



## Transcriptions

### The Stance of a Creational Developmentalist

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**Annotation:** *North American Professors of Christian Education (NAPCE), Northwestern College in Roseville, Minnesota, November 3, 1978.* Ted Ward describes his search for an understanding of developmentalism that is both responsible theologically and incorporates research from the social sciences.



One of the problems that a person in social science or in natural science runs into is that, if his presuppositions are not on straight, he is in a dire danger today of being badly confused by a capacity within humanistic science to define virtually everything that he is in non-theistic terms. Now as a creational developmentalist, I argue and I hold that what the human being is, is because God has created and God has created a humanness that is passed along, not mystically, but psychogenetically as a person inherits the characteristic of being in the family of man (*sic*). God created, and the family of man propagates and does not lose its humanity generation by generation. And there are certain structures—notice the emphasis today in a number of, particularly social science fields, as the word “structure” is becoming more and more prominent, for example, in linguistics. Are you aware of structural linguistics and the emphasis on deep structure, that Chomsky material on structure? Are you aware of the emphasis in sociology on structure, anthropology on structure? Because as these fields of science dig deeper, they find that down underneath it’s like a skeleton and you have to look at that skeleton and say, “My goodness isn’t that remarkable. It’s like somebody put that skeleton right down underneath there.” Just like Kohlberg finding structures. Isn’t it amazing that the structures are there. How did they get there? People are finding structure. Kohlberg has been

referred to as a structural developmentalist. Some of the followers of Kohlberg have described themselves as organismic structural developmentalists which I think is a fantastic tribute to their having discovered that there is more than environment; that there is more than happenstance; that the organism of the human being is a magnificent testimony to logic, to pattern, to structure. This is as close as you can get without saying, “God,” but they will not say, “God.”

The humanist, the secular humanist, is going to great lengths and the newest name is “Sociobiology.” I don’t know. This is *Newsweek* magazine, October 16<sup>th</sup>. There is a researcher at Harvard by the name of Edward Wilson who is trying, from a naturalistic frame of reference, to explain again a yet overpowering evidence of the hand of the Creator and the peculiar nature of man as a spiritual being, and he is explaining this in terms of sociobiology. And in one of the professional journals that I read most carefully back in April—or in *Newsweek* in April, we had virtually the whole issue of the *Educational Researcher* given over to the matter of sociobiology which is virtually the newest way to defy Magoon’s article (University of Delaware,) “Sociobiology and Schooling” another attempt from naturalistic philosophy out of the realm of determinism to explain—not to explain away—but to explain in purely naturalistic terms that, which from spiritual frames of reference and God-based presuppositions, are much easier to explain.

Now the point that I want to make about this is that our attitude toward this kind of work must be very carefully measured. It is so typical within our communities of the saints for us to say, “Well, there is just one more ungodly, beastly scientist trying to rule God out.” Yes, that’s true, but take a hard look at what he’s finding in his data and understand that his data are quite often responsible. It’s his ways of making sense out of his data that are fouled up. And you don’t have to throw out the baby with the bath. Now listen, for example, if you can get past some of his primary assertions, you can find some things in here that ought to really resonate and say, “Well, now, you know, that’s an exciting thing. And if we if we came at that from a creational developmental point of view, you could make some sense out of those data that really are highly suggestive of what’s going on and how we can relate to it.” Let me just read you a few snatches out of the *Newsweek* article which happens to be fairly readable; the other one is not:

The current growth of sociobiology represents the latest twist in the nature/nurture struggle: the seesaw battle over the relative impact of heredity and environment on human intelligence and behavior. The issue dates as far back as Plato who justified the hierarchy in his *Republic* by concocting the story that rulers and the ruled were preordained by heredity. That view re-emerged in the seventeenth century when Thomas Hobbs asserted that man’s aggressiveness, selfishness, and cunning were inherent in his nature.

Okay. Now from a creational point of view you say, “Well, of course they’re inherent in his nature and they would be communicated in a psycho-genetic way. They are part of the inheritance of being human.” You don’t throw that out. You say, “But there’s yet another perspective on that that can be brought to bear.”

A hundred years ago, it inspired Social Darwinism which invokes survival of the fittest as the reason for denying aid and comfort to the poor since such people shouldn’t be encouraged to breed and pass on their apparent inadequacy. The naturists haven’t had it all their own way. Within the past decade, academic sentiment has increasingly supported the environmental determinism advanced by the philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the eighteenth century. Rousseau argued that each human baby is born with free will and perfectibility and is molded by his surroundings. Departures from this notion have been

greeted by scholarly scorn and political protest. Harvard psychologist, Richard Herrnstein, was accused of sexism, racism, and other evils in '71 when he insisted that heredity contributes more to human intelligence than does the environment.

I don't know whether you're aware of this, but people are coming back from the environment kick to a psycho-genetic emphasis and they're leaving God out of it at both extremes. But the thing has developed into a seesaw, so it's no longer a clear-cut, "If you're not a behaviorist, you're lost." Now you're either a behaviorist or a socio-biologist, or you're some kind of a nut. And, yet, as a Christian, you can see the validity of the findings in each of those postures and see how they can be brought together meaningfully as an apparent set of conflicts. But in a theological frame of reference they are not conflicts; they are attributes and aspects of the whole human condition. In other words, a Christian set of presuppositions, or a biblical body of presuppositions, allows a person sometimes to look at those same data and see sometimes even less conflict than the seculars are arguing between themselves; because the position is neither this extreme nor this extreme for the Christian, but it is a third posture. And that third posture, for the Christian, ought to be the hallmark and the keystone of any of us involved in either social science or the fields of practice that are based on social science for their knowledge base. And I submit to you that the social science base of Christian education is there, just not adequately recognized. Now I'm not suggesting that you take away the theological base but I was challenging in the earlier session today how well we've taken advantage of our theological base in fact. Let me read a little more: "Language and religion are almost certainly genetic," says Wilson, "because they're distinctly human and universal. The human being always develops language. The human being always develops religion."

So he's saying that even religion and language are genetic. It is in the nature of man to develop language and to develop religion. Now don't let that turn you off; that ought to turn you on. You say, Well, let's look at the data there; that's what we've been saying all along: that God began his process of dealing with man by creating into man the capability of communication and the tendency to know him when he saw him. Another such claim is the taboo against incest. Very interesting. I've done a lot of work in the moral development realm in the area of incest, alone. And, by the way, the incest thing even goes into higher-form apes. It's a profound common taboo and nobody has really been able to explain it. It's one of the most unexplainable of the evident phenomenon. And here the socio-biologist is coming out, just like a Christian would, and saying, "It's built in; it's part of the nature of the creature." And, of course, he has to explain that then, but he's not using environment to explain it so he has to use heredity to explain it.

Now, you see, this is just a seesaw in the secular realm and unless the Christian wants to play ping pong back and forth across that table, he needs to develop a posture that is a clear-cut Christian presuppositional posture capable of looking at the data, and looking past the findings; reinterpreting from the data findings that make sense from a Christian point of view. "Societies, without exception, exert strong cultural sanctions against sexual intercourse between brothers and sisters," but Wilson posits the existence of what he terms a far deeper less rational form of enforcement. In other words, a deeper form of enforcement than the social enforcement. He says, "It must be a genetic enforcement."

Now you look at Romans the second chapter, where Paul says that even those who have not heard have within them . . . Remember that passage? And lest it be thought a fluke in one chapter, he reiterates it. In a slightly different form, he says, "The heathen have within them that which tells them of God's law." Very interesting, very interesting, and inherently, as written here, non-biblical.

But the data can be interpreted in a biblical framework; they do not need to be rejected. Christian education will find a rich base of background stuff about the nature of human beings as persons and as a nature of human society if it can once get past its blinders with reference to whether or not it's been written from Christian perspective and get past the conclusions into the findings.

Now those of you who are familiar with the standard format of a doctoral dissertation in an experimental science field are aware that chapter one is virtually always the problem statement. Chapter two is virtually always the precedents in literature; not a review of the literature so much as the precedents for this particular study. Chapter three is the particular plan for the study or the research design or the experimental design. Chapter four is the findings. Chapter five is the conclusions, and many the student that has to be taught patiently, laboriously the difference between findings and conclusions. And if we, as Christian educators, could get straight in our heads the difference between findings and conclusions, we would find out there a tremendous wealth of literature. And especially if you can get satisfied with where you're at. And I'm not arguing that you all ought to be creational developmentalists but I'm simply saying, that in my own quest, that's where I'm at now. Creational in the same sense that some of my humanistic friends refer to themselves as organismic and structural. I know there's something basic down there. I know there's a skeleton. I know there's a grand master plan. Well, I don't have to use organismic developmental, I just go straight to source and I argue, it is Creational, God. Developmental in the sense that God made it that way and within it are the potentialities for its development. Therefore, I do not *bring* those potentialities of development as an educator; I *release* those potentialities of development. Just a little more from the sociobiology because it it really speaks so illustratively of where we are today.

Happily he detects another soft-core variety of altruism brought about by different interplay within the genetic limits. The exemplar is Mother Teresa, a nun who ministers to the sick and dying in the teeming city of Calcutta. She lives a life of total poverty without any hope of reward, or so it seems; but according to Wilson, such 'saints' do, if only subconsciously, see their reward in heaven. Less godly practitioners of reciprocal altruism expect their returns on earth. Soft-core altruism is ultimately selfish, Wilson argues. The altruist expects reciprocation from society for himself or his close relatives.

And there's where you have to say, this man does not know what servanthood means to the Christian. He does not know what love means to the Christian. And you have to scratch your head and say, I wonder if many Christians know? And he is explaining from a naturalistic ground that which, indeed, must be explained as finding, but from a different presupposition is explained to a different conclusion, hence, the difference between findings and conclusions. "Does that observed fact," I won't read the precedent paragraph, "require genetic foundation? Religion and government both codify the practices of the group and impose sanctions to make people follow the rules, says Harvard Professor, B.F. Skinner, who believes that all behavior is molded by environment. I question the idea, says Skinner, that we instinctively have this tendency. It is no more than the way we construct our social environment because we're conditioned to learn what is successful behavior."

Back and forth. Interesting thing. At least now we've got somebody else playing on the other side of the ping pong table. But it should not be readily acceptable as a Christian alternative because it is inherently non-Christian in itself. Yet the data from both sides of that argument can be digested in a Christian perspective and they can be useful in the understanding of the human development

process itself. Now it doesn't follow that we can jump easily and readily from that which we understand process-wise to that which we also ought to do process-wise. There's a gap yet there.

Let me share with you an observation about the nature of man and the nature of God as being a reciprocal relationship themselves. Let me posit two dynamics: a dynamic of truth coming through revelation and a dynamic of understanding coming through inquiry. You see the reciprocity there between he who inquires and he who informs. Then let us lay over that a picture of God and man: God in the revealing posture and man in the inquiring posture. Let me make the image a little less confused by pulling this out and pointing out a couple of particulars on this on this transparency. God can be seen as source. If he is seen as source, he must be seen as both Creator and Author. And if we argue God's consistency, that authorship is consistent with that act of creation. Therefore, what God has revealed in his Word is consistent with what God has revealed in his creation. This is God in the process of revealing truth.

What we must understand is that man is created in the image of God; not as if God were creating more creators and authors in order that we, like God, can be in the business of revealing truth, but image more in the sense of mirror-image: that which echoes back, that which responds back into God. And this model gives us a dynamic for a Christian developmental view of educational process because it asks the question—even as authorship and creatorship are synonymous and are interlocked—if man is to be a responsible inquirer and to develop human understanding, how can he do this, apart from putting his science [jumps to next thought] and science properly understood is the process by which man inquires into the Creation? And theology is the process by which man inquires systematically into the Word. One of the problems that I think we have faced in the Christian community is a dissonance between our scientific effort and our theological effort. A dissonance to the point of separation. I just can't deal with that. Every Christian must be an inquirer. Every Christian, therefore, must be developed in scientific competencies to some extent and theological competencies to some extent. And especially those who are developing high-level scientific competencies must have high-level theological competencies. And those who have high-level theological competencies must have high-level scientific competencies. And the fact that that is not the case tells you an awful lot about why there is stalemate in the field of Christian education. I don't refer to Sunday schools here; I'm talking about seminaries. I'm talking about the field of scholarship, itself.

It is absolutely important for me, as a person in social science, to be concerned about my theological frame of reference. My life was transformed in an encounter with Edmund Clowney a little better than ten years ago. In fact, some of you may have been there—Seminar '70, was it '69 or '68? Were you there? I don't know whether you were in that little rump session that Edmund Clowney and several others were in. We sat in some wicker furniture out on the foyer and somebody had asked me to hold forth on feedback theory in communication. I had been a program planner for that—I was not on the program except for a very small slice of time—but somehow somebody had conned me into doing a thing for this little impromptu group on feedback theory. And I was sitting on the floor drawing on big pieces of paper—were you there in that little encounter? *Yeab, I was.* It, well, at any rate, it was a moment that I'll never forget, not for all the people who were there, but for Edmund Clowney and his contribution to it. I had kind of laid it out the way I thought these people would understand it and I'd shared it and I'd shared it in good faith.

And Edmund Clowney, president of Westminster Theological Seminary, leaned forward from the wicker chair that he was sitting on there in that resort in the Pocono Hills and put his face

right across toward me sitting on the floor there and said, “Ted, what are the theological implications of feedback theory?” And I was at a period in my life when I was running into theologians like him, on different occurrences and different circumstances and I’d noticed one of the characteristics of these people was that quite often if you got things out of their ball game, they would do anything under the sun to get it back into their terms. And I’d gotten so that I could handle that with a little bit of grace and a little bit of sarcasm, which is the way I handle a lot of things, and I said to him, “*Doctor Clowney*,” by the way, I knew him fairly well at that point so this was a kind of a good-humored interchange and yet it had a barb in it, I said, “*Doctor Clowney*, you presume to ask *me* what are the theological implications of feedback theory. You, sir, are the theologian; therefore, that is *your* question.” He said, without changing the expression on his face; just as dry as anything, he said, “Ted, I don’t look at it that way.” He said, “I’m a Christian, you’re a Christian; I just asked a theological question; that’s *our* question.” Changed my life. No longer was I satisfied to let somebody else do my theological thinking for me. Now what I’m looking for are some people who are theologically well-grounded who are willing to say, No longer am I going to let other people do my scientific thinking for me. Scientific inquiry is responsible inquiry into that which our Lord has created. Scientific inquiry which is not theologically well-articulated is suspect science. Theology which is not carefully articulated into the rest of God’s revelation of himself is suspect theology. We’re living in a time when the world demands the most whole and thorough understanding they can bring to bear.

I hope that this conversation tonight which reflects something of what’s going on in me and something of the way I approach a question like even the models of teaching, I have to ultimately say, the real issue in deciding here is not which one works, but which one comes down the best in terms of some theological criteria about the nature of man. This quest is one where I’ve come to conclude that there is nothing more important than a biblical theology having arrived at some position with reference to where God is in everything. A biblical theology that, for me, begins with God as Source and Author: “In the beginning, God,” and raises methodological questions like mad from there on.

Of second importance to me is a biblical anthropology. I have been, even as a kid, a little alarmed at the willingness of the evangelical Christian community to look at scientific evidences if it glorified God by saying, Look how many stars God made. I’ll never forget that the first Moody Institute film was, “The God of Creation” (first popular release) and it was a great tribute to the grandeur of God, but it completely skirted the issue of God’s having created man. It exults in God’s having created things. And if you just simply take the Moody Institute films as a whole and look at them as an unbroken line of communication, you know the very first film that began to look at what God had created in terms of structures and society; you know what the film was? “The Colony of Bees.” Somehow bees were safe to talk about what God had created in the way of structures of community. Bees were safe because they were things. It’s like we come from a legacy that doesn’t want to admit that God created man. And yet a biblical anthropology, a biblical view of the nature of man, is one of the most liberating things you can possibly have as an educator: to understand something of what the magnificence of that sixth-day creature is really all about.

And after that, the importance of a biblical ecclesiology because in the understanding of man we understand much more of the needs than we do of the means of meeting those needs. And anthropology gives us a frame of reference about the nature of man in terms of needs to be met. And ecclesiology gives us a frame of reference about meeting those needs. But, believe me, a sloppy ecclesiology coupled up with a sloppy anthropology produces sloppy Christian education.