

Science may lead people away from the organised church, but it will never lead them away from God. Science is the study of God's handiwork.

Damage to Faith

But will not believing in evolution damage people's faith? Yes, it will, if that faith is based on a literal interpretation of every word of the Bible. When young people have been brought up to believe that 6-day creationism is the only valid interpretation of the Bible, and that they cannot be proper followers of Jesus unless they believe it, there is certainly a great danger that their faith will be damaged. But the fault does not lie in the teaching of evolution. It lies in the false foundation that their well-meaning bible-teachers have given them. They have been taught that they cannot be both followers of Jesus and believers in evolution. This wrong teaching is what causes damage to their faith.

For people who simply believe in Jesus, and his all-wise omnipotent father God, all study of science, including the study of evolution, will only strengthen their belief in the infinite wisdom of God. It was he who wrote the laws of science and devised the incredible mechanism of evolution. Through evolution he brought our planet and ourselves into the unbelievably wonderful state that we see around us every day.

Conclusion

You cannot build the kingdom of God on falsehood. We live at a point in history when the traditional church is disintegrating and giving way to a new order. True traditions are for us to keep and pass on faithfully. False traditions are chains and shackles that will bind us and make us slaves of man and rob us of our inheritance in God.

We must learn to seek God and search till we can distinguish between the two. We must follow Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians to "test everything and to hold on to the good" (1Thess 5:21).

Creation and Evolution



recent times could possibly have guessed the size of the universe or the nature of atoms and sub-atomic particles.

In the realm of nature as well as in the realm of the spirit, God has hidden many things from view till the appointed time of their discovery and revelation. The religious world has been more concerned to suppress truth, both natural and spiritual, than to discover and promote it.

To the casual observer the earth appears to be flat rather than round. The Greeks began to think it was round because they realised that an eclipse of the moon was the earth's shadow passing over it. They saw that the shadow was curved. They also noticed that if you travelled south (in the northern hemisphere), the sun and some of the stars were higher in the sky. If you went north the sun was lower and other stars, such as the pole star, were higher. (If you go to the north pole, the pole star will be overhead.)

They still thought that the earth was the centre of the universe and everything else went round it. It still *looks* to me as if they were right. It was only when Copernicus and then Galileo studied the sky and especially the planets carefully, that they began to realise that the earth and the planets went round the sun. With his telescope, Galileo saw that Jupiter had moons going round it, and this disproved the idea that everything went round the earth. For this the church placed Galileo under house arrest and forced him to recant.

Eventually when the church began to lose the argument about the sun going round the earth, it said that it didn't matter any way.

Religious authorities have thrived on ignorance. At their worst they have wanted to stand in the place of God and of Christ (this is the meaning of antichrist) and have total rule over people's bodies, minds and spirits. They have attempted to destroy the credibility of everything that has not proceeded from themselves.

Many scientific inventions and advances (cars, aeroplanes, televisions, computers) have been regarded with distrust if they have not enhanced the power and position of the status quo.

This attitude has been endemic in all kinds of religious power groups, whether Catholic or fundamentalist, or believers in the Bible, Koran, or any other book.

improved. Changes that turn out to be profitless or even retrograde are discarded and forgotten.

Cars have evolved from cumbersome machines that drank huge quantities of petrol and crawled along at slow speeds into the efficient aerodynamic vehicles we have now. They began as status symbols for the rich which bumped along at walking speed with runners out in front to clear the way. They developed lights, horns, heating, speed, comfort, locking systems, efficiency and many other features they did not originally have. Their price has come down to the level at which everyone in a developed country expects to own one.

Computers have evolved in a most spectacular manner from the dinosaurs of the nineteen fifties to the technical wizardry of today.

Houses have evolved from trees, caves and mud huts to the sophisticated all mod cons dwellings in which we now live.

Man is created in the image of God and when he himself creates, he imitates his creator. He uses the process of evolution.

The Bible itself is a record of evolutionary revelation. Jesus was not born from Eve to put things right, the day after Adam fell. Instead he was born of Mary thousands of years later in the fullness of time. God had then pruned and evolved the world and his chosen race through prophets and judgments to be ready to receive him.

My experience of God (and no doubt yours too) has been evolutionary. God has had to 'uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant' (to quote [Jeremiah 1:10](#)) in me and in you. For our part we have had to test everything, and hold on to what is good. We were not perfect as God wanted us to be from the moment we experienced the new birth. God has been working to bring us to perfection ever since. He has cut off the branches that bore no fruit, and he has pruned the branches that bore fruit to make them produce more fruit.

The Church's Record

Sometimes we can learn from history.

Many things in science are not obvious. God has designed natural things as well as spiritual things so that you will only discover them if you search for them. Many scientific secrets of the universe are deeply hidden. No one till

Introduction

To some people there are two kinds of "ists": Creationists and Evolutionists. Creationists are "us", and Evolutionists are "them". Creationists believe the Bible and Evolutionists reject it. Creationists are the "goodies" and Evolutionists are the "baddies".

To many people the whole thing is not a very important issue. They are sure there must be some answer, but feel it is not their problem.

To a few people it is a critical issue that may even undermine their faith.

I believe the issue is important, because our concept of God is at stake. A God who creates the universe in 6 days has a different character from a God who takes 13.8 billion years over it.

I want to know all I can and should about my God. Firstly, because he has called me to be like him, and secondly because I don't want to be a false witness.

The Creationist's Case

Let's consider the "Creationist's" case.

His first argument is to call himself a creationist and his opponent an evolutionist, and thereby assume the two concepts are incompatible. Genesis chapter one verse one says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". "It didn't just evolve", the creationist says. "According to the Bible God created it".

This is a false contrast. Creation and evolution are not incompatible opposites. Someone (who had lost his memory) might say, "I don't believe I came into existence through a man implanting a minute seed inside a woman's body, which somehow contained a complete pattern for how I was going to grow up. I believe God created me as I am." You would reply, "God did create you. He didn't wave a wand and have you materialise as you now are out of nothing. Instead he devised quite incredible processes that we know as conception, birth and growth by which you have become what you are now. You have a wonderful and incredibly complex body, but the processes by which you grew from a minute seed into what you are now are equally wonderful."

The real question before us is not: “Did God create the universe, or did it just evolve?”. Rather it is: “Did God create the world, by speaking a word of command that caused things to materialise instantaneously out of nothing, in more or less the state in which we see them today? Or did he devise a process called evolution by which over millions of years with infinite patience he slowly produced the universe we now see?”

Both these methods of working could be described as *creating*. It’s just that one is quick and the other is slow! - at least by human ideas of time. You could ask the question, “Which is greater, a God who can create a universe in six days, or a God who undertakes 15 billion year projects?”

Man is created in God’s image and man uses tools for everything he makes. He does not build with his bare hands. He began with primitive tools such as hammers, saws, axes and files. From these he made more complex mechanical tools that began to do his work for him. From these he has built ever more sophisticated tools of great power and precision often with highly specialised applications. With these tools he can tackle incredibly complex projects such as building massive jet aeroplanes and huge buildings or highly delicate instruments that he never could have made with his bare hands.

In the same way God made elementary physical laws such as gravity and electromagnetism. From these he devised more complicated laws such as nuclear fission and fusion and radioactivity. Without being too scientific we could say that from the laws of physics he built the laws of chemistry. From chemical laws he made the laws of biology, and from these the laws of evolution. These and many other laws were his tools for building the universe as a whole, and the world in which he has placed us with all its vegetable, animal and human life.

People who are hungry for miracles and the dramatic and want a simplistic approach will incline towards a 6-day view of creation. People who are more mature in their understanding may be ready to consider a view of creation taking much longer.

Greek mythology believed that the goddess Athena sprang fully clothed out of Zeus’s head. We believe Jesus came less dramatically, but far more wonderfully by the normal human process of conception in Mary’s womb. (Normal that is as far as most people would have known.)

On the sixth day we reach the culmination of God’s creation, which is man. God’s purpose for us is that we should be spiritual men, having spiritual understanding, wisdom, strength and maturity.

Demonstrations of Evolution

Jesus stated the principle of evolution in John chapter 15 verse 2. He said, ‘He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.’

Paul told the Thessalonians (in 1Thes 5:21) to ‘test everything and to hold on to the good’.

In the natural world species evolve until they perfectly fit the habitat in which they find themselves. Offspring that is badly adapted to its surroundings dies or is killed. Offspring that is better adapted lives longer and has children that inherit its advantageous characteristics.

Camouflage provides an obvious example. If an insect has offspring of slightly differing colours, the ones that have the best camouflage against their background will live the longest and therefore have the most offspring. These offspring will inherit the colouring of their parents. The best camouflaged of their offspring will in turn be more likely to live and reproduce. In the end after this process has gone on long enough, the insects will blend perfectly with their surroundings.

Some sincere people will object that this sort of explanation takes away from the glory of God. They insist that God made everything perfectly adapted to its surroundings. The answer again is, “Yes he did, but he did it by the process of evolution.” Which is greater, a God who spontaneously creates species perfectly adapted to their surroundings, or a God that creates a law that creates species perfectly adapted to their surroundings? The first concept appeals to the child, and the second appeals to the adult.

Man has simulated the process of evolution to improve domestic animals. He allows the best animals to breed and pass on their characteristics and lets other strains die out. The result is cows that give more milk, pigs that have more meat, horses that are faster and stronger, dogs that perform their various functions better than their ancestors would have done, and so on.

Man has done something similar with his own inventions. Any development or idea that is good and beneficial is retained and further

human race until recently that the earth was the centre of the universe, and the sun and stars revolved around it.

Do we therefore reject Genesis chapter one as of no value? The answer is no. This passage may not teach us science, but there are things of much greater value that we can learn from it. Many passages of scripture have little value on the surface, but when the Holy Spirit reveals their deeper meanings to us, we worship God in amazement at the heights and depths of his wisdom. I will here offer some introductory thoughts on the spiritual meaning of Genesis chapter one. Deeper discussion is not the purpose of this writing.

The New Creation

We ourselves, if we are born of the Spirit, are a new creation in God. God's new creation in the spirit is greater than his old creation in the realm of nature. In our natural state we, just like the earth, are formless, empty and in darkness. God's new creation in us begins when he says, "Let there be light". Without light there can be nothing. He then separates the light from the darkness.

Two further processes of separation must take place before there is life. God created a firmament or expanse between the waters above and the waters below. The waters from above are the pure life-giving waters of the Holy Spirit. The waters below are the corrupted, salty waters of man's religion and works that give no real life.

After that he then separated the sea and the dry land. This process of separation also has its spiritual counterpart in our lives.

Two more steps were necessary before the world was ready for life. On day three God created plants and trees - the vegetable kingdom - to provide food and shelter. On day four he made the sun and the moon. The sun represents Jesus Christ giving light and warmth. The moon perhaps represents the church, reflecting the light of the sun.

On the fifth day God created the fishes and the birds. Fishes live in water, which represents the flesh. Birds live in air, which symbolises the spirit. Jesus called his disciples to be "fishers of men". When a fish is caught it is taken out of the water and dies. So when we come to Jesus we leave the fleshly realm and die to self. We become as birds that live in the air and defy the law of gravity. Thus we move from the realm of the flesh to the realm of the spirit.

The size of the universe is relevant to our discussion. It shows us the scale on which God is prepared to work. Miles or kilometres are too small a measure for astronomical distances. Astronomers use light years, which are the distance light travels in one year.

Light from the moon reaches us in just over one second. From the sun it takes 8.3 minutes. From the nearest star it takes 4.3 years. Our galaxy is thought to be 100,000 light years in diameter. The edge of the visible universe appears to be about 10,000 million light years away.

God has created the universe on an unimaginably large scale. It is only consistent if he has acted on a comparable scale with time. 15 billion years of time matches the massive size of the universe.

Descended from Monkeys?

Some people say with great emotion, "I don't believe I was descended from a monkey." Jesus could have said with much greater emotion and more justification, "I don't believe I was descended from Adam."

In 1859, Charles Darwin published his famous book *On the Origin of Species*. His theory of evolution and, in particular, his belief that the human race was descended from monkeys totally contradicted the teachings of the church. In 1953 James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the structure of DNA. This discovery had the potential to prove whether Darwin was right or wrong. A few years ago, my daughter, two of my cousins and myself sent samples of our saliva to a DNA database. The database then gave me a list of several hundred relatives who were also on the database, and told me their approximate relationships. My daughter and cousins headed the list with our relationships exactly accurate. DNA can prove or disprove relationships. So what is the verdict of DNA on man's relationship to monkeys? The answer is that humans, chimpanzees, and bonobos are more closely related to one another than any of them are to gorillas or any other primate. In other words, DNA totally vindicated Darwin's theories and showed conclusively that humans are related to and descended from monkeys.

As I see it, there are three great impassable gulfs in the evolutionary story.

1. How can you pass from lifeless chemical matter to the totally higher orders of vegetable and animal life?

2. How can you pass from a dumb animal to the totally higher order of human life that can reason, speak, laugh, cry, invent, pray and worship?
3. How can you pass from a sinful, corrupt human being with Adam's nature to the totally higher, sinless divine order of life as expressed in Jesus Christ?

We have no record of how the first two of these transitions took place. No human being was there to watch and record them. The third is recorded for us in scripture. God intervened supernaturally to break the natural chain of human inheritance. Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Only one person on earth knew first-hand what had happened, and that was Mary herself. Joseph had a revelation from an angel of the Lord to confirm her words. Everyone else had to rely on their testimony, and no doubt many disbelieved them. The character and life of Jesus corroborate what they said. He was utterly different from all his ancestors. The natural chain of inheritance had been broken.

When Jesus was conceived, God began a new creation with a supernatural miracle of immense consequence, but all this was concealed from almost the entire human race.

Perhaps some such miraculous intervention created the first living organisms from dead chemical matter millions of years ago. Maybe the transition from monkey to man came about in a similar way. Maybe there were other divine interventions that separated out different species at different times. I am speculating, and no one can tell us for sure, but at least this view accords with science and scripture and what we can see and observe of God's ways.

24 Hour Days

Genesis chapter one repeats the phrase "*the evening and the morning were the first day, ... the second day, ... the third day*" and so on.

Does not this imply a literal day of 24 hours? The normal meaning of the word *day* is a period of light from soon before sunrise to soon after sunset. Scientifically this is a result of the earth's rotation on its axis. If the earth rotated more slowly, a day would be longer. If it rotated faster a day would be shorter. A day on Mars is almost the same length as on earth. On Venus, one

day is equivalent to 243 of our days. A day on Jupiter is only about 10 hours. A day on the sun has absolutely no meaning. It is light there all the time.

The word *day* then does not have the fixed rigid meaning that at first sight it appears to have. Its time length is related to the spin of the earth. Before the earth existed there was no such thing as what we normally mean by the word *day*.

The word *hour* has no meaning of its own, but is derived by dividing a day into 24 equal periods. Minutes and seconds are derived in the same way from hours.

Even time itself cannot be measured with certainty. According to modern science, observers travelling at different speeds would measure different lengths of time for the same event.

Time, like space, is not something absolute that has always existed. Both were created by God, and both will have an end.

Creation of Sun and Stars

We must now look at a serious problem of position of the "Creationist". Genesis 1:14-17 describes the creation of the sun, moon and stars as taking place on the fourth day, after the creation of the earth. All scientific evidence points to the sun coming into existence either before or at the same time as the earth. Some of the stars are certainly much older than our sun.

An extremist might solve the problem by taking the view that God is all powerful and can do absolutely anything. He could have created the sun and stars after the earth. That is half true. There are things that God can't do. God cannot lie! He cannot create false evidence - false witness - for the age of the earth, the sun and the universe.

A more common view is that the sun and stars were created long before the earth, but only became visible on the fourth day - or age - of creation. The trouble with that view is that our verses clearly use the word "made". God *made* two great lights. He also *made* the stars. If you claim to be taking the words literally, you can't change their plain meaning to suit your interpretation. "Made" is different from "became visible".

If we are honest, we must admit that Genesis chapter one is not literally in accord with modern science. It reflects the view held by almost the entire