

Book Review



The Ultimate Proof of Creation: Resolving the Origins Debate

by Jason Lisle

Master Books, Green Forrest,
AR, 2009, 254 pages, \$14.00

On the question of method, among creationists there seem to be two schools, perhaps based on personality. One type is the practical professional scientist, the person who loves scientific creationism and detailed technical arguments. This school burst into twentieth-century positivism, gained a firm foothold, and assured Christians that they need not bend the knee to Baal just because he was wearing a white lab coat. The other type is the theologian/philosopher, focusing on secular theories as manifestations of complex webs we have come to call worldviews. These must be addressed by logical, philosophical, and theological arguments.

Both are necessary and, fortunately, often work well together. However, many scientists lack the interest or background to pursue theology and philosophy, and many professional theologians and philosophers are intimidated by science. Although scientific discourse is moving forward, there is a growing emphasis on debating worldviews, and this contribution comes from Jason Lisle. In *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*, he zeroes in on the primary weakness of naturalism: It is self-refuting because its foundational axioms can be justified only by Biblical Christianity. The argument has many benefits: (1) As an issue of logical validity, it is conclusive apart from science (Reed, 1996a), (2) it is accessible to Christians not trained in

the sciences (Reed, 1996a), and (3) it is lethally direct.

Though not original to Lisle (e.g., Glover, 1984; Hooykaas, 1999; Klevberg, 1999; Reed, 1996a, 1996b, 2000a, 2000b, 2005; Reed et al., 2004; Stark, 2003), this book is easily the most accessible and well-developed discussion of this argument. It includes background on logic, as well as real-life examples employing his argument that most will find helpful. Finally, Jason Lisle does a bang-up job of creating a flow that takes you from the basics to more complex issues in a well-developed, rational sequence.

In his first chapter, Dr. Lisle reviews scientific arguments, concluding that though these are significant, both Christianity and naturalism—being worldviews—must be addressed as such: “The ultimate proof of biblical creation must deal with worldviews” (p. 29). Like Schlossberg (1983) and Noebel (1991), Lisle sees naturalism as an idolatrous religious construct. In the second chapter, he draws an obvious inference: there is no neutral ground in this fight, and secularists have used that chimera to lure Christians away from their Biblical foundations.

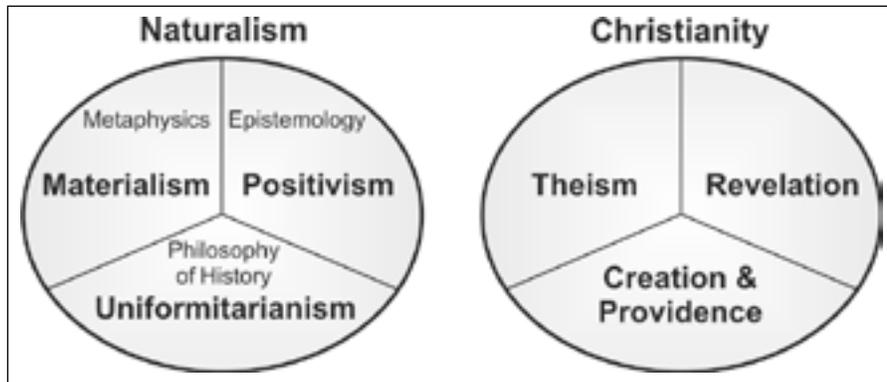
It is important to distinguish between “neutral ground” and “common ground.” The former is impossible; the two worldviews are diametrically opposed, and for a Christian to abandon

revelation—the epistemological basis of his worldview—is to commit rational suicide. Yet the latter is possible because: (1) Every man is created in God’s image, and (2) naturalism glorifies science, the child of Christianity (Glover, 1984; Hooykaas, 1972; 1999; Reed et al., 2004; Stark, 2003). The problem is not that science and reason are not valid methods. It is the secular insistence that they are the only way to incorrigible truth that falsifies their position. Since both reason and science are products of the Christian worldview, there is common ground, but neutrality is a myth.

As an aside, this is a primary error of the intelligent design (ID) school. When it began, it hoped to be the “wedge of truth” between Biblical creation and secular natural history. Intelligent design advocates assumed that a denatured version that emphasized “common ground” would unveil a “neutrality” that would allow ID to go where Biblical creationism could not. The past two decades have vindicated Dr. Lisle’s assertion of the impossibility of neutrality—an extension of Christian dogma dating back to the teaching by Jesus that people are either for or against Him.

Lisle continues in the second chapter, noting a crucial foundation: that worldviews can be comparatively assessed by the truth test of consistency. Then he notes that Christian epistemology opens the door to truth, while natu-

realism does not. A logical comparison of the two worldviews is aided by defining their essentials, as is done in the following figure (Reed, 2000b).



Lisle concludes the chapter noting the necessity of justifying a worldview's axioms, which turns out to be the fatal weakness of naturalism. This follows the thought of C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, who both exploited this weakness in naturalism, even though they did not make the final positive connection to the corresponding strength of Christianity in its doctrine of Creation (Glover, 1984; Reed, 1996b). Their failure to do so illustrates the power of Enlightenment propaganda about both history and science that has only recently begun to crumble (Stark, 2003).

Chapter 3 takes us into the heart of the book. Lisle begins immediately, "The evolutionist must use biblical creation principles in order to argue against biblical creation" (p. 45). As Reed et al. (2004, p. 216) noted: "Naturalism is highly susceptible... since its virulently anti-Christian exterior rests on presuppositions derived from Christian theology." Lisle goes on to discuss the laws of logic, uniformity (cf. Reed, 1998; 2010), and the preconditions for science. Ironically, he concludes that the evolutionist is guilty of the sins of which he accuses the Christian—being arbitrary and depending on blind faith. Hogan (2010) recently discussed a facet of this in addressing the growing

realization by secular philosophers that science cannot be defined absent an absolute standard.

Chapter 4 builds on the necessity

and importance of presuppositions to worldviews and develops a technique called "Answer: Don't Answer" to apply this truth to the origins debate. It is this kind of Biblically centered (Proverbs) and practical advice that makes this book so valuable. His primary goal is to push the evolutionist to understand that he cannot make *any* argument from science without assuming some aspect of Christian reality. Then he supports this view with an assessment of human nature from Biblical theology, driving another nail into the coffin of the secularist. The Biblical view of man is predictive of sociological reality as we experience it, just as the Biblical view of Creation (nature and man) upholds science.

Chapter 5 provides a checklist for laymen intended to organize the apologetic arguments that Lisle calls the "AIP" test. "A" stands for arbitrariness, "I" for inconsistency, and "P" for preconditions. He carefully shows Christians how to detect and answer these fallacies in evolutionist arguments. An appendix provides real-life examples.

A potential argument against Dr. Lisle's approach is that it makes science irrelevant. He addresses this in chapter 6, where he discusses four uses of evidence: (1) confirming Biblical creation, (2) showing the necessity of worldviews, (3)

showing inconsistency and arbitrariness, and (4) leading into the "ultimate proof" of naturalism's self-refuting nature. As he notes at the end, "God has called *everyone* to be ready to give a defense of the Christian faith" (p. 102). That supports his emphasis on the logical arguments because although everyone is not a scientist, everyone is (at some level) a philosopher (Adler, 1965).

The philosopher best known for explicating rules of logic is Aristotle. His ability to define, classify, clarify, and defend these rules makes his work relevant today. As Adler (1965) noted, Aristotle not only followed Plato in defining the first-order issues of philosophy, but he initiated the second-order critical and linguistic analysis prevalent today. In chapters 7 and 8, Lisle follows in this tradition, noting that most arguments about origins resolve to logical fallacies. So he spends these chapters providing a very good and readable summary of the elementary principles of logic and discussing numerous fallacies and how to answer them. These chapters alone make the book worth its price.

Finally, in chapters 9 and 10, Lisle moves into a deeper discussion of the apologetic basis for his approach. He begins by noting that everyone needs an ultimate standard as the foundation for truth. He goes on to say that the Bible is the only reasonable standard, because while appeal to its self-attesting nature is circular, it is not arbitrarily circular. At this point I diverge from the author and encourage the interested reader to delve into the various schools of apologetics to understand the underlying complexity of the subject. While not wanting to (or qualified to) write a treatise on apologetics, I will try to clarify Dr. Lisle's stance. He credits the teaching of the Presbyterian theologian Dr. Greg Bahnsen for his apologetic insight. Apologetically, Bahnsen was a follower of the Dutch theologian Cornelius Van Til, who in turn was a student of Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam. Van Til

wrote numerous books on apologetics in the mid-twentieth century, developing the school of thought that has come to be called “presuppositionalism.” In Reformed circles, this school is continued by scholars like John Frame. However, it is opposed by other theologians like the late Gordon Clark and R. C. Sproul (Sproul et al., 1984), and in evangelical circles by thinkers like Norman Geisler. In my opinion, the basic argument of the self-refuting nature of naturalism does not require Van Til’s self-attesting Scripture. In fact, Sproul’s method of validating the Scriptures as God’s Word would work equally well, since he arrives at the same point of the Bible as incorrigible truth but by a longer route.

Before wrapping up the apologetic side, a distinction made by Mortimer Adler (1965) is helpful. In defining philosophy, Adler noted the importance of two Greek terms for knowledge, *epistēmē* and *doxa*. The former refers to indubitable and incorrigible truth and the latter to contingent, testable truth. Adler noted that philosophy has found very little in the category of *epistēmē*, and that the pursuit of such knowledge has proven deleterious to philosophy throughout its history. It is no stretch to see the Bible as *epistēmē* and human disciplines of philosophy, science, and history as *doxa*. And that is a key question for Dr. Lisle’s argument: What constitutes *epistēmē* and *doxa* in apologetics, in theology, in philosophy, and in science? If our arguments are to have the force of *epistēmē*, then what is the place of mutable knowledge, or *doxa*, in our thought? Or to put it theologically, can man possess God’s certainty outside the Bible? If so, how does it extend to human disciplines, such as theology, philosophy, science, and history?

Dr. Lisle’s treatise does not stand or fall on its ability to answer these questions, although that discussion is relevant—perhaps more than most believe. For if logic itself yields conclusions that qualify as *epistēmē* in terms of their

sylogistic validity, then the argument against naturalism is irresistible. These issues also open the door to debates between Christians and the “new atheists,” demonstrating the epistemological problems of the atheists, and to conundrums arising from the philosophy and history of science. Glover (1984) wisely noted that it was the similarities rather than the differences between Christians and modern Western secularists that opened the most fruitful lines of understanding, because the similarities demonstrate the points at which secularists have stolen Christian axioms. That insight is vindicated in *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*.

My only disappointment with this book was the near absence of notes and references to the numerous works that have anticipated and led up to this book. That background may be of less interest to laymen but would have made the book of much greater interest to scholars in the long run. This technique was well used in Vox Day’s *The Irrational Atheist*, which combined a snappy narrative with extensive, well-researched notes.

Finally, every reader must be careful to avoid a potential fallacy that could come from unwarranted extrapolation or misunderstanding of Dr. Lisle’s thesis. That would be the position that man apart from the Bible is incapable of finding *any* truth. The noetic effects of sin are not absolute. For example, Aristotle was certainly not Christian. His metaphysic, while cogently argued, devolved ultimately to an unmoved mover thinking about himself thinking. We know that the true ultimate reality, God, is personal, immanent, and the Creator of all things. So we reject Aristotelian metaphysics. On the other hand, Aristotle made many true and insightful observations about nature, human nature, ethics, and the categories of thought, logic, and communication. It is no accident that the medieval Scholastics attempted a synthesis of logic and Christianity based on Aristotle’s writings. Likewise, modern scientists may discover

many true things about nature, even though they may fit better inside the Christian worldview.

This is as an important work because the main problem since the Enlightenment has been the retreat of the church before naturalism and a concomitant and paralyzing fear among many theologians of losing their “academic respectability” if they fought back. But if the church as a whole would rise up against naturalism, its life span would be counted in days. This book provides the means by which everyday Christians can switch on the light bulb of inspiration and thus break the hold of fear and intimidation that secularists have held over Christians for far too long. For that reason, it deserves and needs to be widely read and understood by all Christians. Scholars should investigate the underlying apologetic for the reasons cited above, but any uncertainty there does not detract from the force of the book and its argument. As Reed et al. (2004, p. 229) noted:

The environment is ripe for a new attack on Naturalism by creationists. The times, however, call for a formal attack, not another empirical one. No special education or training will be necessary for the public to see the glaring contradictions in Naturalism. Unless they abandon reason, they will be forced to admit (grudgingly and under compulsion of the truth) that Christianity again has the high ground.

I highly recommend this book and believe that it will prove valuable to scientists, philosophers, and theologians alike.

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Book Review

Discovery of Design: Searching Out the Creator's Secrets

by Don DeYoung
and Derrick Hobbs

Master Books, Green Forest,
AR, 2009, 233 pages, \$13.00.

This book by DeYoung and Hobbs is unique both in its content and format. The book is filled with specific examples of design from nature that have been copied by human engineers, architects, and scientists. The book is divided into eight sections, each focusing on one specific part of nature: microorganisms, insects, flying creatures, underwater life, land animals, people, plants, and

nonliving objects. Each section contains several specific examples in nature that humans have used to improve life. These include the human femur, cockleburrs, beech leaves, the octopus, and the kingfisher bird. Each example gives a short description of the object and how it has inspired new products, questions for further study, pictures, references, and key words for Internet searching.

There is also a helpful list of general references, a glossary, and subject index. The book demonstrates that the amazing designs we see in nature, both from living and nonliving things, point directly to the Creator of the universe. It is sure to become a favorite for scientists and non-scientists alike.

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