

THE REASONABLENESS OF BELIEF IN GOD

Pat Hardeman, Tampa, Florida

The Christian's belief in God as the creator of Heaven and earth is more reasonable than any other explanation of how things came to be. In the first article it was pointed out that reason demands not only our belief in a great First Cause, but also that the First Cause be Mind. The materialistic explanation of the "heavens and the earth" has broken down in the light of modern science. And if materialism is inadequate, Christian theism is the most reasonable account.

(2) Argument From Design

Arthur Compton, an outstanding scientist of our time, has said: "For myself faith begins with the realization that a supreme intelligence brought the universe into being and created man. It is not difficult for me to have this faith, for it is incontrovertible that where there is a plan there is intelligence An orderly unfolding universe testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered, 'In the beginning God.'" (Chicago Daily News, April 12, 1936). Men in every age have observed both the fact and the significance of design in nature. Socrates illustrated the significance of design by a statue, Paley, by a watch. The abundance of material makes difficult the selection of a few examples. Paley's *Natural Theology* is filled with examples of design in nature. The mineral, vegetable and animal kingdom all show the work of intelligence. A. Cressey Morrison, Past President of the New York Academy of Sciences, has shown in his book, *Man Does Not Stand Alone*, that chance alone cannot account for the protein molecules necessary to the existence of one living organism. After making generous concessions, DuNouy shows that it would take 1 followed by 243 zeros billions of years for chance to produce even one protein molecule. But the earth has existed, science says, for only two billion years, a very small part of the time required to bring about this one molecule of protein. However, if it should happen, as is theoretically possible, that one or two such molecules should be produced near the first of the vast period of time, this would help the atheist none, for hundreds of millions of such molecules are necessary to form a living cell. The laws of chance are against the atheist and for the Christian. The fact of design is incontestable; both Christians and atheists must agree. Not only is this true, but the Christian's interpretation of the significance of the design is far more reasonable than the Atheist's. (For other works that show the fact of design, see Henderson's **Fitness of the Environment and Brown's Masterpiece—Man's Body**. Both the **Oliphant-Smith and Bales-Teller** debates show the atheist's inability to meet this argument.)

There is an interesting aspect of this argument that is often overlooked. Not only is it true that belief in the uniformity of nature leads one to believe in an intelligent God, but, from an historical standpoint, several philosophers say that the latter was the source of the former. A. E. Taylor, late Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, expresses this idea thus: "The conception of God as perfect and flawless intelligence is manifestly the source of our rooted belief in the presence of intelligible order and system throughout nature; it has created the intellectual temper from which modern science itself has arisen" (*Does God Exist*, p. 2).

Whitehead, another outstanding philosopher, said that this belief in the intelligibility of the world "must come from the medieval insistence on the rationality of God . ." (**Science and the Modern World**, p. 12). Only from this belief in God or something like it could our confidence in the uniformity of nature be derived. C. S. Lewis confirms this in saying: "Men became scientific because they expected Law in Nature, and they expected Law in Nature because they believed in a Legislator". (**Miracles**, p. 128). It has been shown by Hume and a variety of other philosophers that any attempt to prove by reason the uniformity of nature must assume the very principle in question. Hence it is that some important discoveries have been inspired by belief in an Intelligent God. Robert Boyle tells us that it was this kind of belief which led Harvey to discover the circulation of blood in the human body

(Fisher, **Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief** p. 65). The loud assertion that design in nature is not connected with belief in God is wholly unjustified.

If it is historically true that belief in God has led to our faith in the order of nature, it is logically true that contemplation of this order will lead us ultimately to belief in God. Perhaps it will focus attention on this argument if we consider some objections that have been brought against it. Some of the prominent objections are:

(1) **That there are disorders in nature.** To which we answer: this objection does not remove the necessity of explaining the order that does exist. As someone has said, the existence of one human eye is an argument for the existence of God. The eye, which is a prospective organ (formed before birth), is not the work of chance. Also, this objection overlooks the possibility that the disorders may be the fault of men's sins. Then there is the possibility that these disorders exist to remind man of the temporalness of this world and life in it. Finally, this objection only pushes the necessity of an explanation back a step, because the unbeliever must explain the intelligence in man that detects the disorders and uses various methods to correct them.

(2) **That the Darwinian Hypothesis explains without reference to a designer.** There is an unwarranted dogmatism in the way some men proclaim that this objection is fatal to the design argument. For example, William James, in his lecture on "What Pragmatism Means", says, "Old fashioned theism was bad enough, . . . but so long as it held strongly by the argument from design, it kept some touch with concrete realities. Since, however, Darwinism has once for all displaced design from the minds of the 'Scientific', theism has lost its foothold" (**Modern Classical Philosophers**, p. 846). Somehow, James' dogmatism doesn't convince one that Compton, Jeans, Bergson and Taylor are unscientific. A. E. Taylor says that science and philosophy in the last century have strengthened rather than weakened the argument from design and purpose in nature (op. cit., p. 57-66). Bergson, in his **L'Evolution Creatrice**, has shown that the concept of unguided evolution implied in the above objection is an illusion. As this outstanding French philosopher shows, it is sufficient to notice that the complexity of coordinated changes essential to the improvement of an organism demands some guidance. And, as many outstanding scientists are now proving, the strict "Darwinian" hypothesis necessary to a non-theistic explanation, is scientifically untenable (See Prof. Fisher's treatment of Huxley's objection concerning the "evolution" of Paley's watch, **op. cit.**) Evolution, even if it were proved (which is not the case--See *Is Evolution Proved?* - **Dewar-Sheldon Debate**), would not eliminate the necessity of belief in a Supreme Intelligence.

(3) **That the argument proves only the existence of various "departmental deities" who designed objects in their respective fields.** If this objection is justified, then these "deities" obviously cannot be infinite and eternal (It was shown in the first article that the first cause of the universe must be immaterial, self-existent and eternal.) Any attempt to multiply infinite, eternal Being only results in a repetition of the same Being. (See Clarke's Commentary on Hebrews.) It was Kant who insisted that if one is to prove the existence of a single Supreme God from design and purpose in nature, he must show not merely that there are ends in nature, but also that there is an end of nature, i. e. that nature as a whole is working out some result which is intelligent and good. The Christian can answer the atheist here by appealing to the atheist's own beliefs. Now, according to the atheist, human intelligence is the highest intelligence there in. And so far, it is an undeniable fact that nature as a whole is adapted to the existence of intelligent human beings. If this is true (See *Man Does Not Stand Alone*) here is one end of nature which even the atheist pronounces good. And when this is granted, it becomes more reasonable than ever to believe that a supremely good Intelligence guides the course of nature to produce such results.