

SPECTRUM

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In the beginning God created. **METANOIA**

In the Beginning God Created

by John Valk

A student spoke to me the other day about a frustration he experienced in an introductory biology course. At the beginning of the term the professor had read the creation account as recorded in the Biblical book of Genesis. He then similarly dismissed it as myth, stating that it had no basis in fact and no relevance for biology. Such a rejection is rather unfortunate. It is, nonetheless, understandable. That it occurs, however, indicates the unchallenged dominance of certain views and assumptions. These frequently influence, shape and direct the thinking of the unsuspecting student. The debate, as it appeared to emerge in this biology class, is frequently cast as one between a fundamentalist (and unenlightened) Biblical view of creation and a more sophisticated scientific (and enlightened) view of evolution. That assumes, however, that these are the only two options available, and that they are also mutually exclusive. That, quite literally, produces a false picture. Furthermore, it also indicates a confusion of faith and science. That is perhaps the bigger problem. The biggest concern, however, is the means available to help the student, if not the professor, sort out the difference. New discoveries are made constantly about our ancient past. Some of these results from investigations in the natural sciences: biology, geology, archeology, astronomy, etc. From these sciences we are able to draw some definite and astounding conclusions about the beginnings of the vast universe and humans within it. These conclusions are supported by empirical data gathered under strictly established and approved scientific methods. We need to remember, however, that these are always scientific conclusions. They may explain the world physically, but they cannot explain it entirely. We need also to remember, that a scientific theory, like any other, arises from certain assumptions or presuppositions of the nature and meaning of human life in the universe. These border less on the scientific and more on the religious. The problem comes when we confuse the two, when we elevate science from a method or endeavour to a faith or belief system. And, that does occur. Frequently today some fail to distinguish properly between an empirical fact and a confessional doctrine. Thus, for example, a scientific theory of evolution (a belief in a slowly evolving physical universe) may become a religious belief in evolutionism (a belief in the non-existence of God, the randomness of the universe or the meaninglessness of human nature). At this point, science clearly steps beyond its bounds. Science cannot prove or disprove the existence of God, it can only investigate the physical universe. Rather than giving us the conclusions of scientific investigations, however, some scientists dictate how we ought to religiously conceive of the world, including the existence or non-existence of God. This is done by noted scientists such as Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking.

To what extent do these same views dominate our university, all under the guise of science? But, a better question is this. What proper forum exists, for example, to uncover and discuss what exactly the Biblical writers had in mind when they wrote the creation account? We have scientific, historical, and philosophical studies; why not bibli-

cal or religious studies? These are also legitimate fields of investigation. It might surprise many, students and professors alike, that the Biblical writers were not at all pretending to write a scientific account of the beginning of the universe. What they were getting at was a religious account; a view of God, the universe and humans within it that was radically different from

those held by cultures surrounding the ancient Hebrews. It is also a view different from those espoused by many today, scientists included. When students find no program, opportunity or encouragement within the university to engage in these kinds of studies, their exposure to a full education can hardly be called complete.

And, some will remain frustrated. Furthermore, the university will graduate many students from the sciences who will think their scientific studies are sufficient and complete in and of themselves and that religious studies are basically irrelevant and of little consequence. Even worse, some will themselves become teachers who will stand in front of their students affirming that science ...

AIDS : the last ten years

by Terry Richard

AIDS is everyone's disease. This point must always be stressed. It is a disease that affects all people - children, men, and women, either directly or indirectly, straight or gay. The truth of the matter is that by the year 1995 we all will have known someone who had died of AIDS either a lover, friend or relative. Most early studies of AIDS hypothesized that the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was a communicable disease. It was, at first, appearing in large number of gay men, and it was immediately assumed that the syndrome could be sexually transmitted. Because of the strong link in the public imagination between sexuality, sin, and disease, AIDS was soon understood as a "homosexual" disease. In fact its original media designation was GRID: Gay Related Immune Deficiency. Even after the disease's name changed to AIDS the mainstream press continued labelling it the "gay cancer" or the "gay plague". The thought back in 1981 was that gay men caused AIDS and were its only sole carriers. Though much education over the last decade society has been taught that AIDS is not a gay disease. AIDS is a deadly virus that can only be transmitted through unsafe sexual practices (having sex without a condom) and the sharing of needles. Once the virus is in a person's body it will cause that person's immune system to break down. It may take years for someone to realize that they have the virus, as the signs of AIDS for everyone is different. Some people have been tested for AIDS and have died very soon afterwards while others are still living a full active life. This is why it is important for all of us to assume that we all have the virus and play it safe. Both men and women whether you're gay or straight must remember that the days of "playing the field" are over. If you are going to be promiscuous play the field by using condoms and know your partners. When you are having sex with someone you are in all reality having sex with everyone that your partner has had. Be responsible. You also cannot catch AIDS by casual contact, for example by the shaking of

a hand. If you know of someone who does have AIDS don't be afraid. People who are HIV positive are no harm to the rest of society. It is also important for people to realize that those who have AIDS are still human beings. They need to know that they are wanted and loved and that they have support from the ones who love them. At the present time there is no known cure for AIDS, although a number of fundraisers over the last several years have taken place to help fund AIDS research. AIDS is not only a particular lifestyle problem, but every lifestyle's problem. We all must bind together to stop the spread of AIDS, and this can only be achieved through education, having sex with condoms, and by people ceasing the use of using needles for drugs. Our goal can be achieved. However the problem of AIDS doesn't stop here. The fact of the matter is that professionals who are working to stop the spread of AIDS say that their efforts are hampered by homophobia and anti-gay discrimination. This risk of discrimination pressures gay people to stay in the closet, where it is more difficult to reach them for effective safe sex education. Nobody deliberately chooses to get a serious illness. Many people who are showing symptoms of AIDS today contracted it many years ago before anyone knew what caused it or how it could be avoided. There may be some people who have contracted AIDS since then who do know better, but failed to take adequate precautions. But, does that mean they should be discriminated against? Do we turn people away from hospitals or deny them jobs or apartments because they have lung cancer or heart problems? The bottom line is that AIDS is not God's punishment for homosexuality. If AIDS is God's punishment for us then why are newborns, hemophiliacs, and other heterosexual persons getting the disease? Also why aren't all gay men getting the virus? Remember, we all must be concerned with AIDS. We also must get educated on the disease and we must protect ourselves. If you have any question regarding AIDS or if you are unsure you can contact AIDS New Brunswick at 1-800-561-4009.

Gulf talk

Why is America in the Persian Gulf?

Why is America in the Persian Gulf?

Is it for fear of higher oil prices? The Americans faced higher oil prices during the embargo in the early 1970's and showed resilience with new technology and innovative ideas.

Is it to divert American attention from domestic problems? Possibly, and the diversion may prove successful for a time, but the problems are so deep rooted that they're not going to go away even after the war is over. This superpower had to resort to asking for financial help from Japan and Germany because it can not afford this war. America is the biggest debtor nation in the world today.

Is it to fight for their country? Kuwait is a fair distance from mainland America and I don't remember it being an American state although it was a province of Iraq not too long ago.

Is it to liberate Kuwait from the hands of an oppressor? If America had such lofty morals, I wouldn't be writing this letter, because they would have helped the blacks in South Africa, the Palestinians in Israel, the natives in Canada and the aboriginals in Australia. The Kuwaiti emir is known to have at least 40 wives and also keeps slaves. The El-Sabah family controls 90% of the oil wealth of Kuwait. Also, America was born out of rebellion from a feudal monarchy, why should it restore one?

Is the American presence in the Gulf just a mistake? America committed its troops and could not back down from the challenge it made to Iraq. There was no face-saving way out after the crisis began. So now it must fight only to save face.

The reason for America's presence in the Gulf is an elusive one even for the President. George Bush made the crisis into a personal war between the people of America and Saddam Hussein. Hussein is depicted as Hitler and galling George must now get rid of the evil dictator and save the world from the tyrant who wants to impose his will on innocent people.

First the Americans were in the region to prevent Iraq from allegedly entering Saudi Arabia, then to remove Iraq from Kuwait, and now to remove Saddam Hussein from the face of the earth. George Bush has been searching for a reason to be in the Gulf, maybe he's found one.

How can one justify an action of war when one is not exactly sure why he is fighting? The Americans can not justify their presence or initiation of hostilities. However, the reason uttered most often by the American government is not unlike the compulsive liar character on Saturday Night Live. We want to liberate Kuwait. Yeah, that's it — liberate Kuwait. Sure that's the ticket!

This is the extent of the moral stand by the Americans. What about what is happening in Israel? How can America cover a blind eye to the daily killing of young men and children? Maybe Saddam Hussein is wrong to link the occupation of Kuwait with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel but it is not so far fetched as the Americans made it out to be. Saddam Hussein made the link after the Americans made a stand against his occupation of Kuwait. He, quite logically, questioned their stand. How can they be against one occupation and so apathetic towards another? Why the double standard. Are Israelis better than Arabs? Why did the Americans take so long to condemn the brutal slaying of 21 Palestinians in the Al-Aqsa Mosque (Temple Mount) incident?

The Arabs and Palestinians in particular are regarded as sub-humans by the Israelis and Americans. If not, they are treated as such. They have been portrayed as barbaric with a fanatic religion. They are the new foe that will replace the savage Indians, the fanatical Japanese, the demented Germans and the comrad Russians.

It is sad to see such a rich country so engulfed in paranoia.

Naveed Majid