second book.

The Bible brings us the Christian faith in a very practical form, without much theology. Theology and philosophy tend to cloud over the Christian faith and will eventually change it into something like the Hindu religion. The Christian faith has to be lived in real life and not become a mental exercise. The content of *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* is slowly losing true science and the actual teachings of Jesus as well.

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Are Dangerous Animals a Consequence of the Fall of Lucifer?

David Snoke in "Why Were Dangerous Animals Created?" (*PSCF* 56, no. 2 [2004]: 117–25) ascribes to God the creation of "violent and ferocious creatures." Snoke argues against Christians who believe that all natural evils arose as a direct consequence of the Fall of Man. In addition, Snoke disagrees with Christians who believe that "demons created all natural cruelty in nature." Snoke selectively considers the views of some Christians but ignores the belief of many that the real source of evil and aberrations in nature is Satan. This omission seems strange since Satan plays such a central role in the woes of Job whose book is the main source of Snoke's view that God created the dangerous species.

God created the laws that govern all of the workings and actions of his creation. God created creatures with free will that eventually disobeyed him. The consequences that followed were an integral part of the created entities. God did not create evil, evil is a result of disobedience. Evil results from the abuse of free will by rational creatures.

Animals are sentient beings that have no consciousness. C. S. Lewis writes: "From the doctrine that God is good we may confidently deduce that the *appearance* of reckless divine cruelty in the animal kingdom is an illusion, and the fact that the only suffering we know first hand (our own) turns out not to be a cruelty will make it easier to believe this. After that, everything is guesswork."¹ Lewis indicates that: "Man was not the first creature to rebel against the Creator, but that some older and mightier being long since became apostate and is now the emperor of darkness and (significantly) the Lord of this world."² Also, "The Satanic corruption of the beasts would therefore be analogous, in one respect, to the Satanic corruption of man."³ And, finally, "Man is to be understood only in his relation to God. The beasts are to be understood only in their relation to man and, through man, to God."⁴

Lewis speculates: "I do not doubt that if the Paradisal man could now appear among us, we should regard him as an utter savage, a creature to be exploited or, at best, patronized. Only one or two, and those the holiest among us, would glance a second time at the naked, shaggy-bearded, slow-spoken creature: but they, after a few minutes, would fall at his feet."⁵ Curiously, this description of Paradisal man before the Fall is reminiscent of Chance the Gardener, played by Peter Sellers in the movie *Being There*.

In this state, Paradisal man may have had eternal physical life, which he lost at the Fall and was prevented from regaining it by eating from the Tree of Life.

Humans were created in the image of God and animals are subordinate to them. The physical death of humans was a consequence of the Fall. Must that not automatically affect animals? Can superior human beings die whereas inferior animals not die? Therefore, animals were either already affected by the Fall of Lucifer or else the Fall of Man affected animals so that they would always be different in kind from humans. Hence, it is more logical to attribute animal pain and death to Satan and not to an omnipotent God. The millennium reign of the Messiah will be characterized by the restoration of the harmony in the whole of creation (Isa. 11:6–9) that was broken not by the sin of Adam and Eve but by Satan (Rom. 8:18–22).

In closing, Snoke's analysis may be partially successful in casting doubt that the Fall of Man gave rise to the viciousness and death in the animal kingdom. However, Snoke does not even mention the Fall of Lucifer (Isa. 12:14) and so his inference that such features of the animal world were created by God leaves much to be desired.

Notes

¹C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 129.

²*Ibid.*, 134.

³*Ibid.*, 135.

⁴*Ibid.*, 138.

⁵*Ibid.*, 79.

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From Whence Evil?

The explanation offered by David Snoke (*PSCF* 56, no. 2 [2004]: 117–25) for the fact that nature is red in tooth and claw is inevitable only if one accepts the fundamental premise of Calvinism: God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass. Arminians believe the character of God, which emerges from the Bible taken in its entirety, is inconsistent with Calvinism and, consequently, with the conclusion that God created nature as we know it today.

According to Scripture, the universe was originally good and the glory of God is still evident in it (Rom. 1:20). But something else—something frightfully wicked—is evident in it as well. Of their own free will, Satan and other spiritual beings rebelled against God in the primordial past and now abuse their God-given authority over certain aspects of creation. Satan, who holds the power of death (Heb. 2:14) exercises a pervasive, structural, diabolical influence to the point that the entire creation is in bondage to decay. The pain-ridden, bloodthirsty, sinister and hostile character of nature should be attributed to Satan and his army, not to God. Jesus' earthly ministry reflected the belief that the world had been seized by a hostile, sinister