

Article

The Bible, Qur'an & Darwinism

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Abstract

From time immemorial, science and scriptures had been the strongest force in shaping Mankind history and development, though on different platforms, Science, on the platform of observation and testing of facts while religion mainly on blind faith. I intend to show that science and religion with regard to evolution are not demarcated as the agnostic advocated or as the Darwinist's and Creationist's polarized. Rather by invoking the scriptures I will try to show that science and religion are friends rather than foes. With the publication of Darwin's "*On the origin of species*" in the 1850's, the polarity between the two widened as scientist's looked upon religion as something dogmatic and fatalistic, devoid of any hypothetical construction that can be verified by physical research. Religionist's on the other hand, looked upon science as a materialist philosophy that advocates "*Reductionism*" and "*Nothing buttery*" thereby reducing faith (or God) as "*...mere delusion.*" How about Atheist claim of the non-existence of God? No one is in a better position to defend the existence of God like God himself and citing as proof of his existence and control, God cited four things only **HE** could do: Creation of matter and life and controlling death and the knowledge of the future.

Keywords: Atheism, Creation, evolution, Darwinism, Scriptures, Bible, Qur'an.

Absolute certainty is hard to come by, but one thing we can be absolutely certain of is that everything we know, have ever known or will know- be it cosmic, biological or social- ran its course under evolutionary pattern, *i.e.*, from single, simple entities to multi-complex level. I intend to show that science and religion with regard to evolution are not demarcated as the agnostic advocated or as the Darwinist's and Creationist's polarized. Rather using the Bible and the Quran will try to show that science and religion are friends rather than foes. As John Houghton said "*Science and religion are not poles apart, both are searching for reality and truth*"¹

It is obvious, though on different platforms, that science and religion had been the strongest force in shaping mankind history and development from time immemorial. If there is any persistent conflict that dominates human intellectual debate in recent history is the conflict between science and religion. Why? In medieval times, when Islamic civilization was on the rise, religion shaped scientific inquiry because the Qur'an encouraged research culture and even delved into science. Historical fact of Catholicism and its impunity on scientific discoveries, beginning with Galileo, followed by the rise of Protestantism in Western Europe and culminating with the separation of church and state in the reign of Henry VIII succeeded in divorcing scientific inquiry vis-à-vis religion. This led people like the eminent theologian/Scientist, John Polkinghorne, in an agreement with the opinion of two giants in Christendom, St Augustine and John Calvin, to say

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“The Christian doctrine of creation is concerned, not with temporal origin (how did things begin?) but with ontological origin (why is there anything at all)?”²

Then why did modern science emerge from the western/Christian culture instead of the Islamic civilization? Separation of church and state, that was possible, in Christian west was the reason. The issue now at hand is, how are we going to resolve the conflict between science and religion? The clash between evolution and creation is perhaps the best-known example of this conflict.

Atheism, by invoking Darwinism, maintained that evolution is guided by chance, as mutation is too random without discernible direction, that it is too cruel and indifferent to the welfare of the forms it produced, and the process will eventually ends in futility therefore rendering God superfluous. In refutation of those claims, God began with *Q21:30* “*We have created every living thing from water: will they still not believe?*”³ It is not chance that produce the universe and all the life forms we see existing were put in place by an intelligent being with a purpose. For those who deny his existence and role as the architect of life, the burden of proof is on them as God rightly challenges them in the Quran *Q22:73* “*O men here is a parable set forth listen to it. Those on whom, besides God, you call cannot create even a fly, if they all met together for the purpose*”⁴. Life is surely explicable in terms of the laws of physics and chemistry and all the various steps involved on how life evolved on this planet is very well understood, except for the origin which is marred by stumbling blocks and crevasses. The problem of the origin of life “*Has turned out to be much more difficult than I, and most other people, envisaged*”⁵ says Stanley Miller, the leading experimentalist on the origin of life. Simon Conway also said “*life cannot be created in the laboratory, nor is there any clear prospect of it happening.....It was effectively a fluke-like happening, a one in a trillion chance, perhaps the emergence was almost a miracle*”⁶ Likewise Francis Crick says “*An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle*”⁷. Darwin theory of evolution, had of course, and quite remarkably too, explained descent with modification but it doesn't explain the genesis of it. Darwinism starts with life already here and Darwin accepted that organisms are “*designed*” for certain purpose that is, they are functionally organized. Darwin himself sought to sidestep the issue of the origin of life by placing it outside of his explanatory framework, maybe realizing that that is jumping into teleology.

As for mutations, they were not random in the sense of being free from the laws of Physics, rather they were agents towards the selection of cumulatively complex systems that eventually led to the existence of conscious agents. The Genes, both in structure and function, are extremely planned to be able to adapt and varies, and natural selection does not create but only acts on them. Since novel biological forms already exist before they can be selected thus Darwinism begs the question of teleology. Other things that refute the randomness of evolution are inherencies and convergence in biological forms. “*....The most primitive animals, such as Sponges and Hydra have genes (or proteins) that are essential for complex activities in more advanced animals*”⁸ and “*Convergence, as experiments with Bacteria E. Coli, in trying to re-run evolution, shows food and adaptation being the main players not history and chance. Evidence shows extensive redeployment of genes that ended with multiple functions. The famous Pax-6 Gene is regarded with the origin of the eyes and other organs including the nose, brain, pituitary gland, gut and pancreas. Despite different starting points, different lineages often converge on a*

particular destination".⁹

All life shares the genetic code whose basic building blocks are the same, and that was what God alluded to in the scriptures when he says in Genesis 2:19-20 *"And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air and to every beast of the field"*¹⁰ and also in the Qur'an 2:31 *"And He taught Adam the nature of all things"*¹¹ Thus Adam was that first living cell that was programmed with the basic building blocks that will subsequently gave rise to all living forms on earth.

The seeming cruelties of nature, is itself one of the tools in inanimate nature helping to shape evolution. The seeming cruelty of natural forces is part and parcel of evolutionary development, because without it the increasing complexity and diversity that gave rise to consciousness could never have emerged. On the other hand individual cruelty observed in creatures is also for the above reason, it is only in man that the ability to tame and control evil was achieved by arriving at consciousness that possessed moral concepts and the freedom to choose. *"The cosmos is a polarization of creative (Gods) and destructive forces (Satan's) - a process oriented towards the ultimate realization of goodness but driven also (and essentially so) by destructive forces that impede, but also act as a catalyst of that realization."*¹²

Atheist are virtually certain that all life will become extinct in the long run, as the second law of thermodynamics inexorably take effect rendering the whole process in futility as the omega point will be the same nothingness as that from which the universe began. God refuted in both the Bible and Qur'an saying Q21: 104 *"On that Day We shall roll up the heavens like a scroll of writings; just as we originated the first creation, so shall we produce it again - that is our promise, and we will fulfill it."*¹³ and In Psalms 102:25-26 *"Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will endure; yes they will grow old like garment, like cloak you will change them, and they will be changed"*.¹⁴ Therefore as the big bang marks the beginning of this universe, God in the above verse is promising that there will be a big crunch out of which a new universe will emerge again. These scriptural declarations announced centuries ago were only understood by scientist in the last century after decades of disputation between the proponents of Big Bang and Steady State theories. Likewise, with all the information available today they cannot confidently say how this universe is going to end. Scientists are still divided between the scenarios of an open, closed and flat universe, which God categorically in the above verses from both the Qur'an and Bible says it is a closed universe that is going to end with a big crunch.

God is not superfluous and as a proof he challenged everyone in four key areas namely; Origin of matter and life, the ability to defy death and the inability to accurately predict the future, things that are intimately involved with existence but ironically defy science. Let us examine each.

Fourteen Centuries ago an illiterate Arab in the desert claimed that God told him Q21:30 *"Do not the unbelievers see that the heaven and the earth were joined together as one unit of creation (Singularity) before we clove them asunder (Big Bang)"*¹⁵. This declaration, as scientific as it is, is not appealing to the 7th century wild tribes of Arabia, but to the modern day atheists (Dawkins and Co) that are vigorously trying to eliminate God from the scheme of things. The process of

how the universe emerged is also fairly understood, but is it a complete picture? Francisco Ayala says *"The creation or origin of the universe involves a transition from nothing into being. But a transition can only be scientifically investigated if we have some knowledge about the state of entities on both sides of the boundary. Nothingness, however, is not a subject for scientific investigation or understanding, therefore, as far as science is concerned, the origin of the universe will remain forever a mystery"*¹⁶. The further back scientist probe our origin the closer they get to the so called Planck's time which is Ten to the power minus 43 seconds after the big bang. Anything beyond Planck's time is imaginative physics as all the known physical laws we know broke at that moment hitting what the scientist called the "The quantum gravity wall". Some scientist hopefully look forward to the discovery of the "Theory of everything", the grand unified theory that will eventually unify gravity with other forces as Martin Rees said *"One of the challenges of 21st-century physics, in my opinion, is to understand the relationship of gravity to the other forces and thereby give us a firmer picture of the initial tiny fraction of a second of our Big Bang. When we have that understanding, we will know whether our Big Bang has unique properties or whether it was part of some ensemble which could display variety. I think it will be attractive if it turns out that there is a multiverse allowing a variety of big bangs"*¹⁷.

What about life? No one can actually say what literally kick start life on this planet despite the knowledge of how it could have emerged and no one can create life out of nothing despite several attempts that only managed to produce some amino acids.

About death God declares in the Qur'an 56:60 *"We have decreed Death to be your common lot and we are not to be frustrated from changing your Forms and creating you (again) in (Forms) that ye know not"*.¹⁸ All living things must eventually die, and death is not the end of it all as God says he will change our forms and create us in another form (meaning we will evolve even after death). God challenged the atheists Q25:3 *"Nor can they control Death nor Life nor Resurrection"*.¹⁹ If anyone says that the universe has *"....no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference"*²⁰ then let him create life out of nothing or prevent live matter from death. The limits of the life span of each species appear to be determined ultimately by heredity. Locked within the code of the genetic material are instructions that specify the age beyond which a species cannot live given even the most favorable conditions. God challenge is still open for anyone who can to create life or stop death, and I believe achieving that will most certainly rubbish the idea of God and his existence (i.e. God proven wrong).

The final challenge from God is as he puts it in the Qur'an 31:34 *"Verily with God alone rests the knowledge of when the last hour will come....and he alone knows what is in the womb; whereas no one knows what he will reap tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die. Verily God alone is all knowing all aware"*²¹ God is telling us we can never have absolute knowledge to be able to predict the future. Quantum physics, only recently gave us the uncertainty principle in which we cannot determine with precision the behavior of a single sub atomic particle or a photon of light. Matter is arranged in such elusive lines and it is not that such uncertainty inherent in Quantum theory arises out of our gaps in knowledge or understanding. It is not as though someday either the precision of our measurement or the level of our understanding will increase to the point where we can predict which photon will go this way or which one will move another way. On the contrary, the more accurately we measure individual

event, the clearer it becomes that the outcome of those events are indeterminate. Evolution is never contrary to religion because scriptures were the first to moot the idea but conservatism and separation of science and religion caused militant stance between the two. Centuries before Darwin, the famous Muslim scientist Ibn Khaldun in his monumental book, *Muqaddima* made the following claim on pages 137-138 *“One should then look at the world of creation. It started out from the minerals and progressed, in an ingenious, gradual manner, to plants and animals. The last stage of minerals is connected with the first stage of plants, such as herbs and seedless plants. The last stage of plants, such as palms and vines, is connected with the first stage of animals, such as snails and shellfish which have only the power of touch. The word “connection” with regard to these created things means that the last stage of each group is fully prepared to become the first stage of the next group. The animal world then widens, its species become numerous, and, in a gradual process of creation, it finally leads to man, who is able to think and to reflect. The higher stage of man is reached from the world of the monkeys, in which both sagacity and perception are found, but which has not reached the stage of actual reflection and thinking. At this point we come to the first stage of man after (the world of monkeys). This is as far as our (physical) observation extends”*²²

Ibn Khaldun was the first scientist to coherently bring out the idea of evolution but scientific stagnation in the Islamic world led to total disregard for this novel idea. Evolutionary theory is always there for the right thinkers to discover as God aptly said Q29:20 *“Say “Travel through the earth and see how God originate creation”*²³ Ibn Khaldun, through his response to this command discovers evolution, as Darwin and Wallace did independently centuries later. The one and only way at any other time to understand evolution is by traveling through the earth, as God has scattered ample evidence in fossils, diversity and nature of the living world to convince us that evolution is the architecture of life. Surely it is not by only trotting around the globe that will give us evidence of evolution but as God further show in chapter Q22:46 *“Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts and minds may thus learn wisdom and their ears may learn to hear. Truly it is not their eyes that are blind but their hearts which are in their breast”*²⁴ Traveling through the earth will make us see all the evidences of evolution in History, fossils, and diversity. The scriptures had shown our common ancestry and even explain our evolution. In Q39:6 *“He created you all from one being”*.²⁵ That one being is Adam. But mankind did not evolved directly from him as fully developed *Homo sapiens* their evolution had passed through several stages spanning billions of years as God says Q71:14 *“Seeing that it is God that has created you in diverse stages”*²⁶

So what actually kick start the process of life on our planet? Speculative science hinted on life being wafted through space by meteors or other visitors long gone. But in Genesis God tells us how life came about *“Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness”*²⁷ What is the image of God? Is he like me or you? Or is he like an amoeba? Is he like a fish or an amphibian? We all know that the underlying theological perception is God does not look exactly like any of his creation. So what is the image of God alluded to in the creation of man? We have seen in John 4:24 that God is a spirit and in Genesis 2:7 *“And the lord formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostril the breath of life: and man became a living being”*²⁸. This breath of life, popularly known as the soul, is what literally kick start the process of life on this planet. This biblical statement was corroborated centuries later in the Quran 32:9 *“But he fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of his spirit”*²⁹. The

endowment of the spirit of God (The soul) is what God is referring to “*our likeness*”, which becomes manifest through material matter. One thing the scriptures reiterate but kept eluding theologians for centuries was the ability to understand when God talked about Adam (thought to be the first man) he is talking particularly about mankind and generally about creation on earth. In Genesis 5:2 “*He created them male and female and called them mankind in the day they were created*”³⁰ and in the Quran 7:11 “*It is we who created you and gave you shape, then bade the Angels to bow down to Adam*”³¹ the transition from the plural to the singular shows that whenever God talks about Adam he is referring to creation in General.

The word Adam which was derived from the Hebrew word “*Adamah*” meaning “dust of the ground” signifies the relatedness of all creation on earth. Genesis 2:17 “*Out of the ground the lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air*”³² (The animal kingdom) and in Genesis 2:9 “*And out of the ground the lord God made every tree grow*”³³ (The plant kingdom). The female, Eve (*Hawwa*) which is derived from the root word *Haya* (In Hebrew) means ‘to live’. Genesis 3:30 explains “*Because she would become the mother of all living*”³⁴. The first living cell created in water billions of years ago was Adam and Eve, whom represent all created life on earth. God in the Quran informed us Q71:14 “*Seeing that it is God that has created you in diverse stages*”³⁵. The emergence of man in the evolutionary scene in the first instance was not complete but follows successive modifications up to the advent of modern man (*Homo sapiens*). When the first set of Hominids became segregated from their primate relatives they were one species, which subsequently gave rise to other species. As God says in Genesis 10:6 “*And the Lord said ‘Indeed the people are one and they all have one language’*”³⁶ and in the Quran 10:19 “*Mankind was but one nation but differed later*”.³⁷ The world had undergone a series of revolutions. Each cycle corresponding in time essentially to what was termed “Geological periods”. At the end of each cycle the existing faunas were overwhelmed by some catastrophe of nature. The next cycle introduce new faunas, some of which may have been already in existence in areas not affected by the catastrophe.

In conclusion, we should understand that science and religion are not poles apart rather they are different side of the same coin. In the evolution of life God has told us how life originates in various stages, for example:

- (1) **DUST:** Q40:67 “*It is he who created you out of dust*”.³⁸
- (2) **CLAY/EARTH:** Q15:28 “*I am about to create man from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape*”³⁹ and in Genesis 2:7 “*And the lord formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostril the breath of life: and man became a living being*”⁴⁰
- (3) **WATER:** Q25:54 “*It is he who created man from water*”⁴¹ and in Genesis 1:20 “*And God said let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life*”⁴²
- (4) **SPERM:** Q16:4 “*He has created man from a sperm drop*”⁴³

We all know that dust, clay, water and sperm are not one thing or even similar, is God then contradicting himself? Of course not, rather he is explaining to us the various stages of evolution. In the beginning, there was only the star-dust where all the carbon atoms that are in us were first formed. This star-dust (a cocktail of all the heavier elements) eventually settled and condensed into the solar systems. It formed the earth and water. By evolution then life came from dust. Clay

and mud were among the chief constituents that made up the first living cell, which all life evolved from. And it is from water that this first living cell (Adam and Eve) was made. Finally each individual begins after the sperm cell has fertilized the egg and become a fertilized ovum, which grows into a mass of cells that made up an individual. So it is not contradiction when God, variously, says he created from dust, clay, water and sperm he is only emphasizing the evolutionary trend of our emergence. From the scientific point of view is there any contradiction with the above? It is established that life on earth is based on basic building blocks- Amino acids (which build proteins) sugars (that joined to form carbohydrates), as well as nucleotides that are fundamental to DNA- all of the above are derived from, what the pantheist would happily called Mother earth. The role of earthy elements in the origination of life is a fact, but why don't we pause to ponder, if God is not the architect of life how could a band of nomads in the wilderness of Middle East thousands of years ago could write down this scientific fact that life originated from dust, earthy elements and water?

We must strive towards opening new frontiers of understanding the inner workings of matter and life (our physical and biological worlds) as God has commanded mankind in the Quran to pray and strive thus 20:114 "*O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge.*"⁴⁴ I would like to close this presentation with my favorite quote from Francis Collins who said "*The God of the Bible is the God of the genome, He can be worshipped in the cathedral or in the laboratory*"⁴⁵

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