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Evolution and Christianity: An Interview with Dr. Charles Kunert

by Charlotte Evensen

Does evolution have a place in Christian ideals? This is a question that has been discussed for generations. As with other questions challenging the scope of human understanding, many voices have contributed to this ongoing debate. Dr. Charles Kunert is the most recent Concordia voice to contribute his argument. The following interview touches on some of the ideas in his book.

Why is this issue so important?

Humans have a need for identity. Throughout recorded history, the question of human identity has been inextricably linked to the question of origin. Who we are as humans is directly related to where we came from in the first place.

This instinct to define ourselves and our origins is understandable. Authors spend time and words in search of self-definition. Wars are fought on the basis of what tribes and cultures see as crucial to their identity — land, for example, often falls into this category. However, how does that relate to the intense belief that God created this world without some sort of process?

Primitive peoples of all known cultures sought answers in the supernatural, for their knowledge of the natural world was limited by underdeveloped technologies, limited range of observations, and the lack of an integrated system of analysis. In the western world, Aristotle and Ptolemy systemized the observations of the natural world, and this process and paradigms were carried forward into the Roman Empire. With the fall of Rome, however, a dramatic shift occurred in western adoption of the Christian faith. The earth became the focus of the western Christian mindset. This made life bearable under difficult circumstances. Supernatural forces regained their stronghold on thinking as the predominant way to explain observed phenomena.

So because people needed ideas of hope to cling to when pain and suffering became too much, they believed that there must be a better purpose for humans after death. People created a magical entity — God — a being whose existence explains all the big, unanswered questions in life. If this is true, and the belief in God held reason for all the intriguing phenomena in this world, why did this type of thinking begin to change?

With the advent of the Descartian/Baconian revolution in thinking and the inception of the scientific approach to analysis, technologies advanced which gave access to tools to scrutinize in more detail observations gained about the world around us. Diseases were no longer credited to an angry god but were understood to be caused by bacteria or infection. Thunderstorms were not the activities of playful deities but were rather the interaction of airmasses of varying temperature and pressure. And, the church notwithstanding, the earth was no longer thought to be the center of our solar system.

Yes, science has explained phenomena that were mysterious to humans without the aid of technology. What, however, does this have to do with a belief system regarding creation and evolution of the world we live in?

If you believe in God as a Supreme Being, it is natural to believe that God is responsible for us being here. If God did indeed create the world and reveal something of Himself to us in nature, we...