

## **God's Intelligently Designed Universe and Harmful Things?**

Dr Michael Jarvis

In my last article entitled 'Our Intelligently Designed Universe' [Our Intelligently Designed Universe](#) I suggested that God has guided the physical, chemical and biological mechanisms he created so as to bring about his pre-ordained outcomes. Humanity is amongst his pre-ordained outcomes. I also noted that the Bible says God created everything that has been made and that he still upholds and guides his universe in ways we cannot identify through scientific research but we can accept by faith.

Accepting by faith is made easier by looking at the fine-tuning that had to be in place in order for our universe to exist and by looking at the vast numbers of 'intricate complexity' examples we see around us, such as the human eye and numerous very complex chemical systems in living creatures. These strongly suggest a wise and powerful God as the initiator, guider and upholder of the universe. In addition, our faith in God can be strengthened through personal experiences of his reality in our individual life situations. This latter reality was a major factor leading me to the realisation that God still does interact with minute details in our lives and I can now more easily visualise that he can interact with details of his universe. I have written an account of some of my own experiences in this regard in the article 'Personal journey of discovery', freely downloadable from my web page.

### **Some serious questions may arise from this concept of God**

Some of the questions arising from our acceptance of the universe having been intelligently designed by God and guided by him towards his pre-ordained outcomes.

1. Why did he create a biological system based on the '**balance of nature**' that involves food chains and one organism eating another?
2. Why did he create an earth with things such as **earthquakes and tornadoes**?
3. Why does he allow **sickness and other harmful things** to happen to us, such as changes in our DNA genetic blueprints, sometimes leading to problems like Down's syndrome?
4. **Are all these realities consistent with God's characteristics** of love, goodness and justice, as revealed to us through the Bible?

### **Overall comments**

In past centuries, before our scientific age, a commonly held Christian view of nature was that God initially created everything without death, sickness and disasters such as earthquakes. These were all thought to be the result of when sin entered the world, via Adam and Eve in the biblical Garden of Eden.

This understanding has been challenged, through scientific discoveries but also through a new look at what the Bible Genesis account actually says. I accept that some Christians still interpret Genesis in this way but my presentation is for those of us who have

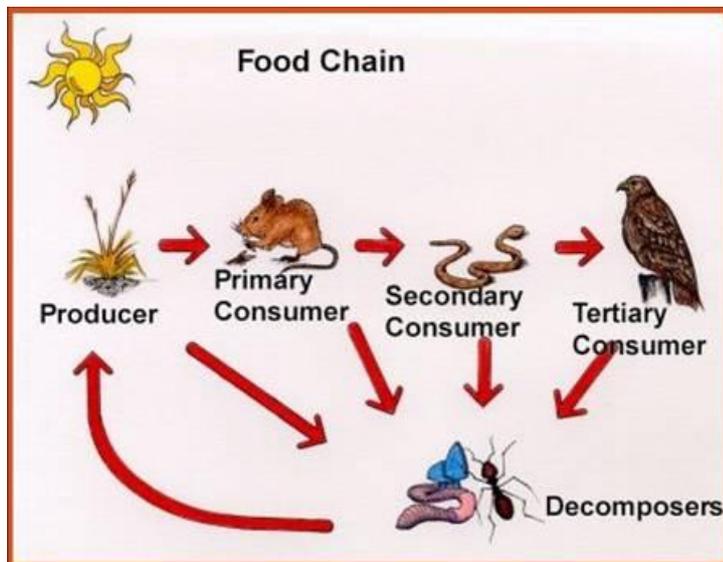
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accepted the scientific evidence for the great age of our earth, for death being a part of life right from the start of life and for things like earthquakes being an essential part of how geology works. [Origin of Death](#)

The challenge facing those of us who accept the scientific evidence is to reconcile this world view with what the Bible reveals about God. This article attempts to summarise my own understanding.

## 1. Why 'the balance of nature'?

The scientific study of ecology shows that every living organism forms part of an overall balance within nature. If there were not this balance between creatures and their food sources we would very soon find life forms outstripping their food supply and their space to live.



The world contains many strange looking creatures, both on land and in the oceans and most living creatures are actually the small ones, such as insects and the even smaller bacteria. All of these perform functions that contribute to the overall balance in nature.

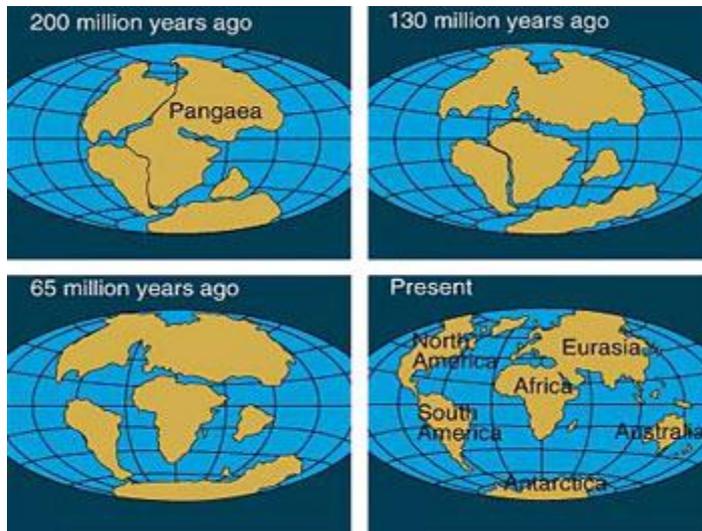
Mankind often upset some of these balances by unwisely removing essential parts of the ecosystem, either through over exploitation or by polluting the environment with chemicals.

There are many examples where this has led to an explosion in the number of plants or animals that then cause damage to crops or to other creatures.

**From a scientific perspective the 'balance of nature' that depends on food chains is a fundamental characteristic of life.** Since the Bible tells us that everything that has been made was made by God, it must surely follow that **he planned life to function in this way.** Each part of these complex webs of interactions is adapted to fulfil very specific functions. There seems to be no way that all of life could have existed without death being a fundamental reality of life on earth.

Another evidence for death being a part of life right from the earliest life forms, is the record they have left as fossils in ancient rocks.

## 2. Why earthquakes, tornadoes and similar events?



Geological studies and comparison of fossils have shown there was once only one continent that scientists have called Pangaea and this started breaking up about 200 million years ago. This process of 'continental drift' has been studied in detail and careful measurements show that major continents are still moving at speeds between 2 and 10 cm/year.

Movements are sometimes slow because of friction between major rock layers and then they may suddenly move causing earthquakes. Earthquakes are particularly common where major continental plates are slipping past each other or colliding. The collision between India and Asia caused creation of the Himalaya mountain range.

**Continental drift is clearly one of the mechanisms the Creator has used to form the separated continents.** We can trace these past movements through a study of rocks and through past and present distribution of animals and plants. For instance, Australia broke free from Pangaea when the earth had many species of marsupial animals like kangaroos and before placental mammals appeared on earth. The placental mammals largely out competed marsupials in most of the earth but Australia retained its great variety of these animals because placental mammals never reached that continent until man arrived.

Clearly earthquakes are a natural event in our world and also tornadoes, hurricanes, floods and other events that are potentially harmful to mankind. However, they are all part of God's creative mechanisms that led to a world suitable for mankind.

## 3. Why does God allow sickness within humanity?

We can look at this question in several ways as listed below and I will expand upon each question in the following pages.

- A. Sickness is in many cases an inevitable result of the **'balance of nature'**.
- B. The genetic code of life (DNA) periodically has small changes and some of these **mutations can be harmful** and cause sicknesses in humans.
- C. There is also a **spiritual dimension** related to the conflict between God and Satan.

### A. Sickness as a result of the 'balance of nature'

Humans have been placed by God into a world where the whole of life functions through a very complex web of inter-relations and inter-actions. As a result there are creatures like mosquitoes and there are parasites of mosquitoes that cause sickness when they enter our bodies. These sorts of impacts on humanity cannot be denied.

The first book of the Bible appears to comment on this where we read, *Be fruitful and increase in numbers 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* (Bible: Genesis 1:28 NIV). The Hebrew word translated as 'subdue' can also be translated as 'bring into subjection'. This suggests that God planned for humanity to be agents of overcoming the difficulties around them. Modern medicine and other beneficial technology can be viewed as part of our fulfilment of this God given function.

### B. Mutations in the DNA code of life

**We do face the reality that the mismanagement of our earth by humanity is not the only cause of sickness.** We have already considered that sickness is in many cases an inevitable result of the 'balance of nature'. In other words, the great diversity of living creatures includes some that have the potential to cause damage to our mortal bodies.

In addition, the remarkably complex DNA genetic code of life does at times undergo apparently spontaneous slight changes that we call mutations. Some of these can result in adverse results, such as children born with genetic disorders.

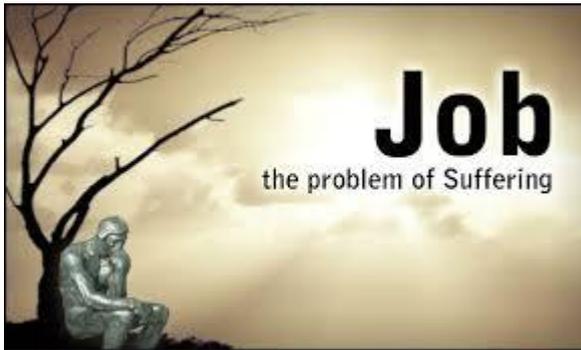
Some of these genetic disorders appear to be unrelated to the lifestyle of individuals or their parents, although others, such as mental impairment due to excessive intake of alcohol during pregnancy, are related to selfish human behaviour.

Although I have suggested in my previous article 'Our intelligently designed universe' that God has guided the mechanisms leading to changes in life forms over time, in order to bring about pre-ordained outcomes such as humanity, these same mechanisms do experience mutations that sometimes lead to genetically caused diseases. We may well ask why God allows this to happen?

### C. A spiritual dimension

The Bible book of Job describes a man who was an example of good living and most people assumed that this should mean that his life would be continually blessed. However, within the unseen realities in which God and Satan exist there is a continuing conflict over the allegiance of mankind.

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We read that Satan challenges God about Job. Satan says to God that Job only serves him because he blesses Job with good health and great possessions. Job then becomes the object of a spiritual conflict. Satan is allowed to harm him with sicknesses and deprive him of possessions. Job suffers greatly but refuses to curse God, even though he struggles to understand why he is suffering these things.

Notice that although Satan cannot create anything he can manipulate God's creation to bad effect.

Jesus tells us more about the character of Satan. We read about the temptation of Jesus in all four of the Gospels, such as Matthew 4:11. It is recorded that Satan promised Jesus all the kingdoms on earth and their splendour if he would bow down and worship him. Jesus did not deny the truth of Satan's claim. In other words it seems that he has authority to manipulate destinies of nations, although other scriptures, such as in the book of Job, make it clear that he only operates within limits allowed by God.

Jesus referred to Satan as, *He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies* (Bible: John 8:44-45 NIV). Little wonder that this great deceiver has managed to fill the history of mankind with murder and wars.

**Paul reminds us of the reality of these unseen powers of deception, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms** (Bible: Ephesians 6:12 NIV).



The Bible book of Revelation vividly portrays the results of mankind being deceived by Satan. We read in chapter six of the four horses let loose on the earth. The first was a white horse depicting the deceptive power of conquest and the deceptive glamour of armies and war. This was followed by the red horse depicting the brutal realities of war, leading to the black horse representing famines resulting directly from the wars and a pale horse representing continuing famine and plagues due to the disruption in normal functions of society.

We should remember that our world today contains millions without enough food to eat or without access to medication, but if the money spent on armaments was diverted to these humanitarian needs they could be totally wiped out in a short time.

In other words, much of the suffering, hunger and disease in the world are a direct result of the selfishness, pride, arrogance, greed and aggression that Satan so easily deceives humanity into justifying.

#### **4. Are these realities consistent with God's character?**

We need to consider the possibility that there was only one sort of universe and world that would be suitable for life and humanity. We understand that God is almighty and this surely means that he can bring about anything that can be brought about. However, **it is possible that the universe and earth we experience is in fact the only possible one that can enable God's long-term plans to be realised.**

We read in scriptures that part of **God's long-term goals is to give us, frail creatures of mortality, an eternal destiny in his presence.** In addition, this life on earth becomes a training ground for that destiny and God knows that our characters are formed through adversity. For instance, we read the words of Peter, *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith you are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, **though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – that faith may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed*** (Bible: 1Peter1:3-7 NIV).

The writer to Hebrews suggests we take Jesus as our example, *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him **endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart*** (Bible. Hebrews 12:2-3 NIV).

**Once we, by faith, believe that this life is not the end and that we will all stand before our Creator, then we can better understand that God's goodness, mercy, love and justice will only be fully revealed to us at that time.** If we consider the words of Jesus regarding judgment we see that he not only considers our actions but also the circumstances of our actions. For instance, he spoke to the people of Capernaum who had seen most of his miracles, and told them that the men of Sodom (destroyed because of their wicked behaviour) would have repented in sackcloth and ashes if they had seen these miracles. Therefore, Jesus said, it will be better for the men of Sodom on Judgment Day than for the men of Capernaum.

There are other Bible passages that show God taking into account the opportunities we had or did not have in this life and he takes ignorance into account when judging wrongdoing. It is therefore unwise for anyone to say that God is not good, loving, merciful and just because **the final demonstration of these qualities will only be fully revealed at Judgment Day.** I personally believe that when we experience the realities of what God has planned for us after physical death, all the hardships of this life will fade into insignificance.

**So, why did God create a world with death, pain and suffering?** We do not know the full answer but can suggest that this was the only way for him to bring about all of his pre-determined 'end goals', many of which involve the great future he has planned for many of humanity. We can also suggest that this world has become a 'battle ground' for the allegiance of mankind. It will remain a conflict zone until the great deceiver has been finally taken out of the picture. This is a hope and expectation accepted by faith by those who have experienced the reality of God in their own personal lives.

## Conclusions

In answer to our initial question: God's intelligently designed universe and harmful things?' I have suggested that sicknesses, earthquakes, tornadoes and other potentially harmful things, are largely the inevitable result of how the chemistry, physics and biology of life function.

**Why did an almighty God plan his Creation this way?** Being almighty must mean that God has the ability to bring into being all possible universes. However, since science is showing us that God has used mechanisms and processes to bring about creation of our universe, it is probable that he would also use mechanisms and processes to bring about any other universe. Science tells us that our universe only exists because of many examples of very finely-tuned relationships. Thus, **it is probable that God knew ours is the only possible universe that could lead to an earth suitable for humanity.**

**We may ask why God created our universe in spite of knowing in advance that life would be based on a 'balance of nature' system involving death, pain and sicknesses?** One possibility is that the end goal was so important to God's overall plans that he knew the end would justify whatever 'means' were necessary to achieve those goals.

**We may ask what overall plans could be so important to God?** Here we can only turn to biblical revelation, telling us that God has a great destiny planned for us within the Timeless Dimension and that this will become a reality after our brief mortal lives are ended. I believe it is only then that all of these questions will be fully answered and **it is only then that we will fully understand that the Creator is indeed good, loving and just.**

It is only then that we will fully understand the words of Jesus, *For God SO LOVED the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him* (Bible: John 3:16-17 NIV).

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It is sometimes hard for us humans to think ahead towards the destinies that God has planned for us because right now we cannot see them with our limited human abilities. God operates within the Timeless Dimension and sees our future as clearly as our past. **He has promised a day when the 'balances will be balanced' and the 'wrongs avenged'.**

**I have asked myself which of two options I would prefer. Would I prefer never to have existed or, in spite of life's difficulties, am I glad to have had a chance to experience life and to have the opportunity to be part of an eternal destiny?**

**We may ask what possible good comes from the problems we face in life, including sicknesses, earthquakes etc?** In this regard we try to see things as God does. He at times seems to consider our character building and our preparation for the eternal destiny he has planned for us, to be far more important than our physical comfort. He knows that adversities have the potential to build our characters if we accept them constructively.

It is also a reality that many people have little or no time for God when they are healthy and prosperous. Since God seeks for our eternal good he knows that adversities lead to more people entering into a relationship with him and it is this relationship that the Bible calls Eternal Life. Some may suggest that this is the ultimate example of 'tough love'!

**We also try to accept that there is a spiritual dimension of reality of which we know little,** but we understand from the Bible that there is a very real contest between good and evil, in essence between God and Satan. I believe it makes good sense to put my faith in the good side and to proclaim by faith that God is good, just and loving, in spite of the unpleasant things that I cannot understand.

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