



Challenge



"...but try the spirits whether they are of God..." (1 Jno. 4:1)

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Editorial...

This issue deals with the question of whether or not a Christian can believe in Darwinian evolution and still be a faithful child of God, or more specifically "Could God have used evolution to bring about creation?" There are many, and these ranks are growing daily, who take the position that God could have used evolution and that Christians can believe in Darwinian evolution and still be faithful children of God. It will be our intent, in this issue, to show that such is not true and therefore not possible.

In this issue we are going to look at what one atheist, Todd Greene, has to say about the matter. He argues that the Christian can believe in evolution and still believe in God. This is a new position for atheists, and in my response to Mr. Greene I will show why this new position is being taken. We will also look at an article written by Dr. Bert Thompson on Theistic Evolution and see if one can be a Christian and believe. Dr. Thompson shows just what is wrong with Theistic Evolution and why a Christian cannot hold to it.

Belief in theistic evolution has been around for about as long as atheistic evolution has been, but until the last 25 to 30 years ago it was not as popular a belief in the Lord's church as it is today. I can remember hearing some who always said "well, you can't really know what method God

used, he could have used evolution if he wanted to," but these sentiments were not the norm, they were the exception. Now, they are the norm and the idea that God did not use evolution is becoming the exception.

Why is this? Is it because men are more educated in science? Is it because men are more educated in the Bible? Have we found new knowledge that we did not previously have? No! In this issue we will look at the reasons for this, and will show that they have absolutely nothing to do with education in science or the Bible. As a matter of fact one has to ignore both science and the Bible to believe in evolution period, let alone theistic evolution.

We will also continue to look at Dan Barker's Bible quiz and show you that he has the wrong idea about what the Bible has to say.

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WHY CAN'T GOD BE AN EVOLUTIONIST?

Todd Greene

It is said that evolution implies atheism. "If evolution is a fact, then God does not exist." As will become apparent, though, evolution does NOT imply atheism. The idea that it does is a misconception.

If evolution implies that God does not exist, then believers in God could not reasonably accept evolution, and those who accept the extensive evidence for evolution cannot rationally believe in God. Of course, this idea automatically serves to prejudice theists against consideration of evolution and evolutionists against consideration of theism. Indeed, we see this prejudicial form of discussion practiced frequently and intentionally by many creationists. Christians who are already prejudiced against evolution heartily concur with the opinion that evolution implies atheism while attempting to persuade other Christians to reject evolution for the reason that their acceptance of evolution would logically require them to reject God.

But let's properly analyze this claim of evolution's implied atheism. If a Christian accepts the contention that evolution implies atheism, then she or he will probably never be willing to give fair consideration to the idea of evolution, either in terms of genuinely understanding the relevant concepts or in terms of genuinely examining the empirical information on which it is based. Those who truly believe that evolution is a "tool of Satan to deceive true believers into unbelief will never ponder the possibility that evolution might be the true state of the world -- and will have thus rendered impotent the responsibility to be intellectually honest.

"Evolution implies atheism" is based on a theological misconception.

But evolution does not imply atheism (evolution and God's existence are not disjunctive), and those who make such an assertion reveal a crude conception of the nature of existence as it pertains to the relationship between God and our universe.

Furthermore, it is this unsophisticated theological conception that has strongly contributed to the historical antagonism between religion and science. Indeed, the antipathy that exists today among conservative religious people toward the methods of scientific inquiry may have its very basis in this primitive theology. And, because of prejudices like this, there is a prevalent view among conservative Christians that science is an enemy of religion. However, a view's prevalence is not what determines its validity.

Evolution's purported atheism can be stated simply: "If there is no God, then our universe (and everything in it including life) has developed due entirely to natural causes. Evolution is the development of life by natural relationships. With evolution the events of earth's organisms do not need to include supernatural activity. Hence, God does not exist."

Let's look at this presentation in another context: "The orbit of the earth around the sun is due to natural processes. Thus, the earth's orbit does not involve supernatural activity and does not require supernatural activity. Hence, God does not exist." Or how about this one: "The decay of radioactive elements proceeds according to the natural, physical properties of the makeup of matter. Since radiation does not involve the intervention of divine power, God does not exist."

You may have received a forceful impression from the latter two examples that the earth's orbit being a result of gravitational mechanisms, or radiation being a result of subatomic interactions, has nothing to do with whether or not God exists and that the whole syllogism is a non sequitur. This impression is absolutely correct! Moreover, it demonstrates that the former presentation is also a non sequitur, for the two are logically equivalent. The reason for this is that categorizing something as a "natural process," no matter what it is, does not mean that it then becomes a tool used in the workshop of atheism as evidence that God doesn't exist. Indeed, it does not even address the question.

*Natural processes
are non-theistic not
atheistic*

Where would this leave mathematics, for example? Do we say that $7 \times 3 = 21$ because God exists? Do we say that the trigonometric tangent of a 45° angle is 1 if and only if God does not exist? Rain has natural causes and natural effects; does the existence of rain therefore prove or disprove the existence of God? If its nature as a natural process was relevant to the religious discussion, then meteorology alone would make the case for atheism.

When looked at in this way, these questions appear absurd. Instead of being "theistic" or "atheistic," it is more proper, I think, to say "nontheistic." In other words, what about ideas that make no reference to whether or not God exists? You can never say of nontheistic concepts that they are true if and only if God exists or if and only if God does not exist. Nontheistic ideas are independent of consideration of God's existence. Evolution — like the theory of relativity, Goldbach's conjecture, and the size of Proxima Centauri — is not atheistic, nor is it theistic.

Evolution is nontheistic. Evolution does not imply atheism — accepting the idea of evolution does not imply that one must be without belief in God. Evolution is, however, nontheistic — it is a description of events and processes that is without reference to God. Evolution, like astronomy and chemistry, for example, is an area of scientific inquiry that is, and must be, performed without reference to supernatural activity.

So when you hear someone say that evolution is atheism, it is important to determine what that person is trying to say. Is she or he claiming that evolutionists must, in order to be consistent, reject belief in God? If so, then the speaker must be asked to justify her or his statement, and careful attention must be paid to the justification she or he provides, for it will invariably contain flaws like those mentioned here.

Finally, we just have to ask this question of those who try to form such an obviously prejudicial disjunction as this in the minds of those they would try to persuade in this way: Is it impossible for evolution to be a process "put in motion" by God, in the same manner as all other natural processes that is the purpose of our scientific inquiry to investigate? Why are you trying to limit the power and ingenuity of God with your own human prejudices

WHY CAN'T GOD BE AN EVOLUTIONIST?—A RESPONSE!

Jerry D. McDonald

The question answers itself because anyone who knows anything at all about Darwinian evolution knows that God and evolution just don't mix, it simply is impossible to get them to do so. The article above was written by an atheist, one who does not believe in the existence of God—one who knows that God and evolution cannot mix which is why he does not believe in God. At one time Mr. Greene was a member of the church of Christ, his father was a preacher for the church of Christ and a graduate of the Preston Road School of Preaching. While attending ACU Todd was taught, in an astronomy class that the universe was much older than the 6 to 10,000 years he had been brought up to believe it was and this led him down the path to atheism, but you don't have to take my word for it, just read his own words:

“--- Todd Greene wrote: When I was at ACU I took an astronomy course in fulfillment of one of my science credit hours requirements. I quickly learned how unequivocally it was known in astronomy that the Universe has been in existence far, far longer than any mere 6,000 or 10,000 years. My personal realization/ awareness/ understanding of this relevant information led me to unequivocally reject young earth creationism for being a false idea about reality, and the rest, as they say, is history” (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Maury_and_Baty/message/120 45).

This started Todd down the road to his present state of atheism. The first step to atheism is belief in an old age for the earth and the universe as this does

away with the literal interpretation of the Genesis account of creation. When one accepts the old age for the earth and universe accepting biological evolution is easy, and when one accepts biological evolution the next logical step is to jettison one's belief in God. In this article we will look at valid reasons why one cannot believe in Darwinian evolution and still be a Christian, or better yet why God couldn't be an evolutionist.

The first reason God could not use evolution as his method of creation is because logic would not allow it. Succinctly stated the law of contradiction says that two positions that are opposites cannot both be true. Evolution and creation are opposite positions because evolution says that everything came by natural selection, and creation says that everything was designed and constructed by a supernatural God.

From the "big bang" to our present state, evolution's explanation of the origin of the universe and our existence in it says that nature has selected this to happen. There is no room in natural selection for SUPERnatural design and creation. Ever since Charles Darwin men have clamored to the ideals that we are simply a product of nature that we are here because nature selected us, not because some supernatural deity created us. The very thought of the supernatural to the true atheist is despicable, and as previously stated the only reason they will even give credence to God is to lead those who are willing to take small steps in compromise away from God.

Creation, on the other hand, claims that we are "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psa 139:14). Creation says that "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). In creation, if you will notice, man did not start off as a one celled organism and was selected by nature to take his chances in a harsh environment as he evolved to his present state as evolution declares. In creation God wonderfully made man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

From this we can see that since evolution claims to be by natural selection and God is a supernatural being, this would keep evolution

from being a method that God used to bring about the universe into existence. The only logical course here is to take the position that evolution belongs to atheism and creation belongs to God. You can't take evolution and put it with God, it just won't work.

Another reason God couldn't have used evolution as his method of creation is because according to evolutionary theory everything happened by chance. Notice the following statement:

"The fossil record leaves no doubt that biological organisms have changed over time—all scientists accept the reality of *biological evolution*. As conditions on Earth changed shifted and Earth's surfaced evolved, those organisms that could best take advantage of their new surroundings succeeded and thrived—often at the expense of organisms that could not make the necessary adjustments and consequently became extinct. What led to these changes? **CHANCE** {Emphasis is mine jdm} (*Astronomy Today*, Chaisson & McMillan, p. 765).

The above quotation is from a text book that is used in the University of Missouri in the Astronomy courses, and there is no doubt that it teaches biological evolution. The book isn't just some book written by some nut some where in the boondocks. Evolution teaches, whether evolutionists want to admit it or not, that everything came about as a result of chance: "What led to these changes? Chance." The changes that were discussed later listed things like a monkey that could run faster or climb higher, however, chance was still the determining factor. That monkey that could run faster, got that gene by chance, nothing more, nothing less. The monkey that got the gene to become a hominid got that gene by chance, nothing more, nothing less. So, according to evolution we are here by chance, nothing more, nothing less.

Now if that is what a person wants to believe in, then he/she is free to do so, but that is totally incompatible with God. The Bible says that God created man, specifically, after he had created all the animals of the earth.

"And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his

kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen 1:23-27).

The animals were already created, then God created man and gave man dominion over the animals. Man was not a descendent of the animals, he was to have dominion over the animals. But how did God make man? “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7).* He made woman differently than he made the man: “*And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen 2:21-22).* This is quite different from the evolutionary theory of the one celled amoebae that some how changed (by chance) into a two celled organism, into something else, into something else and so on until by chance we have what we have today, the finished product: man. And they say it takes faith to believe in the Bible! Not near as much as it takes to swallow the garbage shoved down our throats on a daily basis by the evolutionists about how we are nothing but a result of mutations which happened by chance.

There is simply no way that one can believe that God could have anything to do with the evolutionary theory. The Bible is quite clear on how man was created. It is quite clear on who created man. It is quite clear on who long ago man was created. So, if the Bible is so clear on these things, why is it that there are so many people who hold to theistic evolution? Good

question! Could it be that they want to allow science to be the source of all authority, but they still want to hold to their belief in God? Hence they wrest the scriptures to their own damnation to fit the evolutionist interpretation of what science has to say? I believe that is a fair assumption. The Bible must be our source of authority. Jesus said “*thy word IS truth” (Jno. 17:17).*

Mr. Greene states that:

“if evolution implies that God does not exist, then believers in God could not reasonably accept evolution, and those who accept the extensive evidence for evolution cannot rationally believe in God. Of course, this idea automatically serves to prejudice theists against evolution and evolutionists against theists.”

The problem that Mr. Greene has is that he wants to bring believers closer to atheism without their being aware of what is going on. Thus he doesn't want anyone telling people that God and evolution are not compatible. He wants you to think that the two are compatible so he can slowly get you over to his side. Here's a question you might want to ask him: “Why, if there is room for God AND evolution, did he leave God completely and embrace evolution completely?” He might respond with “Well, I just don't see any evidence of God!” But then you respond with “Why?” Sooner or later he is going to have to come back to evolution, and when he does, he will eventually show his true colors. God and evolution are NOT COMPATIBLE. HE KNOWS IT, BUT HE WANTS YOU TO THINK THAT THERE IS COMPATIBILITY SO YOU WILL BE MORE COMPLIANT. Don't be fooled, if he thought for one moment that there was room in this world for God and evolution he would never have left God. He is an atheist today because he knows that there is no compatibility between God and evolution and he believes in evolution. Don't be drawn in by his deceitful lies “EVOLUTION IMPLIES ATHEISM IS NOT BASED ON A THEOLOGICAL MISCONCEPTION IT IS BASED ON THE TRUTH THAT EVERY ATHEIST KNOWS TO BE A FACT OTHERWISE THEY WOULD NOT BE ATHEISTS.

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What's Wrong with Theistic Evolution?

Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Kings 18:21, Elijah chastised the people of God for not taking a stand for their God. He asked, “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow Him.” Henry Morris, in commenting on this passage, stated:

The spirit of compromise that prevailed among the people of God in Elijah’s time also manifested itself in the mid-nineteenth century, as Christians labored to accept both God and evolution, both the Bible and the ages of geology. This was not surprising, for in every age there has been conflict between God and the Devil and a corresponding tension between the world-system and the community of the saints, and always there have been those among the latter who seek to ease the tension by yielding up some of the distinctives of the Bible-founded separatism to which they were called. Neither is it surprising then that the same spirit of compromise is moving strongly today among erstwhile Bible-centered Christians (1966, p. 97).

Some today prefer a “middle-of-the-road” approach to the matter of origins—a concept generally known as “theistic evolution” (sometimes referred to as “religious evolution,” “mitigated evolution,” or “spiritual evolution”). What, exactly, is theistic evolution?

The word “theistic” derives from the Greek word, *theos*, Greek word, meaning God. Therefore, when one claims to be a “theistic” evolutionist, he is claiming to believe in both God and evolution at the same time. It is not always easy to provide a simple, comprehensive definition for theistic evolution because the concept is altered by its adherents to suit their own personal situations. Some, for example, would suggest that God created the initial building blocks of matter and then allowed the evolutionary process to take over—including the spontaneous generation of life. Others contend that God created not only the primary building blocks of matter, but also life itself, and then placed into operation natural laws through which evolution operated over eons of time. Still others would argue that God not only

created the building blocks and gave life a “push,” but actually intervened from time to time, even though evolution was the mode of operation. Generally speaking, those in this last group prefer to be called “progressive creationists” rather than out-and-out theistic evolutionists. The following definitions from the literature offer a summary of the concept known as theistic evolution.

Many Christians, including men of science as well as theologians, accommodate the discoveries of science in their religion by suggesting that God did not create the world (in its present form) supernaturally. Rather, He used natural processes as His “method of creation,” and guided evolution to the final realization of man. In this view, Adam’s body was produced as a result of the process of evolution, and God then completed His “creation” of man by giving him an eternal soul. The creation of life as described in Genesis is thus recognized to be essentially poetic, or at least to be flexible enough to permit God a wide latitude in His **method** of creation. This interpretation is generally referred to as “theistic evolution” (Young, 1985, p. 46, emp. and parenthetical item in orig.).

The theistic evolutionist holds a position somewhat between that of the absolute evolutionist and the creationist. He believes that God created the materials of our universe and then guided and superintended the process by which all life has evolved from the very simplest one-celled form on up to the sophisticated forms which we know today. Evolution was God’s method of bringing about the present development, though originally the materials were created by God (Baxter, 1971, p. 159).

What is theistic evolution? Believers in God generally take the position that God made the universe, including the laws of nature, so that the universe moves along in response to these laws. If one drops an object to earth, it is expected to behave in accordance with the law of gravitation as formulated by scientists as a result of their observation. Both theists (believers in God) and atheists (disbelievers in God) believe that there are natural laws by which the universe operates. The atheist believes that there was no FIRST CAUSE

but that this system has gone on for eternity, so that prior to each effect there has existed a totally adequate natural cause. When a natural effect occurs for which there was not a totally adequate natural cause, then supernatural INTERVENTION has occurred. Theistic evolution postulates that such intervention accounts for some actions in evolution (Camp, 1972, p. 192, emp. and parenthetical items in orig.).

[On occasion, there is some confusion about the definition of theistic evolution in regard to natural laws. Robert Camp has addressed this matter: "The expression 'theistic evolution' is sometimes used to refer to the concept that God created natural laws which would cause evolution to take place and thus in this guiding principle, God can be said to be the author of life. This notion cannot be said to be 'theistic evolution' in any meaningful sense. One might as well refer to theistic rain, theistic thunder, theistic earthquakes, etc. These natural phenomena can be observed, yet we believe that they have totally adequate natural causes though a theist will no doubt believe God created those natural forces while an atheist will not believe in God. The phenomena are not regarded to be a result of divine intervention into the laws of nature" (1972, p. 63).]

IS THEISTIC EVOLUTION POPULAR?

Is theistic evolution popular? Indeed it is. Many today have accepted it as a "way out" of having to make a decision in favor of either creation or evolution. Thus, it has become the "middle of the road" position that so many Christians already have taken on a myriad of other issues (e.g.: verbal inspiration, the virgin birth, the resurrection, miracles, etc.). As Wysong observed:

Theistic evolution has been advocated in the past by men like Augustine and Aquinas. Today it is vogue. It is downright hard to find anyone who does not believe in evolution in one form or another, and it is also difficult to find anyone who does not believe in a creator in one form or another. This hybrid belief has given reprieve to those not wishing to make a total commitment to either side (1976, p. 63).

Henry Morris assessed the current trend in this manner:

The sad fact is that evolutionism has also deeply affected evangelical schools and churches. After all, even modern ultra-liberal theological schools (e.g., Harvard, Yale) and denominations

(e.g., Methodist, Episcopalian) were once orthodox and zealous for the Scriptures. These institutions have traveled down the road of compromise with evolutionary humanism farther than most, but many evangelicals today seem to have embarked on the same icy road, unaware of the dangers ahead and impatient with those who would warn them. Evangelicals (meaning those who accept the inerrant authority of the Bible and believe in the deity of Christ and his substitutionary death and bodily resurrection) generally "dare not call it compromise" and perhaps are not even aware of it. But compromise they have, in many, many instances. Some have accepted full-blown theistic evolution, but many more believe in either "progressive creation" or "reconstructive creation" (i.e., the so-called Gap Theory)... [T]he sad truth is that many evangelical leaders, who **profess** to believe in biblical inerrancy and authority, have also compromised with evolution (1989, pp. 101,104, emp. and parenthetical items in orig.).

Sadly, the proof substantiating Dr. Morris' statements is not hard to come by. For example, Stanley Beck, of the American Lutheran Church, once remarked:

To call himself reasonably well-educated and informed, a Christian can hardly afford not to believe in evolution. Evolution, including human evolution, is no longer in contention. Evolution has been demonstrated so thoroughly...even produced experimentally, that it has ceased to be a matter of opinion. And to announce that you do not believe in evolution is as irrational as to announce that you do not believe in electricity (1963, pp. 316-317).

J.D. Thomas offered this summary:

This view is also commonly accepted by many others who accept biological evolution. Major religious groups today which hold for some form of theistic evolution include the Roman Catholics who count it to be their official doctrine of the origin of man. Some Jews, particularly the extremely liberal ones, hold to this view, and the Protestant theologians which are normally counted as Liberals are very strong in favor of theistic evolution (where they accept God); and the Neo-Orthodox or Existentialist theologians follow in this same pattern since they also accept much of the "Scientific Naturalism" that Liberalism has held to over the years. There are also several who

wear the label of conservative theologians, some of them quite outstanding, who have accepted theistic evolution in some manner, believing that the arguments favoring evolution are strong enough that they must be accepted; and they have felt that this is the best way to find agreement between the Bible and science.... Some call their view “progressive creationism,” some “threshold evolution....” Each of these terms implies that there is something about the general doctrine of evolution which must be accepted (1965, pp. 177-178, parenthetical item in orig.).

The evidence suggests that belief in theistic evolution has been popular in the past, and remains popular today.

WHY DO PEOPLE BELIEVE IN THEISTIC EVOLUTION?

Why do people choose to believe in theistic evolution? First, no doubt many believe in theistic evolution because they feel that the evidence for organic evolution actually having occurred is just too strong to ignore. Nobel laureate George W. Beadle put it this way:

One must accept all of evolution or none. And the evidence for organic evolution is overwhelmingly convincing.... [B]elief in evolution, including the spontaneous origin of life from non-living antecedents, need in no way conflict with religion (as quoted in Buffaloe, 1969, pp. 17,20,21).

Jan Lever of the Free University of Amsterdam remarked:

...when we thus place side by side the knowledge which we possess of the higher life of the Primates of the Pleistocene Epoch and the revelation that man has been brought forth within that which has been created, then we may not reject in advance the **possibility** that the genesis of man occurred by way of a being that, at least with respect to the characteristics of its skeleton, was an animal, according to our norms and criteria.... [W]e may not reject in advance the possibility that there has existed a genetic relation between man and animal (1958, pp. 197,221, emp. in orig.).

In a symposium on “Origins and Christian Thought Today” held at Wheaton College on February 17, 1961, Walter Hearn stated:

...surely we know that processes have been involved in bringing **us** into existence. Why shudder, then, at the idea that processes were involved in bringing Adam into existence? Granted that we do not yet know details of the processes, why may we not assume that God **did** use processes? (1961, p. 42, emp. in orig.).

Edward L. Kessel presented the theistic evolution point of view by suggesting:

Once He had established the material of Nature, and the laws of Nature to govern its activities, He used this mechanism to continue creation—creation by evolution (evolution, development).... Just as an open-minded scientist must heed the evidence and recognize that there must be a God, the non-scientist must likewise heed the evidence and recognize that creational evolution was God’s method of creation, once He had produced the material of the universe and established its laws (as quoted in Baxter, 1971, pp. 159-160, parenthetical item in orig.).

In speaking of James Orr, the conservative theologian of the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, Davidheiser suggested that he

“...entertained views of theistic evolution. Dr. Orr had the theory of evolution thrust upon him and he had to deal with it. He seems to have been convinced that the scientists had proved evolution to be true and that he had to do the best he could with it” (1969, p. 38).

This appears to be the attitude of many today. They have had the theory of evolution “thrust upon them,” and the only way they know of “doing the best they can with it” is to attempt to incorporate it into the biblical record. They therefore make a conscious decision to become theistic evolutionists.

Second, some people believe in theistic evolution because they are convinced in their own minds that it not only is not contradictory to the Bible, but is, in fact, quite compatible with the Divine Record. Albertus Pieters, in his Notes on Genesis, wrote:

If a Christian believer is inclined to yield as far as possible to the theory of organic evolution, he can hold that man’s body was prepared by God through such a natural process, and that, when this process had reached a certain stage, God took one of the man-like brutes so produced, and made him the first human being, by endowing him with a human

soul and a morally responsible nature.... In such a conception there is nothing contrary to the Bible (1947, p. 201).

James Hefley, writing in Eternity magazine, stated: "A distinguished university professor and respected Christian told me, 'I believe that science has proved certain forms of evolution.... I believe this does not conflict with the Biblical account of creation'" (1965, p. 21).

Neal Buffaloe, writing in Mission magazine, said that he believed "the concept of evolution is neither degrading to man, detrimental to human dignity, nor in conflict with the Bible" (1969, pp. 17,20, 21). John N. Clayton, a lecturer on Christian evidences and editor of a bi-monthly journal titled Does God Exist?, is on record as stating: "If we look carefully at the issues about which we are talking, however, we can find that evolution and the Bible show amazing agreement on almost all issues and that one is not mutually exclusive of the other" (1976, p. 130).

In the September/October 1984 issue of his Does God Exist? magazine, John Clayton published, approvingly, an article titled "Monism, Belief, and Scientific Explanations" by Pepperdine University biology professor Norman Hughes. In his article, Dr. Hughes wrote:

It is unfortunate that so many believers seem to have accepted an idea that has grown out of philosophical monism: the idea that there is either a naturalistic explanation (discovered by man and therefore understandable by man, i.e., "scientific") for a natural event, or there is a supernatural explanation (not known or understood by man, except to whatever degree divine revelation may have enlightened him for the same event). This brief essay is an attempt to set forth the thesis that such a choice is neither necessary nor beneficial. In fact, the essence of the dualism of Scripture is that the believer can accept both natural and supernatural explanations at the same time.... The idea that to whatever extent one accepts evolutionary explanations, to that degree one has eliminated God's role in the creation of life is an idea based on a fallacy (1984a, 11[5]:16, emp. added, parenthetical items in orig.).

Was Dr. Hughes advocating theistic evolution? Indeed he was. And one does not have to "read between the lines" to reach such a conclusion because Hughes himself settled the matter once and for all in a letter he wrote to the editor of the Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation in

which he stated: "I am a theist—I believe in God and in Jesus Christ as His revelation to humankind. I am an evolutionist—I find many biological phenomena which are not explainable except by the theory of evolution. But please, don't call me a theistic evolutionist!" (1986, 384[4]:282). [One wonders exactly what Dr. Hughes would expect to be called, if not a theistic evolutionist. Perhaps he would prefer "evolutionary theist."] After reading Dr. Hughes' article in John Clayton's journal, Wayne Jackson of Stockton, California, wrote to inquire if he was, in fact, a theistic evolutionist. [In the December 1984 issue of the monthly paper he edits, The Christian Courier, Jackson authored an article titled "A Pepperdine Professor and Evolution" that documents all of these facts (1984, 20:29-31).] On November 23, 1984, Dr. Hughes graciously responded by letter as follows:

I do insist again that the basic thesis of the article is valid, i.e., that one can hold both a naturalistic and a supernatural explanation for the origin and the continuation of natural phenomena at the same time.... As a scientific theory, organic evolution has a number of weaknesses, but at the same time, it provides explanations for certain natural phenomena which I could not otherwise explain. To the extent that I find evolutionary theory useful, I have no hesitancy in using it (1984b, p. 1).

Apparently people like Buffaloe, Clayton, Hughes, and others who think like them, believe that there is no conflict whatsoever between the Genesis account of creation and evolution; therefore, anyone who wishes to espouse theistic evolution is free to do so, without worrying about any contradiction (real or alleged) that it might present in regard to the biblical material on origins.

Third, there are those who believe that the concept of theistic evolution somehow heightens God's glory by having allowed Him to create the Universe via an evolutionary process. They feel this makes God "more believable," and simultaneously bestows more honor on Him. Paul Amos Moody, in his book, Introduction to Evolution, addressed the issue in this fashion.

It is just as possible to worship a God who works through natural laws, slowly evolving life on this planet, as it is to worship a God who creates by sudden command. In fact, is not our concept of the Creator immeasurably heightened when we understand more and more of the intricate workings of this marvelous universe? Such a

Creator is of far greater stature than would be a miracle worker who created things once and for all back in 4004 B.C. (1970, p. 496).

In commenting on this idea, Davidheiser remarked:

Theistic evolution is as old as the acceptance of evolution by the nominal Christian church. Those who hold this position consider evolution to be a fact, but they believe that it has been divinely directed instead of coming about through natural processes. It is frequently said by those who advocate theistic evolution that it is a grander concept to think of God working in this way than to think of Him producing living creatures by fiat creation. However, what is important is what the Bible says, and not what men may think is grander (1969, p. 168).

Fourth, no doubt there are some theistic evolutionists who believe it “just doesn’t matter” one way or the other. J.D. Thomas reviewed this position in his book, *Facts and Faith*.

In connection with a study of evolution it is important that we consider the question of theistic evolution or “religious” evolution, which question is a real problem to some people. The reasoning is, that inasmuch as so many people do believe in evolution, what is the use of “making a big fuss about it”? They feel that we might accept some basic principles about evolution and yet hold for the existence of God and for creation in some way—that perhaps God simply used evolution as the means of getting man here (1965, p. 15).

In commenting on theistic evolution, John Clayton suggested that “While there is no evidence biblically or scientifically to support such a position, these people do have one very excellent point, and that is that this whole subject is totally irrelevant to the question of the existence of God” (1976, p. 131). Edward John Carnell, in his book, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, assessed the matter rather bluntly when he wrote: “If God was pleased to breathe His image into a creature that had previously come from the dust, so be it” (1959, p. 95). Buffaloe—with what might best be described as a “shrug of the shoulders” attitude—said: “What do we care that man the animal is a product of evolution as long as man the spirit is begotten of God?” (1969, pp. 17,20,21).

Fifth, theistic evolution is popular among some people because they feel Genesis has not told us how God created. Russell Mixer, former president

of the American Scientific Affiliation, was a proponent of this view. He felt that “Genesis 1 is designed to tell Who is the creator, and not necessarily how the full process of creation was accomplished” (1961, p. 25, emp. in orig.).

There are other reasons, of course, that could be listed to document why so many Bible-believing people choose to accept evolution. Many, no doubt, are influenced by the steady stream of evolutionist propaganda appearing in such widely read publication as *National Geographic*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Weekly Reader*, *Discover*, *Scientific American*, and a host of others. Fear of being viewed as “anti-intellectual” likely causes some to opt for theistic evolution. The influence of co-workers, friends, or peers also cannot be ruled out. Pressure to conform to the status quo is quite severe, especially in the scientific community. The love of “all things worldly” likely is responsible for many falling prey to theistic evolution. And, the desire to avoid controversy at all cost probably is responsible for the acceptance of theistic evolution among certain groups of people.

THEISTIC EVOLUTION AND THE VOICES OF COMPROMISE

In attempting to help people see the effects of the compromise of theistic evolution, Paul Zimmerman asked:

Is it possible for us, as faithful interpreters of Scripture and believers in God’s Word, to accept theistic evolution? If we do so, what are the consequences, if any? Have we perhaps, out of a stubborn conservative spirit, been dragging our feet when we should have gone along with evolution? There are many who feel that our insistence on creation as opposed to evolution imposes an intellectual obstacle to the faith of young people in today’s scientific age (1972, p. 97).

Many in the religious community believe Christians simply should “go along with evolution.” Bernard Ramm is just one example. In *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, he wrote:

We have noted that already orthodox thinkers (Protestant and Catholic) have affirmed that evolution, properly defined, can be assimilated into Christianity. This is strong evidence that evolution is not metaphysically incompatible with Christianity. The final answer, however, must come from one with responsible leadership. It must come from the best of

evangelical scholarship which is fair, competent, and learned. It must come from our better thinkers in biology, geology, and theology, and not from more vocal or less able men. It must not come by the cheap anti-evolutionary tract nor from pulpiterring, but from that evangelical scholarship which is loyal to the best academic scholarship and to the sound teachings of Holy Scripture (1954, pp. 292-293, emp. and parenthetical item in orig.).

Thus, Ramm asks us to “check our brains at the church house door” so to speak, and let “competent scholarship” do our thinking for us. In light of such a suggestion, a good question might be: “What position will ‘competent scholarship’ urge upon us?” In his book, *The Long War Against God*, Henry Morris provided the answer.

In 1973 an unofficial survey was conducted among the science teachers in the Christian College Consortium, an association of a dozen or so prestigious evangelical colleges (Wheaton, Gordon, Westmont, etc.). The report of the survey included the following summary: “Efforts to characterize and identify with the departmental positions results in all respondents calling themselves ‘theistic evolutionists,’ ‘progressive creationists,’ or infrequently ‘fiat creationists.’” The great majority of these teachers thus teach either theistic evolution or progressive creation—that is, when they do not bypass the subject altogether... (1989, p. 104, parenthetical item in orig.).

Dr. Morris went on to discuss the results of a second survey taken in 1980. Of 69 schools to whom questionnaires were sent, 52 responded. Of those, 48 replied that they did not consider the topic of origins important, and 31 stated categorically that they did not teach the Genesis account of creation to be literally true (1989, p. 105).

In some cases, it appears that Dr. Ramm has gotten his wish. “Competent scholarship” has spoken—and what has it said? James Jauncey, in *Science Returns to God*, commented that:

There are a great number of biologists who at least tentatively believe in evolution, but who nevertheless are active members of Christian churches and find no problem at all. The general attitude is that even if evolution were proved to be true, instead of making God unnecessary, it would merely show that this was the method God used (1961, p. 20).

Dr. Jauncey stated further:

This kind of thinking would consider the evolutionary process as the means that God is using. The point that the author wishes to make here is that even if the origin of man from the evolutionary hypothesis were proved to be correct, there still would be no insoluble difficulty for the Christian interpreter (p. 49).

In 1954, Ramm said:

To this point we have shown that evolution with all necessary qualifications has been adopted into both Catholic and Protestant evangelical theology and has not meant the disruption of either. To charge that evolution is anti-Christian, and that theistic evolution is not a respectable position, is very difficult to make good in view of the evidence we have given (pp. 289-290, emp. added).

Fifteen years later, when Bolton Davidheiser wrote his classic volume, *Evolution and Christian Faith*, he observed:

In recent years a new thing has happened, and this is more dangerous to Christian faith than the attacks and ridicule of the evolutionists. Men of science who profess to be Bible-believing Christians are telling conservative Christian audiences that it is not only all right to believe at least a certain amount of evolution, but that it actually is necessary to do so (1969, p. 39).

The evidence suggests that many Bible believers, especially young people, are falling prey to the idea that they can believe in evolution in one form or another. Hugo McCord, while professor of Bible and biblical languages at what was then Oklahoma Christian College (now Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts), wrote of his experiences with the freshmen in his Bible classes.

It is my privilege of teaching all Oklahoma Christian College Freshmen in their first Bible course on this campus. Since we start with Genesis it is not long till the subject of evolution arises. It is distressing that some from Christian homes are quite firm believers in evolution. Each year, after students listened to a taped lecture on “The Bible and Evolution,” questions are written out and handed to me. One of the questions shows that there is the belief in theistic evolution: “What is so wrong about believing that such things really occurred gradually, with the help of God? I have no

problems correlating evolution and my religion” (1968, pp. 771,777).

It is not surprising that youngsters are so willing to accept theistic evolution, considering what “competent scholarship” urges upon them. In 1986, for example, students in the biology classes of two professors at Abilene Christian University (ACU)—Kenneth Williams and Archie Manis—were taught that “the fact of evolution is beyond dispute.” Dr. Manis urged his students to study the Genesis account (he had given them a photocopy of Genesis 1 from his personal Bible, with the words “myth, hymn” scribbled in the margin beside Genesis 1:1), and then to synthesize a “personal statement of belief about origins” (see Thompson, 1986, pp. 10-16). A serious and sustained controversy erupted when alumni of the University (including a number of alumni from the biology department itself) discovered that Genesis was being labeled a myth and evolution was being taught as fact. Those alumni, and others who opposed the teaching of evolution as the correct view of origins, rose up in arms against ACU. Financial support to the school decreased. Parents who had planned to send their children to ACU decided against doing so. And so on.

Tragically, rather than admit the obvious and correct the problem, the University Administration and Board of Directors publicly denied that there was any problem with the professors’ teachings—in spite of firm, eyewitness testimony from former and current students. Friends of the University counseled then-president, William J. Teague, that one way to convince the institution’s many financial supporters and alumni that the charges against its biology professors were false was to publish a book on the very topic of the controversy—creation and evolution.

Two years later, in 1988, University officials did just that, and released for distribution the volume titled *Evolution and Faith*. Ironically (or perhaps not), the University chose as editor of the book J.D. Thomas, former chairman of ACU’s Bible department and a well-known advocate of the Gap Theory (1961, p. 54). At first, it seemed odd that the University would choose a man who for so long has been recognized for compromising the creation account. However, after reading the volume that he edited for ACU, it was apparent that he was chosen because of this reputation, not in spite of it. Assisting Thomas were other ACU faculty members, and one Board member (J.T. Ator). The book addressed such topics as biology (J.R. Nichols), chemistry (P.C. Reeves, dean of the

College of Science), physics (M.E. Sadler), astronomy (J.T. Ator), origins and the Bible (I.A. Fair, Bible department chairman), and the week of creation (N.R. Lightfoot). Interestingly, there was an appendix by John N. Clayton of South Bend, Indiana—who is known widely for his many compromises of the creation record (for documentation, see Jackson and Thompson, 1992). President Teague penned the foreword.

The thrust of the book was crystal clear. For example, an entire chapter (by Sadler) was devoted to the proposition that “experimental evidence indicates that we live in a universe that was created over 10 billion years ago, after which the heavier elements were formed. The age of our solar system is about 4-5 billion years.” Where does this line of reasoning lead? Dr. Sadler continued:

The Bible does not say how old the earth is, much less the solar system or the universe. To judge as heretics all those who believe that the present universe has evolved from a big bang is unfair and creates controversy over something that is certainly not a central part of Christianity (1988, p. 93, emp. added).

Do certain teachers at ACU present the evolutionary Big Bang scenario as the method of the origin of the Universe? Yes indeed, as is evinced from the fact that one of the authors of the book, Arlie J. Hoover, subsequently published an article on “God and the Big Bang” in which he suggested that “it is entirely possible” that “God used a big bang as His method of creation.” Dr. Hoover went on to suggest: “Because the Bible does not specify how God did it, we are left to choose the hypothesis that seems to have the best supporting material.” He concluded his article by stating: “The big bang theory is far from being established, but we should not reject it as if it necessarily contradicted the biblical account of Creation” (1992, 134[9]:34-35).

Dr. Sadler suggested that these things are not “a central part of Christianity,” and Dr. Hoover stated that “the Bible does not specify how God did it.” Yet a comparison between the evolutionary Big Bang scenario and the Genesis record of origins establishes numerous contradictions between the two. [NOTE: For an in-depth discussion of those contradictions, see Jackson, 1993, 28:41-43.]

In the chapter following Dr. Sadler’s, ACU Board member Ator instructed the reader not to place “unnecessarily restrictive” limitations on Genesis 1. He then stated that the days of Genesis were not

really “days” at all, but long periods of time (1988, pp. 96-97), from which he concluded: “The data just reviewed has [sic] driven scientists to the conclusion that the universe must have an age of between fifteen and twenty billion years” (p. 105). His entire chapter was devoted to the idea that “one should not ‘force fit’ his or her own ideas into the brief, beautiful, pristine creation account in Genesis” (p. 115), and then he proceeded to do just that. Oddly, one chapter later Bible Department chairman Ian Fair wrote:

While it is possible to consider the term “day” in the Hebrew language to mean “time” or “age,” this does seem to strain the simplest interpretation of Genesis 1:3ff. We will notice below that the Biblical theologian should have no difficulty with the “24-hour day” interpretation if the text is permitted to speak in its own literary context and within its own purpose... (1988, pp. 146-147, emp. in orig.).

However, in the following chapter Neil Lightfoot wrote regarding the word “day” as used in Genesis “Obviously this is not a simple question with a clear-cut answer. ...here dogmatism is not only unwise but unscriptural” (1988, pp. 172,173, emp. in orig.).

Here is a book—whose alleged purpose is to build faith in the creation account among college-age youngsters—which suggests that the Gap Theory (espoused by Thomas and Clayton) is correct. No, ignore that. The Day-Age Theory (espoused by Sadler and Ator) is correct. No, ignore that. The days of Genesis are to be accepted as 24-hour periods (according to Fair). No, ignore that. There is no way to come to any clear-cut answer regarding the length of the days of Genesis (says Lightfoot). No, ignore that. The Big Bang scenario is the correct view of the origin of the Universe (Hoover and Sadler think). Pity the poor ACU student reading this volume. What is he or she to believe? From beginning to end, the book is filled with contradictions and false teachings on the creation account and related passages.

Neal Buffaloe, professor of biology at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, and a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), teaches his students that:

It is simply a fact that it [evolution—BT] produced that wonder which we know as the human species.... We have sought to show that evolution is not in itself the enemy of Theism, as the Creationists mistakenly assume, but

rather can reasonably be interpreted as providing support for the doctrine of divine creation (Buffaloe and Murray, 1981, p. 20, emp. in orig.).

In 1999—eighteen years after Dr. Buffaloe wrote his college textbook, and thirteen years after the fiasco at Abilene Christian University—Mike Gipson, a science professor at Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (which is supported by individual members and congregations of the churches of Christ), penned a letter to the editor of Oklahoma City’s largest and most prominent newspaper, the Daily Oklahoman. His letter (which appeared in the “Your Views” section of the November 24, 1999 issue of the paper under a general heading titled “Textbook Disclaimer Advocacy”) was written in response to a November 14, 1999 editorial discussing a State-proposed “disclaimer” being considered for inclusion in all books used in Oklahoma that discussed evolution. The editor of the Daily Oklahoman had suggested that the disclaimer (which pointed out to students that evolution is not a fact, and is only one possible explanation of how the Universe and its contents came to be) was “elegant and non-offensive.” Dr. Gipson wrote in strong disagreement.

First, he complained because the disclaimer “implies no gradualism at all in the fossil record.” Second, he complained because the disclaimer “suggests that the hundreds of transitional forms claimed by paleontologists automatically have no merit. In my judgment, this is not...intellectually honest.” Gipson then concluded: “Evolutionary theory, like all science, is tentative. Within the realm of faith, many of us hold religious explanations for the source of the diversity of life around us. Within the realm of science, evolution—though theoretical—currently appears to be the best explanation” (Gipson, 1999, A-8, emp. added). Little wonder so many young people today are confused on what to believe regarding the biblical account of creation, considering the exposure they receive to this kind of material (much of it from professors who claim to be Christians!). Can evolution “reasonably be interpreted” to fit the Genesis account? Is evolution really “the best explanation” for the origin of the Universe and its inhabitants? Can we believe (and still be true to the Scriptures) that “such things occurred gradually, with the help of God”—and not affect adversely either our faith or our salvation? I suggest the answer to these kinds of questions is an apodictic “No!” And I agree wholeheartedly with Coppedge when he observed: “Some believers in God are not

clearly aware that the Bible and evolution are not compatible. They suppose that theistic evolution is a philosophy acceptable to the Christian faith, not having thought through the contradiction involved” (1975, p. 177).

The fact is, theistic evolution and its counterparts undermine the authority of both God and His Word. Were it possible somehow to take a comprehensive poll of church members, that poll likely would show that many today quite willingly espouse theistic evolution as “God’s method of creation.” While this is unfortunate indeed, it should not be all that surprising—in light of the minuscule amount of teaching we have offered in the past on this topic. While teaching on sin,

heaven, hell, the resurrection, grace, faith, and love (all important topics), many times we have failed to teach Genesis 1 in its proper perspective. The result is a membership that believes in theistic evolution without really knowing its ramifications or end results. As Hosea said long ago, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

Were Christians to be made aware of the logical implications of their belief in evolution, some would retreat from the ranks of theistic evolutionists post-haste. The problem appears to be that many Christians are not aware that it is an “either...or” situation when it comes to belief in creation and evolution—not a “both...and.”

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HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR BIBLE? Part 10

Jerry D. McDonald

In our last issue we looked at number 9, now we are ready for number 10: "According to biblical anatomy, where does thinking happen?" Is it (A) In the heart, (B) in the brain, (C) in the Kidney's, or (C) in the lungs? Mr. Barker says "Biblical anatomy also rates an 'F.' The heart is an organ that pumps blood--it does not process thoughts, although the biblical writers erroneously thought it did. The word 'brain' appears nowhere in the bible." Yes, the Bible does speak of the heart as being the center of thought, but it is not talking about our blood pumper. It is talking about our minds, our souls. Our brains are only organs that make thought, and storage of thought possible. However, if the consciousness of man that actually does the thinking.

We tell people we love that we love them with all of our heart. Do we mean that we love them with all of our blood pumper? Of course not, but we use the word heart and we may even put our hand on our heart (blood pumper), but what we really love with is our mind, our consciousness, our emotion, and our thoughts. It amazes me how people can nit pick when they want to find something wrong with the Bible. They take something that we use in our every day world accept it in every day living, but condemn it when it is used in the Bible.

Case and point: Some argue that the Bible is not scientifically accurate because it speaks of the sun rising and the sun setting. Yet this is a common every day figure that we hear every day we listen to the weather. It is so common that it is said without incident. Someone might ask "What time is sunrise?" and someone else will say "Oh, about

6:30.” Now, does the sun really rise? No! Are our weather people scientifically illiterate? No! Then why do they use such language? Because it is a common figure of speech called “apparent motion” that we are so used to using that no one even questions it when it is used. However, if some weatherman was to get up and say “Now the earth will rotate on its axes at approximately 6:30 a.m. allowing the sun to shine over your area” this would certainly raise a few eyebrows. It would be the talk of the town, and he might even be called in and asked if he was serious or not. If he was, he

would probably be told to go hunt another job just for being stupid.

No, the Bible doesn't consider the blood pump as the thinking part of the body, but it uses the word heart in much the same way we use the word when we say that someone has broken our heart by doing something to hurt us. Now Dan knows this! If he cannot come up with anything better than this, he ought to just quit.

NEWS & VIEWS

There isn't much going on these days. I have a written debate going on with Todd Greene on the age of the universe/earth. I have already sent in my first affirmative at <http://www.challenge2.org/mcd1aff1prop.pdf> and am waiting for his first rebuttal. You can now purchase your copy of the Butt/Barker Debate from either Apologetics Press or The World Video Bible School. I ordered two copies when it first came out, and I just got mine this past week. So it may take you a while to get yours. Several have asked about how to find out about my debates and you can find most of them by going to <http://www.challenge2.org> and then going to debates and clicking on it, and also “exchanges,” and some exchanges in the “article” section. There

are also a couple of debates on my Biblical Criticism website at <http://www.biblical-criticism.com> and go to debates and articles. I also recently completed a written debate with Spencer Lo on the Resurrection which can be found at <http://www.challenge2.org/coverres.pdf>. I am involved in another one with him on the same subject, but coming from a different direction. I am also in a written debate on the Canaanite Conquest with someone I only know as Silent Running. It is running on the *Theology Web* and I am running under the name of Ghost Sniper. I will be putting it on the *Challenge2* website soon. I have started up another email discussion list *Challenge2 Biblical Examination* which will go along with the Biblical Criticism website.

Challenge is a quarterly apologetic journal that is used mainly to debate the evangelical atheistic/skeptical movement that permeates our country today. There is no charge for the electronic journal and you can either view it on the challenge website or request it and it will be sent to you free of charge. If you want the paper version of Challenge please let me know. We won't be making that many, but we will make them up for those who don't use computers. There will be no charge for the paper version. For the electronic version please send an email to jerry@challenge2.org. If you want the paper version you can send a request to that address or the following regular address: Challenge, P.O. 237, Belle, MO 65013. Phone is (573) 578-5931) Jerry McDonald is the editor and owner of Challenge. Thomas Hardeman McDonald is the co-editor.

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