

Learning From A Setting Hen

One of my earliest memories is of going into the storm cellar near our farm house where we had an incubator in operation. I watched my mother turn the eggs. Learning from her, I was sent at times to do it by myself. How did we come to know that eggs needed a half turn each day (or was it more often?). We learned it from hens. I wonder how many of you have watched a setting hen turn her eggs, inserting her bill under each egg and giving it a half-turn. I suspect that there are few of us around who have witnessed it.

We learned from watching the hen, but who taught the hen to do it? That simple question demands profound answers.

The chick could not have learned that from watching the mother hen for it was an egg when the operation took place. Neither could the egg learn it while in an incubator. If it was instilled by the hen in the egg during its developing stage, then why do not roosters help turn eggs also for they are hatched in the same nest with the same brood? Is only the pullet capable of learning?

We tend to dismiss such questions by saying it is all instinct, inherited and below the conscious level. But where did instinct originate? Did the inanimate elements of this universe develop life, sensitivity, memory, and choice with powers of procreativity and of transmitting those acquired qualities to offspring? It requires more faith to believe those fanciful suppositions than to believe in a Creator! That faith makes atheism a religion! The struggle between belief in God and belief in no God is a conflict between religions. So why must the religion of no God be required in our society but the religion of God be shoved out of sight?

We are not speaking of religious rituals or the Bible here but we are referring to irrefutable implications of nature. Did the hen develop by chance from the lifeless elements of this universe or did an intelligent power make her from the lifeless elements and endow her with life which involves sensitivity, instincts, and memory? The hen teaches us lessons about a Creator that derive from the creation itself rather than from theologians (an atheist is, in reality, a theologian!), the Bible, or systems of religion.

Shocking as this may be to many Christians, I have no problem with evolution. The Bible does not tell us the process by which God made things or how long that process took. Yes, I know all about the "six days of creation" in Genesis. The Genesis account is not a scientific document but a literary piece declaring that God created all things. As a literary account, many symbolic and figurative images are used.

I do have a very serious problem, however, when God is left out leaving it to truly materialistic evolution. It is not to our credit that Christian apologists try to ignore the possibility of theistic evolution and give only the choice between materialistic evolution and instantaneous creation in six days about six thousand years ago. I propose that God

has not abandoned his creation but is still “*making*” it from the elements created as recorded in the first sentence of the Bible.

There is no denying that creatures have gone through changes in their development. We have called out for the “missing link” as proof against major change from one specie to another. (I will not try to use all the technical terminology.) Where is that missing link between the supposed ape and man? The Missing Link has been around all along. He is the Creator! According to the Genesis account, God made man from the dust (earthly components). He has also made each of us from those earthly elements. Sometime after making man, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life so that he became a living (spiritual) being. In similar manner, God makes us of dust and later, as we are born of the water and the spirit, we become in the spiritual image of God. God was the missing link to raise him to his higher state and is the missing link between our earthly nature and our spiritual nature.

If God chose to start with single-cell life and develop from there, why should I complain? His hand could touch at any point to make them become splitting cells eventually with two sexes with instinctive attraction between the sexes at the right time with the right procedure. He could bring some from the water, make them walk on two feet, give them feathers and wings and flight instincts. In all this process he can cause the hen to form a scientifically shaped egg shell with an expansion bubble in it, having brought a rooster into the operation which knew how, and was eager, to do his part. He gave her instinct and hormones to build a nest, lay a number of eggs, stop laying and change into a “setting” mode, in which she keeps the eggs warm, turns them with her beak, and develops an aggressive temperament to protect her eggs and newly hatched chicks. Whether God did this in twenty-four hours or twenty-four million years does not amount to a hill of beans.

If we read Genesis 1 as a literal account, we must recognize that all actual creation is stated in the very first sentence. After that, the terms for *make* and *create* are used interchangeably. In the seven days depicted, materials already created were used to make/create specific things. In similar manner, a seamstress may create an artistic garment, not from nothing, but from materials already on hand. God set the seventh day apart and defined a day as beginning at evening followed by morning. This suggests that the account was written after the Hebrew people were formed and their law was given.

Our literal interpretation of the creation account collides with scientific explanations. We have tried to make it an either/or proposition, that is, if we accept one interpretation, we must reject the other. So, often faith is shaken in those who accept scientific conclusions. Instead of holding our views of both science and the Bible as interpretations to be studied for harmony, we have accepted our Biblical interpretations as ultimate truth which must displace any scientific interpretation which varies from it.

More needs to be said about our claimed literal interpretation of Genesis. We are not so literal except on the points that we are hung up on. Can there be seven successive literal “evening and morning” days? If it is evening at our location, it is morning on the other

side of the earth, and by the time there is an “evening and morning” sequence of seven days there, it is already evening of the eighth day at our point. So this is a literal impossibility (to use an onymoron). Is a snake subtle, having a reasoning intellect like a man? If it could reason, could it talk without a voice box? Could it hear Eve, having no ears? Can humans and snakes converse? Did God, as Spirit having no physical voice, converse with a snake? Could Adam and Eve eat knowledge? Did God want man to be ignorant? Did they not have knowledge of good and evil before eating the forbidden fruit? Or was man’s mind an infantile blank like a new hard drive in your computer into which God instantly programmed an extensive education? Was Adam endowed with unlearned speech, language, information, and experience? Was he given tools and knowledge to dress the garden for he had no dead branch of a tree or bone of a dead animal to use as tools? Were Adam and Eve given a culture at the time of their creation? Were they given vessels, cutlery, a nail file, and scissors to cut their hair? If they were given this culture and knowledge, how can we account for the loss of such practical knowledge as the use of tools later in history by aboriginals? Can man hear a Spirit-God walking? Does a snake eat dust? Did the tree of life die? What became of the Garden of Eden which was in what is now Iraq? Man was driven out and not permitted to return. Is there some spot in Iraq where man cannot go? Adam's need for food indicates that his body would consume and expend energy. Would he have died before the fall without food? If the man had so much as pulled up a turnip to eat, would that not have brought death into Eden?

When we face these and other similar questions, our literal approach to the Genesis account begins to evaporate, leaving us high and dry.

I do not claim to have all the simplistic answers, but that is not alarming, because my salvation in no way depends upon understanding of scientific data. The Genesis account evidently is intended to instill faith and awe in us toward an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator and God rather than giving us soul-saving scientific facts.

We must resist implying that God completed his working in this universe in six days. That would leave us with a God who does not work in either our world or in our lives. Do you really believe he wound it up like a clock and has just sat back and let everything run on its own? If so, you cannot believe that he sent his Son or the Holy Spirit.

God holds all of us accountable for recognizing his invisible power and deity which are demonstrated in his creation (Rom. 1:18-32). We may learn this from a setting hen or any other facet of nature. Outside, sometimes I see what looks like a whiff of vapor. It is a swarm of some sort of flying insects. I clap my hands and find a few specks whose features I cannot see even with my reading magnifying glass, yet they can fly in unison, mate, and stay together in the breeze. There are many forms of life even smaller.

Pistol, unseen by the naked eye, is a star 325 times larger and is ten million times more powerful than our sun. It emits as much energy in six seconds as our sun does in a year and is estimated as 25,000 light years away, according to astronomers. Also, they tell us

that the farthest object seen by the naked eye is Andromeda Galaxy at a distance of 2.2 million light years away. If we can comprehend such things, we can comprehend God.

Someone has suggested that God has a sense of humor, else he would not have made monkeys and donkeys. Surely it was in fun that he decided to put a flashing light in the tail of a small flying insect, and to make the kangaroo. Her premature joey emerges and crawls up her saliva slathered belly into her pouch where it finds and attaches to a nipple, there remaining for the final weeks of gestation. Some creatures are examples of artistic ugliness! We have all marveled at the television programs about nature. Though the producers do not mention it, these revelations of nature all testify of an intelligent Creator.

Nature does not answer all our questions about the personality or will of God but his divinity and power can be seen clearly in our universe. When doubts begin to trouble you, it may be time to ask again who taught a setting hen to turn her eggs. []

(Cecil Hook: September 2005)

Talkin' Texas: In reporting on Hurricane Katrina as the worst natural disaster in the history of our country, the media overlook the most important aspect of disaster, that is human lives. When a hurricane inundated the entire island of Galveston in 1900, there were 5,000 to 10,000 lives lost. Afterward, they constructed a ten-mile sea wall and dredged to raise the city to twenty feet elevation – without FEMA. (This was written before Rita became a hurricane.)

“I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).