

The Breath of Life

1. Creation: The Past

- A. Wind, water...wonder
- B. Deep Time
- C. "The multimillion [indeed, billion] year time frame within which scientists believe the earth has existed, and which is supported by the observation of natural, mostly geological, phenomena"
- D. In the beginning
- E. Not just a few thousand years in some remote Middle Eastern garden, as the young earth creationist will tell you, but centuries *exponentially* multiplied
- F. Ages past
- G. Genesis 1
- H. "Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the spirit of God was over the waters."
- I. The spirit of God
- J. Alternate translation
- K. Wind, breath
- L. From the Hebrew, *ruach*
- M. God understood not as a supreme being or entity, but—
- N. Acc to mystical Judaism—*primal vibrations*
- O. Creative tremors that shook form out of chaos, matter out of energy, a whisper of wind that whirled the universe into being
- P. In—the—beginning

2. Long after the beginning

- A. Ages pass
- B. Yet the same sacred breath that brought form out of chaos
- C. Will bring a people, the Jews, out of slavery
- D. Rise up, O Prophet, and speak
- E. From v. 5: "Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it"
- F. The fabric of the cosmos, stretched, glittering with stars
- G. A beautiful image—
- H. He who speaks thus knows what we have forgotten:
- I. The only way to Mystery is through metaphor

- J. The cosmos, a fabric—spread out by God
- K. Then breath, spirit, wind, water...wonder
- L. In—the—beginning

3. A New Beginning

- A. Stand aside, you prophet
- B. Your vision of old
- C. The source of creation
- D. Inanimate and *cold*
- E. The age of science—
- F. A seminary student turned natural biologist
- G. Master of exquisite detail
- H. Discovers the mechanism by which life evolves:
- I. Natural selection
- J. And with it, survival of the best adapted
- K. Carving out, in his *Origin of Species*,
- L. A final gap-for-God
- M. “There is,” he says, describing the evolutionary process, “a grandeur in this view of life . . . having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one.”
- N. Here it is:
- O. Darwin’s nod to God
- P. But only a nod
- Q. For after God breathed in Genesis 1
- R. His creative work was all but done!
- S. The good book says it;
- T. You know how it’s true
- U. That after a week
- V. The Good Lord was through
- W. On the seventh day He rested
- X. Or as some translations read: He stopped
- Y. Dear Darwin, *it would seem*, was right!
- Z. In the beginning was the end...for God

4. “But wait, but wait,” the prophet cries

- A. “Lies, lies—all of it lies!”
- B. God’s work isn’t over!
- C. His work isn’t done!

- D. For each flash of being,
- E. Is just like day one!
- F. Each breath you take
- G. Each moment—it's true
- H. Comes from a source
- I. Much deeper than you!
- J. Why—let's pause—limit God's work to the past?
- K. Does not the same breath that first brought matter to life animate *you* each moment of *your* life, continually giving you the power to exist—the power to resist non-being, a power that comes not from yourself but one that you *derive* from a deeper cavern of being, a well of being, a life force, one that is “breathed into” you each moment just as it was those first beautiful, bubbly simple forms of aquatic life?
- L. Listen closely: The prophet isn't challenging Darwin's view of evolution; he is challenging Darwin's view of God!
- M. God didn't simply create once upon a time!
- N. God is *always creating*; creation is ongoing, God *continually* generates each moment, each flash of being, each breath *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) or *ex profundis* (from the depths)!
- O. From v. 5: “Thus says God, the Lord . . . who *gives* breath [present tense] to the people upon [the earth], and spirit [wind, ruach] to those who walk on it.”
- P. *The whisper keeps whispering*
- Q. The potter still works at Her wheel
- R. The wind that once swept over primeval waters, scattering the gift of breath upon inanimate forms *now fills your lungs with air*
- S. That *same* breath, Holy *Ruach*, Holy Spirit, links you and me with the first forms that filled the seas
- T. How fascinating, the link
- U. And the proof—the proof??
- V. Good God, it's right under your nose!
- W. Your breath is not your own
- X. Each moment, Genesis
- Y. Each moment—a beginning

5. Now pause once more: consider the implications—

- A. True religion, I believe, does three things
- B. It draws us out of ourselves
- C. It connects us with others

- D. And it inspires gratitude for this life and every breath we have
- E. What if every worship,
- F. Every sermon,
- G. Every hymn,
- H. And every prayer
- I. Had the single purpose of cultivating within us a deep sense of gratitude for the miracle, the gift, the pure grace, of each breath?
- J. Albert Einstien says it: “There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though *everything* is a miracle.”
- K. And Martin Luther says it: “In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask [in the Lord’s] prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and receive it with *thanksgiving*.”
- L. All is miracle
- M. All is gift
- N. Each breath is pure grace
- O. In-the-beginning

6. A New Beginning (Reprise)

- A. Time, now gone, debris of the past
- B. Tell me, dear pastor, what will be last?
- C. Of breath, you spoke, the source of it all
- D. Of tremors, vibrations, before Adam’s fall
- E. Gliding across the waters of old—
- F. A vision, such beauty, that Genesis told
- G. Of breath, the source of each living thing
- H. Appearing this morning in voices that sing
- I. A truth, you see, beneath every nose
- J. But the true new came only when Jesus arose
- K. Filled with your breath, his form was renewed
- L. A surprise to his followers, James, John and Jude
- M. Past, present, future—the theme is *all breath*
- N. Sustains us each moment and keeps us from death
- O. Ahead one more mile, we await the next day
- P. When God’s new creation will keep death at bay
- Q. The heavens shall open and God will descend
- R. Like the Breath upon Jesus, beginning the end
- S. Then God and His breath will merge into One

T. As Father was present in Christ, His Son
U. Our bodies are dust, to soil we turn
V. But the breath that is coming belongs to no urn

7. And now, dear friends, a last verse to share

A. Verse nine from Isaiah—the new I declare!
B. Your loved ones consider, those you miss most
C. Their breath, their essence, returns to its host
D. The *eighth* day of creation, a time yet to come
E. When breath will be all—
F. And God will be One

Amen