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Life on Mars? A Theological Response

by Murray McLeod-Boyle

In a recent issue of *Creation* magazine, Jonathan Sarfati discussed the excitement that has surrounded the 'Mars Rock.'¹ This article was primarily aimed at analysing and assessing the scientific claims that have been made about this rock. However, theology also played a part when Mr Sarfati stated that, "Scripture strongly implies that no *intelligent* life exists elsewhere."

As this statement is one that many Christians agree with, it seems natural to try and expand on it and give a Biblical outline as to why intelligent life *does not exist* on other planets. This is an important exercise, as the Bible has more to say on this subject than many people think.

1. God's Works of Creation are Focused Upon the Earth

Scripture's message begins with a record of the divine fiat: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This Creative effort by God was not limited to planets and galaxies, but also included creatures. Where did God centre His efforts in this regard? He concentrated them upon the earth.

It was upon the earth that He created plants, birds, fish, cattle, creeping

things and man. Similarly, God ordered the cosmic environment to sustain life upon the earth. For example:

God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth" ... And God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night ... And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth (Genesis 1:14 -17)

These two luminaries were placed in the sky to give light, heat, direction, times and seasons to the earth. There is

no accident involved. God's measurements and design are exact. Why? For the purpose of maintaining the life He created upon earth.

As an example, let us compare our state with that of our nearest neighbours, Venus and Mars.

"Venus differs greatly from the Earth in having a thick and highly reflective cloud layer that perpetually hides the planet's surface and causes extremely high surface temperatures and pressure. *The surface is known to be far too hot to harbor any life.*"²

What of Mars?

"The major constituents of the Martian atmosphere are carbon dioxide (95.3%), nitrogen (2.7%), and argon (1.6%). Minor amounts of oxygen, carbon monoxide, water vapor, and other trace constituents make up the rest ... The Martian atmosphere undergoes dramatic daily and seasonal temperature changes. It averages about 220 K (-64 deg F) and varies from 145 K (-199 deg F) during the polar night to 300 K (80 deg F) at the equator during midday at perihelion. The "perihelion" is the point at which, in a planet's elliptical orbit, it passes closest to the sun."³

This advises us that if we were to move one planet closer to the sun, we



1. Volume 19, Number 1. December 1996 - February 1997.

2. Ellen Stofan, *Venus* (*The Academic American Encyclopedia* (1996 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia Version), copyright (c) 1996 Grolier, Inc. Danbury, CT.) Italics added.

3. Kenneth L. Tanaka, *Mars* (*The Academic American Encyclopedia*). Earth's atmosphere is 78% diatomic nitrogen; 21% diatomic oxygen; 0.9% argon and the other 0.1% consists of trace gases, one of which is carbon dioxide. Noticeably, these are the reverse of the Martian atmosphere. As far as the temperature is concerned, these figures convert to the following: Average -53.3°; Extremes -128.3° to 26.6°.

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would cook; move one planet further from the sun and we would freeze.⁴ What God has created is perfect.

2. Life. What is it?

Important for our discussion is the definition of the term "life." We are used to talking about "intelligent" life, when we speak about extraterrestrial beings. However, as we shall see, intelligence is not a Scriptural criterion for life.

Genesis 1: 20 informs us that, "God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." The Hebrew term *nephesh hayyah* is here rendered as "living creatures." This term is instructive, as it helps us to define what is and is not "life."

Today, we are used to an evolutionary, and often pantheistic, commentary on life, in which we are told that all life is in some way special. Yet, that definition of life is completely arbitrary, and is made to include everything from a blade of grass to man. Hence, the 'green movement' speaks

about trees as though they have feelings, emotions and true life. Such beliefs are, however, unwarranted as far as Scripture is concerned.

The *nephesh hayya* are distinct from plants in the Biblical record. Genesis 1:11-12 deals with the creation of plants on the third day. Whereas, the "living creatures" do not appear until day five of creation.

This distinction is further defined when, in the Scriptural context, the *nephesh hayya* are seen to include whales (KJV), fish, birds, cattle, beasts of the earth, and man.⁵ Genesis 1:30 is also very helpful in this respect. It teaches us that the plants are to be food for the *nephesh hayyah*.

As far as Scripture is concerned there is a great difference between those creatures in which is the 'breath of life' (Gen. 2:7), and those plants and organisms from which it is absent.

Put simply, the "bacteria" — if it is bacteria? — found on the so called 'Mars Rock,' does not Biblically constitute "life." Evolutionists are excited, solely because their presupposition is that such a "bacteria" could one day evolve into a *nephesh hayya* — a concept that the Bible declares to be impossible.⁶

3. Life: The Intelligent Alien

As noted earlier, 'extraterrestrial life' is synonymous with 'intelligent life.' Hence, the expectation that extraterrestrial life will be superior to human life and intelligence. An expectation portrayed in movies by depicting aliens with massive craniums.

Is such a thing possible? No! Not according to Scripture.

In Genesis 1:26-27 we have the account of man's creation. There we read:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And

APOLOGIES

Our apologies to subscribers for the lateness of these newsletters. You have not been overlooked.

The enclosed newsletters bring you up to date. We trust you find the material a help in your Christian life.

We have also enclosed another copy of the February newsletter containing an article by Dr F.N. Lee. Unfortunately, our typesetting program left off the last paragraph after we had proofread the document. In order to do justice to Dr Lee's comments, especially his closing paragraph, we have reissued the newsletter, this time with all the text intact. Our apologies to Dr Lee for omitting that important final statement from his article.

* * * *

The Modern World

Many words have been used to describe contemporary culture. Not all aspects of culture are degenerate. But author E. Michael Jones, in his book, *Degenerative Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Behaviour* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), provides a thoughtful summary of some people involved in influencing contemporary views. The relationship between their modernistic views about culture, he argues, was attended with a sexual licentiousness. The two were so intertwined, that Jones has argued that the real purpose of their cultural activities was to give free reign to their sexual proclivities.

This is an unusual book in that the author has placed the chronologically first chapter at the end of the book. Dr Jones analyses a number of key figures who assisted in the modern world. The modern world, according to this thesis, is one that has rationalized sexual behaviour, that is, attempted to make it acceptable. Dr Jones's critical pen touches on anthropologist Margaret Mead, espionage agent Anthony Blunt, sex-liberator Kinsey, Picasso the painter, Freud and Jung the psychologists, and more.

According to Dr Jones, however, the modern world began with Martin Luther's attack on the idea of free will. We might well-question whether Dr

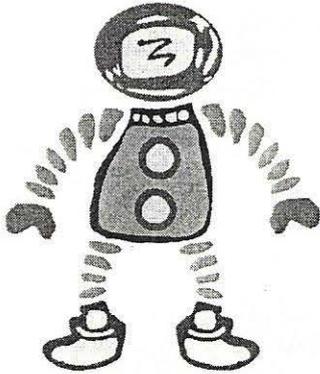
- Temperature is not the only difficulty, of course, "it has been found that the Martian surface apparently contains oxidizing agents highly incompatible with any form of organic life." A.G.W. Cameron, *Solar System* (The Academic American Encyclopedia).
- See Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, 30; 2:7, 19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16. These same types of distinctions are also given in Leviticus 11:10 and 46, where the focus is clean and unclean foods.
- On the evolutionary time scale, the first, and longest, period is known as the 'precambrian era.' During this period, "life," according to the evolutionist's definition, consisted of bacteria and algae. Hence, if 'bacteria' can be found on Mars, then the evolutionist believes he has discovered 'life' on other planets — albeit in its extreme infancy.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him.

So far we have seen that the Scriptures draw a line between those objects in creation that have 'the breath of life' and those that do not. This text furnishes us with one further distinction. Here, Scripture draws a firm line of demarcation that separates man from animal.

Noticeably, man is distinguished from all other *nephesh hayyah*, by the fact that he is made in the image of God.

What do we understand by this? Put simply, being made in God's image means that we are like God in those areas where imitation of God is possible. For example, God alone is eternal, in the sense that He does not have a beginning or an end.⁷ Likewise, God alone is self-existent; all other life depends on Him. These attributes belong to God alone.



In contrast to this, man reflects the Creator in such things as the ability to know, communicate, and love. Man speaks because God first spoke. Man knows because God is all knowing. Man, as an analogue of God, was created to think God's thoughts after Him.

Consequently, man is *intelligent* because he is made in the image of an intelligent God.

This being the case, *the existence of intelligent life on other planets would demand that such life was also created in the image of God.*

This concept is untenable for a number of reasons, the chief of which will be dealt with at point five.

4. Man and Dominion

Genesis 1:28 declares that man was given *rule* over all the

nephesh hayyah. This rule belongs to man, only because he bears the image of God. This requires that any "life forms" — according to the Biblical definition — that exist on other planets, are, by necessity, under the rule and dominion of man.

Man's creation, in the image of God, sets him apart as the highest ranking and most important creature made by God. This fact is born out clearly when the doctrine of sin is analysed.

Genesis chapter 3 carries the sad tale of Adam's rebellion against God. As a result, sin entered the world and death came to all. In Romans 8:19-22 we read:

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

What we learn from this text is that Adam's rebellion had a creation-wide consequence. Not only man, but creation also, was subjected to futility or, in plainer terms, the ravages of sin. This illustrates two elements. 1. That man was ruler over creation, for such consequences could not have come to creation had this not been the case; and 2. That, as this is the case, man has no equal anywhere else in creation. *There is no other* (created in the image of God) *intelligent life.*

5. Salvation History

This then leads to the final and most important point — Redemption by Jesus Christ.

Adam, by his fall, inflicted sin upon all creation. He subjected his offspring, as well as all that he ruled over, to the consequences of his rebellion. Hence, it was imperative that The Redeemer be both man and God. This was necessary for two reasons. 1. Only a man can be an adequate substitute for a man;

Jones accurately portrays Luther's views, since no definition of free-will is offered by Dr Jones. Instead, the phrase is bandied around as if Luther denied any concept of human choice and volition.

What really irks Dr Jones, a Catholic, is that Luther turned his back on his ordination vows and eventually married. Dr Jones argues that the reason Luther turned his back on these vows was his inability to control his sexual appetite. This seems to be drawing a rather long bow, and a very simplistic explanation of Luther's major attack on the free-will. Jones makes no mention of Luther's definition of free-will and "human ability." Said Luther, "free-will" is obviously a term applicable only to the Divine Majesty; for only He can do, and does (as the Psalmist sings) 'whatever he wills in heaven and earth' (Ps. 135:6). If 'free-will' is ascribed to men, it is ascribed with no more propriety than divinity itself would be — and no blasphemy could exceed that! So it befits theologians to refrain from using the term when they want to speak of human ability, and leave it to be applied to God only."

In other words, Luther was keen to distinguish between true 'free-will' and human choice. Only God is free to will whatever He wants. He alone has 'free-will' and the term ought to be reserved for God alone. When people attempt to equate man with God and put man's will on the same level as God's, then we have divinized man at that point. The creature cannot be the creator, and it is this preservation of God alone as Divine, possessing the attributes of God, that Luther argues for so eloquently.

Thus, for Luther, his attack was not on the ability or necessity of human choice. What he denied is the claim that for man to have 'free-will', this must somehow equate with the 'free-will' that God has. Luther denied that man, the creature, can ever have a 'free-will' like God, and his *Bondage of the Will* is the classic refutation of such a notion.

Dr Jones's misplaced attack on Luther should not deter readers from his important study. For contained within Dr Jones's *Degenerate Moderns* are critical and important analyses of some of the twentieth century's leading contributors to the decline of Christendom. To put Luther in the same class as Kinsey, Mead, Freud or Jung is a little like attempting to put a square peg in a round hole — an impossible and ludicrous task.

* * * * *

7. Man was created to be eternal, but unlike God, man knows a beginning.

and, 2. Only God could provide the perfection required in order for the substitute to be acceptable.

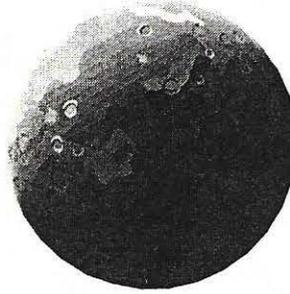
These elements were combined in Jesus Christ for the very purpose that He could, as the second Adam, offer a sacrifice for sin that would appease God's wrath, and bring about the destruction of sin.

The importance of this for our discussion is that this doctrine affirms man's high place in creation. By one man's sin, the creation was plunged into chaos. By the other Man, Jesus Christ, we, creation included, were set free from the law of sin and death.

Consequently, it is reaffirmed that there are no other creatures that were made in the image of God. If we believe that other image bearers exist, then we have to believe that Jesus had to take on the form of some other crea-

ture and die a second, third, fourth or fifth time. Maybe even more.

This belief would then be kin to what is found in Mormonism: namely,



Is there life on Mars?

that when Jesus ascended, He returned to heaven via North America. No Christian we know of believes that this happened, as it contradicts Scripture's testimony at so many points. So why should such an argument be con-

templated when it is applied to alien life?⁸

6. Conclusion

Recently, the movie "Independence Day" has sparked off great interest in the whole debate over extraterrestrial life. Many people are caught in the hysteria of the moment, and no doubt some of them may be Christians. Extraterrestrial life and evolution, are topics that the media adores to represent as fact, when there is no evidence in support of these theories.

As Christians we must choose whether we are going to believe what God, the Creator, has written, or what fallen and sinful men propound. Compromise is not an option.

God's Word clearly teaches that man is alone in this creation. Man was created for everlasting fellowship with God, and that is precisely why he, and he alone, was created to be like God.

8. See Acts 1:9-11 and Hebrews 1:3 as examples.