

THE BOUNDS OF THE DOMINION MANDATE

by Henry M. Morris*

In a recent article,¹ I pointed out that God's primeval dominion mandate is still in effect for all nations. As a reminder, that mandate—originally given to Adam and Eve—is as follows:

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

Such dominion and subjugation of the earth would entail developing a large population, and then much serious research into the systems and processes of the earth and its inhabitants, as well as the control and dissemination of this research to other men and women who can develop and apply it, all carried out as a divine stewardship under God. This project would eventually involve men and women serving in many different occupations—in fact, every honorable human occupation can well be included in this mandate.²

Sometimes the word translated "earth" (Hebrew, *erets*) is used to refer particularly just to the ground. This is *not* the

connotation here, however. God specifically said that man's dominion was to be "*over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*" Thus the oceans and atmosphere, as well as the continents, are included.

What about the Stars and Outer Space?

The outer heavens, on the other hand, were *not* mentioned in the mandate and so were *not* placed under man's dominion. This fact is made clear in later passages of Scripture. For example:

The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath He given to the children of men (Psalm 115:16).

In light of such a definitive prescription by God, should men talk about conquering outer space, as some have done? Consider also, the key sermon by Paul when he preached to the philosophers in Athens.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times be-

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fore appointed, and the bounds of their habitation (Acts 17:24,26).

This inspired assertion by Paul the apostle tells us that God has made all nations of men “*to dwell on all the face of the earth*”—not on Mars or Venus or some distant star, and apparently not even on an orbiting satellite such as Earth’s Moon. None of these have the necessities for human life, such as air and water. Planet Earth, alone among all the known planets and satellites in the solar system (or anywhere else), is equipped to sustain man. “*The earth hath He given to the children of men* [literally ‘children of Adam’].”

Note also the reference to “*the bounds of their habitation*” in Acts 17:26. God has apparently assigned specific boundaries, both geographically and chronologically, to each nation. All of these, of course, are on “*the face of the earth,*” never anywhere else.

Then, why do many men—especially scientists and politicians—want to spend untold billions of dollars on outer space? As one scientist acknowledged: “Astronomy and cosmology are of little earthly use.”³

The answer, at least for most cosmologists and theoretical astronomers, is that they hope by such costly research to explain the universe without God and find evidence of life and evolution out there.

One eminent astronomer comments as follows: “It is therefore scientifically plausible to consider a universe with no need for an external creator in the traditional sense.”⁴ This notion is based on the popular current astronomical idea that some sort of “quantum fluctuation” in the primeval “nothing” produced a particle universe which then proceeded to evolve through inflation and the Big Bang into our present cosmos. Alan Guth, the inventor of the inflation hypothesis, says that “in the inflationary theory the universe evolves from essentially nothing at

all, which is why I frequently refer to it as the ultimate free lunch.”⁵

Such far-out ideas are not, of course, based on observation and are beset by many difficulties. Nevertheless, they are believed by most cosmologists (at least if the published scientific journal articles and books in the field are any criterion). Even those cosmologists who reject the Big Bang and have various other cosmogonies to promote are also mostly writing within an atheistic perspective. There are, of course, a few who believe that the Big Bang confirms the account of creation in Genesis 1:1, but astronomer Paul Davies notes that: “. . . some still regard the Big Bang as ‘the creation.’ . . . However, this sort of armchair theology is wide of the mark. The popular idea of a God who sets the universe going like a clockwork toy and then sits back to watch was ditched by the Church in the last century.”⁶ There is little doubt that the vast majority of astronomers and cosmologists view the cosmos from an atheistic perspective.

The evolutionary worldview could be buttressed, of course, if evidence of the development of life in other worlds than Earth alone could ever be found. This is what enables the politicians and cosmologists to obtain continual government funding for their hyper-expensive space projects. An important meeting was held for this very purpose several years ago. “But last week researchers from a host of disciplines gathered in Washington to build a case for protecting and expanding work on the origins of the universe, planetary systems, and life itself. Their goal is to convince the Clinton Administration that further cuts to NASA’s science budget will endanger efforts to understand how life emerged.”⁷

One commentator has noted that: “Given a choice, many people would not spend a dime to explore the universe be-

yond Earth. They think social problems rate funding priority and therefore consider it wasteful to throw billions of tax dollars to achieve who-knows-what in return. . . . It's a 'given' that humans so yearn to discover life elsewhere; this underlying desire can be exploited to 'green light' almost any mission."⁸

Not even the waste of billions of dollars—not to mention sacrificing the lives of many dedicated and brilliant men and women—must be allowed to hinder space research, they say. "So, continued planetary funding requires public relations—and glamour."⁹

Future Space Research

There have been many valuable "spin-offs" from our space research, especially in the technological tools that have been developed to implement it. Furthermore, astronomy has for centuries had many practical earthly uses (in navigation, surveying, chronology, etc.). Modern research has led to tremendous advances in communications, weather forecasting, etc. These aspects surely are warranted in the dominion mandate. Also many highly motivated men and women—not only engineers and scientists, but even many astronauts themselves—have contributed significantly to the program as sincere Christians, seeking to follow God's will in their lives.

Those aspects of the space program that have contributed specifically to our divinely ordained mandate of dominion over the earth are fully warranted, as far as the mandate itself is concerned. The risk to human life may be questioned, especially in view of the fact that unmanned space shuttles and other vehicles can be programmed to do almost everything that manned vehicles can do.

But space programs whose purpose is mainly to satisfy curiosity about cosmic or organic evolution do *not* seem (to me, at least) to be a part of the dominion man-

date. It is "*the earth*" that has been "*given to the children of men*"!

However, I am admittedly as curious as anyone about the structure and purpose of all the trillions of stars, planets, and satellites that are out there. But the Bible says that, in the ages to come, we who have truly trusted the Word of God and have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation, have eternity ahead of us to learn about God's creation. We cannot know much about all this right now, but at least we know there will be endless time ahead in which to learn and enjoy everything about God's limitless creation. Maybe the present dominion mandate will be expanded to become a cosmic mandate. We shall see!

Endnotes

1. "The Dominion Mandate," in *Acts & Facts* (vol. 32, March 2003), pp. a-c.
2. See *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science*, by Henry M. Morris (2nd Edition, Green Forest, Arkansas: Master Books, 2002), pp. 31-37 and *God and the Nations* (same author and publisher, 2003), pp. 27-36, for more extensive discussions of the scope and on-going relevance of the dominion mandate.
3. Horace F. Judson: "Century of the Sciences," *Science* 84 (November 1984), p. 42.
4. Paul Davies: "What Hath COBE Wrought?" *Sky and Telescope* (January 1993), p. 4.
5. Alan Guth. "Cooking Up a Cosmos," *Astronomy* (vol. 25, September 1997), p. 54.
6. Paul Davies, op. cit., p. 47, Andrew Lawler. "Building a Bridge between the Big Bang and Biology," *Science* (vol. 274, November 8, 1996), p. 912.
7. Andrew Lawler. "Building a Bridge between the Big Bang and Biology," *Science* (vol. 274, November 8, 1996), p. 912.
8. Bob Berman. "Strange Universe," *Astronomy* (vol. 28, August 2000), p. 100.
9. Ibid. 

IS MAN A “HIGHER” ANIMAL?

by John D. Morris

Frequently we see the statement that man is an advanced animal, implying he is higher on the evolutionary tree than the others. Let’s examine this claim.

Remember that evolution holds that simple forms of life spontaneously arose from non-life. Through mutation and natural selection they increased in complexity to multi-cellular animals to invertebrates to vertebrate fish. Next, some evolved into amphibians, then reptiles, then birds, and mammals. The standard view of evolution considers each stage more “advanced,” or more complex than its predecessors until finally man arrives. In reality, however, all animals, living or fossil, are unthinkably complex. Each shows interdependence of functioning parts, each with a marvelous purpose to achieve. Even a single cell is more complex than a super computer. There is no such thing as simple life. If it’s alive—it’s complex.

Consider the “lowly” insect—pick one. As you study it, you’ll discover an undreamed of complexity. Or the extinct arthropod, the trilobite sporting a powerful eye with a complex lens, equally as advanced as any today.

Or consider various mammals—from the whale with an intricate language, to the appreciation of beauty among some birds, to the use of “tools” among some primates—animals exhibit amazing abilities.

Similar traits or organs or abilities are also found in man, although our sight is not as good as the hawk’s, our hearing is not as good as a dog’s, etc. Each has its own niche to fill.

Yet man is different. His “higher” characteristics have more to do with his

intelligence, his ability to plan and consider the future, and ability to express emotions. Animal instincts and habits are remarkable, but something sets man apart.

We find this difference explained in the record provided by the Creator of man and the animals. In Genesis One we see that the fish, the birds, the creeping things, the cattle, the beasts of the field, and the beasts of the earth were all created “after their kinds.” But when God created man, He created him “after His own image.” We often have similar DNA to the animals, similar body parts, similar functions, similar consciousness, similar blood, but the comparison disappears when man’s eternal spirit is considered. The animals have nothing like this. Something about man adequately reflects God’s nature in a way that the animals don’t share.

God created man with the wonderful ability to reason and comprehend abstract thoughts. He alone can speak in a language which communicates his inner yearnings. Most importantly, man can truly love and respond to love, most particularly the love of God. He can recognize his own sinfulness, repent of it, and appreciate God’s gracious solution to his sin problem. He can respond to God’s love by choosing a life pleasing to Him. Animals, regardless of their cranial capacity, know nothing of this.

Man is qualitatively superior to the animals in many important ways. But he is also quantitatively distinct from all animals.

No, man is *not* a higher animal. Man is not an animal at all. He is the very image of God, and nothing less. 



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