

Destiny or Chance

Our solar system and its place in the cosmos

Stuart Ross Taylor

This author is more up front on the inclusion of religious content than others of his persuasion. The title lets one know of such content, but not the flavor. If “Destiny” most likely the God of the Bible. If “Chance” then likely atheism. So the book is divided between technical information and religious arguments.

On the technical side, the book is fascinating. The author goes over every planet and moon. He covers current knowledge on the formation of the solar system and its parts down to the smallest rock in the dance around the sun. For a book for the masses on the solar system, I cannot think of any book that is better.

On the religions side one becomes aware quite quickly that the religion espoused is atheism. Such beliefs are mildly scattered through most of the book. Near the end of the book science is deposed with and the religion is right in one’s face. This is not a feeling – it is absolute truth: science as we know it cannot prove or disprove the existence of a creator. However, using science to help support one’s religious position is of interest and is interesting. Christians are more gentlemanly in using science in relation to their beliefs. They do not call those who believe differently names or imply they are ignorant or stupid. Atheists are liberal with such name calling and accusations. Taylor was no exception. It makes it appear that their religious position is based more on arrogance than the science they claim. It can partially spoil a good book.

I will comment on a few statements in the book the first of which I found amusing. Within the section “How did the universe begin?” is the statement concerning expansion “Will it fly apart for ever, or does the theory need some revision?” I know Taylor did not mean it as so, but it reads as if we can save the universe from dying by coming up with a theory otherwise, as if our theories effect the universe. Now, that would be real arrogance.

In the section “On the development of intelligent life” Taylor states “Clearly high intelligence has little evolutionary advantage, for it has

appeared once in tens of billions attempts.” (The strange wording is his.) I would submit to Taylor that the earth is not big enough for more than one high intelligence. Didn't he see the movie “The day the earth stood still” – the original movie? He goes on to say “Only one of the 20 or so civilizations that have arisen on Earth in the past 5000 years has developed the technology to communicate with other possible life forms elsewhere.” This is the strangest statement in the book. It reads as if each civilization is a different species, one evolved from the other. Man did not come out of the goo, if you will excuse the expression, with a cell phone to his ear. There is only one species of man and his technology evolved to having a cell phone to his ear. The statement has the smell of the racism of an atheist evolutionist. William Jennings Bryant did not prosecute in the Scopes' trial because he found Darwinism a threat to his religious beliefs. He prosecuted because he found Darwinism contradicted with his belief that all men are created equal by a creator. The belief of the day was the logical conclusion of Darwinism – some people are superior to other people based on racial make up. But, it was taken beyond that. It was being believed that white color workers were superior to blue color workers and that is why they both were where they were. And I guess one could come to the conclusion that political leaders were superior to voters. William Jennings Bryant was the man-of-the-people and strongly rejected such notions. Of course he is portrayed as a bubbling religious fool.

In the section “Was the universe designed for us” Taylor does a Dawkins on the reader. He shows how we are imperfectly designed by giving an example of the nerves of the eye being connected in the front instead of on the side. This may not be optimum or the perfect design but it does not decrease the functionality I need in seeing. A better example can be given of poor design that makes all other such examples trivial. We age and die, death resulting in great loss of functionality. I believe that the Christian faith has more to do with that particular defect than with where the nerves of the eye are attached. Taylor takes the notion that if there is a creator then the creation should be perfect. It is not perfect so there is no creator. That is simplistic. From what Bible reading I have done it seems that the reason for the imperfection around and in us is up front and center.

The conclusion of the book is that everything happened by chance events. So - that is the conclusion of any atheist and is in fact the foundation of atheism. The other thinking is that a creator who created the

universe can and did create events in it. Both positions are outside of science. Why are we talking about this in a book on the solar system?

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