

A Modern-day Parable
(One that is highly instructive.)

Once upon a time, an old man made the acquaintance of a young man, as they both were avid fishermen. And as it happened, one day in early spring when the lake ice had melted, the old man invited the young man to go with him upstate to a favorite fishing place the old man knew of. They'd take their camping gear and tents and fish for a couple of days. The young man drove, the old man showed the way.

When they got there, the young man exclaimed, "This place is no good! There needs to be moving water for good fishing. This water you brought me to is dead."

"Nonsense," said the old man, "the fishing here is great." And the two got into an argument over where the best fishing is. After some hot words, the young man said, "OK. You can stay here and waste your time but I'm driving on to where I know I'll catch some fish." And he left the old man there with his camping gear and drove off.

Two days later, bright and early, as the old man was casting his hook and lures into the water, he slipped on a wet rock and fell, striking his head with terrible force on a rock. His lifeless body rolled down into the frigid water and sank.

From afar, a young woman who happened to be at that place saw the man fall. She hurried to the water's edge, and after some search found where he was and with difficulty, some hours after he fell, managed to pull the old man's body up out of the water. But he was dead. There was nothing she could do for him but go to summon help, which she did.

Hours later, she returned leading police and would-be rescuers to the scene. The coroner came too. The young man also returned at that very same time. The officers saw the head wound and a very cold body, and asked the young man what he knew. The young man said that 2 days earlier they'd gotten into an argument, whereupon the police promptly took the young man into custody and charged him with murder.

At trial, the coroner told the court what the body temperature was when he measured it. The prosecutor then called expert witnesses to testify. And they all gave the same opinion: the body temperature measured at the scene by the coroner indicated clearly that the old man had been dead for 2 days, placing the time of death precisely when the young man got angry at his old friend. The experts all testified that their science is valid: the longer a body is dead, the colder it gets, so one can simply extrapolate back in time to fix the time of death. "The evidence speaks for itself," they said. The defense attorney tried to show that the young man was basically a kind person and would not do such a crime, in vain. The jury was charged to bring a verdict of murder in view of the overwhelming and compelling forensic evidence.

But as the jury was rising to leave to go to the jury room, a young woman at the rear of the courtroom jumped to her feet shouting, "No. Wait. This is all wrong what you're doing. I saw the old man fall into the water. It was that very morning when I was there and I saw it. It was an accident. I was there, I tell you. I saw it!"

"You're out of order," shouted the judge, as he repeatedly hammered his gavel and ordered the officers of the court to remove the young woman from his courtroom. "Get that woman out of here!" said the judge. And the jury was led out from the courtroom to fix a verdict.

So that's our story. And what's wrong with it? What's terribly wrong is obvious: the eye-witness' testimony should trump the forensic evidence, because the experts had clearly misinterpreted the data. The body was very cold because it was immersed in frigid water for two hours, not because it had been dead for 2 days.

There's no such thing as "the evidence speaks for itself." All "evidence" has to be interpreted. And it's in that interpretation where the difficulty lies. We interpret and we analyze based on what we know about present, repeatable processes. And in the interpreting we necessarily take into account a host of assumptions, some of which probably don't even enter into our consciousness. Furthermore, we're all fallible, we unavoidably approach the analysis with latent biases, and we easily jump to conclusions prematurely and hold to them with all the vigor that attends our pride and self-importance. And so we come to conclusions which have to remain at best tentative, merely inferences, because the event in question was a singular event that had occurred in the past and is therefore unrepeatable. It's an attempt to arrive at truth, using reason, experimentation, technology, all the methodologies and apparatus of science, and that "truth" can never be known to be truly true. But if there's an eyewitness...ah, that changes everything. Assuming the eye-witness is credible, the eye-witness' narrative should be accepted as true history, what actually happened in that unique past event.

The creation/evolution conflict is the above parable playing out in real time in Western society. Evolutionary scientists gather data, the "evidence," and they offer their interpretation of it, which is, of course, Big Bang, billions of years, and common descent. And that's all just speculation, conjecture, human ideas, necessarily, because no one was there to see it. They are opinions, and nothing more—and they *cannot* be anything more—because of the limits of science, indeed the limits of all human knowledge. We can only know for sure what's happening in the present, and what we know has happened in the historical past as we've experienced and recorded it. As for the origin of all things, there is an eye-witness who has recorded for us what happened and how it happened, the only One who was there, who could have been there, the Creator. In the Bible, the Creator is a transcendent Being. He is all-knowing, truthful, and good – three characteristics essential for a credible eye-witness. We can therefore be confident that the knowledge communicated is factual, it is true, and we'll benefit from it. We should reasonably rely on His testimony rather than the flawed interpretations of fallible and biased men.

So it all comes down to this, Is what science tells us about the origin of things, what science has "discovered," really fact? Is there the requisite objective correspondence to reality? Or is what the Bible tells us about origins, which is *revealed* to us, really fact? For if it's fact, we ignore it at our peril.

A fact is what we, in one way or another, know certainly to be true. What science discovers by means of its methodologies about the world we live in can be known to be true if the event or process is on-going or repeatable and can be confirmed. When that isn't possible, as with origins, then science necessarily cannot possess certain knowledge. No trained observer was there to see and record the stars taking their place in the universe, how living cells came into existence, or how the different kinds of animals originated. No human could experience what reality was at the beginning. What happened at the beginning is simply beyond the limits of human knowledge. Like the forensic experts in our parable, evolutionary scientists use technology and reason in the attempt to discover what may have happened at the beginning of things. But they make assumptions, have their underlying presuppositions, and can only at best make tentative inferences. The interpretations of evidence regarding origins therefore are not facts, evolutionists' protests notwithstanding. So what science tells us regarding origins is just a belief, an interpretation that scientists are committed to. Which means it's religious. But as our parable demonstrates, another, perfectly valid means of knowing something is revelation. Revelation of course is only as reliable as the one doing the revealing. If the Revealer is totally reliable, that which has been revealed must be accepted as fact. We completely misunderstand the nature of revelation. When God reveals to us that which is otherwise unknowable, we are obliged to accept it as fact. It's true truth. Of course, we need to be humble and passively receive revelation. That enters the equation too. Revelation

can be received or not –but that doesn't change the truth of it. *It's true because of the character of the One who does the revealing.*

So the reality of the current situation is the exact opposite of how the issue has been framed. We've been led to think that what science tells us about origins is fact, and what the Bible tells us is something not factual, something simply to be believed. It's really just the reverse: what science tells us about origins is belief, as determined by a pantheistic religion, whereas what the Bible reveals to us is factual narrative, which we can either accept or reject.