



From the Shepherd's Desk

Brother Barry Bryson, of the Manassas church has the ability to capture and express issues facing society since the family of Adam and Eve debated the serpent in the garden. Brother Barry, I wish I could have said it so eloquently.

Viable Secular Sources

Michael Shermer, publisher of Sceptic magazine, wrote an editorial at the end of the April 2018 issue of Scientific American titled, “Silent No More: The rise of the Atheists” (p.77). In it he cites the trend against organized religion in the United States, and world-wide, as an encouragement to atheists to be more assertive. That’s fine. True Christian faith is more than prepared to compete in a free-market of ideas. He argues that secular government is preferable to religious government. I think history bears that out – especially since no nation is governed by God, but by flawed humans who wield power by co-opting His name. He claims that there are 64 million atheists in the United States. I think his math is a bit creative, but I have been accused of “preacher-counting” before so I won’t throw stones at that. The glaring flaw in his reasoning arises in the last sentence of his essay. He ends by writing: “And we should continue working on grounding our values and morals on viable secular sources such as reason and science.” Good luck with that.

I am not sure if science and reason are fertile sources of morals and values apart from God. The one value that offers an alternative to the tyranny of power, and an end to the cycle of vengeance is grace, which is only reasonable considering Jesus’ sacrifice. Also, I would argue that reason and science are not the property of secular unbelievers. A Christian believes that the “Heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19.1). If we believe God created Heaven and Earth then any discovery about that creation tells us more about God and His glory. A Christian has nothing to fear from scientific inquiry. In fact, one ought to view such exploration as a reverent endeavor.

Reason is the milieu of the New Testament. Everything Jesus taught is perfectly reasonable in light of His sacrifice. No one wields the tool of reason as carefully as the apostle Paul. Thus I disagree with Mr. Shermer in that “reason and science” are exclusively “secular” sources.

Two pages after Mr. Shermer’s essay, Scientific American ran an excerpt from an 1868 issue on the origin of the earth. The piece called such information “a barren acquisition to our theoretical knowledge, from which not a single useful result could be expected (p.79).” The Bible doesn’t think so. In fact, the origin of the cosmos is the first thing addressed in scripture, and its implications are ever expansive throughout the Bible. Genesis 1 tells us that the entire universe sprang forth when God acted upon a singularity in a vacuum (Genesis 1.1-2), that at the beginning photons were able to expand out freely (Genesis 1.3), that all the continents were originally a single land mass (Genesis 1.9), that the species of life filling the planet are the product of orderly biological processes (Genesis 1.11-2, 24-25). As science and reason reveal more of the glory of God I am sure we will have an even more precise understanding of the details of Genesis 1. But we have always known the most important fact of the origin of the Cosmos, we know its ultimate cause:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1.1

Edward O. Wilson, one of the world's leading biologists, is a wonderfully clear and readable writer, twice winning the Pulitzer Prize. He is also firmly an atheist. In his book *The Meaning of Human Existence*, he asserts, "there is no advance design, but instead, overlapping networks of physical cause and effect. The unfolding of history is obedient to the laws of the universe.* What (or more precisely, "Who") would be the source of those immutable laws? He spends much of that book explaining that "free will" does not actually exist, that like planets and photons, persons are just obeying those immutable laws...then in the last chapter he calls on us humans to make better choices.

Where an atheist founders is in finding "viable secular sources." There are none – not for morals, values, nor for the ultimate cause of existence.

**The Meaning of Human Existence*, by Edward O. Wilson, Liveright Publications, 2014, p.13.

- Barry Bryson

One of the benefits of being freed from the daily trek to an office, is the opportunity to read the thoughtful products of our Christian brothers and sisters and stimulate you to action. There are several excellent publications in the office and foyer, and soon in the Resource Room, Room 112. If you would like to avail yourself of this material, see Al Foxx or Joe Price.

Thank you Barry

Bro. Joe Price, Elder