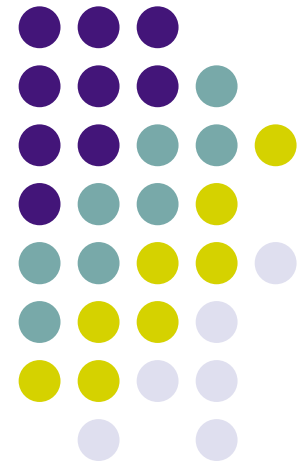


The Biblical View of Nature

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Introduction

- How does the Bible view nature?
- How does this compare or contrast with how nature is viewed by other worldviews?
- We especially want to contrast this with scientism of various sorts.



Introduction

We suggest the Bible
views nature as:

- Created
- Good
- Revelatory
- Orderly/Uniform
- Controlled
- Cursed
- A stewardship
- Finite
- Open
- The visible part of a larger realm

Created



- See Genesis 1:1 and frequently:
- Genesis 1:1 (NIV) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV) The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; 2 for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Created



- Probably the most basic feature of nature according to Scripture
- Vs eternal
 - Nature has not always existed.
- Vs divine
 - Nature is not to be worshiped.
- Vs accidental
 - Nature was made by God's wisdom.

Good



- See Genesis 1:31 and several times earlier.
- Genesis 1:31 (NIV) God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

Good



- Though the Bible will later mention a curse that comes upon nature because of human rebellion, its goodness is still emphasized.
- Vs neutral
- Vs accidental, as in secularism
- Vs bad, as seen in Gnosticism

Revelatory



- See Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18-20
- Psalm 19:1 (NIV) The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- Romans 1:18-20 (NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.



Revelatory

- Nature shows God's character as an artifact shows craftsman's skill.
- It reveals God's glory (his uniqueness).
- It reveals his divine nature, eternal power.
- Teleology is a natural consequence.
- Vs accidental
- Vs meaningless

Orderly/Uniform



- See Genesis 8:22, Jeremiah 33:20-21
- Genesis 8:22 (NIV) "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."
- Jeremiah 33:20-21 (NIV) "This is what the LORD says: 'If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, 21 then my covenant with David my servant--and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me--can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne.'"

Orderly/Uniform



- God has made nature to be orderly.
- This is inexplicable even in modern science.
- Vs capricious, random, chaotic
- Vs work of a committee, as in some polytheisms

Controlled



- See Romans 8:28; Isaiah 44:24-28
- Romans 8:28 (NIV) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
- Isaiah 44:24-28 (NIV) "This is what the LORD says-- your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself, 25 who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, 26 who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be built,' and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,' 27 who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,' 28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."

Controlled

- Everything is under God's control, who is working out his purposes in nature and history.
- Vs accidental
- Vs fate
- Vs equally ultimate actors

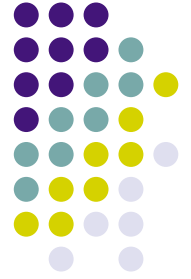


Cursed



- See Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:20-21
- Genesis 3:17 (NIV) To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."
- Romans 8:20-21 (NIV) For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Cursed



- There is some uncertainty regarding the scope of this curse, earth-bound or broader?
- Vs made imperfect
- Vs evolving

A stewardship



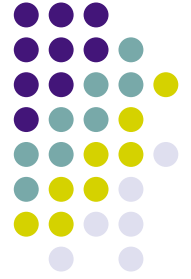
- See Genesis 1:28; Psalm 8
- Genesis 1:28 (NIV) God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."
- Psalm 8:5-8 (NIV) You made him [Adam] a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

A stewardship



- God has entrusted to humans the oversight of nature (at least on earth), but we are responsible to him for how we do this.
- Secular ecologists want something of this sort, but often get tangled in priorities (e.g., PETA).

Finite



- See Genesis 1; Psalm 147:4; Psalm 102:25-27; Revelation 21 and 22
- Psalm 147:4 (NIV) He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.
- Psalm 102:25-27 (NIV) In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 26 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. 27 But you remain the same, and your years will never end.

Finite



- Nature has a beginning, probably a finite size, and some sort of end, though renewed it will last forever.
- Vs eternal cycles
- Vs heat death



Open

- See Genesis 18; Exodus 3; Joshua 5; Job 1-2; Job 38-42.
- Exodus 3:2 (NIV) There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.
- Joshua 5:13-14 (NIV) Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" 14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

Open



- God can and does intervene into the universe he has made.
- This is not typically given much attention by Christians in science or even in theology. Perhaps this is a reaction to medieval and charismatic extremes.
- Vs closed universe
- Universe is more like a guitar than a watch.



Part of larger realm

- See 2 Kings 6; Job 1-2; Matthew 17
- 2 Kings 6:17 (NIV) And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
- Matt 17:5 (NIV) While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Part of larger realm



- This is related to the previous characteristic of nature being open.
- The universe is not explicable from within; not all causation is internal.
- The universe is a stage; history is a novel.
- Vs closed universe of Rudolf Bultmann
- Vs clockwork universe of materialists



Conclusion

We suggest the Bible views nature as:

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The End

Nature has a significance and future beyond human prediction

