

# The Consequences for Religion

Robin Ghosh

**Abstract:** *Newton was a devout Christian. The title indicates that he took his theology even more seriously than his science. He would have been horrified if he had thought that his life work would result in general understanding of religious faith. And his own opinion was that it should have exactly the opposite effect. He even supposed that his system of celestial mechanics provided proofs of the existence of God.*

**Keywords:** Consequences for Religion, Religious faith, Gravitation, Celestial mechanics, Perpetual motion.

## 1. Research Methods

The Research Methods are well supported by claims and counter claims as provided in the paragraphs of the article.

### No Natural Cause

There is no natural cause which should determine all the planets, both primary and secondary, to move the same way in the same plane without any considerable variation: this most have been the effect of counsel (i.e. planning). Had the planets been as swift as comets .... Or had the distances from the centres about which their move been greater or less ... or had the quantity of matter (i. e. mass) in the sun, or in Saturn, Jupiter, or the earth, and by consequence their gravitating power, been greater or less than it is the primary planets would not have revolved round the sun nor the secondary ones about Saturn, Jupiter, and the earth, in concentric circles as they do, but would have moved in hyperbolas or parabolas, or in ellipses, very eccentric. To make this system, therefore, with all its motions, required a cause which understood and compared together the quantities of matter in the several bodies of the sun and planets, and the gravitating powers resulting from thence, the several distances of the primary planets from the sun, and of the secondary ones from Jupiter, and the earth, and the velocities with which these planets could revolve ... and to compare and adjust these together in so great a variety of bodies, argues that cause to be not blind or fortuitous but very well skilled in mechanics and geometry.<sup>1</sup>

Newton's argument is only a particular version, or example, of what philosophers call the "argument from design" for the existence of God. The essence of the argument is that nature shows examples of the adaptation of means to ends, in other words of planning, and that implies a planner. Thinkers including Newton himself, have given many other instances of such apparent design, in the universe. The human or animal eye is a favourite is a favourite example, although any other organs of the body or the body as a whole, would do as well. Thousands of other examples have been suggested. Thus, the pollination of flowers by bees and other insects is often quoted. The bees carry pollen from flower to flower. Chance cannot account for this. Evidently there is a purpose in nature to produce flowers. That is the end, and nature has adopted, a singularly in genius set of means. The purpose it is evident is not the mind of the bee. The only explanation is the purpose of a mind which controls nature.

A B Elgian scientist, Lecomte du otty apparently produced a book called Human Destiny in which he argues "that the

protein molecule, which is necessary for life, could not have been produced by chance, but must have been the result of design".<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that all the cases cited the solar system, the production of the eye, the pollination of flowers, the protein molecule are merely different examples of one and the same argument and that they all depend on the same logic. The logical examination of the argument as it appears in one example will therefore apply to all the others. Whatever happens in this world is almost infinitely improbable for there are always an infinite number of other things which could have happened instead. A man walking along a street is killed by a tile blown off a roof by the wind. We attribute this to chance that is to the operation of blind natural laws and forces, without any special design on the part of anyone. Yet the chances against that event happening were almost infinite. The man might have been, at that moment the tile fell, or two feet away, or twenty feet away or a mile away. He might have been at a million other places on the surface of the earth. Or the tile might have fallen at a million other movements than the moment in which it did fall. Yet in spite of the almost infinite improbability of the happening, we do not find it necessary to suppose that someone threw the tile down from the roof on purpose. We are quite satisfied to attribute the event to chance, that is, to the operation of natural forces. Thus, if as a matter of logic, we treat God as an hypothesis, we find that chance is a better hypothesis than God. Thus, from whatever point of view we regard it the argument from designs turns out to be worthless.

## 2. Criticism / Abstract

W. T. Stace has criticized that Newton's argument is entirely worthless and therefore that the argument from design whatever example is chosen is worthless. The aim is not to produce skepticism regarding the existence of God. The problem of the truth of religion will in the end come up for discussion, but not now. The immediate aim is to show that no scientific argument by which he meant an argument drawn from the phenomena of nature can ever have the slightest tendency either to prove or to disprove the existence of God, in short that science is irrelevant to religion. This aim has evidently two parts, first to show that no argument from nature such as the argument from design has the slightest tendency to prove the existence of God, and second, that no argument from nature can disprove it.

Ignoring details, the essential discoveries were: -

That the earth moves round the sun, not the sun round the earth. (Copernicus)

That the planets move in ellipses, not circles (Kepler)

That moving bodies will continue moving at a uniform speed in a straight line, unless some force acts on them. They will not stop. (Galileo)

The Law of Gravitation (Newton)

This has expressed itself in the western world in the form of three central beliefs that there exists a divine being who created the universe, that there is a cosmic plan or purpose and that the world is a moral order. And neither the Copernicus astronomy nor any of the other discoveries of the early scientists nor, for the matter of that, any discoveries of later science are inconsistent with these religious beliefs.

It is fact that the rise of science was immediately followed by a great wave of religious depiction. On the heels of the 17th Century came the most skeptical age of the modern world, the 18th Century. This was the age in which an English king could complain that half of his bishops were atheists. This was the age which produced Hume gibbon, Voltaire.

### Remoteness of God

First of all then, Newtonian science produced in men's minds an ever growing sense, or feeling of, the remoteness of God. Any sort of living religion requires God, who is near us, who is all round us in the world now. In superstitious ages this sense of present nearness was produced by belief in miracles. God worked immediately in our lives by causing fire out of heaven to fall on our enemies, by sending food to us by ravens if we were hungry or sending down out of the sky, for us to eat. This things of course did not happen to everyone. But they had happened to those men who, more conspicuously than others, followed God's commands. And this was sufficient to show that God was near at hand and is always helping those who love him and whom he loves. He is working in the world all the time.

### God created the World

God created the world, and he also, in doing so, created the natural laws for instance, the laws of motion and gravitation by which it was to run. God was thus the "first cause" of the world, but after he had once created, natural law, which he had also created, took over the job after the original creation God did nothing. Gravitation and the laws of motion did everything.

God was like a watch maker, who, having once made and wound up his machine, left it to be moved by its own internal mechanism. God differed from the human mechanic only in that he had invested a perpetual motion machine which would go on working for ever by itself without any intervention on his part.

### God and the American people

In the Reader's Digest of January, 1949 there appeared an article entitled God and the American People. It recorded the results of a nationwide poll on religious questions. Asked whether they believed in the existence of God ninety five persons answered 'yes'. But asked why they tried to lead good lives, only twenty five percent gave religion as one of

the considerations which counted with them. Asked whether religion in any way affected their politics or their business fifty four percent said no analyzed the polls, the reverend Dr Green Berg observed "People do not apparently associate God directly with their own behaviour".<sup>3</sup>

A God who "exists" but does nothing in the world, who in no way affects the outcome of events, is simply a God who does not matter. Of course most people do not say things like this, do not even think them in their minds. But this modern world picture, consciously emsised only by a few intellectuals, is nevertheless the unconscious background of modern life. And we see now when we speak of Newtonian Science having undermined or even destroyed belief in God, it is not meant that it has resulted in people saying "there is not God" but in the draining of all life out of the assertion that there is.

If one admits the scientific maxim that every event in nature has a natural cause, it is still, of course, possible to bring in God at the beginning as a first cause. But this leads to the conception of a God who, since he does nothing in the world now, is of no practical importance in our lives. By a logical ingenuity one can, no doubt, avoid this result one can suppose that God is operating all the time, but that he operates only through and by means of natural laws. The force of gravitation does not act by itself. It is God who is acting in this force at every moment. And so is with all natural laws. If he were not continually thus working in nature, gravitation and the other forces of nature would cease to act and nature would collapse. God is, as it were, continually creating and recreating nature. This hypothesis did in fact suggest itself to a few philosophic minds, but it has no influence with the masses of men who continued to feel that God could only have acted in the beginning.

Hume in the Eighteenth Century wrote, "Look around the World. You will find it to be nothing but one great machine, sub - divided into an infinite number of lesser machines."

### 3. Summary

From all the details furnished above it would be clear that Newton was a God fearing person and so behind all the proofs that he has given he has leveled God as the soul arbitrator because without His consent not a blade of grass can move though he believed that God cannot be proved inside the laboratory and it is not possible for science to prove this. There is no possible explanation to prove the movement of the planets, the rise of the sun, moon and the stars at night and religion cannot explain this through theology. There is ot natural cause for the planets movement. So God has to be believed.

### 4. Conclusion

Whatever be the consequences of religion it is clearly proved four the contents given above that it cannot come nearer to scientific discoveries. Laplace proved that the sun goes round the seen but not it has been scientifically proved that the earth moves round the sun. When Newton proved centuries ago that he would make the Americans light their homes but the people laughed. When he did people were

very happy. Similarly when the apple fell on his lap he discovered the law of gravitation. He knew that the earth gravitates. Then Newton came to the conclusion that the earth had immense power and God is at the centre of all. Nothing can move beyond God's will though it cannot be proved scientifically that the earth moves round the sun. The why is yet to be answered.

## **References**

- [1] Quoted, A. E. Burtt, *Metaphysical foundation of Modern Physical Science* (New York) Harcourt, Bruce and Company, 1925 P/286
- [2] Belgian Scientist Lecontate du Nothy in his book *Human Destiny* wrote this.
- [3] Dr Green Berg – People do not apparently associate God directly with their own behaviour.
- [4] Hume quotation – 18th Century “Look around the world when you will find it to be nothing but one great machine sub divided into an infinite number of lesser machine.