



THE BLOOD OF FORGIVENESS: THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN DEATH AND LIFE — IS THE ATONEMENT REALLY NECESSARY?

Movements that question the Christian faith's essential tenets in favor of principles of "inclusion without boundaries" are reprocessed in almost every generation. Today, for example, many have rejected the idea of God's existence entirely in favor of naturalistic explanations for the origins of life, speciation, and humanity. In so doing, the exclusive truth claims found in Christianity are removed from view and replaced by other more accepting or "tolerant" worldviews.

One of the most prevalent explanations naturalists use for the origins of human life is the theory of macroevolution, which is the idea that major evolutionary transition allows for one type of organism to become another type of organism over time.

This premise supports the conclusion that human life did not begin as part of a special, supernatural creative act by God. In fact, if macroevolution is true, then there was no special design connected to the human species at all. Instead, humanity came about as the result of natural, evolutionary processes.

There are some who attempt to reconcile this belief with the idea of a Creator, but usually macroevolutionists suggest the creation narrative found in the Bible (Genesis 1 and 2) is a poetic attempt by the uninformed to explain the origins of life. They view the first couple described in Scripture (Adam and Eve) as figurative, and thus see the idea of "original sin" (Genesis 3) as a construct based solely on the theory of biblical creation. Regrettably, once a literal Adam and Eve are removed, and once we do away with the doctrine of original sin, the idea of Jesus coming to earth as an atoning sacrifice for humanity's sin also comes into question. This is the troubling result of a macroevolutionist view of the origins of human life.

Microevolution, on the other hand, does not produce the same difficulty. It leaves plenty of room for the idea that humanity was created as part of a special, supernatural act of God. Microevolution acknowledges a succession of relatively small variations that cause the formation of a new subspecies over time. This view accepts that mutations, genetic drifts, and selections can and do occur over time, sometimes even relatively quickly (1).

To summarize, macroevolution usually begins with a belief that there is no Creator or designer, but microevolution allows for (and even suggests) a Creator or designer (2). Many within the scientific community are comfortable with microevolution but remain opposed to macroevolution, as the necessary chemical modification allowing for one



species to become a different species is completely absent in the natural world. In fact, a natural process responsible for creating new species of increasing complexity and sophistication has never been reproduced or even empirically observed; chemistry simply does not support it.

Additionally, new theories on the speed of light also throw a wrench in the works for the theory of macroevolution. There have been recent challenges to the theory of relativity with the discovery that the speed of light can actually be exceeded (2). This discovery acknowledges that there is a “time-zone” outside of time as we know it (the speed of light). God, who is described in Christian orthodoxy as both transcendent (above us) and immanent (with us), operates in both “time-zones,” doing what He does even when it doesn’t seem possible within our concept of time.

Theologians who accept macroevolution must also explain a 4,000-year history of belief in the necessity of blood atonement for the forgiveness of sin as presented in the biblical record. They argue that substitutionary atonement is simply unnecessary if there was no original sin, but without this essential building block of the Judeo-Christian faith, an enormous amount of maneuvering is required to divert attention away from its primacy in Scripture. For example, a “theological macroevolutionist” must avoid the Levitical explanation of the necessity of blood for forgiveness, the prevalence of prophetic scriptural claims of a Messiah who would heal humankind by his blood, the teachings of the apostles Luke, James, Peter, and Paul with their many references to the blood of Christ being necessary for the forgiveness of sins, and the words of Jesus himself who claimed his own blood was to be shed for the purpose of our forgiveness. Simply put, a biblical worldview must hold suspect any claim that negates the existence of the Creator, opposes the teachings of Scripture regarding the origin of humanity, disregards the doctrine of original sin, and rejects the need for Christ’s death by dismissing the doctrine of substitutionary atonement.

Another problem that arises for the theological macroevolutionist is that the syncretism of faith and scientific belief means another explanation for the coming of Christ (the incarnation) is required. If atonement was not the goal of Jesus’ coming, then the incarnation amounts to nothing more than God’s loving (yet powerless and fumbled) attempt to connect with us in order to show us how to live. Jesus’ death in this view is not purposely redemptive, but rather the tragic result of sinful humanity acting outside the will of Jesus and the Father by hanging Jesus on the cross. The “saving grace” of the tragedy, according to some in the camp, is that Jesus uttered from the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing.” Therefore, these theological macroevolutionists suggest that Jesus’ willingness to forgive us despite our cruelty enables us to learn from our mistakes and become more loving as a result. But because not all humans will respond to this and “do better,” God will eventually usher in His kingdom until all humankind is ultimately saved. This framework helps explain why some macroevolutionists go so far as to claim all religious views are equal; under this view loving fellow humans is the only goal, and Christian evangelism becomes completely unnecessary.

An “obsession with novelty,” as the late Dallas Willard called it, is the desire to believe something new and different because it is new and different. Novel theories become



even more alluring when they appear to be especially inclusive of others. Obsession with novelty means we don't just want to be open to new ideas—we want new ideas. The core of the desire for something new may suggest a desire to step away from, or even above, those who came before us. If a new idea is more inclusive than what came before it—offering grace, mercy, and tolerance—it will tend to gain quick attention and adherents, even if it is not true.

Jesus told us to be salt and light, connecting to the world that doesn't know him in order to share this great news of his life and offer of forgiveness. The desire to include others is good and godly, as the very essence of the Christian faith is to be inclusive for the purpose of sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel includes anyone who receives it, yet it also clearly warns of the consequence of rejecting it.

The gospel offers mercy, but it also promises justice. Justice is the promise that acceptance of God's life will lead to real life, but the rejections of His offer will lead to death. When we see the atonement as unnecessary, there is no need for justice because no matter what we do, we will eventually be saved regardless. Mercy without justice is an anemic faith at best and spiritually irresponsible at worst. Willard's warning reminds us that novelty can charm, but it can also harm. Truth will relentlessly prevail even though it may not be popular.

Therefore, if the law of Moses is true, if the prophets who foretold of a messiah who would heal us by his stripes is true, if the New Testament letters insisting on the need for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus is true, and if Jesus was compelled to sacrifice his life for us rather than being powerlessly overcome by a few people (Matthew 16:21), then the atonement is necessary, biblical, and extremely relevant today.

The biblical assertion that atonement for sin is necessary, and the fact that Christ, who is the same God who required payment for sin, took our place as a substitute and died on our behalf that we might live, is an old story filled with all the freshness of good news. We have all sinned and fallen short of his glory, the glory we were designed to reflect. Through faith in Jesus and his atoning act on our behalf, we can find forgiveness, hope for inner transformation, passion to become the people he designed us to be, and the promise of eternal life with him. Without the atonement, our hope is lost. Without the atonement, our attempt to include everyone will ultimately result in the exclusion of those Jesus misses most.

You can believe in a creating God and the science that continues to reveal the truth behind His creation. You can be scientifically sound and believe that man, apart from Christ's forgiveness, is lost in sin and in need of a redeemer. Though you may not fully grasp the vast meaning behind the blood atonement, you can be saved by it. To comprehend how God Himself, who required atonement, gave His own blood to atone for our sin is to understand love fully. It is love—His love—which saves us. Though we experience it, we do not fully understand it, but that which we do understand is enough to give us life abundantly and eternally with the one Who is Love.



Bibliography & End Notes:

1. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/microevolution?s=t>
2. "Professor James M. Tour is one of the ten most cited chemists in the world. He is famous for his work on nanocars, nanoelectronics, graphene nanostructures, carbon nanovectors in medicine, and green carbon research for enhanced oil recovery and environmentally friendly oil and gas extraction. He is currently a Professor of Chemistry, Professor of Computer Science, and Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science at Rice University. He has authored or co-authored 489 scientific publications, and his name is on 36 patents. Although he does not regard himself as an Intelligent Design theorist, Professor Tour, along with over 700 other scientists, took the courageous step back in 2011 of signing the Discovery Institute's "A Scientific Dissent from Darwinism," which read: "We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged."
3. (<http://www.uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/a-world-famous-chemist-tells-the-truth-there-no-scientist-alive-today-who-understands-macroevolution/>). <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/science/story/2011-09-22/particle-travels-faster-than-speed-of-light/50518790/1>