

I intend here to interact with six chapters [136 pages] of Robert Pyne's *Humanity & Sin: The Creation, Fall, and Redemption of Humanity*. Having met Pyne at a seminary open house, when he was teaching a class on Christian anthropology, I was interested in reading his book. Committed to biblical truth, he also has read extensively in the relevant scientific fields, and brings a balanced, non-dogmatic, approach to the discussion. I would recommend his book to those interested in issues dealing with man's origin, the meaning of being created in God's image, the material and immaterial nature of a person, and the debate over genetic, environmental, and free-will effects on behavior. Along the way, Pyne also discusses theological implications for issues such as Prozac, homosexuality, and assisted suicide.

As part of his defense of biblical creation, Pyne discussed the anthropic principle, that the universe seems to be fine tuned to support human life [12-13]. I think this is the best scientific evidence about the existence of God, for – as Pyne related – tiny changes in any of myriad variables would render human life impossible. The odds of this happening at random are remote. I also like the teleological argument, about the universe being too ordered to be random [12]. There seems to be much mathematical and scientific evidence of the existence of the creator.

I thought Pyne's explanation of the debate about man's origin to be well balanced and informative [24-50]. We see that the science itself shows the difficulty with even modified macro-evolution theory [24-36]. I think it takes more faith to believe in some scientific theories than it does to believe in God, for there seems to be more evidence of God than that needed to support some of these theories. What has especially annoyed me about this debate is that, in their dogmatism, neither extreme seems to see how precarious their position is. Certainly we can recount times that scientists have been wrong in their interpretation of nature, noting even that all science seems to progress – not incrementally, but – by showing previous theories to be false. Newton, for example, was proven totally incorrect about gravity, which Einstein showed didn't even exist, but rather was a result of inertia; now a new wave of scientists are disproving Einstein's theories. Similarly, we can recount times that the theologians have been wrong in their interpretation of the Bible. For example, God's statement in Job about laying the foundation of the Earth led to the doctrine of a flat Earth, and thus to much persecution of scientists insisting the world was round. Scientific and biblical truth will align when we understand both, but for now we need to realize that we don't fully understand either, and be motivated to treat kindly those who hold different opinions.

Pyne shows that the biblical account apparently cannot be squared with macro-evolution, not even theistic evolution [43]. The Bible states quite clearly that man was created from dust. However, Pyne gives a lot of credence to the arguments for an old earth, which would imply that the creation of the universe did not occur in seven days [38-42, 46-49]. While he acknowledges that the young-earth creationists are finding some promising new evidence, he still comes out in favor of an old-earth theory, as a progressive creationist [one who believes God created everything, but over time; though he leaves room for believing there could have been some theistic evolution not involving man] [48-49].

What I found most interesting in this discussion of the Earth's age was the consideration of Genesis 1 as being poetic, rather than historical [38-42]. This would explain not only the apparent inconsistency of this passage with scientific evidence, but also of it with other biblical

texts; and this theory is more palatable than others I have read, such as “days” not being twenty-four hours. Even within Genesis 1, you have light created before the things that provide light. But if this account of creation was a poem, rather than historical narrative [which the rest of Genesis clearly is, according to Pyne; 42], then its purpose would have been to have “described a true theological concept, using a genre that should have been recognized by the original readers. They would not have speculated on the length of the days, nor would they have worried about the timing of events. They would have recognized that the days were arranged into two sets of three, and they would have gotten the point about the nature of God’s construction project” [41].

In discussing man as made in the image of God, Pyne shows from the Bible that this is true even after the fall, and yet also that this is exemplified in Christ and must be restored in people through Christ [52]. In his discussion, he allowed that this “image” could include rational and moral capacity, and dominion [or authority] [52-57], but what is interesting to me is that he also considers that this image includes God’s glory, which has an implication for a possible physical resemblance [57-66]. For example, he notes that when Ezekiel saw God [Ezekiel 1:26-27], “the prophet said he looked like one of us, but as on fire. He was ablaze with divine glory” [59]. Considering Psalm 8:3-6, which is a “devotional commentary on Genesis 1,” Pyne observes that “Dominion, which in Genesis follows from creation in the image of God, here follows from coronation with glory and majesty. Indeed, coronation is the placement of a *luminous* crown, a corona, upon the head of one who is to rule! Psalm 8 suggests that this is precisely what God did when he created people in His image” [59; italics in original]. Pyne says such theories about the divine image including divine glory and some physical sense were discussed in communities of early Judaism [61]. While God does not have a body in our sense, might he not have a body in the sense that we will have resurrected bodies and the angels and demons can take physical form? [Pyne touches on related concepts on 82.] As we are conformed to Christ-likeness, we are renewed in the image of God, which includes a future transformation of our body in addition to a present transformation of our character [63]. Our bodies, at least, do somehow reflect God’s glory [70].

Pyne argues that our bodies must be distinct from the immaterial part of ourselves, else the biblical account of the afterlife would not be true [80]. However, later he argued [considering the inter-relation among our parts while we are on Earth] that “... since humans are complex creatures, we cannot always distinguish between physiology, psychology, and spirituality” [135]. I thought this statement odd for another reason also: earlier, Pyne had made a strong argument for considering the immaterial parts of ourselves as indistinguishable among themselves: e.g. we cannot consider our soul as completely separate from our spirit, they have different nuances, but both refer to the immaterial part of ourselves that lasts beyond physical death [118]. This was part of his argument in favor of a dualistic perspective, rather than what he calls a “trichotomous” perspective [102; see 102-118 for the whole discussion of biblical use of various terms like “soul” and “spirit”]. I always had a trichotomous perspective, that we are body, mind [soul], and spirit [heart], but I have to admit that Pyne’s biblical discussion weakened my resolve on that perspective. But I thought it was ironic that he reverted to it when discussing how various sources could affect our behavior.

Pyne had a good number of topics to discuss regarding implications of a biblical appreciation for our bodies and having been created in God’s image, including our perspective of the

handicapped, abortion, birth control, assisted reproduction, fetal tissue research, cloning, organ transplants, assisted suicide, capital punishment, treatment of dead bodies, and cosmetic surgery [88-100]. Each discussion provoked me to think a little about my own views, but the ones that really stood out to me were about the handicapped and assisted suicide. Pyne's contention is that each life is precious to God, that each of us is made in God's image, so therefore we need to help broken people live, not die [88-90, 97-98].

Another interesting discussion was about how each life begins, whether the immaterial part of us is preexisting, is created by God at conception [or some time between then and birth], or is a product of our parents as is the body [traducianism] [119-122]. Though I do not have a problem with God continuing to create, I like the traducianism idea that he is doing it through the mechanism he has already begun, and it seems to be more consistent with the genetic traits evident along generations. This does not pose a problem for consideration of Christ, because I don't think he had any of Mary's DNA: I think God created Jesus' humanity [as he did the first Adam's] and implanted it in Mary [though there are some verses that might suggest otherwise]; but he also could have simply used the Holy Spirit to purify whatever was passed through Mary.

Pyne went over the nature versus nurture debate with regard to what determines behavior, and then pointed out that neither extreme allows for free will [127-134]. He used this discussion to enlighten about how to look at sins such as homosexuality: it is not moral or excusable, because it is forbidden in scripture, but understanding the role biology and environment do play in how that person feels helps us to have compassion [133]. At the same time, rather than blaming our genes or our parents for our bad behavior, we must submit to the Holy Spirit in obedience to the scriptures and faith in Christ [134]. He concludes, in looking at the effects of Prozac, that we are responsible for what we do, regardless of circumstances, that we are who we are [136].