

# Creationism v. evolution but not creation v. evolution

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Many Christians believe that the very idea of evolution – most crucially, the idea that the species *Homo sapiens* evolved from many previous species now extinct – entails denial of true religion. We wish to argue that there need be no real dispute. The fear appears to be that to admit evolution as a fact –*i.e.* admit to life unfolding over time with increasing complexity & variety – would bring one into a crisis of faith in Holy Scripture. Maintaining it is a misunderstanding we seek to resolve this apparent conflict in the present paper.

But before we delve into the theory of evolution we note that the facts in direct support of the specific idea of *Homo sapiens* evolving from ape-like ancestors are – as science now stands – very scanty. The old ‘missing link’ objection still holds good to a large extent regarding factual evidence of immediate human evolution. Indeed, the whole record of evolution is riddled with discontinuities, *e.g.* the frogs suddenly appear, not preceded by any proto-frogs. The main reason why almost all scientists believe in evolution is that it has been exceedingly successful as an integrating theory within biology.

Nevertheless, one must point out that the evidence is fairly conclusive that humans appeared only about a million years ago, certainly long after many species that have existed for hundreds of millions of years (in contrast to the face value of the story in *Genesis* 2). More importantly, we maintain that even if a seamless sequence of fossils were demonstrated with no missing links in human evolution, such a finding need have no theological significance regarding the central doctrines that man is created by God and made in the image of God.

Perhaps we should make clear at the start the perspective from which we attempt to contribute to this fraught arena of (sometimes intemperate) argumentation. We are scientists working on aspects of biology, and we are mainstream Christians who hold to traditional doctrines as summarized in the Apostles’ Creed. In other words, we find ourselves able to live by the belief that Christianity does not conflict with a science that is conducted with intellectual integrity – a science that acknowledges the finitude of all human knowing and therefore its inability to proclaim on ultimate issues save what is given by special revelation.

For many Christians the science/God debate automatically focuses on an attempted literal reading of the first two chapters of *Genesis*. Many assert, and quite strenuously, that *Genesis*

outlines literally the actual history and scientific principles of creation, and any secular science that contradicts this ‘Bible science’ must be rejected outright.

In this literal interpretation of a particular part of Scripture, creation is believed to have taken place over six 24-hour days and perhaps no more than 10,000 years ago. ‘Creation science’ rejects any thought of an ancient earth spanning periods of geological time of many millions of years, and denies any gradual development or evolving of life forms. It is a philosophical position that rejects a huge amount of scientific evidence gathered by a vast community of scientists who hold a wide spectrum of religious (Christian and others) and non-religious viewpoints about the origin of life.

Our personal conviction is that ‘creation science’ is fighting the wrong battle. We say this for two important reasons. Firstly, it makes the dubious assumption that *Genesis 1 & 2* must be read in a strictly literal sense if they are to be read in a God-honoring way. It is not at all clear to us that the narrative form of the early chapters of *Genesis* is literal or even remotely scientific in its intent. The creation texts contain a very simple storyline that is timeless and relevant for all people for all time. But is it science? Science as the modern discipline which gave rise to the creation/evolution discussion hadn’t evolved when the author(s) penned these narratives. The burning issues of the day were what we would call theological, not scientific. Who made the cosmos? Who is in charge of it? Who is to be worshipped? Were the people of God to place their faith in the many divinities of polytheism or in the one true God of the Israelites?

Despite the impact on contemporary culture of post-modernity’s disaffection with science, there is a significant continuing acceptance of ‘old fashioned’ modernism - scientific materialism and loss of a moral base. The full potential of *Genesis 1-3* to help us address these issues will not be realized unless we shoulder the responsibility of interpretation with all the difficulties and even pitfalls that this may entail.

It seems to us that the main point of the creation narratives is to put nature – including mankind – fairly and squarely in its place as created, and thus as a consequence never to be accorded the status of divinity. No part of creation was to be the object of man’s worship. No part of creation was to shape the ultimate destiny of humanity, and this was to include the heavenly bodies. God alone was to be acknowledged as the source and sustainer of all created things.

We must discern very carefully the type of literary narrative being used in each part of scripture. It may be disastrous if we apply an interpretation not intended by the author. It seems to us that when we come to a central Christian truth such as the Resurrection the various accounts given in all four Gospels confront us with a flesh-and-blood, time-and-place narrative that almost ‘screams’ out to be read in a literal sense. Everything about the Resurrection narratives seems to insist we take them literally.

By contrast the early chapters of *Genesis* do not read in this same flesh-and-blood historic way. They have an entirely contrasting literary flavor. Their structure is much more stylized and poetic. The already-established 7-day Hebrew week is, in all probability, used as a means of systematically working through each realm of the created world with the very powerful pronouncement that all such realms and their inhabitants were the creation of God. What more powerful way to demolish for all time the pagan myth that within the world there were powers and forces that could hold sway over the destinies of people and enslave them in the vice of fear-ridden subservience?

The text reads much more like a series of epic declarations –that God is the supreme commander of the universe, and that all things large and small owe their existence to him. These are, perhaps, words that attempt to describe the indescribable – events of such cosmic proportions as to be literally beyond our understanding as created beings. The language is surely conveying what we would call religious, not scientific truth.

Clear evidence that the text is not meant to be read in a scientific sense is got by comparing the two different creation accounts contained in *Genesis 1: 1-2:3* and *2: 4-25*. As an obvious example of the author's(s') clear disregard for chronological accuracy, in the first account land animals are created before humans whereas in the second account animals are created after man. This apparent conflict is important only if we try to interpret the narratives in a narrow literal sense. Surely an important purpose of both accounts is to place humanity at the apex of creation, separate relationally from all that is beneath; for this theological point, timing is hardly relevant.

We hold that science in general and evolution in particular can offer no genuine conflict with Christianity. There are well-known general grounds for our attitude. The purview of science is restricted: it is as narrow as the physical realm of matter & energy (including living organisms), but no spiritual entities. The fact that science can study only this restricted realm (within which it has achieved very impressive discoveries) is no handicap; it is simply a fact that the scientific method applies only to energy & matter as defined by science, and when science attempts to pronounce on moral questions, let alone spiritual questions, it is a trespasser.

We can say that science is a human activity able to deal only with the lower levels of material cause and effect. By contrast, what we think of as ‘religion’ is concerned with the big picture, the ultimate issues concerning the cosmos and its relationship to the creator. The issues of governance, purpose and meaning are outside the scope of science. The material world operates as a subset within the much larger framework illuminated by revealed religion. In using the word ‘subset’ here we are attempting to stress the importance of not letting theology and science retreat to supposedly unconnected spheres. We wish to provoke renewed co-operation, rather than spurious conflict, between them.

We hope these generalities set the stage as we turn to particulars about the evolution of organisms and about, on the other hand, the vastly more important ‘**why**’ and ‘**who**’ questions which only revealed religion can tackle.

## Outline of Evolutionary Theory

Modern science has existed for only a few centuries. Why it took so long to begin is discussed in Harold Turner’s recent book<sup>1</sup> and in Renton MacLachlan’s thoughtful review of that book in this journal<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately that review complains at Rev Dr Turner’s ‘repeated, scathing dismissal of “creation science” without any justification whatsoever being given’. As friends of Harold Turner we are aware he reached the conclusion years ago that “creation science” is a waste of time. He does not bother in his book to expound his reasons for his dismissive attitude to it. Our purpose now is to assist readers by outlining how such a conclusion as Dr Turner’s is not merely reasonable but essential to the goal - dauntingly ambitious to some - of reconciling science and religion.

Since the originators Darwin and Wallace, biology has amassed a compelling body of evidence for organic evolution, *i.e.* evidence that life has unfolded over a long time, as a tree with many branches and many 'missing' branches, developing a generally more complex range of life-forms, with *Homo sapiens* appearing only recently. The facts gleaned from fossils, augmented recently by molecular details, strongly suggest that evolution has occurred. The body of evidence from which this deduction flows is so huge, so multi-faceted, and so coherent, that evolution is regarded as a fact by almost every scientist today.

The evidence for evolution, minimally admixed with neo-Darwinian theory, is interesting to review as it stood<sup>3</sup> around the time when modern 'creationism' arose in the USA.

We immediately, emphatically add: **how** evolution has occurred is a different (and much more difficult) question from the simpler question of whether organisms have evolved. And Goldsmith has pointed out vigorously, in an exchange<sup>4</sup> with the militant atheist Wolpert, that it is a mere assumption to say that evolution must have worked by the mechanism of natural selection.

Many readers will be aware of a supremely confident brand of scientific atheism that is currently fashionable, largely popularized by Oxford University’s Richard Dawkins. Dawkins

<sup>1</sup> H W Turner 1998 *The Roots of Science - an investigative journey through the world's religions*. Auckland: The Deep Sight Trust

<sup>2</sup> R MacLachlan 1999, review of *The Roots of Science*, *Stimulus* 7 (2)50-52

<sup>3</sup> Barnett L 1962 'The World We Live In' Time-Life Books. C D Darlington 1958 'Evolution of Genetic Systems' Oliver & Boyd

Barnett on a popular level summarizes the scientific knowledge. Darlington is a scientific textbook with detail of how evolution appears to have occurred. This was all before the current fixation on DNA took hold.

<sup>4</sup> E Goldsmith & L Wolpert, exchange of letters, *The Ecologist* 30 (3) May 2000

contemptuously dismisses any suggestion that evolution requires anything more than the blind forces of physics. He says “Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist”. Dawkins views Darwin’s idea of natural selection as providing an entirely material means by which the chance variations in an organism’s offspring are channeled in the direction of ‘evolving’ (read increasing) complexity. What is important is that evolution is viewed by Dawkins as an entirely mindless process; hence his confident atheistic stance.

We consider Dawkins in error at a fundamental conceptual level and wish to highlight this by reference to just one of the illustrations he employs to support his scientific atheism - namely the evolution of the eye as expounded in one of his recent books *Climbing Mt. Improbable*<sup>5</sup>.

Dawkins likens the evolution of the eye to climbing a high mountain. In this scheme of things the evolution of biological novelty (*i.e.* reaching the summit of Mount Improbable) is achieved in the neo-Darwinian sense by gradual, almost imperceptible steps of improvement. In his metaphor we take a route up the gentle slopes rather than attempting to scale the impossibly steep cliffs and precipices. All that is required is that we head towards the summit.

The emphasis is on small, easy improvements in the organism rather than large leaps in sophistication. Like many of Dawkins’ illustrations, the mountain-climbing analogy seems, at least superficially, to make a lot of sense. It is common for technological advances to proceed in much the same gradual, bit-by-bit fashion.

But let’s look closely at the claimed connection between the development of an eye and Dawkins’ mountain-climbing metaphor.

We arrive at this most improbable structure - the fully functioning eye - by imperceptibly small steps in improvement. No big leaps of innovation, no wild attempts at scaling ‘steep cliffs or precipices’, just an easy meander up the gentle grassy slopes until the summit of optical sophistication is reached.

To support his case Dawkins describes in some detail a computer study conducted by Swedish biologists Dan Nilsson and Susanne Pelger. These scientists devised a computer program to simulate the evolution of what they describe as a simple eye representation. Remember, this is a virtual, not a real, eye.

They begin with a 2-dimensional picture of a flat layer of imaginary light-sensitive cells sandwiched between an imaginary transparent layer and an imaginary dark backing layer. The two biologists admit in their study that they don’t pretend to explain how the light-sensitive cells that their model commences with might have evolved. This is entirely understandable as the origin of the first living cell remains just one of the innumerable mysteries of the biological world, and how any became light-sensitive is also unknown.

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<sup>5</sup> R Dawkins 1996 *Climbing Mt. Improbable*, Viking

The model works (and always in a virtual sense) by producing at random small percentage changes in the degree of curvature of the sandwich, in the diameter of a light-restricting aperture, in the thickness of the transparent layer, and in the local value of its refractive index (light-bending ability). The computer model is programmed to perform a simple calculation of the sandwich's optical resolving power every time a change occurs at random in the three variables noted above. This is done by a simple ray-tracing procedure, one familiar to any physics student.

In a relatively small number of steps (1829 steps if each step involved a 1% change in any of the variables) the computer model is shown to transform the flat sandwich through continuous minor improvements into a configuration representing a virtual, focused eye lens. Dawkins claims this transformation of the initially flat configuration into a focused configuration by a series of tiny but connected steps is exactly analogous to climbing the mountain of biological complexity: "Going upwards means mutating, one small step at a time, and only accepting mutations that improve optical performance. So, where do we get to? Pleasingly, through a smooth upward pathway, starting from no proper eye at all, we reach a familiar fish eye, complete with lens." (*Climbing Mt. Improbable*, p. 151.)

However, any careful reader will immediately see that Dawkins' claim to explain eye evolution involves a most blatant transgression of the rules of his own materialistic science. Note how logic requires him to impose a highly artificial and purposeful constraint on the behavior of the eye model: he inserts the crucial proviso of "only accepting mutations that improve optical performance". In terms of his mountain-climbing analogy, one must "aim for the summit". He has committed a cardinal breach by introducing a profoundly personal dimension into his scientific materialism: it is persons that have aims, with the foresight to discern whether an immediate change of no use in itself heads toward a distant coordinated usefulness.

Ask any serious mountaineer, ask one of New Zealand's most famous citizens - Sir Edmund Hillary: high summits are conquered only because the mountaineer has a powerful desire to get to the top. The activity is loaded with purpose. The mountaineer is possessed of a burning obsession to achieve the very difficult. Ed Hillary and Norgay Tenzing reached the summit of Everest in 1953 because they really wanted to get there!

If Richard Dawkins is required to use a metaphor such as mountain-climbing to explain the role of 'natural' selection then this is surely the most bare-faced admission that he really does require more than a set of purely material mechanisms to explain the evolution of complexity in the living world. 'Aiming for the top' is to admit to a guiding principle that cannot be expressed in terms of the impersonal processes of physics and chemistry. For a much more detailed critique of Dawkins' approach and of scientific materialism in general, the interested reader is referred to the

book *How Blind is the Watchmaker? Theism or atheism: should science decide?*<sup>6</sup> published recently by one of the present authors.

We do know – insofar as one could know about events in the distant past that cannot be directly observed or repeated – that evolution has occurred; but we have only vague ideas of its mechanisms. It is important to keep clearly distinguished these two distinct questions. In our opinion, the mechanism postulated by neo-Darwinism is very inadequate. We agree that mutations occur (more or less randomly), but we believe the notion of selection among those mutants by "the environment" which is said to be blind and purposeless, is no better than an intellectual con trick. This main axiom of neo-Darwinism is a bald unsupported assumption that what Aristotle called **final cause**<sup>7</sup> is absent from biology. That which is officially denied by Dawkins – purpose – is quietly admitted when he talks about “aiming for the summit”, the vital missing link in modern materialistic biology.

Most educated people are aware that as soon as Darwin announced his concept of the origin of species a heated dispute arose which has been raging fitfully ever since<sup>8</sup>. Our contention is that this is a phony dispute, a series of misunderstandings; and this leads us naturally to the topic of ‘creationism’.

## Creationism

The basic assumption of ‘creationism’ is:-

*either* God has created and sustained the universe, including all life,

*or* organisms have evolved (as scientific evidence strongly suggests).

This axiom is – rather obviously – unsatisfactory; the two propositions are **not** logical alternatives but, from the viewpoint of scientifically informed Christians, **both** are true. We have every right – even (as we would argue) a duty – to study with our God-given faculties the world as we find it, including the evidence of its past changes; and when we do so, we find overwhelming evidence of evolution – a fact of little or no theological significance.

The body of evidence amassed by thousands of scientists – including no small number of Christians – fills many books. As against this there exists a tiny group of works<sup>9</sup> maintaining a ‘young Earth’ theory and attempting to interpret the facts on the basis of the belief that all species were created within a very short time, relatively recently.

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<sup>6</sup> N D Broom 1998 *How Blind Is The Watchmaker?*, Ashgate, Avebury Series in Philosophy, Aldershot, UK

<sup>7</sup> J E Morton 1972 *Science Man and God*, Auckland: Collins ch. 1

<sup>8</sup> E Mayr 1991 *One Long Argument*, Penguin

<sup>9</sup> e.g. J C Whitcomb & H M Morris 1961 *The Genesis Flood*, Baker, Grand Rapids; H M Morris 1974 *Scientific Creationism*, Creation-Life Publications, San Diego

The first comment on this confrontation must be the general principle— which Christians, especially, should never forget – that truth is not decided by voting. The fact that “creation science” is propounded by only a very tiny minority of scientists is no proof of its unreliability; remind yourself of the long series of scientific theories that have been mocked and marginalized for a period after first challenging orthodoxy, but have later gained credence. For instance, Wegener’s continental drift hypothesis was, within living memory, dismissed by the leading biologists and (more persistently) geologists, but has now become standard theory. The history of science is not merely sprinkled with but largely consists of such revolutions in theory<sup>10</sup>. And indeed the idea of evolution itself was, for a while, widely rejected. Today the resistance to it among scientists is down to an extremely tiny minority. But that does not tell us whether it is true.

We suggest to readers who are outside science that ‘creation science’ does indeed deserve the inverted commas assigned to it by Renton MacLachlan. It is not real science but a form of pseudo-science within which the facts are selectively distorted or ignored for the purpose of forcing a conclusion that cannot follow from application of the scientific method to the full array of known facts.

‘Creationist’ fundamentalists insist that the first three chapters of the Bible must only be read in a strictly literal sense. On this axiom is built the fear that evolution threatens true faith by challenging the reliability of Scripture. This is the essential confusion in the ‘creationism’ position.

Reconciling science with Christianity will require, we suggest, nothing short of the abandonment of the fundamentalism which asserts that there is always a straightforward, clearly recognized, strictly literal, reading of texts and that such a reading is the only possible reading of Scripture. The attempt to understand the Scriptures without interpretation is impossible – all communication necessarily involves interpretation. The attempt to understand the Scriptures without interpretation is doomed to failure and should be abandoned. Only if we have faith that God does not play tricks on us, either in the Scriptures or in our observations of the world he has made and sustained, can we breakthrough to the reconciliation which is sorely needed.

This may seem a daunting challenge to some devout Christians whose feelings we have no wish to bruise.

We are puzzled at the insistence of fundamentalists on literal reading of, especially, the first three chapters of *Genesis* while apparently accepting poetic language in, say, *Ezekiel*, and in the New Testament (to take one example out of many: John the Baptist hails ‘the lamb of God’ in an important metaphor which nobody tries to take literally). We see no reason to assume that just a few parts of the Bible are devoid of symbolism, figures of speech, even poetry; indeed, on the grand difficult topics of the origins and the nature and the fate of humans we would expect, if anything,

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<sup>10</sup> T S Kuhn 1962, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press

unusual recourse to such devices of communication. In dealing with the issue of origins the biblical narrative is entering territory that must surely ultimately transcend what is accessible to the human mind, and especially the mind trained in the sciences. Indeed, the sciences themselves rely on model, metaphor, symbol and analogy to picture the objects of scientific inquiry. How much more will we need pictures and symbols to present reality that lies beyond normal experience, such as the origin of creation?! The language of imagery and symbolism (picture language really) must surely play a crucial role in communicating such cosmic truths to people of all ages and times. We think it is evident that only on such a basis can the creation stories of *Genesis* be understood at all.

One argument against a non-literal or symbolic reading of the early chapters of *Genesis* cites the several references to Adam and Eve, to Cain and Abel, and to Noah in both the Gospels and elsewhere in the NT. How can both Christ and Paul speak of real figures and we then deny their historical reality? Again we need not respond to this challenge by ‘accelerating straight down the road’ of panicky literalism. Theologically there is a recognized plasticity in the meaning of the word ‘Adam’; it is far from certain that it was used in *Genesis* to speak only of a single first man. The symbolic, representative meaning of Adam may be much more relevant to our deeper understanding of the *Genesis* narratives than the secular, literal approach with its necessary exclusion of sacred, symbolic content.

It may be helpful to remind ourselves that for most of the Christian era it has been held that the Scriptures should not be available outside a very small exclusive cadre. Those who first tried to make the Bible available to the masses were victimized severely. One reason for that punitive attitude was fear that the individual Christian left to interpret Scripture will fall into error. This fear has today been supplanted by faith that the Holy Spirit will guide our prayerful reading so that on the whole we shall be better off than if interpretation and even reading of Scripture had been reserved to an elite few.

The fundamentalist claim that holy Scripture can be read without interpretation – that the reader can, and should, refrain from interpreting what is read, but should instead somehow simply take it only at ‘face value’, whatever that might actually mean – resembles that earlier belief that ordinary people cannot be entrusted to read the Scriptures at all. Indeed it is worse, in that restriction of Scripture-reading was at the time more or less feasible (if not moral) whereas to read without interpreting is actually infeasible.

We suggest that the promulgation of lay reading of the Bible has been a glorious effort doing vastly more good than harm. The fact that some extremist sects have arisen during this era of vernacular Scripture-reading hardly begins to outweigh the magnificent achievements of the many campaigns to bring the gospel, in writing as well as orally, to every corner of this world in the spirit of the Great Commission.

## The Reconciliation

The key theological doctrine which evolution does not, cannot touch, is that the human being is a special creation of God, destined for relationship with him and especially loved. (Christians do not have such clear beliefs about other species, although the Bible is clear that God is the creator of all things and will bring creation as a whole to its fulfillment under the headship of Christ.) In that theological setting, our argument against ‘creationism’ is: the physical series of events whereby the species *Homo sapiens* came to emerge is a matter for valid investigation by science, and has little if any theological significance.

In maintaining that the holy Scriptures are inspired we wish to suggest that the ‘interpret only literally’ recipe actually leads to an impoverished understanding of the intended meaning of certain texts. Are they to be understood literally? Is there not a deeper level of sacred truth conveyed by these words? This is surely the crucial issue facing any serious student of the Bible. Has not a slavish commitment to a superficial literalism - derived very largely from our secular scientific culture with its own slavish commitment to facts, numbers and data stripped of any symbolic sacred value- hampered the discovering of the sacred meaning of the text?

To those mostly modern Christians who have become habituated to the false antinomy ‘evolution *or* faith’ we pass the vision of leading scientists such as Professor Morton. Evolution is, as best we can make out the facts, evidently the method whereby God has brought into this world the wonderful range of species (approx. 9/10 of them now extinct). There seems to be no good reason to resist this conclusion drawn, we believe, from a dispassionate examination of the facts revealed by an enormous body of scientific investigation.

One level on which the issue should *not* be decided is one’s subjective, aesthetic reactions to the two approaches. Nevertheless, we would like to say that, to our mind, the marvelous panoply of unfolding creation over eons is surely tribute to a Creator who operates on a scale of time that hints at the eternal. Rocks as old as 3,500 million years contain evidence of organisms similar to the photosynthetic blue-green algae still functioning on earth today. The earliest fossilized animals have been found in a complex of sedimentary rocks that stretch back more than 600 million years. These were first discovered in Australia, and have subsequently been found in South Africa, England, Siberia, and Newfoundland, and form what is called the Ediacara fossil complex. The challenge to us today is to avoid the secular temptation to pit the pre-scientific, religious *Genesis* narrative against the hard-won picture that science has unfolded during the past couple of centuries. The narrative reading of the early chapters of *Genesis* and the narrative reading of a genuinely-conducted science must surely speak from different vantage points. The task before us today is to interpret the Creation narratives of *Genesis* in the light of what has been discovered within the past couple of centuries. We beseech our fellow Christians to do so in faith that God will not let us down or play tricks with our reasoning. The truth – and only the truth – is consistent.

Those who adopt the spurious axiom of Creationism (as discussed above – the assumption that one can believe in *either* creation *or* evolution but not both) are risking severe cognitive dissonance. It is a false statement which if adopted must lead to contradictions and endless trouble.

We must object to Renton MacLachlan's attempt to enlist on the side of modern fundamentalism the great scientists Maxwell and Faraday. It is hypothetical in the worst sense to say 'if these two were alive today they would be numbered firmly among those holding to . . . "creation science" '. This is a completely un-testable, almost meaningless assertion. There can be – short of a miracle – no such thing as Faraday alive today in a position to consider the evidence now available. It is simply impossible to know how that devout (though very nonconformist) Christian would have viewed the issue as it now stands. All one can say is that, as one of the three greatest scientists of all history, Faraday earned a most illustrious reputation for honoring the facts observed by science, and did not allow interpretation of them (as they then stood) to be warped by sectarian dogma.

### **Ecclesiastical and Political Implications**

Those who persist in 'creationism' often project it into civil life in objectionable ways. Militant 'creationist' campaigns (emanating, so far as we have traced them, out of Lubbock, Tex. and Orange County, Calif.) have attempted to purge library holdings and to censor school science curricula to protect pupils from the teaching of evolution. This is a tragic, and even menacing, confusion. Only if evolution gets taught with the false overlay of suggesting that it contradicts or weakens Christianity should it be interfered with. This is certainly the case with the materialistic explanation for evolution, *i.e.* neo-Darwinism, but it is certainly not so if we view evolution as the means by which God has unfolded the splendor of his creation. The compromise is readily available for secular public schools to teach evolution as science but without metaphysical comment of any sort. We Christians of course regard such a compromise as unsatisfactory.

There are, however, some leaders who wish to protract the phony conflict. Psychologically, this mistaken approach tends to consolidate their followers by the well-known mechanism of focusing on the need for solidarity against an external enemy. But science practiced with integrity is not an enemy of Christianity, and the sooner this is realized the better. The phony war makes for bad science and for distorted religion.

### **Conclusion**

The real intellectual battle today is scientific atheism *versus* biblical theism, not evolution *versus* 'creation. The creation '*versus*' evolution wrangle serves only to channel valuable human energy into a futile side-issue that the secular world assumes to be the defining issue upon which Christianity stands or falls. Scientific atheism (read in part, neo-Darwinism) then rides on in a

posture of un-criticized intellectual triumph, gathering apparent strength in the eyes of our materialistic, irreligious culture for having exposed the absurdity of a simplistic ‘creation science’ without having its own absurd assumptions challenged.

Christians are confronted with more than enough genuine tasks to keep us busy in the service of the Lord. Billions of people around the world have never heard the Word, and about one billion are malnourished, often ill-clad and ill-housed. The church cannot justify the dedication of books, rhetoric and misdirected work in the cause of “creation science”. It is not real science, and its theological motives are confused. Let us move beyond this distraction.

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