

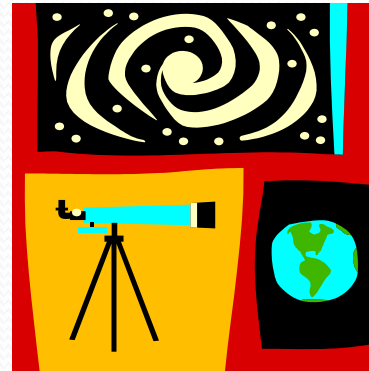


God's Two Books: Both Divine and 'Natural' Authors

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American Scientific Affiliation
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God's Two Books: Scripture and Nature



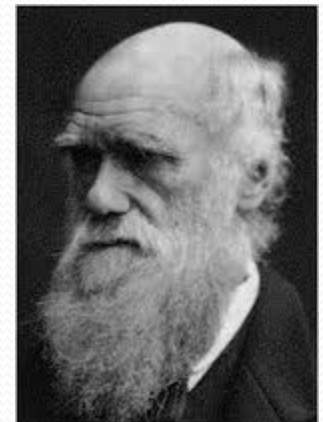
Truth Revealed in Two Sources:
Special Revelation and General Revelation

God's Two Books

- “To conclude therefore, let no man upon a weak conceit of sobriety or an ill-applied moderation think or maintain, that a man can search too far, or be too well studied in the Book of God's Word, or in the Book of God's Works—Divinity or Philosophy. But rather, let men endeavour an endless progress or proficiencie in both.”

Sir Francis Bacon The Advancement of Learning
1605.

- Bacon is quoted by Charles Darwin in preamble of The Origin of the Species 1859.



Authorship of Scripture: Both God and Men

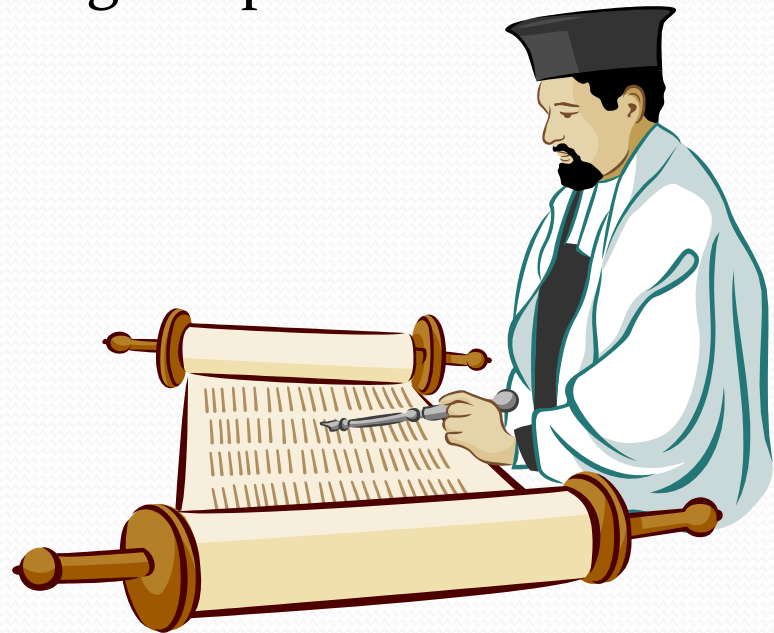
- “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” II Peter 1:21
- “All Scripture is inspired by God (or “God breathed”) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness”. (II Timothy 3:16)
- “Scripture is not only man’s word – the fruit of human thought, premeditation, and art – but also and equally God’s word, spoken through man’s lips or written with man’s pen. In other words, Scripture has a double authorship, and man is only the secondary author; the primary author, through whose initiative, prompting, and enlightenment, and under whose superintendence each human writer did his work, is God the Holy Spirit. (J.I. Packer, “The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible”, in The Origin of the Bible, 1992)

Dual Authorship of Scripture as understood by Church Fathers

- “At an early date, God’s inspiration was understood to extend not merely to the writers of Scripture or to the concepts expressed in Scripture, but to the very words written in the Scriptures. That understanding, known as the doctrine of “verbal” or “plenary” (complete) inspiration, was stated by Irenaeus, a second-century bishop of Lyons in Gaul, in his work *Against All Heresies*.”
- “To Irenaeus and Augustine, inspiration was not an ecstatic overpowering of a human writer’s consciousness by the Holy Spirit, but was rather a high degree of illumination and calm awareness of God’s revelation.”
Harold Brown, “The Inerrancy and Infallibility of the Bible”, in The Origin of the Bible, 1992.

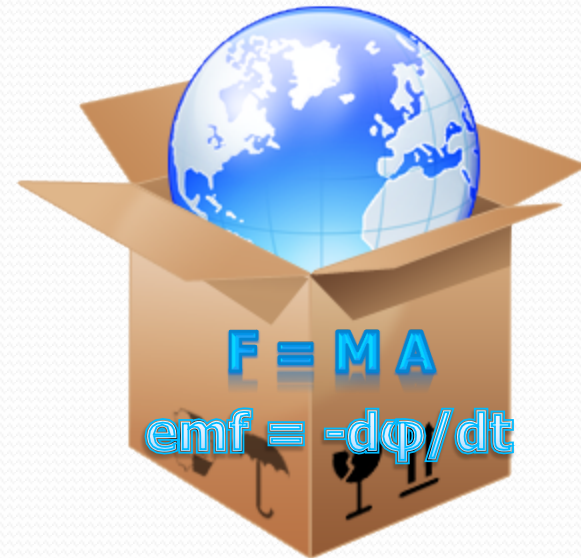
Key Point:

- It is not a choice between Divine authorship and human authorship, but rather both God and humans are intimately involved in authoring Scripture.



Authorship of Nature

God? or Natural Laws?



God's Authorship of Nature according to Scripture

- “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands” (Psalm 19:1)
- “O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth, Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!” (Psalm 8:1)
- “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20)

Natural Laws as Author

- “Author” can be thought of as an agent involved in the origin of the “book” that has left us clear “signatures” or “styles” that can be observed today, helping us to establish its origin.
- Just as Scripture reveals the style and cultural conditioning of its human authors, so nature reveals the influence of physical laws in its development.

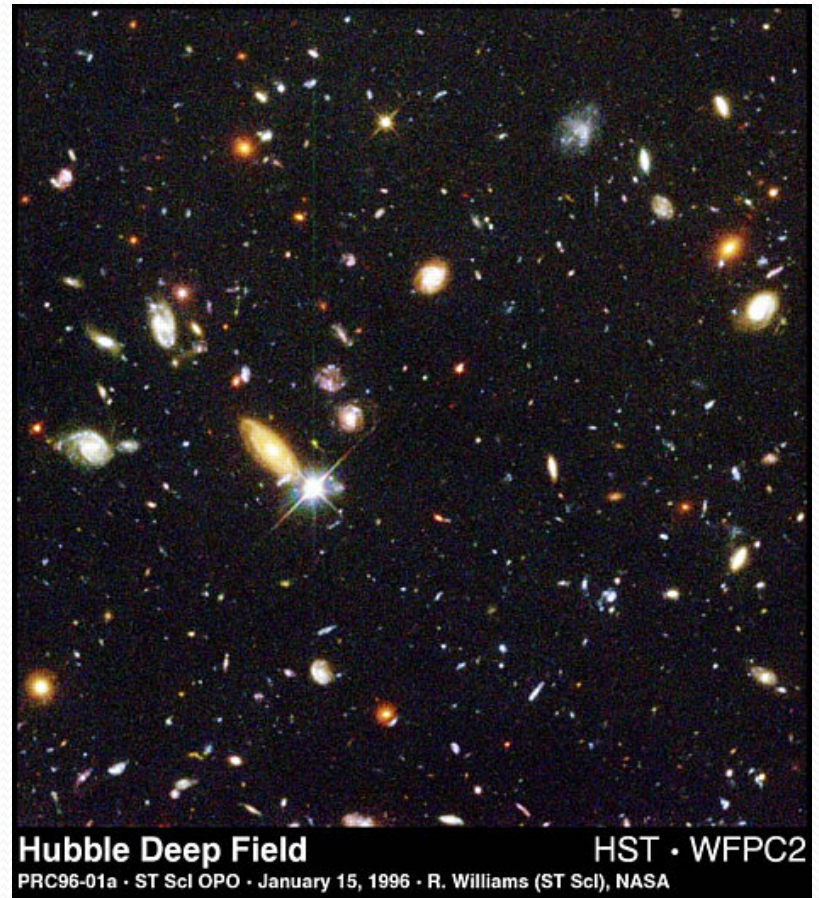


Natural Laws – Author of Universe

Example - The Big Bang
Origin of the Universe:

Based on general relativity,
elementary particle forces,
laws of thermodynamics

Confirmed by empirical
observations – Hubble
expansion, cosmic
microwave background,
abundance of elements



Natural Laws – Author of Solar System

Example – Solar System
Formation Model

Based on gravitation, nuclear
fusion, thermodynamics,
laws of EM radiation

Confirmed by empirical
observations of stars, KBOs,
meteorites, exo-planetary
systems



(Painting by William K. Hartmann.)

Natural Laws – Author of the Moon

Example – Origin of the Moon
Collision-Ejection Model

Based on gravitation, chemical reactivity, thermodynamics

Confirmed by empirical observations – composition of Moon and Earth mantle, lack of volatiles, large angular momentum



(Painting by William K. Hartmann.)

Authorship War

- Those supporting God's authorship: creationists, leading proponents of Intelligent Design



- Those supporting Natural Law authorship: atheists, leading proponents of philosophical naturalism
- Both sides of this war agree that we must choose which author is responsible.



Biblical Case for Dual Authorship

- Scripture argues for the dual authorship of nature.
- God’s response to Job: “Do you know the *ordinances* of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth.” Job 38:33
- “And God made the two great lights, the greater light to *govern* the day, and the lesser light to *govern* the night; He made the stars also.” Genesis 1:16
- “Who gives the sun for light by day, and the *fixed order* of the moon and the stars for light by night...” Jeremiah 31:35

Reason to Accept Dual Authorship

- As we have seen, evangelicals accept dual authorship of Scripture; both divine and “natural” authors were instrumental in giving us Scripture.
- Why do we have such difficulty accepting a dual authorship of nature? Are we afraid that by admitting natural laws do provide explanations for the origin of the universe, the solar system, and the moon, we will be denying God’s role?
- Conversely, denying the influence of natural laws serves to discredit our claim of God’s authorship.

Ways to Accept Dual Authors

- Deistic perspective – the universe as a wound-up clock, left alone – inconsistent with a biblical view
- Progressive Creation perspective – natural laws acting normally, interspersed with occasional divine intervention



Multilayered Perspective

Nature is not a deterministic machine, but rather allows for freedom of human action and divine action, although God's hand need not be interventionist, but completely consistent with natural laws.

John Polkinghorne, Science and Providence, 1989.

“If God is the origin of all that is, he is consistent with all that is, and this means that a great deal of his purposive activity will be hidden in the structure of scientific law.”

“The critical question is whether that insight is such that it is capable of being reconciled with the Christian's belief in a personal and caring God, addressed in prayer and active in his providential government of the world”

Multilayered Perspective

- John Haught, Is Nature Enough?, 2006. “Naturalists put too heavy a burden on evolutionary science whenever they turn it into ultimate explanation. What I shall propose instead, as a way of giving a place to both science and religion, is layered explanation. By this I mean that everything in the universe is open to a plurality of levels of explanation.”
- Example of roasting marshmallows



God's involvement in creation

- Paul's message to the Athenians included a theology on how God interacts with His creation: "for in Him we live and move and exist", Acts 17:28.
- We speak of God as both transcendent and immanent.
- Whereas limiting nature to a strictly naturalistic understanding impoverishes our view of nature, limiting God to our gaps in scientific knowledge is too limiting for such a mighty God.

Concluding Thoughts

- The Dual Authorship accepted by evangelicals is an important model of how divine and “natural” authors both contributed to produce the book of Scripture.
- Analogously, the Dual Authorship of God and natural laws contributed to produce the book of Nature.
- A Multilayered Perspective allows a richer and more complete understanding of the origin of our world, allowing the complete input of both God and science.

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