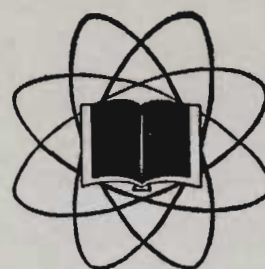


# Journal of the American



## Scientific Affiliation

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Psalm 111:10*

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# THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC AFFILIATION

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# JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC AFFILIATION

September 1963

Volume 15, Number 3

EDITORIAL:

## Christian Commitment and Evolutionary Concepts

V. ELVING ANDERSON and  
DAVID O. MOBERG

Some readers may be tempted to ask, "Why bring up the issue of evolution again?" The answer is obvious: The subject raises important issues which are of continuing interest and concern to many members of the American Scientific Affiliation. New members have not had the benefit of earlier discussions. Old members may hope for some movement toward increased clarity of thought and resolution of tensions.

The articles in this issue form a symposium only in the sense that they all relate to the central topic of evolution. There has been no opportunity for the writers to share their ideas in face-to-face conversation. Neither has there been any attempt to make a survey of ASA fellows or other members in order to discover the consensus of their opinions. Rather, it is our hope that a fresh look at some of the issues will help to put relevant questions into a form that will stimulate meaningful and fruitful discussion and enrich our understanding of Christian doctrine and commitment.

The word "evolution" is encrusted with emotional overtones and a variety of meanings. We sometimes speak of the evolution of human culture, of a scientific theory, of a philosophical school of thought, of rock formations, of the forms of life, or of the universe as a whole. The "ground rules" for fruitful scholarly discussion of evolution may be quite different for each of these topics.

Meaningful discussion is possible only when we clearly define our terms. Let us consider, for example, the labels "creationist" and "theistic evolutionist." In a very real sense, all ASA members, as evidenced by their agreement to the basic statement of faith required for membership, can be considered creationists. But unfortunately much current usage of "creationist" is not equivalent to "believer in God as the Creator." In a similar manner, "theistic evolution" has many meanings and is seldom clearly defined either when it serves as a label of one's own point of view or as an expression, either complimentary or derogatory, applied to the views of another. Perhaps we would be better off if both terms were discarded and we were forced to start afresh with a new vocabulary.

The spirit with which we treat each other in discussions such as this is important. We have a tendency to say, "I disagree with him!", when we ought to say, "I don't understand what he means." We may state, "I don't like him," when we ought to say, "I don't like his opinion about evolution." We are tempted to judge another's salvation—his basic Christian faith—by his views on evolution when we ought to evaluate it on the basis of his relationships with Jesus Christ. We are inclined to arouse a spirit of suspicion which walls us off from those with whom we disagree instead of charitably reaching out to them in an attempt to share our experience of God's grace. Saving grace is found neither in evolution nor in anti-evolution. The negative reaction is significantly different from the positive thrust of Christian outreach that characterized the early church.

As Christians we reflect the dominant world view more clearly and more completely than we usually realize. If the data and interpretations of science produce in us a sense of panic, that experience may reveal some confusion about the nature or the degree of correspondence to be expected between research and faith. We may be tempted on the one hand to deny the validity of the scientific method, but on the other hand we may expect science to bolster our faith. We may inconsistently condemn science and at the same time attempt to support our own world view by selected gleanings from scientific research reports. We may conclude that, because some scientific theories have later been proven false, science must always be untrustworthy. Such a conclusion is just as incorrect as the related error of those opponents of Christianity who assume that, because some Christian interpretations have later been recognized as incorrect, no Christian perspectives are worthy of confidence. A frame of mind that is sensitive to both science and the claims of Christ is committed to a continual reappraisal of scientific data and of Biblical interpretations as they appear. For the Christian who is caught in the spirit of his age and expects much more of science than it can justifiably produce, the reappraisal will usually be an agonizing experience.

It is difficult also to realize how great a part religious traditions play in our own systems of belief. Even as we decry the dependence of others upon tradition, we reflect and continue to absorb traditions ourselves.



As a result, a major task of teachers in church-related colleges is to help students understand what aspects of their religious systems are not really a part of their faith in God. This type of *negative witness* is essential lest we construct new and unnecessary barriers to Christian faith. Yet this posture carries the danger of leaving us with little energy or effort in the area of *positive witness*. In our attempts to avoid misinterpretation of scientific data, we leave ourselves open to the uninviting possibility of having merely a negative faith. We ought rather to encourage each other to develop a clear formulation of what we do believe.

Some of the tensions which divide evangelical Christians on this subject may arise from a failure to distinguish between *evolution as a focus for scientific research* and *evolution as a comprehensive world view*. As a focus for research, the term "evolution" refers to methodological postulates and procedures, a theoretical frame of reference, and collections of empirical data. The area of study may include the principles which govern changes in gene frequencies, the results of comparative research on various forms of life, recurrent patterns of development in the history of social institutions, and the processes of change in structure or function. In this sense, "evolution" has provided powerful tools for study and a framework for organizing data which have been amazingly productive in the development of modern science.

It is the extrapolations from research data to world view (including certain scientific-philosophical theories) that justifiably cause concern on the part of persons committed to faith in God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Do the research data provide evidence that there is no God? Of course not, but neither can one find God solely through scientific research. The source of Christian doctrine is revelation, so sensory data cannot disprove it. Yet we often say that the natural world also is a revelation of God and that our conclusions based upon observation of it therefore must correspond with the revelation in the written Word of God. Tension is inevitable as we check our interpretations of the written revelation against interpretations of observations of the world, and vice versa. The system of values or world view of a Christian may be open to modification as a result of the findings of science, but it is not based upon scientific data alone.

The most distressing result of confusing *evolution-as-research* with *evolution-as-world-view* is that the energies of Christians may become so devoted to attacking

scientific methodology that there is little time left for a positive testimony about the Christian way of life. Few evangelical Christians have presented the concept of God as Creator in terms which are able to strike the scientific imagination as an option worthy of consideration to replace contemporary beliefs.

What really is God's message for our age? What are the "idols" of our generation, the predominant change-producing forces, the decision-making criteria? "Evolution" certainly is a dominant philosophical orientation for many educated people, although its influence among the general population is less certain. One task of the ASA is to discover how we as individuals and as a group can help our contemporaries see the relevance of the Bible and of Jesus Christ for their lives.

The membership of the ASA represents an unusual combination of Christian commitment and scientific knowledge. The ASA brings together persons with enough common understanding in science and in faith that meaningful discussion at significant levels is possible. We must keep the lines of communication between members open, and we must recognize the special competencies of both scientists and theologians. If in addition we wish to convince non-Christian scientists of the relevance of the doctrine of creation, we must engage in continuing conversation with them, both to learn their point of view and to share with them the meaning of Christ for our own lives.

That there is no one Christian view held by all evangelical Christians pertinent to the interpretation of *evolution-as-research* is obvious from the differences of opinion evident in the pages of this issue of the JASA. On the other hand, a positive stand on the doctrine of God as Creator and on the inadequacy of science in general (or, more specifically, of evolution) as an exclusive or comprehensive world view seems to us to be a common platform and a desirable meeting ground for all Christians. We can be open enthusiastically to new scientific data and interpretations, but we must be cautiously critical of value judgments based upon scientism. We must try to avoid over-simplification of the issues, semantic confusion, false dichotomies, and other logical pitfalls in our discussions of this and related subjects. Through our positive witness we must provide the necessary antidote against certain tendencies on the part of some scientists and philosophers. Such a framework of opinion can be expected to encourage critical thought, perceptive research, illuminating writing, incisive testimony, and other modes of effective Christian witness.

# Theological Reactions to the Theory of Evolution \*

BERNARD RAMM\*\*

*The history of clashes between scientists and theologians before the evolutionary controversy reveals that dreadful predictions about the downfall of Christian orthodoxy with the acceptance of scientific advances failed to materialize. Opposition to evolution has nevertheless remained strong for a century because it focuses attention directly upon man. Creation as a theological dogma is a relational concept which cannot be imagined by finite man. It is an expression of the Lordship of God and is attributed to the Word of God, who created from nothing and whose action is continuous in the universe. The truth of creation is derived from revelation, not from sense or reason. Israel came to faith in creation only after her knowledge of God as Redeemer; the Genesis creation account is a great confession of faith. The Christian doctrine of creation is not embarrassed by the empirical contributions of science.*

## The Theological Reaction to Developments in Science.

In order to understand the theological reaction to evolution it is helpful to survey certain debates between theologians and scientists prior to the evolutionary controversy. Understanding the cause of these controversies and their settlement might help us with the problem of biological science.

The first great debate between theologians and scientists developed around the heliocentric theory of the solar system of Copernicus. However, the controversy did not concern Copernicus himself but it raged around Galileo. The sordid story has been told many times and it varies from Protestant efforts which attempt to make the Catholic Church appear as black as possible to the Catholic version which claims that the Church was only trying to protect the Faith of the Church before it rashly made concessions before the full import of the theory was assessed (7, Chap. 50; 9, Chap. 3).

The judgment of the Roman Catholic Church against Galileo was that:

(1) The proposition that the sun is the centre of the world and immovable from its place is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical; because it is expressly contrary to the Holy Scripture. (2) The proposition that the earth is not the centre of the world nor immovable, but that it moves and also with a diurnal motion, is also absurd, philosophically false, and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith (7, p. 246).

The real issue of the Copernican controversy was that the theologians thought that the theological centrality of the earth was dependent upon the earth's astronomical centrality (8, p. 59). They believed that the heliocentric theory was a denial of the incarnation. With the loss of the earth's astronomical centrality went its moral significance. Therefore the Copernican theory was to be resisted.

But the Copernican theory eventually made its way through continued Roman Catholic protest which lasted until the early part of the nineteenth century. Theologians no longer argue that the theological importance of the earth is dependent upon the earth's location in the solar system or the universe. As soon as this adjust-

ment was made the controversy ceased. This pretended discovery, which negates the entire Christian plan of salvation as one theologian expressed himself, did no such thing when it became generally accepted by even the orthodox. That the Copernican theory is "atheistic," and "contrary to Scripture" and that "geometry is the devil" is no longer heard today.

Eventually another controversy emerged from the physics of Isaac Newton. Newton was a devout believer and thought his theory was in favor of theism. But Newton's theory of gravitation was generalized and made to include all particles of matter wherever found. This was revolutionary because heretofore it was believed that the laws which governed the heavens must be different from the laws which govern the earth (3, p. 181). Newton's theory in simple terms is that the motions of particles in their pushes and pulls, momentums and collisions, could account for events small and large, both on the surface of the earth and in the astronomical spaces.

The first philosophical fruitage of the new science was English deism. Taking its cue from Newton it saw the universe as one well-ordered system which did not need any further action by God; any unusual entrance of God into worldly affairs would be unworthy of God. But the French Encyclopedists and the German materialists took Newton further along to a more radical conclusion. It saw in Newton the scientific grounding of the ancient materialism and so used Newton to propound and defend modern materialism. In fact for the next three hundred years Newton's physics was used as a basis for scientific mechanism, philosophical materialism, and psychological determinism.

But it was eventually felt by many thinkers that although Newton had the last word in science, it was an improper procedure to extend his principles of science to other areas of knowledge and certainly to philosophy.

\*Paper presented at Darwin Centennial Lectures, Bethel College, St. Paul, Minn., April 22, 1959.

\*\*Dr. Ramm is Prof. of Systematic Theology, California Baptist Theological Seminary. Recently named an Honorary Fellow of the ASA, he is widely known for his many books and other publications.

Materialism in philosophy persisted into the twentieth century, but it ceased to be considered the only philosophy in keeping with modern science. And so both philosophers and theologians considered Newton's physics as good science but poor philosophy. Thousands of the orthodox were taught this physics in their schools without murmur, and such professions as astronomy, physics, and surveying daily employed this system of science. By the time of Einstein Newtonian physics had ceased to be a theological issue.

A third controversy raged over medicine. Dissection, so necessary for a doctor's knowledge of anatomy, was declared a profanation of the human body. Surgery was fought by the Church for a thousand years, and the surgeon's office was not free from dishonor till the fifteenth century. Medicine was refused monks on the grounds that it was a confession that disease came from natural sources and not the devil. To avoid disease by inoculation was "a diabolical operation," or "flying in the face of providence." The use of chloroform in childbirth was "to avoid one part of the primeval curse on woman." To cover up drainage ditches to prevent plagues was to tamper with God's judgments. Such a list may be greatly extended.

Today it would be safe to say that opposition to medicine on the part of orthodox theology is almost negligible. Not only are there thousands of Christian medical men, but the Church itself considers medical evangelism one of its most important means of Christian service. All the dreadful and doleful things said about the downfall of orthodoxy with the acceptance of medical advances have failed to materialize.

A fourth debate was the controversy over geology. The statements made by theologians of previous centuries about geology are very embarrassing to read today.

The favorite weapon of the orthodox party was the charge that the geologists were "attacking the truth of God." They declared geology "not a subject of lawful inquiry," denouncing it as "a dark art," as "dangerous and disreputable," as "a forbidden province," as "infernal artillery," and as "an awful evasion of the testimony of revelation." (9, vol. I, p. 223)

The story of the various interactions of geologists and theologians has been told many times. It is a story of revision followed by revision followed by revision. The bulk of orthodox people today accept in principle the findings of geology. Some admit the truth of geology by stating that there are two creations in Genesis 1. This is the so-called "gap-theory" which puts all geologic history in the first creation and its subsequent history. Other orthodox men follow a theory of harmonization in which they believe the six days of Genesis and the geologic column tell essentially the same story. Only the followers of so-called flood geology, which accounts for most geological phenomena by the universal flood of Noah, challenge modern geology.

Geological science is now generally accepted directly or indirectly by orthodoxy and has ceased to be a point

of serious controversy. Again, all the doleful and dreadful things which would happen to Christian theology if Lyell's uniformitarian geology be accepted have not materialized.

### Evolution as a Source of Contention Between Scientists and Theologians

When we scan the hundred years of the history of evolution, we discover that it has not followed the same pattern as that of the four sciences we took as examples. In order to see why this is the case, we first summarize the theological reactions to the theory of evolution from 1859 when the *Origin of Species* was published until 1900.

For the most part, orthodox theologians regarded evolution as a direct competitor to the Genesis account, and therefore it was judged as unChristian. Its basic presuppositions appeared to them to be a denial of theism and an affirmation of materialism. Charles Hodge summed up the opinion of this school when he wrote: "What is Darwinism? It is atheism."

A smaller group of theologians and Christian scholars felt that the so-called antagonism between evolution and orthodox Christianity was false. They held the theory to be purely a scientific one and to be settled on scientific grounds; the charge that it is materialism and atheism simply means that materialists and atheists make unfair use of the theory. The theory is not in its essence either materialistic or atheistic. Thus Dr. Brunton, a leading British medical man, said he accepted both evolution and the Genesis account (1). President James McCosh of Princeton University accepted a form of evolution in his work, *Christianity and Positivism* (1871), and President Noah Porter of Yale, who first opposed evolution, acceded to it in the year 1877 (6, pp. 20-21).

The theologians of religious liberalism heartily accepted evolution and attempted to impress it into Christian service. Henry Ward Beecher called himself "a cordial Christian evolutionist" (6, p. 29), and Newman Smyth said that the great coming theologian who would construct the great apology for the Christian faith would be "a trained and accomplished biologist" (4, p. 161). It is a very informative experience to read Chapter 3 of Foster's *The Modern Movement in American Theology* (4), which surveys the reception of evolution by the orthodox theologians, and then to read Chapter 9 entitled, "Liberalism under the Full Influence of Evolution." Here we see evolution completely domiciled within liberal theology.

We noted previously how Copernican astronomy, Newtonian physics, modern medicine, and Lyellian geology were all sternly resisted by orthodoxy; when it was seen that in reality these scientific theories did not impinge upon Christian faith in any deleterious manner, opposition ceased. But evolution has been with us one hundred years and the opposition is still massive and sharp among the orthodox. Clarke's thesis in *Evolution and the Break-Up of Christendom or World Conditions*

*Traced to Modern 'Science,'* (1931) that most of our modern religious and political ills can be traced to the dominance of evolution is shared by tens of thousands. And a modern scientist who is very learned in both the history of science and the data of science but of very strong orthodox convictions states: "Today evolution still stands primarily for an attitude of mind—and it is a dangerous and ugly one at that . . . Above all, the so-called 'evolutionary outlook' is still exactly what Darwin made it—a substitute God" (2, p. 187).

[This learned author also states that the value of fundamentalism is that it does an "invaluable work in keeping alive a core of opposition to evolution" (2, p. 185).]

Why this attitude towards evolution has persisted so long can be attributed to the following factors:

(1) Evolution has been used to support such anti-Christian philosophies as materialism, atheism, and positivism. The Roman Catholic Church, which began taking a very concessive stand toward evolution lest it burn its fingers again as in the Galileo case, found it necessary recently to tighten up on evolution as taught by her theologians due to the use of the theory of evolution by Russian Communism (*Humani Generis*, papal encyclical of 1950, 5, p. 284). Therefore any theory which gives such comfort to unbelief must be basically and essentially unChristian.

(2) Evolution has been used to devastate the famous teleological argument, which was named by Kant as the most impressive of all theistic proofs. Paley gave it a classic statement which has had a world-wide hearing and left a great impression upon English religious thought. Many of the greatest scientific minds of England banded together in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century and produced the famous *Bridgewater Treatises* which attempted to show that scientific knowledge was on the side of William Paley.

But scientists and philosophers believed that Darwin's theory of evolution explained the design in the living organisms on a completely natural basis. The beautifully designed human hand is really the end product of countless variations selected out by some sort of process of elimination. The theory which destroys the teleological interpretation of nature is therefore against divine creation and is for theism and materialism.

(3) Evolution was employed by radical biblical criticism and religious liberalism against orthodoxy. The radical critic frequently held up the Genesis account as merely purified Babylonian myth and evolution as something scientifically respectable. Many religious liberals claimed that evolution gave man a greater insight into the work of God in nature than the Genesis account.

(4) Evolution was extended beyond biology into other areas of human culture. Thus we had, among other things, evolutionary ethics and the evolution of religion. Ere long some scholars rewrote the entire history of the religion of Israel from the standpoint of the evolution of religion. Other writers attempted to

show that all the characteristics of the religion of Israel could be duplicated in many other religions of the world.

(5) Finally, the evolutionary theory when applied to man seemed to dissolve away the biblical view of man. It challenged the direct creation of man by God, the paradise of Eden, and the Fall of man. A theory of man coming into some sort of human form 500,000 years ago and slowly developing into modern man a few thousand years ago seems diametrically opposed to the first three chapters of Genesis.

The opposition to evolution has remained strong for one hundred years because it focuses such attention *directly upon man*. The other theories affected man only remotely. The religious implications of medicine are for the fundamental understanding of man of little significance. But evolution touches the very heart of the Christian understanding of man—his creation, his original righteousness, his divine image, and his fall—and therefore the agitation against it continues unabated. To many orthodox thinkers of today the opposition is still the simple straightforward one of a hundred years ago: Darwin or Genesis—a human theory or a divine revelation.

### Creation as a Relational Concept

In order to further our investigation we must examine in some detail the concept of creation as a theological dogma. How an Eternal Spirit brings matter into existence and impresses form upon it is a complete mystery to man. We may conceive of creation as a bringing of something into existence, but we can form no *picture* of the process. The concept of creation is conceivable but it is *not imaginable*. We can form no empirical notion of the action of creation. The most ardent literalist in interpretation has really no idea how God created either the universe or its furnishings. We must therefore make our doctrine of creation more precise if we are to know exactly what we are defending.

If the act of creation is conceivable but not imaginable, we cannot defend any particular empirical or picturable notion of creation. We must be very careful that we preserve the theological character of the doctrine of creation. To begin with, the doctrine of creation in Scripture is first of all an expression of the Lordship of God. God is Lord of all, and therefore He is Lord of this universal frame we call the universe. But the basis of His Lordship over all is His Creatorship. However, He is not Creator, then Lord; He is first Lord and then Creator. We therefore exhibit and establish his Lordship in the doctrine of creation.

Secondly, creation in Scripture is attributed to the Word of God. The expression, "the Word of God," is an intensely theological concept. It protects the Christian faith from many heresies. For example, creation by the Word of God automatically excludes the notion of creation as an emanation of God. It is also hostile to the doctrines of pantheism. Creation by the Word of God preserves the personal character of the Creator

and shows that what God wills, He can accomplish. Creation by the Word of God has been declared one of the most sublime conceptions in all of literature.

Thirdly, the doctrine of creation states that God created from nothing. That God created from nothing is not an empirical or scientific sort of statement. It is a statement about the relationship of the Creator to the creation. The Creator is eternal and sovereign. He is prior to all things, and above all things. When He created, He employed no substance existing eternally with Him, nor did He call in any assistance to serve as His helper. Thus creation from nothing preserves the Lordship, the Sovereignty, and the complete Spirituality of the Creator.

Fourthly, creation is continuous. This again is no statement about the empirical character of so-called natural laws. Continuous creation is another theological concept. It excludes the notion of deism that, when God made the universe, He made it an independent entity existing in its own right. But if God's action is continuous in His creation, then the correct theological perspective of the universe is maintained. If God's eternal power were withdrawn from the universe the universe would cease to be.

If we understand these four theses we will understand that *God is not the God of gaps in scientific knowledge. God is not the yet-unexplained in scientific theory. God is not an empirical premise for any scientific theory.*

There are a number of Scripture passages besides Genesis 1 which touch upon creation. If we inspect these verses to see how the other writers of Scripture understand creation or use the concept of creation, we note that they do not touch upon the manner in which God made things. They simply affirm that whatever is—the sun, moon, or stars; the birds, animals, or man—was made by God. The emphasis is always upon the reality of God's creative action, and not upon any empirical mode or manner of the action of creation. Thus if the statements about creation are purely theological, i.e., if they are relational and not empirical, then much of what has been debated in the past about geology, biology, and anthropology is beside the point. The weight of Scriptural teaching about creation is that God is the Creator, and this confession is not a result of man's thinking but of God's revelation. The truth of creation is not derived from sense or reason but from revelation. Hebrews 11:3 asserts that only by *faith*—which is always response to God's Word—can we understand that the visible universe was made by the invisible Word of God.

#### Israel's Faith in a Creator

In the previous section we attempted to show how intensely theological the concept of creation is and how it ought to be kept free from entanglements with empirical matters. We now turn to discuss the subject of how Israel came to this faith in God as Creator. This subject is seldom treated properly. The faith of Israel

did not first derive from a doctrine of creation and then proceed to the God who called Israel into existence. The God of the Old Testament is first of all *the God of the fathers*. The Scriptures do record the doctrine of creation first, and then the call of Abraham some chapters later. But that is not the order in which Israel arrived at her faith. In Israel's actual chronology, she first came into the knowledge of God as the God of her election, of her redemption, and of her deliverance. Only after having known God as Redeemer did she come to know God as Creator. If we carefully inspect the theology of the Old Testament, we discover that the concept of God as Redeemer is a greater and more important concept than the concept of God as Creator. The supreme concept of God in the Old Testament is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It was, therefore, the saving and redeeming God who led Israel to the knowledge of God as Creator. The religion of the Old Testament is frankly a supernatural religion. In a transcendental manner God appeared to the patriarchs. He not only appeared to them; He occasionally acted miraculously in their behalf. But in order to act in history, God must also act in nature. Nature is the stage in which history occurs. There could be no action in history without a corresponding action in nature. If God is the Lord of history, as Scripture presents Him, then He is necessarily the Lord of nature. Thus the doctrine that God is Lord of history leads to the doctrine of God as Creator. Hence the writers of the Old Testament have no hesitancy in saying that the God of the Jews, the God with a supreme interest in Palestine, is nonetheless the Creator of heaven and earth. No God could deal with *this* people in *this manner* in *this* country unless He were Lord and Creator of all. The faith in God as Creator arose in Israel through the understanding of God as the Creator of Israel in history, as the Creator of her institutions and of her Scriptures. History was a form of creation to the Hebrew prophets and by the logic of it they were led to see God as Creator of all.

This means that the Old Testament has an intensely theological or relational attitude toward creation, not a so-called empirical one. It is generally indifferent toward a precise *modus operandi* of creation. The method of creation (apart from that it was by the divine word), the sequence of acts, or the amount of time involved, is not the center or point of any discussion. We can judge only that our contemporary cosmological and cosmogonical discussions would be considered by the prophets as irrelevant to the doctrine of creation. Israel was led to faith in a Creator through the medium of special revelation and divine redemption, not through scientific or philosophical speculation. In the intensity of our debates over the findings of the geologists, the theories of the biologists, and the skeletons of the anthropologists, we have lost the Old Testament perspective of creation, and Genesis has been forced into an area of debate where it does not belong. Genesis 1 is not an empirical account of things in the sense that



from it we may extract a cosmogony or a cosmology, or that by it we can favor one theory of origin of the universe over another one.

Genesis 1 is first of all a theological document and a great confession of faith. It is a major piece of revelation which deals with the most fundamental relationships in the universe: the relationship of God to nature; of God to man; of man to nature; and of man to man. That this is the perspective which obtains in the Old Testament is evident from the following: (1) idolatry is forbidden because it confuses the creation with the Creator; (2) murder is sinful because man was made in the image of God; (3) man need not fear the astronomical bodies, for they are creations of God; (4) man need not fear any invisible cosmic powers, for God made things invisible as well as visible; (5) brotherly treatment of each other is enjoined upon the fact that we have one Creator; (6) and divorce is reprehensible because it is a frustration of God's purpose in creating male and female.

### Creation in the New Testament

We find in the New Testament the same basic attitude toward creation as we find in the Old. Creation is empirical in the sense that it is no mere concept nor abstract idea. It speaks empirically of the coming into existence of this universe and all that is in it. But whereas our interest is inordinately concerned with the *empirical how*, the Scripture emphasizes the *theological that*. In the theological and relational idea of creation both Testaments agree.

(1) The New Testament attributes the origin of all things to God in His creative act. Everything had its origin "in the beginning," or "from the foundation of the world." These expressions are not so much expressions which indicate time; they indicate the absolute and final origin of all things in God's creative word.

(2) In carefully specifying nature as created, the New Testament is careful to include all of nature by the use of the expression "*ta panta*." It is practically identical to the German word *All*, which means *the universe*. The purpose of the use of *ta panta* is again theological. It expresses the truth that there is God and His creation. There is no third something, no reality apart from God and His purposes. We need not have any concern, any sense of threat, any spirit of defeat, because there is a something not under the Lordship of God.

Also instructive at this point is Paul's assertion that God made invisible things as well as visible. Man in his superstition sometimes fears the invisible more than the visible. So Paul puts our minds at rest by affirming that every conceivable type of creature which might exist, visible or invisible, was made by God and therefore comes under His power and lordship.

(3) The instrument of creation is the Word of God. Peter uses the word *logos* (2 Peter 3:5), and the author of Hebrews *rhema* (Heb. 11:3). This we have already commented upon as saving the Christian faith

from any form of pantheism, philosophical idealism, or the mistakes of German identity philosophy. It protects the pure spiritual and theistic character of creation.

(4) The New Testament has no hesitancy in asserting that man was created by God, and that the relationship of the sexes is determined by the creation account. This is employed by Christ with reference to divorce and by Paul in affirming the headship of the husband in the marriage relationship.

(5) The doctrine of creation is used to teach the spirituality of God. In Romans 1:19-32 the nations of the world are rebuked for their idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of the creature in place of the Creator. When any tribe or nation properly grasps the doctrine of creation and the spirituality of God, it ceases from idolatry.

(6) A number of miscellaneous topics are also settled in the New Testament by recourse to creation, such as the goodness of meats, or the sovereignty of God over his creatures (Romans 9:20).

(7) However, there is a remarkable and unusual use of the doctrine of creation in the New Testament. I refer to those passages which attribute creation to Jesus Christ, and speak of the new birth as a creative act. The attributing of creation to Jesus Christ is certainly inspired by two matters: (a) By showing that Christ participated in creation, the full stature of His deity is maintained and protected; and (b) by showing that He is creator of all things, *the totality and universality of his Lordship* is established.

By looking at both the Old and New Testament very briefly, we have attempted to establish the intense *theological* and *relational* aspects of the biblical doctrine of creation and thus to free it from the unlovely controversies into which it has been forced. We must now return to the subject of theology and evolution.

### The Biblical Account of Man's Creation

The creation of man is recorded in Gen. 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them;" and in Gen. 2:7, "then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

The first text states that man was created by God. We can form a picture of only that which we can imagine, but we cannot imagine creation; therefore we can form no picture of it. Creation means to bring into existence that which did not heretofore exist. We may in a limited way picture creation in the sense in which man can create buildings or works of art. Creation in this pictorial sense is conceivable and picturable or imaginable to us. But we can neither imagine nor picture how an Eternal Spirit brought a material universe into existence; nor can we have any picture or empirical concept of how a pure Spirit, as God most assuredly is, impresses form upon the matter He has already created. And this inability to picture or imagine the creative activity applies to man just as it does to the other things.

In Gen. 1:27 we are thus presented with the reality of man's origin by God's creative act, but we can form no picture or empirical accounting of it.

However, sometimes we do form a specious picture of creation. We imagine that God creates in the same manner in which a magician performs his tricks. One minute we see an empty hand, and the next moment something suddenly and "supernaturally" appears. And so we imagine God speaking, and suddenly the thing spoken exists. It is there! But this is picture-making of our own doing and nothing derived from Scripture.

It has been maintained that Gen. 2:7 gives us a concrete picture which sets the issue beyond controversy, but this cannot be admitted. The word "form" is the Hebrew word *yatsar* and is used for things formed or made by the human hand. It is used for the formation of vessels or the creation of statues. The verb is thus an anthropomorphic one and cannot be taken literally.

Equally anthropomorphic is the expression of breathing into man's nostrils. Taken literally this would attribute lungs to God. Thus if we take Gen. 2:7 as a picture of man's origin, we do so by falling into the heresy of attributing bodily parts to God—hands and lungs. We must also note the intensely anthropomorphic expression in v. 8: "And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden." Certainly this cannot be taken in a senseless literalistic way.

Genesis 1:27 and 2:7 affirm that man is a creation of God. At one time such a creature did not exist; after God's creative action, he did exist. But we can form no picture of this action. The creation of man must remain a concept about which we can form no pictures.

Another item must be mentioned briefly here: the Scriptures do not give the doctrine of the *image of God* a biological interpretation. Man is not in the image of God because he walks erect, has a big brain, or has such flexible hands. All biological and even psychological matters can be put upon a comparative scale; they simply reveal what an advanced organism man is, but they do not demonstrate that he is in the *image of God*. Therefore those apologists who would base so much upon the character of the body of man must be very certain of the precarious sort of task they have undertaken. The *image of God* must be zealously protected on its theological side and not get needlessly embroiled in all sorts of discussions of comparative anatomy and comparative psychology. Adam was under the Word of God, and this defined him in the *image of God*. Evolution can neither be brought in by materialists to deny this, nor by religious evolutionists to support it.

### Summary

Creation is not some sort of cosmology in Scripture, but it is an intensely theological matter. Genesis 1 is neither for nor against modern cosmological theories; it is apart from them. They neither confirm nor refute the biblical doctrine of creation. Nor are the six days of creation surveys of the history of geology or biology.

The Scriptures simply attribute the total cosmos to God's creative action. How God proceeded is nowhere the real point of creation. The real point is that God created by his Word; that there is no creature, no realm of being, no third thing, outside of God's power and lordship.

The Scripture is as noncommittal about biology as it is about geology. It attributes life to the Holy Spirit of God, but never does the Spirit so involve Himself within the creature that the Spirit becomes an empirical factor for the investigations of biologists. The distance between Creator and creation, between Spirit and life, is such that the Creator and the Spirit can never become empirically involved in the work of scientists. Therefore in biological science the Christian must, on the theological side, maintain a neutrality, an aloofness, as he does in astrophysics and geology. In his great trust in God and in Scriptural revelation, he must show that he is neither threatened nor encouraged by the progress of biology.

The Christian knows that every theory of science is capable of abuse. Astronomy has been used to trivialize human existence. Modern atomic physics has been used to demonstrate the belief that the brain and the mind are one and the same. Behaviorism has been turned against Christian faith, and positivistic sociology has been employed to discredit Christian ethics. Similarly evolution has been used by atheists, communists, materialists, and religious liberals either positively to enhance their own system or as a weapon against orthodoxy.

The Christian strategy ought to be of one piece in these matters. Because some philosophers believe the brain and the mind are equivalent on the basis of modern physical theory, we do not completely deny modern physical science. If behaviorists attack the Christian doctrine of moral responsibility, we do not deny the science of psychology. The Christian has every right to speak up in these situations, but he must speak up the right way and upon the right premises. He must point out that in each case there is an improper extension of science. The science itself may be good or bad. We will let the scientists purify themselves in this regard. But we speak against these accusations, not on the grounds that we know more science than our opponents, nor that the entire basis of their science is in error, but that they put science to the wrong service.

With reference to evolution, we must not think merely of evolution but of the totality of biological science. Modern medicine, dentistry and optometry are specialized departments of biological science. Certainly we may be embarrassed if we admit large areas of biology to be correct, and yet wrong at basic theory.

The Christian doctrine of creation is not embarrassed by the empirical contributions of science. Creation is an empirical concept in that it speaks about the touchable, hearable, measurable sensible reality. But it is not empirical in the sense that from it we can determine empirical facts of science. It is an intensely relational

and theological concept. Therefore it views the theory of evolution with indifference, indifference in the sense that nothing is more at stake in evolution than in geology or astrophysics. That man is in the image of God is settled by the *Word of God* and not by human physiology, or comparative anatomy.

If evolution be used to re-enforce atheism, materialism, or Communism, then as a Christian I have every right to speak up. We register a protest, not because we know science better but because they know theology less. We speak up, not because we are experts in biology but because we stand in the light of revelation. And we must speak up as Christian scholars and Christian gentlemen; otherwise we shall not be heard. Those on the outside will judge us as not contributing something to the understanding of man, but as exhibiting typical traits of a strange form of religious mentality.

## The Tennessee Anti-Evolution Law

RUSSELL C. ARTIST\*

The Tennessee state law against evolution was passed in 1925. It is given in the Tennessee Code 49-1922 as follows:

**Teaching of Evolution prohibited:**—It shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, teachers' colleges, normal schools or other public schools of the state which are supported, in whole or in part, by the public school funds of the state, to teach any theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man descended from a lower order of animals. Any teacher violating this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and fined not less than one hundred dollars (\$100) nor more than five hundred (\$500) dollars for each offense.

In regard to decisions that have been made, the annotated code also carries under the subheading "Construction" the following notation: "This section prohibits the teaching in the public schools of Tennessee the materialistic theory of organic evolution. (Scopes vs. State 1927)"

This bill was written and introduced to the Tennessee legislature by John Washington Butler, a member of the house of representatives. It was passed by the lower house on January 28, 1925, by a vote of 71 to 5. Ray Ginger has stated, "Butler was no vindictive, pleasure-hating, puritanical fanatic. In maturity he looked back with pride to his youthful skill at baseball. He loved music, and his three sons had a band. His religion looked toward love rather than toward retribution. Clerk of his own congregation and clerk of the district division of the Primitive Baptists, he had chosen this sect over the more popular Missionary Baptists because of a doctrinal issue." (*Six Days or Forever?*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1958, p. 4).

Recently a committee passed a resolution recommending that the anti-evolution law, often referred to as the Butler Act, be repealed. Nothing further than this has been done in recent years. Most state employees I have

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asked seem to feel that it would not be successful in getting a repeal even at this date.

**Testing of the Butler Act:** A news article published in the Nashville *Tennessean* for April 7, 1963, gave a resume of the only indictment brought under the Butler Act:

The famous "monkey trial" started when the American Civil Liberties Union placed a classified advertisement in a Chattanooga paper offering to finance the defense of a test case of the Tenn. anti-evolution law. (This was in 1925). George Rappelyea, an engineer who then worked at the Dayton Coal and Iron Co., saw the advertisement. Realizing a trial would bring great publicity to Dayton, Rappelyea set about to interest townsmen in staging a test case in Dayton. Rappelyea, John T. Scopes, a biology teacher, and others, met around an old fashioned ice cream table in Robinson's drugstore on Dayton's main street. It was at this meeting that the "monkey trial" was born. Scopes told the group he was teaching the Darwin theory of evolution, contrary to the state law. . . . Scopes was tried and found guilty by the jury. His conviction was reversed by the state Supreme Court because of a technicality in the imposition of the \$100.00 fine.

Since 1925 no indictment has been brought under the law.

**Recent Events which have recalled the Scopes Trial:** In the Nashville *Tennessean* for April 14, 1963, the following account was given concerning an intended debate in a Memphis high school.

It looked innocent enough, the raised hand and then the question in a room of high school sophomore biology students. "Is this the monkey man came from?" asked the student, pointing to a picture in the biology text. Two student teachers, Martha Powell, and Dorrie Doss, nodded and began to answer the question by mentioning the Darwin theory. Miss Doss began to appoint students to debate the biological merits of the two theories the following Monday.

But before the meeting of the afternoon class where the debate was to occur, Messick High School principal Radford W. Rosenbrough, Jr., told the two teachers to

\*Dr. Artist is Chairman, Dept. of Biology, David Lipscomb College, Nashville, Tennessee.

call off the debate. . . . It's the policy of the school to avoid controversy, he explained. When the story of the planned debate came out in the newspapers, E. C. Stimbert, superintendent of schools at Memphis, stood behind the two teachers. However, he said he did not approve of the planned debate. Darwin's theory, Stimbert pointed out, is in all the city school books—and in the standard text book prescribed and approved for high school biology across the state. The theory exists. Children ought to know about it. You can't shut your eyes. But at this level, biology should be taught, not debated.

Dr. C. C. Humphreys, president of the Memphis State University said he had never asked his biology professors whether they were teaching evolution. Biology is taught as it is in other state schools, Humphreys said.

**The status of the attitude toward the law in Tennessee:** I can speak with some certainty only in regard to the university and college group and the ministerial circle, since teaching and preaching are my chief pursuits. In the college field, there is very little said and very little discussion regarding the question of evolution, for nearly all with but few exceptions have accepted the doctrine in one form or another. Only in little "islands" of influence is any remonstrance made concerning the theory. In none of these do I find a flat denial or an unreasonable avoiding of examination of the claims of evolution doctrine; rather, there is on the part of most of these a determination to see both sides of the issue expressed. This attitude was voiced by Mr. Stimbert, superintendent of schools, in the recent issue over the intended debate:

Stimbert says the matter is closed as far as the board of education is concerned, but adds: I think a teacher would be remiss in her duty if she did not point out that such a theory exists, but we do not encourage the students to believe it, just as we do not encourage them to believe in communism, even though we teach the principles of communism. ("Evolution Is Still Illegal," *Nashville Tennessean*, April 14, 1963.)

I do not find this attitude very widely upheld among most evangelical preachers; far too many, it seems to me, are content simply to let the "scientists" have their say and go along with them; few have taken the trouble to examine the whole matter for themselves. By and large, the majority find that this theory fits in with their trend toward modernism and the abandonment of the Bible as the Word of God. A poll among the ministers of the churches of Nashville would reveal that

the majority would not even raise any question about the validity of evolution, and many would hold to some theistic form of the doctrine. Only occasionally is there likely to be one who would come out publicly on the side of the creation of man as given in the Bible.

Most textbooks teach the subject without interference of any kind, some more boldly than others. Generally no challenge of any kind is made, even in institutions committed to "Christian" education. Most Seventh Day Adventists and members of the Church of Christ have opposed the bias and prejudice of eliminating all mention of creation from high school and college textbooks. At David Lipscomb College, we in biology openly discuss the doctrine and evaluate its claims before every class that comes under our influence. I find that Vanderbilt, one of the greatest universities of the central South, has in its libraries few really scholarly books on the side of the creationist. Unless they have been added very recently, *Modern Science and Christian Faith*, *Evolution and Christian Thought Today*, and Kerkut's *The Implications of Evolution* are all missing from the collection.

The film *Inherit the Wind* has done little to raise up an attitude of serious inquiry into the merits of either side, but it has, in my opinion, done damage to both sides. Ray Ginger's book, *Six Days or Forever*, is prejudiced on the side of the evolutionist and seems to indicate that all fundamentalists are ignorant people. It seems to me that books like Dr. Bernard Ramm's *Christian View of Science and Scripture* are far better approaches to the problem of serious inquiry into the merits of each viewpoint than those books which are calculated to raise prejudices only.

**Enforcement of the Tennessee anti-evolution law:** Legislators with whom I have talked point out that no officer has been appointed to enforce the law. In incidents like the two student teachers in the Memphis high school, there can be a test case only if formal charges are brought by someone. This is rarely done, perhaps because of fear of intimidation, general apathy, or lack of conviction.

## The Mississippi Anti-Evolution Law

RUSSELL MAATMAN\*

Within three years after the Scopes trial in the 1920's Mississippi virtually copied the Tennessee law against the teaching of evolution. I talked to several persons who teach in different parts of the state and to one who knows well what biology is being taught throughout the state about the teaching of evolution. The story is the same everywhere: there has never been any trouble over the law. The law has never been tested in the courts. No one I talked to has ever heard of a major local disturbance, such as a church campaign to halt

the teaching of certain kinds of biology in a local school.

What is actually taught? Everyone I talked to accepts some part of evolution theory, and each teaches what he can in the particular situation in which he finds himself. Some teachers indicated there had been "comments" in local churches; nothing had come of it in

\*Dr. Maatman was an Assoc. Prof. of Chemistry at the University of Mississippi when he wrote this paper. He is now at Dordt College.



any case, however. A little grumbling over the teaching of evolution has undoubtedly been common. This occasional grumbling and the law have very definitely limited the amount of evolution which has been taught.

Neither the law nor the beliefs of the teachers are likely to change in the foreseeable future. However, occasional complaining church members might not reflect the true feeling of the majority. A few such persons probably have a great deal of influence in keeping an existing law on the books, but they probably are not nearly as effective in affecting some change they might desire.

True majority feeling may be indicated by the outcome of a massive assault on the University of Mississippi by two politicians, well-known in the state, in 1959. They presented to the governing board of the school a bill of particulars comprising several hundred charges. In general they accused the University of teaching integration, but one charge accused the University of teaching evolution. State opinion would have been strong against the University had the integration charges been proved, and the Board is always a good barometer of that opinion. It is now generally understood, however, that inclusion of the evolution charge was a bad miscalculation. This was the one charge which the University admitted. Even so, the Board did not take this particular accusation seriously, and inclusion of this charge helped discredit the accusers and kill the whole case against the University although it is technically a violation of the law to teach evolution.

There is another interesting relationship between the race question and evolution. Those who believe in segregation usually justify it by claiming the Negro race is biologically inferior. This is close to accepting one of the chief tenets of the evolutionist, viz., man has existed on a continuum of biological levels. In the last

few years this idea, which seems to be implied in the segregationist position, has been spelled out by some articulate segregationists. Carleton Putnam, businessman-turned-amateur-anthropologist, author of *Race and Reason* (Public Affairs Press, 1961), leans heavily on the evolution idea, claiming the Negro has not evolved as far as the white man. He is widely read in Mississippi, and in spite of the anti-evolution law, he would be the state's anthropologist-laureate were there such a post. In addition, the University of Mississippi student newspaper recently reprinted an article by Professor Garrett, Chairman of the Department of Psychology of Columbia University, in which he took much the same position, stating (on the authority of Anthropologist Carleton Coon) that the Negro evolved 200,000 years after the white man. Publishing such an idea in a student newspaper almost certainly would have caused a considerable disturbance in the years following the Scopes trial.

It is really not possible for me to judge what effect these trends in the dissemination of ideas concerning evolution have had on the upholding of the Christian faith. My own personal opinion is that teaching evolution leads to a falling away from the faith, but I do not have evidence one way or the other as far as Mississippi is concerned.

Thus, on the one hand, there is an anti-evolution law on the books, which is still backed by some churchmen and which therefore holds to a minimum the amount of evolution which is taught. On the other hand, the world-wide movement toward a belief in evolution has not by-passed Mississippi, and very many Mississippians are more than willing to make evolution a useful weapon in the defence of their position on an issue infinitely more important to them, the issue of racial segregation.

## A Roman Catholic Statement on Evolution\*

J. D. CONWAY\*\*

*Following a brief survey of scientific evidence, Msgr. Conway indicates that evolution is an ancient idea in Catholic thought and Christian theology. It is a beautiful scientific theory which gives magnificent glory to God when rightly understood. Refuting false notions often linked with it, he deals with creation as a continuing process in which God must be on the job every moment. Evolution is consistent with the belief that every human soul is a product of God's direct creative work. Behind the first three chapters of the Bible are significant theological teachings which may seem commonplace today but which were unique when the Scriptures were first written.*

. . . Way back when the roar of the 20's was growing in volume, I had the privilege of studying biology from one of those rare professors who can make their subject live in the interest and imagination of their students. We called him Father Hauber, though he owned the title of Doctor, and later became Monsignor . . .

We studied at Davenport, Iowa, and nearby at Linwood was a limestone quarry. Father Hauber used to

\*Reprinted by permission from *The Catholic Digest*, vol. 25, no. 8, June 1961, pp. 120-128. This article appeared in "What Would You Like to Know about the Church?" in answer to this question: "As I understand it, all the great minds of the day accept the theory of evolution. Does your church accept it? And if so, how does she explain it?"

\*\*Monsignor Conway is pastor of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church of Davenport, Iowa. For many years he was in charge of the Newman Club at the University of Iowa and an official in the ecclesiastical court of his diocese. He is past-president of the Canon Law Society of America.

take us there, explaining beforehand that the stone in this quarry had been deposited by slow sedimentation during some 60 million years of the Devonian period—one of the many stages of development of the earth's surface.

There were living things on earth during the Devonian period; and when they died their bodies often became embedded in the rock which was forming at the same time. In our quarry it was easy to find fossils by the hundreds . . .

Back in the classroom Father Hauber explained that if we should visit some of the lead mines at Dubuque we might find an earlier stratum of rock, with fossils of simpler forms of life. And still farther north there would be another . . . Each of them lasted some 80 million years. In the rocks of those ages we might still find trilobites, but certainly no fish—probably mostly algae and sea shells. But even these were not the earliest forms of life on earth, merely the oldest ones which have left many fossils for us. It seems that the rocks of pre-Cambrian ages were so fused by heat and pressure that they crushed all life forms caught in them.

Now if we were to go south from Davenport, into the coal mines of Iowa and Illinois, we might find remains of amphibians, reptiles, and some primitive land animals; but there would be no mammals or birds. These didn't appear on earth for another 50 million years after our coal was deposited in its seams . . .

Our study of the history of life in the rocks of the earth was only one small phase of our biology course . . . We studied embryonic development, and saw how simple, microscopic organisms go through stages of growth reminiscent of the life forms found in our successive strata of the earth . . . Since our days in college I have seen remarkable genetic changes take place in the cornfields of Iowa. And I have read of even more notable mutations in plant and animal life as a result of radiation.

When the evidence from all these different sources is put together, the theory of biological evolution seems both sound and intriguing. It may not explain all the data observed, but it is by far the best working hypothesis available—and most scientists simply accept it as fact.

We usually think of biology when the word evolution is mentioned. But the same general principle of creative growth seems to apply to our entire universe.

The first theoretical stage of cosmic evolution might be called physiochemical. Some of it may have taken place before the stars began. Maybe it started with an enormous cloud of subatomic particles; maybe with a ponderous mass of concentrated atomic material. It is a challenge to speculation that we have been able to change matter to energy, showing that they are made of the same stuff; we have discovered that all atoms from hydrogen to uranium are made of the same building blocks: protons, electrons, neutrons, and the like . . .

I was a student at the University of Louvain in 1927, when one of the priest-professors there, Canon Lemai-

tre, gained the attention of the world by his theory of an exploding universe. I never really understood what he was talking about, but I mention it as added evidence that a Catholic education need not impart a prejudice against evolution, in any of its phases.

Next comes geological evolution. Did some star pass near the sun 3,000 million years ago and pull off a blistering blob of magma, which went into elliptical orbit and gradually cooled off—in a few hundred million years—so that a solid crust could start forming on it? It seems possible.

The most baffling problem to the evolutionist is that of the origin of life. The geologist can give no help; his records have been destroyed. If they were intact they might take us back 1,000 million years. Recently our laboratories have given us some hopeful evidence; if we can't dig up the story of life's origins, maybe we can duplicate them . . .

In this area there is no basic conflict with Catholic thought. Our ancient and medieval ancestors—the Fathers and Doctors of the Church—rather took for granted that living things sprang up right before their eyes: from the sea or from decaying organic matter. Later, science ridiculed such naive notions, and developed a contrary principle that "everything living comes from an egg." Now we are not so sure. But it is still hard to imagine all the ideal conditions, fortuitous circumstances, and catalytic factors which might have developed first life from nonlife.

In our elementary biology course we did not learn much about man, but it was clearly implied that his body need not be an exception to the general process by which earlier and simpler forms of life developed into later and more complicated ones. Anthropologists simply took it for granted. We don't like the notion of apes in our family tree, but we cannot deny that even the most beautiful human body has the same basic physical structure as a chimpanzee.

In our college days it seems that historical evidence to back up the theory of human evolution was not abundant. There were hints of Java men and Peking men, of Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon types. But still everyone seemed to be looking for the "missing link." Since then diligent diggers have found our family skeletons in various cavernous closets—and all new discoveries seem to fit nicely into previous theories.

While we were studying biology, the Scopes "monkey trial" in Tennessee hit the headlines of our newspapers. Our sympathies were frankly with the monkey; it didn't seem fair to blame him for the monkeyshines of two of the nation's most famous lawyers, or for the mass hysteria created by the threat of a "bar simian" on the family escutcheon.

You know about the Scopes travesty from *Inherit the Wind*, but in the days of the trial the issue was not as utterly false as it may seem to us now. For 50 years the slogan of the atheist had been: "Man is descended from the ape. Hurrah! We don't need God any more! Chance has replaced the Creator!" The beautiful scien-

tific theory of evolution acquired bad repute in religious minds because of the company it kept in its adolescent years. It has since been baptized and tamed, it serves science faithfully, and it gives magnificent glory to God, if it is rightly understood.

The first problem in human evolution is that anyone who believes in the spirituality and immortality of the soul cannot postulate its natural development from lower animal life. However, this problem can serve an important purpose: it should remind us that our evolution is the constant work of a Creator, who is apart from the world, who gave existence to everything in the world, who drew up the blueprints for every step of creative change, and who keeps His sustaining and guiding hand on the smallest amoeba and the farthest star.

The religious problem of the average scientist is unconscious. He is immersed every day in the material aspects of the world: its natural laws. He seldom has reason to think of a creative power beyond his matter and energy. So by habit he drifts into an attitude of monism, which holds that the created world is all there is, that it is eternal and unlimited, and that it has inherent in itself any "divine" powers which may be needed to explain its existence and activities.

Notions like these are evidently contrary to Catholic doctrine, but they are not a necessary part of evolution. They may result from a conscious effort to push a personal God from the picture, or from the unthinking daily attitudes of a man who saves his faith for Sundays.

To the man who believes in God, the theory of evolution gives most impressive evidence of divine power, wisdom, and constant presence. Surely it requires better planning to develop a vast and complicated world from simple beginnings than to form it all ready-made in the divine workshop. And a growing, changing, purposeful world requires a more active, lively Providence than a static prefabricated world.

We all know that creation is a continuing process; things made from nothing do not stay in existence without the Creator. But still, if God had made everything in finished state right in the first six days, the rest of divine history would be a perpetual Sabbath. He could just sit back and watch his machine work, merely holding on to the string of its existence. In an evolutionary world He must be on the job every moment to perfect his creative work.

Once we get this idea of God's personal power in evolution, the special creation of man's soul offers no great problem. Just because He chose to perform most steps in the process in accord with natural laws, using secondary causes, is no reason he must perform every step that way. He is free to exert his power directly when He wishes.

It is our firm Catholic belief that God created your soul and mine, and that of every human person, by a direct personal act. We are made in His image, and this quality cannot be transmitted by genetic process.

We do not inherit our spiritual souls from our human ancestors; so Adam presents no special problem. Certainly he could not inherit his immortal soul from some subhuman ancestor he might have had. God intervened in a special manner for Adam and Eve, just as He did for you and me.

You ask, Laurie, if the Church accepts the theory of evolution? Certainly Catholic theologians did not jump on Darwin's bandwagon right from the start, and if they had they would have been pushed off by Spencer, Huxley, Haeckel, and the like. But . . . Canon de Dorlodot . . . was a great admirer of Darwin, and I have just finished glancing through a little book which he wrote 40 years ago to show that a theory of evolution much more thorough than Darwinism would not be contrary to Catholic doctrine.

He claimed that such theories were rather common among early Fathers of the Church, even up to the Middle Ages. He cites particularly St. Gregory of Nyssa, who writes of nature as an artist, the cause of the world's development; and St. Augustine, who believed that in His original creative act Almighty God had implanted in nature "seminal forces"—the seeds which would be effective in future development.

There is another big problem, Laurie, and I don't have much space in which to discuss it. What about the seeming conflict between the theory of evolution and the inspired story of creation told in the first three chapters of Genesis? Frantic fear of this conflict created the false issue of the Scopes "monkey trial." Does not the inerrant Word of God tell us plainly that the whole world and every living thing in it was created in six short days, and that man's body was molded out of dust by the artistic hands of the Creator Himself?

I would suggest that you get out your Bible and read those three chapters, but keep a few essential points of literary interpretation in mind while reading them.

1. The author of Genesis did not see creation take place. Neither did any other man. There is no evidence that God revealed the details to him.

2. The author's purpose was to teach religious truth, not science. The simplicity of his cosmic concepts is evident: his world was a large plate floating on a vast expanse of waters; it was covered by an inverted bowl, blue and beautiful, in which the sun, moon, and stars were stuck; this bowl kept the waters above it from swamping the earth, but it had floodgates which could be opened to let the rain come down. Need I go on? Remember that he was writing for people who had the same ideas; he used language they would understand. Just one mention of nebulae, electrons, or chromosomes and they would have thrown his book away. It would have made no sense to them.

3. The author of Genesis neither argues for evolution nor against it. The idea never occurred to him; he had never heard of it.

4. More than 15 centuries ago St. Augustine warned us against naive notions in interpreting the Scriptures. We must know an author's intent, style, figures of

speech, and form of writing before we can get his message.

5. Genesis gives two completely different accounts of creation: the one of seven days, and the other of God the sculptor. Both represent stories which were traditional and well known to the people for whom they were written. The inspired writer used these folk tales to teach religious truths.

6. The seven days are seven poetic stanzas, which serve as an aid to memory, and point out to us the important lesson of the Sabbath rest.

7. The story of God the sculptor, anesthetist, and surgeon is evidently figurative: God comes down to earth, molds clay, blows breath up the argil nose, stages a parade of animals, carves a rib, walks in the garden, and talks casually to man and snake.

What is the real meaning of it all then? Most of its teachings seem matter-of-fact to us. But they were quite unique and much needed in the world of their day.

1. There is only one God; He is deeply concerned with the world and takes a personal hand in its affairs.

2. God is not part of the world. He made it—all of it—right from the beginning.

3. His creative power is the cause of every single

thing: the dry land and the seas, the plants and the trees, the wild beasts and the cattle and creeping things—as well as the stars in the firmament.

4. Everything God made is good.

5. Man is a special work of God. The Creator planned man carefully, molded him with loving hands, and gave him life by a special act.

6. Man is the most important creature on earth. In the first story man's creation comes last: a culmination of all the other work. In the second story man comes first.

7. Man is made in God's image, and his special nature makes him master of the birds and beasts, and of the whole world.

8. Man's natural mortality may be implied by the fact that he is made from dust.

9. Woman is made in the same nature as man: the flesh of his flesh, made to be his companion, his helper, and even his equal, as none could be found among the animals.

10. The relationship of man and woman is right and good: a part of the plan of God.

I shall not get into Eden, inviting—yes, tempting—place that it is! That is another story.

## Theistic Evolution: Some Theological Implications

JOHN W. KLOTZ\*

*Science is so influential today that Christians are tempted to adjust Christian doctrine to it by accepting theistic evolution as God's method of creation. Men's observations and interpretations are not infallible, and science has returned to once-rejected theories, so the present popularity of evolution should not deceive us. Hermeneutical principles applied to the types of literature in the Bible, the interpretations of Genesis by the Protestant Reformers, New Testament light on the creation account, the theological importance of the doctrine of creation, and the logical and practical effects of accepting evolutionary theory all combine to warn us of the spiritual dangers of theistic evolution.*

Some men like to be different, but the average man is a notorious conformist. He likes to fit in with the general run of people. The way to win friends and influence people is to agree with them. Many believe that the best way to win people for Christ is to soft-pedal such controversies as evolution or, better yet, to adapt evangelical Christianity to the generally accepted theory.

There is no doubt that science has increased its impact and influence substantially. It cannot be ignored in our twentieth century western culture. We respect and even worship that which produces, and science has certainly produced in the society of which we are a part. Consequently the scientist has come to be regarded as an authority not only in science but in other areas as well, and this includes religion. And who would quarrel with a recognized authority? Rather than quarrel we ought to adjust and adapt.

There is another factor that cannot be ignored. The history of controversies between scientists and theologians has not been particularly flattering to churchmen. The evangelical Christian cannot help but be haunted by the ghost of Bishop Wilberforce at Oxford in 1860 and by the ghost of William Jennings Bryan at Dayton in 1925. We would do well to learn from experience, and experience in this case certainly dictates caution.

Certainly we ought to try to get along with our contemporaries: the Bible urges this. Ought we then to adjust and adapt Christian doctrine by accepting theistic evolution? This has been a popular way of reconciling

\*Dr. Klotz is Professor of Natural Science and Chairman of the Division of Natural Science, Concordia Senior College, Ft. Wayne, Ind. He has earned a B.D. degree at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and a Ph.D. in genetics at the University of Pittsburgh.



theology and science ever since Darwin suggested his theory and Huxley defended it. Dillenberger<sup>1</sup> among others has an interesting section relating the history of theistic evolution; its proponents include eminent evangelical scholars. Is it possible, then, that evolution was God's way of creating? We would certainly all agree that God ordinarily works through means in dealing with us and all men today: He ordinarily uses natural laws, cause and effect relationships. Is it possible that in bringing this world into being He also used natural means, cause and effect relationships operating gradually over a long period of time? Evolution would certainly seem to agree with the way in which God ordinarily works today.

### False Claims

Theistic evolutionists are also quick to point out that many facts and observations seem to point to evolution, and they argue that God would certainly not deceive us by creating a world that appears to have evolved when actually He finished it by fiat creation. Let us look at this claim. It implies that finding evidences which intelligent men interpret as indicating that evolution has occurred means either that it has occurred or that God created an earth that deceives. But there is a third possibility. It may be that the limitations of man's understanding and reason lead him to misinterpret the evidences which are present at this time level. Many people have interpreted the evidences of their sense organs as indicating that the earth is flat. For almost two thousand years intelligent men—among them some of the most capable scientists who ever lived—interpreted their observations of the solar system to indicate that the earth was its center. Would anyone today blame God for these faulty interpretations and accuse Him of creating an earth and a solar system that deceived?

Others who urge evangelical Christians to adapt their theology to modern science by adopting theistic evolution suggest that we are fighting a losing battle in opposing evolution because science never moves back to accept a theory or a hypothesis which it has rejected. They tell us that the evidences which have accumulated have led science to move from the idea of sudden origins implicit in fiat creation to the idea of the gradual development of living things. Science, we are told, never returns to an explanation which was found wanting.

Yet science does return to rejected theories and hypotheses. Aristarchus of Samos developed a heliocentric theory which was studied, rejected in favor of Ptolemy's geocentric theory, and then developed afresh some seventeen centuries later by Copernicus. The theory of epigenesis was proposed by Aristotle and accepted by Harvey. Swammerdam and the early microscopists rejected it because of what they thought they saw with their newly developed microscopes and developed the theory of preformation only to have that theory rejected in favor of a return to the theory of epigenesis. Spontaneous generation was rejected in the light of evi-

dences developed by Redi, Spallanzani, and Pasteur. Today naturalistic evolutionists find spontaneous generation necessary to explain the origin of the first living matter from inorganic precursors.

Is it possible that evolution was God's way of creating? Can we solve the evolution-Bible controversy by adapting Scripture to a theory of theistic evolution? First of all, we ought to point out that some evangelical Christians believe it is nonsense to speak of theistic and atheistic evolution. They believe the two adjectives have no business being used in connection with the noun "evolution." They say that we do not talk about theistic and atheistic chemistry or theistic and atheistic physics, and we ought not to talk about theistic and atheistic evolution. Evolution, they say, is a scientific theory. They argue that it has nothing to do with Christianity, and therefore it cannot be either theistic or atheistic. It is essentially this position that van der Ziel<sup>(7)</sup> takes when he says that science and theology are complementary.

This sounds like a rather plausible approach. It does away with the problem by denying that one exists. And the fact of the matter is that we don't talk about theistic and atheistic physics or chemistry or sociology or anthropology. What the proponents of this point of view are suggesting is the existence of a sharp dichotomy between science and Christianity. Science, they say, is concerned with the material, the here, the now; Christianity is concerned with a message of redemption, the spiritual, and the life that is to come.

Yet this sharp division is really too neat. It isn't possible to compartmentalize in this way. Christianity is very much interested in the material, the here, and the now. It has been least effective when it has concentrated exclusively on the spiritual and on the life that is to come. Too many Christians today are compartmentalizing, worshipping God on Sunday and mammon during the week. Too many Christians refuse to admit members of other races into their fellowship here and now, even though they admit that they shall be with them in the life that is to come. Any division of man into body, soul, and spirit is arbitrary and is done for the sake of convenience. A human being is one. He must be one in his life and in his thinking.

It is true that we do not speak of theistic and atheistic chemistry or physics. But it also is true that we have Christian chemists and physicists. Chemistry and physics do not play a direct role in the body of Christian beliefs. The origin and development of all things, the story which evolution purports to tell, does enter into the body of Christian beliefs. Theistic evolutionists recognize that a literal interpretation of Genesis cannot be accommodated to theistic evolution. For that reason they suggest that Genesis must be interpreted in some other way. Some tell us that it is poetry, others that it is saga, still others that it is myth. In any theological discussion of theistic evolution one of the first

topics that must be dealt with is the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis.

### Genesis 1-11

Traditionally evangelical Christians have interpreted the Bible literally. This does not mean that it has been interpreted literalistically. Many criticisms that are raised against the Bible are due to the attempt to make it speak literalistically. Many ridicule the Biblical phrases "the four corners of the earth" and "the ends of the earth" and insist that this shows clearly that the Bible teaches a flat earth. Yet we have no problem with these phrases if we recognize that they are poetic imagery. Many of the criticized phrases occur in the Psalms or in one of the prophets.

A literal interpretation of Scripture recognizes that there may be different literary genres and that in any type of literature there may be figures of speech. The Bible is made up of historical books, poetic books, and prophetic books. These have their different styles. Prophecy, for instance, is made up chiefly of pictures and ought to be interpreted in this way. There are different ways of expressing things. New Testament quotations of the Old Testament are an example of this. In many instances we do not have direct quotation but rather indirect. For this reason the words are often not quoted exactly, and they need not be.

We must recognize, too, that within a historical book there may well be similes, metaphors, poetic expressions, allegories, anthropomorphisms, and hyperboles. But even these are meant to communicate a literal, historical truth.

Let us look at some of the possibilities for Genesis 1 to 3. Could these chapters be poetry? Smethurst<sup>(6)</sup> suggests that this is the case. Yet there is no evidence that this section is intended as poetry, because it does not have the characteristics of Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry was characterized, not by rhyme or rhythm, but rather by parallelisms. A verse of Hebrew poetry is always double and sometimes triple. Look at one of the Psalms as an example. There you will find a phrase followed by a second phrase. The second phrase either repeats the same thought as the first phrase in a different way, or it adds to the original thought, or it gives the antithesis of the original thought.

Poetry is not confined to the poetic books. Genesis 25:23 is in the form of Hebrew poetry as is also Genesis 27:29. The poetic sections within the historical books generally are brief. When we examine Genesis 1 to 3 we find it does not show the characteristic parallelisms of Hebrew poetry. It does not fit the pattern which characterized Hebrew poetry. Genesis 1 to 3 gives every appearance of being a historical account.

Is it possible that this is saga or myth? The former is used to designate a historical occurrence but one which did not occur in the manner recorded. The latter is used to describe an account totally without historical foundation. Those who suggest these interpretations usually apply the scheme to the entire section from

Genesis 1 through Genesis 11. Thus they suggest that the stories of the Noachian deluge and the tower of Babel as well as the story of the creation and fall are myth or saga rather than history. They are generally agreed, though, that Abraham is a historical character, and they believe that the rest of the Genesis account is history.

When we examine the end of Genesis 11 and the beginning of Genesis 12, we look in vain for any indication of a change of literary style or genre. It all seems to follow in the same style or pattern. There is no sharp shift like the one at the beginning of the poetic section of Job, Job 3:2. When we read through Genesis 11 and into Genesis 12, verse seems to follow verse and paragraph paragraph.

Interpreting these sections as myth or saga is an allegorical interpretation, and it is against just such an allegorical interpretation that the Reformers objected. The church of the Middle Ages had moved far from the literal interpretation. All sorts of interpretations were suggested, and the allegorical interpretation was sometimes regarded as even more important than the literal, historical interpretation. It was against this allegorical approach, which we have seen revived in neo-orthodoxy, that Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli protested. For instance, in commenting on the account of the creation of woman, Luther describes the various allegorical interpretations and then goes on to say: "Because these explanations are altogether allegorical, the historical and strict meaning of this passage must be sought and adhered to" (4, p. 132). In concluding his discussion of the fall, he says: "According to our ability we have treated all these facts in their historical meaning, which is their real and true one. In the interpretation of Holy Scripture the main task must be to derive from it some sure and plain meaning" (4, p. 231). Again in introducing chapter 4 Luther says: "The chapters which follow support our conviction; for nobody can fail to see that Moses does not intend to present allegories but simply to write the history of the primitive world" (4, p. 237).

But there is an even more striking reason for interpreting Genesis 1 to 3 literally. A general principle of Biblical interpretation is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Particularly Christians like to let the New Testament throw light on the Old Testament. What has the New Testament to say about Adam and Eve? Theistic evolutionists usually argue that they are not persons but that rather they represent an evolutionary population, mankind in general. This they must argue, for if man developed from anthropoid ancestors, it is inconceivable that a single male and a single female developed the status of *Homo Sapiens*<sup>(3)</sup>. Rather we would expect to find a group, an evolutionary population, achieving that status. It is true that the Hebrew word "Adam" is sometimes used not for a single individual but for mankind in general, and theistic evolutionists argue that this is the case in Genesis.

While Jesus does not refer to Adam and Eve by

name, He does refer to the creation story. In one of His encounters with the Pharisees, He confounded them when they challenged Him on the subject of divorce by referring to the Creation account. He refers to it in such a way as to indicate that He accepts it as a historical account because He quotes both Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24. (See Matt. 19:3ff and Mark 10:2ff.)

The Apostle Paul refers to Adam by name (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 15:22; I Cor. 15:45; I Tim. 2:13f). Moreover, the whole argument in Romans 5 and I Corinthians 15 rests on the historicity of Adam, for Paul speaks of one Adam and one Christ. If Adam represents an evolutionary population, it is hard to see how the analogy fits. St. Paul refers elsewhere to the Creation account and treats it historically, not allegorically. In I Timothy 2:13 he tells us that Adam was first formed, then Eve. This makes sense only if the Genesis account is interpreted literally. It is biological nonsense to suggest that for a time there was a race of males and that only later did females evolve. St. Paul's reference to the Creation in I Corinthians 11:12 is also interesting. Here we have a very clear reference to the account of Eve's creation, because Paul says that woman is "out of" the man.

### Some Implications

Actually the doctrine of creation is an important one. Carl Henry has an excellent discussion in the Darwin Centennial Volume of the ASA<sup>(2)</sup>. Man's whole relation to God depends on the fact that God is the Creator and man the creature. It is for this reason that Scripture goes into detail about the Creation. We owe God honor, worship, and obedience because He created us. Christianity is in a very real sense an authoritarian religion. When God speaks, man is to obey. The Ten Commandments are binding on all men not because they are the socially accepted way of living but because they are the commandments of the Creator.

The story of Creation is a part of the supernaturalism of the Bible. Most dyed-in-the-wool evolutionists, such as Simpson, object to any sort of supernaturalism and find the approach of a man such as Teilhard de Chardin, the Roman Catholic theistic evolutionist, unacceptable<sup>(5)</sup>. Theistic evolution, while not denying God, removes Him at least one step. It suggests that He works exclusively through natural laws and that He is more or less out of touch with the world in which we live. The God of the evolutionist is very similar to Newton's watchmaker God. Indeed the watchmaker God is the prototype of the theistic evolutionist's God. Newton accepted miracles, but he believed that the age of miracles was past. While he himself was pious, devout, and deeply religious, his suggestion that the universe is a machine and his implicit denial of God's role in preservation laid the foundation for much of the mechanism and materialism which characterizes modern science. In a very real sense evolution represents the application of Newton's mechanism to the biological world. Theistic evolutionists still proclaim God; so did

Newton and his followers. But it was not long until other men came along, applied Occam's razor, and eliminated God entirely, since He was no longer philosophically necessary. This has happened also in biology; the result has been the evolutionary humanism of Huxley and Simpson.

There are theistic evolutionists who still accept the miracles. Some, like Newton, accept all of them; some sort them out, accepting some and rejecting others. But still others join men like Bultmann to deny them all. They go so far as to deny the physical resurrection, believing that Jesus did not actually rise and that the meaning of the resurrection is spiritual.

The whole thrust of evolution, with its emphasis on fitness and selection, runs counter to the basic Christian ethic of love with its emphasis on brotherly love and responsibility for the care of the unfortunate and the unfit. In a Darwinian sense these ought not survive. If selection is to accomplish its purpose of improving the species, we ought to permit it to eliminate those who are less fit. It may be that we are weakening the race by permitting the unfit to survive. But who are we to judge fitness? Isn't it possible that those who are unfit in one respect are superior in another? And if we cannot judge fitness, how is an impersonal natural selection to make that judgment?

Christianity emphasizes the importance of the individual. You and I are important in God's eyes. He sent His Son to suffer and die for us, and He has written our names on the palms of His hands. He knows us by name; yes, He has even numbered the hairs of our heads. To the modern evolutionist the individual is unimportant; it is the group, society, that counts. If a choice must be made, it is the welfare of the group that must prevail. The rights of the individual must yield to those of the group. Christianity emphasizes the rights of both, and so does American democracy.

Theistic evolution cannot be fitted with a literal interpretation of Scripture. It can be accepted only by those who are willing to regard the Genesis account as allegorical in some way or another. But if Genesis is not literal history, what real evidence have we that the Gospels are literal history? The men who wrote the Gospels were a part of the same Hebrew culture as the writers of the Old Testament. Moreover, the whole thrust and philosophy of evolution go counter to that of historical Christianity. There is reason for rejecting evolution, for consistency may well lead to the evolutionary humanism which is the religion of so many scientists today. Not all theistic evolutionists have gone that far; many of them still accept the Christ of the Gospels. But evolution is more than a scientific theory. It has implications not only for the material and the physical realm, but also for the spiritual realm.

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## A Perspective on Scriptural Inerrancy \*

RICHARD H. BUBE\*\*

*A consideration of the total revelation of God—the verbal testimony of the Scriptures, the form and purpose of the Scriptures, and the natural revelation given in the physical world through creation and divine Providence—leads to the conclusion that the Scriptures are indeed verbally inspired, inerrant, and infallible as a revelation of God by Himself to men. Such a viewpoint permits an intellectual integrity, especially with respect to the interaction with science, and a vital application of the Scriptural revelation to the individual today, not always possible when the Scriptures are considered to be verbally inspired, inerrant, and infallible in an arbitrarily absolute sense as factual information. This by no means implies that there are "errors" of fact in the Bible, but rather that the criteria for judging fact are often either uncertain or irrelevant to the revelational purpose of the Bible.*

Newton's third Law of Motion states that to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. A similar law seems to hold in the realm of theological interpretation, although there the reaction often seems to be greater than the action that caused it. The age of rationalism reacted against the influence of ecclesiastical supernaturalism to such an extent that the concepts of Scriptural inerrancy and infallibility were thrown overboard, and the Bible was viewed as a wholly human book. Fundamental Christianity struck back at this wave of modernistic thinking by insisting on the absolute and unlimited inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures, reducing the human influence to a minimum. In this insistence there was also a tendency for the pendulum to swing too far in the opposite direction, to go beyond the very claims of Scripture itself.

It may be helpful to call to mind a few classical examples from the history of the church. The desire of the church fathers to emphasize the three-foldness of God revealed in the Scriptures as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sometimes led them to formulate doctrinal statements which neglected the one-ness or unity of God. The desire of the church fathers to emphasize the deity of Christ sometimes led them to propose formulations which did not really give adequate expression to the humanity of Christ. The necessity for the defense of doctrinal truth sometimes led the church fathers to formulate creedal statements which depersonalized the gospel and permitted intellectual assent to replace personal commitment. Luther's bold insistence upon *Sola Scriptura* in his defense of his theses led him to the point where he could not interpret the words, "This is My body" and "This is My blood," without insisting that the physical body and blood of Christ were conveyed to the recipient in the sacrament of the Lord's supper "in, with, and under" the bread and wine.

We today have a heritage in orthodox Christianity of

a position with respect to the Scriptures which has been so intent on establishing and defending their divine origin and nature that it has tended to overlook their relationship to the men for whom it was intended. We are careful never to say so in our discussions of the Scriptures, yet it is often practically true that we tend to regard and treat the Scriptures as if they were dropped down from heaven in one piece, transcribed by the finger of God. Although we have been careful to recognize the error in the syllogism: Jesus is God; Mary is the mother of Jesus; therefore Mary is the Mother of God; we have not always been equally careful about the syllogism: God is perfect, complete, and all-knowing; the Bible is God's Word; therefore the Bible is perfect, complete, and all-knowing in the same way that God is.

### The Question of Inerrancy

Within orthodox Christianity there have been two principal views concerning the nature of the Scriptures. The first of these contends that the Scriptures convey essentially information and knowledge; such a view contends for a principle of "arbitrary inerrancy," i.e., that the Scriptures must be inerrant with respect to any criterion applied to them to test their inerrancy. The second of these contends that the Scriptures convey essentially a revelation from God necessary for our spiritual life; such a view contends for a principle of "revelational inerrancy," i.e., that the Scriptures must be in-

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\*\*Dr. Bube is Assoc. Prof. of Materials Science and Electrical Engineering at Stanford University. He is a Fellow of the American Physical Society and of the American Scientific Affiliation, a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, and the author of *A Textbook of Christian Doctrine* (Moody, 1955) and *Photoconductivity of Solids* (Wiley, 1960).



errant in conveying God's revelational message to men.

The general question of inerrancy has been confused because of the manner in which the matter has been conventionally approached. Oftentimes conservative theologians have spoken out in defense of Scriptural inerrancy as if there were only one kind of inerrancy imaginable—a kind of all or nothing inerrancy. They argue that the Scriptures are either completely inerrant in every way and with respect to every criterion for inerrancy which may be applied, or they are not inerrant at all. This is the viewpoint of "arbitrary inerrancy." The term "arbitrary" does not imply that the motives of those who hold to this point of view are arbitrary, but rather that inerrancy must be maintained and defended against arbitrary criteria. Overlooking the basic importance of the *criterion* for determining inerrancy has been detrimental to the discussion of this whole question. How can we intelligently discuss the inerrancy of the Scriptures without being able to answer the question: What would an error in the Scriptures look like? If we truly wish to understand the significance of Scriptural inerrancy, we must do it on the basis of the Scriptures themselves, not on the basis of human logic or reasoning, however well based on the Scriptures they may seem to be.

No understanding of the Scriptures can be achieved without an understanding, first of all, of the purpose for which they were written. We will attempt to sketch briefly the importance of revelational purpose to a useful and timeless interpretation of the Scriptures, to indicate how those who defend the principle of "arbitrary inerrancy" in practice always defer to the principle of "revelational inerrancy" to solve actual Biblical problems, and to answer some of the objections which have been raised with respect to this perspective on Scriptural inerrancy.

### Purposes of Revelation

First, foremost, and including all else that follows, the Scriptures were written to reveal God as the Redeemer of His people, with all that such a statement implies concerning the nature of God, the nature of man, and the relationships between God and man and between man and his neighbor. This revelation centers in the person and work of Jesus Christ; it is the purpose of the revelation to make God known in Christ and to lead men to Him as their Lord and Savior. Typically, John says in John 20:31, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." The authors of the Bible were witnesses of the power, grace, and love of God; they were witnesses likewise of the justice and mercy of God. They had seen His works and known His Son. Having been witnesses of these things, it was their prime purpose to witness about them to others, so that they too might come to know the glory of the God of Israel and of His Christ, the Lord Jesus.

Secondly, the Scriptures were written to ensure the

certainty of the faith, by the personal confirmation of those men who had experienced the events of Christ's life and who had been recipients of the special revelation of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of those events. Their readers were to pass through dark days of persecution, when doubt and uncertainty would threaten their faith. So the authors of the Bible wrote to give these troubled believers, in a way appropriate to troubled believers of all times, the "comfort of the Scriptures." Luke 1:3-4 expresses this purpose, "... it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

Thirdly, the Scriptures were written to guide men into the paths of victorious living in the strength of the Holy Spirit, so that we might know the joy of serving God according to His will. Man was saved to serve God. So it is the burden of a large portion of the Scriptures to set forth the guides for this service. The key passage on the inspiration of the Scriptures emphasizes this practical purpose behind the giving of the Scriptural revelation: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16). One of the basic purposes behind the giving of the Scriptures was thus to provide God's children with the teaching, direction, and instruction necessary for their fruitful Christian living; the revelation is oriented to this end.

In summary, we may say that the purposes of revelation are to make known to us our God, His nature, His dealings with men, and His Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ; to give to us the assurance of the validity of that revelation in spite of apparent evidences to the contrary in our daily lives; and to add such instructions and guidance as are beneficial in leading Christians to become like Him through the power bequeathed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is the purpose of revelation to extend a call to action: to believe, to trust, to witness, and to work for the glory of God.

When we say that the principal purpose of the Scriptural revelation is to make known Jesus Christ, we do not mean that the purpose is to reveal primarily facts, details, or "things" about Jesus, but to lead men to meet personally with the living Lord today. We are not to believe only truths about Jesus; we are to believe Jesus. We are not to love accounts about Jesus; we are to love Jesus. It is indeed true that our knowledge of this Jesus comes through the revelation given in the Scriptures and their validity is our assurance that we personally know Him; yet it is imperative to emphasize that the intrinsic function of the Scriptures is to lead men into a personal relationship with God in Christ. Although Jesus used the Scriptures vigorously and pointedly in defense of the things He taught, He directed men to the Scriptures to redirect themselves to Him.

He said, "Ye search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life" (John 5:39).

The Bible is used properly when it is used to see the revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ, of His work of atoning redemption in fulfillment of the ancient covenant made by God with Abraham, of His reigning in power and glory after His resurrection from the dead, of His eternal oneness with God the Father and Holy Spirit, and of all the instructions and guidance which have been given in His name through the Holy Spirit to lead His people in His ways. To insist that the Bible presents more than this requires detailed substantiation from the teaching of the Bible itself and may jeopardize the value of that very revelation which is essential to Christianity.

The purpose behind revelation is the basic point in the question of inerrancy. If it is assumed, without due Scriptural support, that the purpose of revelation is to give mankind a source-book of information on all phases of physical, mental, spiritual, sociological, artistic, and scientific life—a source-book which must have meaning for the people to whom it was addressed and to all the generations coming after them in spite of the changes which are continuously occurring—then we have the greatest difficulty in maintaining the doctrine of an inerrant Scripture. If, on this stand, we adopt the position of "arbitrary inerrancy," we essentially jeopardize the whole truth of Christianity by attempting to balance the great wealth and weight of God's revelation in Christ upon our ability to show that the words of Scripture can be judged inerrant even when we examine them on the basis of criteria they were not written to satisfy. How much of liberalism and rejection of Biblical revelation has been precipitated as a blind reaction against such a stand!

But if the purpose of revelation, as the Scriptures abundantly testify, is to give to mankind a knowledge about God and His purposes in Christ, then the Scriptures are indeed inerrant so long as the authors do not mistakenly convey false ideas about God and His Christ. Then the form of their writing, the details of their style, their lack of verbatim quotations, their disregard for modern historical accuracy in chronology, their use of symbolic pictures, all these things are below and beyond the question of inerrancy. Interesting they may be and significant the research undertaken to shed new light on them, but the results of such research cannot affect the inerrancy of the revelation. There are no errors in the Bible—if we recognize that an error should be defined in the light of Scriptural testimony as a failure by a Scriptural author to convey correctly the revelation God intended to convey through him.

This perspective clears away much confusion, at least in principle. Instead of demanding that the very essentials of our Christian faith stand or fall upon man's ability to prove or disprove human interpretations of the Scriptural record, the Christian is freed to face all of

God's revelation fairly, both that given in nature through science, and that given in the Scriptures through inspiration. His faith rests unshakably on the authority of God's revelation, not on some point of interpretation of that revelation.

It should be made clear that the perspective presented in this paper does not detract in any way from the authority and trustworthiness of the revelation of God conveyed through the words of the Bible. If we examine the attitude of Jesus and of the apostles toward the Scriptures, we see everywhere the supreme confidence that the Scriptures bear the marks of divine authority and that the revelation which God conveys through and in the Scriptures cannot be gainsaid.

### Interpretation of Revelation

The recognition that the Scriptures come to us as an inspired revelation of God is but the first step toward our understanding of them. What we in actual fact believe is not what the Scriptures say but what we interpret the words of the Scriptures to mean. We cannot submit to the Word of God until we know what it is, and we cannot know what it is until we know what God is saying to us, i.e., what the revelational content of the Scriptures is.

In order to make sense out of the Scriptures, a system of interpretation, hermeneutics in theological terminology, has been developed to guide us. A brief investigation of the most basic principles of hermeneutics, as espoused by conservative and evangelical Christians, emphasizes how these principles are based on the principle of "revelational inerrancy," that it is the meaning and the content of the Scriptures which is inerrant. We shall consider just four of these principles to illustrate this assertion.

(1) Progressive revelation. Progressive revelation means that God has given His revelation of Himself to men in ever increasing clarity, fulness, specificity, and detail, adopting at each stage of man's development that form of the revelation and that content of the revelation which is the most meaningful and the most useful. The growth of the revelation concerning the identity of the Messiah is a typical example. The very essence of God's dealings with His people in the Old and New Testaments can be understood only in terms of progressive revelation. When we look at the Old Testament through the revelation given in the New Testament, we see that the earthly promises given by God to His earthly people Israel with their earthly promised land of Canaan were symbolic of the deeper spiritual promises given by God to His people in Christ with their spiritual blessings and their spiritual land of promise in heavenly places. We cannot go back today into the forms and symbols of the Old Testament revelation and hold them up as vital and significant in the face of the realities of the New Testament fulfillment of these forms and symbols in Jesus Christ. This Old Testament viewpoint is indeed inerrant as the revelation of God; it faithfully presents His essence to His people

in the time in which it was given and to us today when properly understood. In order for it to present faithfully His essence to us today, however, we must take into account the limitations under which it was given, and we must see its larger interpretation in the fuller revelation of the New Testament.

(2) Contemporaneous relevancy. "All Scriptural statements must be understood and applied in the light of the conditions and circumstances which they were intended to describe or under which they were originally written."<sup>1</sup> In order for us to obtain a real understanding of the revelation given to us in the Scriptures, we must go beyond the face value of the words in our English text, back to the words of the best text in the original language, back to the significance of those words in the days in which the originals were written, back to the purpose for which the originals were inspired by God. We cannot a priori inflict our modern concepts of history and the relation of historical events upon the historical writers of the Scriptures. We must seek, rather, to see things always from their viewpoint, not forgetting the great philosophical differences between ancient practices of reporting theocentric history rather than scientific or pragmatic history.

(3) Theocentric orientation. The authors of the Bible were writing primarily about their relationships with God. They were not writing science or history treatises, nor did they use the language of modern science or historiography. The authors were not discussing scientific truth per se at all; they were intent upon the process of conveying the revelation of God. It is vain to claim to find in the Scriptures word-pictures of scientific phenomena unknown to the authors. The Bible does not use modern historical language, but employs popular forms of speech with picturesque symbolism. It is essential always to seek a meaning natural to the times and to the purpose, sometimes even a colloquial meaning.

(4) Limitations of scope. The Bible did not come as a complete revelation dropped down from heaven but through human authors inspired by God. There is a variety of style, vocabulary, grammatical construction, and manner of treatment. Although always sufficient to accomplish the purposes of revelation, Scriptural statements may not always be complete or comprehensive statements. What is not essential for the conveyance of the revelation is often left unwritten.

There are other principles which could be listed as well: the revelational content of the Scriptures is to be obtained from a study of the Scriptures as a whole, not from isolated "proof texts"; universal passages of Scripture must be used to interpret the local; didactic passages must be used to interpret the symbolic. We see from this brief consideration of the rules of interpretation which orthodox theologians have developed that the exegetical toolbox of the theologian is replete with interpretational guides that severely contradict the principle of "arbitrary inerrancy." If the words of the Old Testament represent an early stage in the giving of pro-

gressive revelation, to be interpreted, clarified, and finally transformed into spiritual verities hidden before the time of Christ, in what sense can we maintain their "arbitrary inerrancy?" Certainly their "revelation inerrancy" is preserved; their form and details are to give way before the grand display of God's revelation in Christ. If all Scriptural statements bear the mark of contemporaneous relevancy, what inerrancy is there except that of the revelational content of the Scriptural message? If the Bible does not use modern scientific language, if the Bible does not use modern historical language, if the Bible conveys its message in all the imagery of poetry, symbol, and allegory, what sense is there in speaking of "arbitrary inerrancy?" How is such an inerrancy to be judged? How is such an inerrancy to be defended? Is it not more in the spirit of the Scriptures to speak in terms of "revelational inerrancy," that inerrancy which fastens upon every device of inspired writing, every picture, every colloquialism, in order to convey infallibly to God's people His desired revelation?

### Meeting Biblical Problems

We must pass over the nature of prophecy fulfillment as revealed in the New Testament and over the prominent use of numerological significance in the Scriptures, each of which is vitally dependent upon the interpretation of Scripture in accord with "revelational inerrancy." We proceed instead to consider directly the manner in which defenders of "arbitrary inerrancy" meet the challenges of Biblical problems. We shall find that such scholars invariably find the solution to a great variety of Biblical problems by invoking the concepts of "revelational inerrancy" to resolve the dilemmas. This is hardly strange, for a thorough position based on "arbitrary inerrancy" can hardly countenance even apparent discrepancies or errors; when such apparent discrepancies or errors are objectively discovered, only the principles of "revelational inerrancy" are adequate for the task of showing how God's revelation remains inerrant in spite of them. (We shall not take space here for scholarly documentation of particular theologians who have treated problems in the ways indicated. Most readers will have abundant experiences supplying such documentation.)

(1) Differing quotations of the same event in different accounts. These are explained by pointing out that it may not have been the intention of the authors, i.e., their revelational purpose, to give verbatim accounts.

(2) Different chronological ordering of events in different accounts. These are explained by pointing out that it may not have been the author's purpose to give a chronological ordering but rather a topical or theocentric ordering to make the meaning more effective.

(3) New Testament quotations of Old Testament passages which differ from the originals. These are explained by pointing out that New Testament writers often paraphrased Old Testament passages in order to

bring out the true sense of these passages, i.e., their revelational content. Or it is pointed out that the words "it is written" must be applied to the message, not to the actual words.

A specific problem which may be cited is the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew. Matthew gives the "wrong" number of generations between Abraham and Christ by leaving out five generations if compared with the Old Testament genealogies. This is explained by proposing that Matthew did not intend to give a factual number but rather a representative or symbolic number in the light of his basic purpose, to present in the person of Jesus Christ the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham and to David.

As another example, let us consider a classic from the interaction between Christianity and science: the conflict between Scriptural interpretation of Galileo's time and his defense of the concept of a heliocentric universe. Not only was the church certain of its dogmatic position because of the strong geocentric orientation of the early chapters of Genesis, but there were also such clear Scripture "proofs" as the sun standing still for Joshua and such verses as those in Psalm 93, "The Lord reigneth . . . the world also is established, that it cannot be moved." The church of Rome was not alone in condemning Galileo; many of our great Protestant fathers of the Reformation joined in the attack on him. So clear and undeniable, so obviously statements of scientific and historical fact, so in keeping with the whole tenor of the Scriptures, were the proof texts for a geocentric universe to the fathers of the church, that they set themselves resolutely against any such nonsense as that perpetrated against the holy Christian faith by upstarts like Galileo and Copernicus. If these men were right in their perverted interpretation of astronomy, then the inerrancy of the Bible was overthrown, God was a liar, and Christ was crucified in vain. Today we still have the same Scriptures, but we have a completely different interpretation. How is this justified by the defenders of "arbitrary inerrancy?" They appeal to the revelational purpose behind the writing of these passages which intends them to be spiritual and practical in their application and to say nothing at all about the scientific mechanisms of astronomy.

It is generally true that every genuine solution of a Biblical problem has been provided only by "revelational inerrancy" and that this approach is used by all theologians, whether the user is a defender of "arbitrary inerrancy" or not. What, then, impels devoted and consecrated Christian scholars to insist upon "arbitrary inerrancy?" Any answer to this question must be an oversimplification, but we would offer two suggestions.

First, there is the overwhelming intellectual attraction of a logical theological position which has been constructed from the Scriptures over the centuries since the Reformation: the development of a system of doctrine in which all loose ends can be made to fit. It is comforting to have all the answers to everything within the two covers of a book, only to be read and ac-

cepted. If God is omnipotent and infallible, surely He would convey His revelation to man in a way which would provide man with absolutely accurate answers to all questions man may ask.

Second, there is another factor which is most pertinent to the relationship between science and Christianity. This is the fear that we subtract from God and from His glory when we ascribe to natural mechanisms His operations in this world. It has been natural for man to ascribe to the direct and supernatural intervention of God all those phenomena in his experience for which he has no natural or rational explanation. This tendency has led to the exclusion of God as the cause of the known phenomena in man's experience. Thus the belief has developed that God is manifest and "proved" only by the miraculous, the apparently supernatural, that which defies natural explanation. As time passes and knowledge increases, the number of phenomena which defy natural explanation decreases. Thus there is a tendency to push the relevance of God and His working into ever decreasing orbs of influence. As we find out more and more about His creation, we see less and less evidence of the Creator!

Once men believed that there was proof for the existence of God in the power needed to hold planets in their orbits. But when it was pointed out that gravity accomplished this, many felt that God had been made unnecessary. One still finds Christians groping for a proof of God in the forces which hold the nucleus together, or in the forces which determine the galactic configurations, or in the inability of man to synthesize life from inanimate constituents, or in the "mystery" of fiat creation. They see all efforts to provide natural descriptions of the mechanisms underlying the origin and development of our earth and its creatures as deliberate attempts to discredit God.

The Scriptural view is quite different. The work of God's immanence in Providence is everywhere emphasized. God does not appear in history only, or even primarily, in those events which we term miracles, but God manifests Himself and His power in every detail of the natural course of history. If gravity keeps the planets in their orbits, this does not remove God from the picture; it adds the how to the Who. If God used the processes of evolution to accomplish His purpose in creation, we have not minimized the fact that it is God who creates. If God used natural physico-chemical processes to bring into being the first living matter from inanimate matter, we have not minimized God by acknowledging this possibility. The revelational significance and power of the Scriptures do not depend upon our ignorance of the mechanisms of this physical world. If we allow this to happen, we soon find ourselves left with only a God-of-the-gaps, a God whose power is evident only in a few isolated events, which the passage of time and the advances of man's knowledge threaten to obliterate completely.

Few things have done more to discredit the testimony of the church in the world in the course of the past



several centuries than this prevalent refusal to accept the findings of scientific research as valid indications of the natural revelation of God. The church has insisted repeatedly until long after any conscientious and informed Christian could agree, that specific interpretations of the Scriptures be held as scientific fact. Finally, in each instance, the church has reached the point where it also must back down and admit that its interpretation was incorrect. But the world at large does not discriminate between interpretation and revelation; all that the world sees is that the advances of science once again have forced the church to drop a superstitious dogma which it had been trying to foist on its members in spite of the results of legitimate scientific research to the contrary.

It is only by consistently following the principles of "revelational inerrancy" and by consistently guiding interpretation by the criterion of revelational purpose that we can maintain a living Word. We thereby free Christianity from the burden of defending "arbitrary inerrancy," and we adopt a point of view which enables Christianity to face contemporary challenges with an inerrant revelation of God unfettered by the fallible and changing interpretations of men.

#### Discussion of Possible Objections

We have presented our case, in abbreviated form, for the conviction that the concept of inerrancy must be applied to the revelational content of the Scriptures, not to all Scripture interpreted arbitrarily in a literal sense as conveying historical or scientific information where such information is not essential to the revelational purpose of the Scriptures. This position may cause a certain anxiety in some who read this. We will now attempt to dispel this anxiety by listing and discussing five points of view which this perspective does *not* imply.

1. "There are errors in the Bible." This is a statement which can be made only if the wrong criteria are used in judging inerrancy. We believe that the Bible is absolutely reliable and to be trusted in accomplishing that for which it has been given; there is no false revelation in the Bible. As is stated so well in the 1961 report of the Christian Reformed Church, "To speak of inaccuracy, error, or inconsistency is to speak unscripturally of Scripture and can be done only when Scripture is subjected to criteria which are not appropriate to Scripture."<sup>2</sup>

2. "Science is able to lead men to a comprehensive knowledge of God." Our references to the role of science in unraveling God's natural revelation do not have this concept in mind at all. Science can be defined properly only as the logical investigation of God's revelation in nature. Man cannot derive God from the facts of experience by the methods of science; rather he can derive a real understanding of the facts of experience only on the presupposition of God. We are not proposing that science can serve as an independent method of obtaining knowledge of God, but rather that

it serves as a valid influence in the area of revelational hermeneutics. It is almost a matter of definition to say that the interpretation of the Christian man of science must be God's interpretation. However, how is God's interpretation of natural phenomena to be obtained? This is a crucial issue. We would think God's thoughts after Him. In the natural world God's thoughts are ascertainable through the proper use of God-given reason, experiment, and logic. This revelation in nature cannot contradict the revelation in the Scriptures. Truth is not involved; interpretation of revelational form is.

Often science can be considered as the means by which the immediate or secondary cause of events can be derived, whereas the Scriptures are the means by which the ultimate or primary cause of events can be obtained. In other words, the proper role of science is in the realm of description rather than of explanation. If we ask the question, "Why does an apple fall to the ground?", the answer of science, "Because of gravity," is a description of the immediate mechanism. The ultimate cause is nothing less than that "God's purpose in creation and providence may be fulfilled." Science cannot lead us to ultimate causes; only the Scriptural revelation does this. But similarly, the Scriptural revelation seldom leads us to the immediate mechanisms; this is the normal function of science. Christians must not conclude that science's preoccupation with immediate mechanisms is in itself a denial of the existence of ultimate causes. Scientists must not conclude that the preoccupation of Christian theology with ultimate causes is in itself a denial of the importance of immediate mechanisms. In particular, Christians must not assume that the scientific discovery of immediate mechanisms removes the need for the underlying ultimate causes. We must emphasize constantly that the understanding of the processes through which God has worked and does work in nature does not lead to a denial that God indeed is working.

Science can also be considered as a useful guide in hermeneutics in those areas in which scientific knowledge is applicable. For example, how are we to interpret the phrase in Psalm 93, "... the world also is established, that it cannot be moved?" Is this a statement of astronomical fact, or is it a statement of spiritual significance relating the assurance of God's almighty care over the world? Or is it both? The answer will not come from exegesis of the text. By combining exegetical hermeneutics with the knowledge of reliable scientific inquiry, however, we can rule out astronomical significance from this phrase. Before the scientific knowledge was available, it was traditional to interpret this phrase as revealing astronomical information. Only the development of scientific knowledge brought about the change in this interpretation. In this we should find a lesson against dogmatism which reads scientific fact into Scriptural passages dealing with revelational truth when known scientific information is insufficient or silent on the issue. It should be clearly noted that we are *not* judging the *truth* of the Scriptures by science;

we are guiding our *interpretation* of Scriptural truth by science.

3. "Emphasizing revelational content over a literal form of interpretation puts us in the position of substituting subjective opinions for the objective revelation of the Scriptures." To this we reply that the revelational content of the Scriptures is, after all, not some new and mysterious concept to which Christianity is unaccustomed. Christians have always extracted the revelational content of the Scriptures as a regular part of private devotions or Biblical exposition. Having finished the historical exposition of an Old Testament narrative, for example, it is customary to inquire, "What is the purpose for which this story is given to us in the Scriptures? How do we apply its message to our situation today?" To teach the Scriptures without asking these questions is unthinkable. The answers to the questions are nothing more nor less than that which is encompassed in the concept of revelational content. Does anyone teach the story of Moses and the brazen serpent in the wilderness without devoting a major portion of his exposition to what this story reveals about the deadliness of sin, the grace of God, the offer of salvation as a free gift, and the similarity between this Old Testament narrative and God's plan of salvation fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament?

Even when we stand in awe before the empty tomb, it is the revelational significance of that historical event which we strive to set forth: the seal of God's acceptance of Christ as the Messiah and Son of God, the stamp of God's approval on everything that Jesus taught and did, the sign that God had accepted the sacrifice of Jesus and that the world had been reconciled to Him through Christ, the guarantee that those who believe on Jesus are justified and righteous before God, the pledge that all those who believe on Jesus shall also be raised from the dead, the symbol of our own dying to sin and rising again to newness of life in Christ, the warning of the day of judgment when the risen Christ shall stand as Judge.

Setting forth the revelational content of the Scriptures is therefore not some new approach which we have invented. It is the time-honored, Scripturally-approved, constantly-used procedure of deriving the meaning of the Scriptural record to bring out its significance to its hearers. The exposition of the revelational content of the Scriptures is guided by the same principles of interpretation which we have discussed before: by context, by purpose, by style, by form, and by the commentary of Scripture on Scripture. No door to subjectivity and man-made doctrine is thereby opened.

4. "Not to stress the literal historicity of the events of the Bible in every case is to destroy its whole testimony." Here again we must be most careful to follow the Scriptural testimony, being zealous to stress the literal historicity of events which are directly connected with God's revelation, but being equally certain to re-

alize that the connection between literal historicity and revelational content is not the same for all the events described in the Scriptures. The literal historicity of certain events is the very substance of their revelational content. It is clearly impossible to teach the revelational content of the Resurrection without showing how that content requires for its very existence the literal historicity of the Resurrection event. The same is true for the Incarnation and the Atonement. In every case the Scriptural insistence itself must be the guide. Where pertinent and applicable, reliable scientific information may be helpful in determining the extent of literal historicity involved.

5. "Whatever merit this perspective may have, it is certain to be a danger to Christianity because of its potential abuse." To this we reply that there is an apparent principle which states that that which is spiritually true is almost always particularly susceptible to potential abuse. Christian liberty can easily be abused; it is much "safer" to have a strict set of do-and-don't laws to regulate Christian living. Salvation by grace can easily be abused; it is much "safer" to have salvation by works so that emphasis on Christian living can be made easier. Yet such principles involving the responsibility of the individual are not regularly abused by Christians because of their freedom; God has done a work in the heart of Christians, and attempts to regulate the freedom He has given are in effect a denial of the sufficiency of His work. Christians who have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ do not regularly abuse their Christian liberty, nor do they sin freely so that grace may abound. The "revelational inerrancy" perspective on Scriptural truth, assuming that it has the usefulness and validity we have tried to point out, will not be abused in the hands of born-again followers of the Lord Jesus Christ but will be used to meet the challenges of our day openly, faithful to our God and to the totality of the revelation He has given us.

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Dr. Bube is editor of *The Encounter Between Christianity and Science*, an ASA book in preparation to succeed *Modern Science and Christian Faith* (Van Kampen Press, 2d ed., 1950). Since the essence of this paper forms the central philosophy of his introductory chapters, he is anxious to receive reactions to his thoughts. Write to him at 789 Holly Oak Drive, Palo Alto, Calif.

# NEWS AND NOTES

## NOTES ON EVOLUTION

1. *The Unwinding Universe*. Organic evolution is generally considered to be a winding-up process with life becoming more and more complex. Contrasted to this idea is that which envisions the universe as running down according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics with an accompanying increase in entropy or disorder. Actually both points of view are defensible in some area. From the evolutionary point of view, one would expect that micro-organisms would be simpler than the more complicated ones. From certain points of view this is true, but in the 1959 Cold Spring Harbor Symposium on Quantitative Biology (Biological Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, N. Y.), Dr. G. L. Stebbins on page 306 quotes a fact from the work of Kluyver and Van Niel that micro-organisms can perform a larger number of enzymatic syntheses than can Metazoa or higher plants. From this one can safely conclude that some apparently simple organisms are not as simple as they appear to be.

2. *When Did Land Plants Originate?* There is a common misconception that the earth was covered with water in the Cambrian Period and that only aquatic organisms existed at that time. This idea was thought necessary to strengthen the view that life arose in the sea and then progressed onto the land. It has been found, however, that practically all the phyla capable of being preserved are now found in the Cambrian, and the new idea is that if organic evolution in the phylogenetic sense took place, it occurred prior to the Cambrian. We also now know that there was dry land in the Cambrian, and in the symposium mentioned above a paleobotanist, Dr. Andrews, is inclined to believe that land plants did indeed exist in the Cambrian.

3. *A Healthy Point of View*. Ronald Good is a noted English botanist. In *Features of Evolution in Flowering Plants* (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1956) he makes the following interesting points: (1) Evolution exceeds the sum of human experience, and thus the evidence for it (even fossils) is indirect. (2) While evolution is a reasonable explanation, it is not justifiable to maintain that no other explanation is possible. (3) Indirect evidence cannot be final proof but can only lead to a high degree of probability. (4) The literature of evolution has to be read with caution, because the discussion of evolution commonly evokes degrees of feeling unusual in scientific circles and more familiar in religious controversy. Great contributions are often marred by a failure to let the facts speak for themselves.

My comment on these points is that more scientists should take them to heart. Too often one finds otherwise logical men becoming quite heated and emotional when an aspect of the Evolutionary Theory is called into question. Certainly some aspects of the theory are

true, but this is no guarantee that all parts of it are factual.

4. *Can Life be Created in the Test Tube?* A number of biochemists are subjecting chemicals, notably ammonia, methane, hydrogen and water, to electrical sparks of various voltages in an effort to produce something living. So far, only simple proteins have been made; since these are the same as or similar to those stored in bottles in chemistry laboratories, one cannot logically say that anything "living" has been made. According to the *St. Paul Dispatch* of January 16, 1963, Drs. C. Arthur Knight and Karl Grossenbacher have been trying to create life for three years. The article infers that they have not as yet succeeded. Dr. Knight is quoted as saying that the purpose of the experiment is to duplicate the evolutionary process. I suspect that he did not wish to be quoted in this way because, as most people know, the creation of life and organic evolution are two separate ideas. One cannot have evolution without the creation of life, but the creation of the living form is not necessarily followed by evolution.—Irving W. Knobloch

## The Perpetual Dialogue

In teaching and studying biology at a Christian college, there is more academic freedom than can be found elsewhere. As Christians we know by direct revelation (Scripture) that God was the originator and sustainer of all life, ". . . all things were created by him and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. 1:16-17). Yet in many American college classrooms neither the instructor nor the student feels at liberty to mention God's part in life. Can we imagine a class trying to study an invention without complete freedom to mention the inventor? Inasmuch as such a class is inhibited in recognizing the inventor, their study of his invention is both inadequate and inaccurate. In the Christian college God can have His proper place in the Biology classroom as elsewhere on campus. The role of God in creating and maintaining life can be integrated with all other aspects of a biological curriculum.

For example, Christ's words in Mat. 6:28 have a beautiful and accurate application to the latest biochemistry of photosynthesis, "they toil not, neither do they spin." It is by a passive receptivity to light that a plant . . . produces its sugar supply. One sees God's role in embryological development in Psalm 139:13, 15-16,

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou has covered me in my mother's womb . . . My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

Likewise, one can have nothing less than awe when he reads these words of Gen. 9:4 written thousands of years before the discovery of a circulatory system: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat."

When it comes to the topic of "origins," . . . a student is shown how much of this study depends upon one's philosophy and not one's science! The same facts of biology can be made to fit a materialistic and evolutionary view, or can be used as evidence of God's creative genius. By studying the work of recent evangelical scientists, theologians, and philosophers, it is seen how the *facts* of science nicely fit the truth of Gen. 1. It is Gen. 1 that helps the Christian biologist avoid the evolutionary pitfalls of our day.

Yet it is not enough to present a course with a firm Biblical and Christian orientation to biology. It is also a must to equip our students with technical skills necessary for success in the rapidly expanding biological professions. Man was commissioned by God to subdue the earth; it is thus God's will that His people achieve in the world of medicine, horticulture, or research . . .

It is also necessary to provide cultural enrichment for non-biology majors and to equip them for life in a world where DNA and ATP are becoming household phrases. A glance at recent issues of *Reader's Digest* or *Saturday Evening Post* will demonstrate the relevance of research biology in our day. Solomon appreciated the richness that comes in understanding the world of life—I Kings 4:29-34. It is fun to try to answer such questions as "What is that plant?" or "How does water reach the top of *Eucalyptus* trees?"

. . . In a Christian education courses must be anchored to a Christian framework and must also be truly educational. Anything less (in the name of "Christian liberal arts") is inadequate.—George F. Howe, Asst. Prof. of Biology, Westmont College. Adapted by permission from the *Westmont Courier*, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 4, Feb. 1963.

#### Southern Baptists, Genesis, and Education

In June 1962 when the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) met in San Francisco, the press carried headlines, "Southern Baptists Denounce Darwin." The stories dealt with the controversy over a book published by the denomination's publishing house in 1961.

The book was *The Message of Genesis* by Dr. Ralph Elliott. In May 1963 when the SBC met in Kansas City with 12,971 registrants for its 106th annual session, the controversy was still hot. Dr. K. Owen White, a Houston, Texas, pastor who had been a leader of the anti-Elliott wing, was elected president. Tension preceding and during the convention was again high. By this time it was clear that neither the book itself nor any creation-vs.-evolution debate implied in misleading headlines of the previous year was the real issue. The conflict actually centered around the definition of doctrinal purity to be maintained in seminaries owned by

a passionately democratic denomination which has prided itself on having no creed. Nevertheless, at the 1963 Convention a lengthy "Statement of Baptist Faith and Message" drawn up by a special committee of presidents of the state conventions was presented. Several attempts were made from the floor to amend the statement, and one motion was made to declare the Executive Committee of the SBC guilty of heresy in recommending in 1962 that the SBC have such a statement! That motion was ruled out of order, and the total statement was adopted without change.

Dr. Elliott's book actually appears to be relatively mild. (See its review in this issue). It met with varied response as soon as it was released, some Baptist leaders favoring its content and others objecting strenuously to its approach and message. Those who opposed the book seemed to feel that Broadman Press should have blocked its publication from the outset, and some felt that Dr. Elliott should be removed from the faculty of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City. For example, in Jan. 1962 Dr. K. Owen White suggested that the Houston Baptist Pastors Conference write to members of the SBC Executive Board asking for the removal of Dr. Elliott. By that time the Midwestern Seminary trustees had issued a statement expressing confidence in Dr. Elliott's personal beliefs, but Dr. White said he was concerned about "what he writes and what he teaches in the classroom."

The Jan. 10, 1962, issue of the weekly *Texas Baptist Standard* was devoted primarily to "Baptist Theologians and Their Books," with an editorial by Editor E. S. James and articles by Dr. White and by Robert H. Craft on *The Message of Genesis*. Craft, the pastor of a Kansas Baptist church, considered the book "the most significant and creative contribution to the field of Biblical scholarship for Southern Baptists since the writings of Dr. H. E. Dana and Dr. A. T. Robertson." Dr. James said of the book, "We do not believe it should have been written by a Southern Baptist theologian, and we hold that Broadman Press should not have published it for Baptist readers." Dr. White's article, "Death in the Pot," began with about a dozen quotations from the book to show that it was "poison" and "liberalism, pure and simple." Passages he cited as objectionable included the following:

"'God took him' is not necessarily an indication that he disappeared suddenly and was nowhere to be found. It is the Old Testament expression of belief in the idea of immortality."

"The tower of Babel parable shows the futility and emptiness of human effort divorced from the acknowledgment and service of God."

"In other words, there are a great many evidences which, while not giving conclusive proof, lend strong credence to the historicity of the patriarchs."

"Quite possibly some of the stories have been heightened and intensified by materials that are not literally historical, for the purpose of the Bible is not merely to give a factual account of events."

Dr. White was then chairman of the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. A few weeks later a meeting of District Four of the BGCT commended Dr. White and Dr. James for opposing the

book and passed a resolution asking SBC seminaries and Texas Baptist colleges to ban teaching of it and asking the trustees of Midwestern Seminary to "restudy" and "clarify" their vote of confidence in Dr. Elliott. The effect of such continuing publicity was to create a demand which exhausted the entire first printing (4,053 copies) during the spring of 1962. Editorial comments in other state Baptist papers had the constituency of the entire SBC worked up to a high tension by June when the Convention met in San Francisco. It passed the following motion presented by Dr. White:

1. That the messengers to this convention, by standing vote, reaffirm their faith in the entire Bible as the authoritative, authentic, infallible Word of God.
2. That we express our abiding and unchanging objection to the dissemination of the theological views at any of our seminaries which would undermine such faith in the historical accuracy and doctrinal integrity of the Bible, and that we courteously request the trustees and the administrative officers of our institutions and (other) agencies to take such steps as shall be necessary to remedy at once these situations where such views now threaten our historical position.

Dr. James L. Sullivan, Executive Secretary-treasurer of the Sunday School Board, of which Broadman Press is a part, had already decided to handle *The Message of Genesis* as a special case and had postponed action on reprinting it until after the Convention. At the July meeting of the elected Sunday School Board in Glorieta, N. Mex., he suggested several alternatives to the Board's Plans and Policies Committee, including reprinting, not reprinting, asking the author to consider revision, or asking that "Dr. K. O. White, or someone else, write a book for publication setting forth a more conservative view to be studied along with the Elliott book." The Committee and the whole Sunday School Board voted to let the matter pass without taking any action, i.e., to let the book simply go out of stock. This move irritated Dr. James because it was too passive. In an Aug. 1 editorial he demanded a study in depth of the Board's policy of publishing controversial books, adding, "if their reported action is final and is their idea of depth, we would hate to depend on them to find well water in West Texas." Dr. Sullivan replied that defending the book and defending the Board's book publishing responsibility were two utterly different things; publishing *The Message of Genesis* harmonized with the publishing philosophy that had grown out of history, experience, and SBC assignments. The only mistake Dr. Sullivan admitted was a slip-up in a single instance of advertising the book in certain Sunday School Board periodicals which made it appear that the book was designed for a wide readership rather than for a scholarly audience.

Meanwhile, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary called a special meeting of the board for Sept. 27 to give consideration to the Convention's motion regarding theological teaching and to "take necessary actions." At that meeting a special committee of seven was appointed to "study our institution in regard to our theological controversy and seek an amicable solution

and bring recommendations to the full board." The special committee met on October 17-19 in Kansas City, conferred at length with Dr. Elliott and with Dr. Millard J. Berquist, president of the seminary, and presented their report to the full board at a meeting on Oct. 25. The report contained a strong statement of devotion to the fundamental doctrines of the faith and of belief in the Bible as the final authority in all matters of Christian faith and practice. On the other hand, the trustees recognized among themselves and among Southern Baptists some divergence of views regarding interpretation of various passages of the Bible. They felt that Baptists "have not in the past and do not now make identical understanding of all passages in the Bible a test of fellowship."

Acknowledging that a theological seminary must have a certain pre-set framework of doctrinal beliefs by which its teachers must be tested, the report also made clear that the task of the teacher is to continue to search for a fuller understanding of divine truth and to declare that truth:

"The 'Literary-Critical and Historical approach' to the study of the Scripture is recognized as one of the valid ways of approaching the Bible. This method is not an end in itself and is not the only approach to the Bible. Among Bible students this approach is included and it is recognized that the method is not in conflict with the historic position of Baptists. This recognition does not carry approval of all conclusions reached by all students following this method."

The report then listed nine points concerning the controversy on which there was unanimous agreement within the committee itself and with which Dr. Elliott fully concurred, points such as a firm belief in the Bible as God's word, belief in the inspiration of the Bible and all parts thereof (but "the method of inspiration is not to be thought of as a test for Baptist fellowship"), acknowledgment of the miraculous and supernatural character of the acts of God presented in the Bible, and rejection of any theory that regards the Bible as a book of folk-lore and mythology.

However, on the tenth point they hit a snag. The committee faced Dr. Elliott with the impact of the publication of *The Message of Genesis* "with full knowledge of confusion, turmoil, tension, and division which has arisen." The committee then asked Dr. Elliott, in the light of their effort to work out an amicable solution to the problem, not to seek republication of the book at that time. Dr. Elliott responded that "after conscientious reflection, I cannot accede to the request that the book not be published." After further attempts to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution, the committee "reluctantly and regretfully" reported to the Board of Trustees that such a solution was impossible, and it therefore recommended the dismissal of Dr. Elliott from the faculty. The trustees, approving the report by a vote of 24 to 5, voted to continue Dr. Elliott's salary and all fringe benefits for a year and to "provide moving expenses," and then issued a statement that he had been dismissed from the faculty.

There were immediate protests by students and faculty



members of Baptist seminaries and colleges, but the matter apparently was closed. Dr. Elliott assumed an interim pastorate in a Kansas City church, announcing that he was not a candidate for its permanent pastor. Publication rights to *The Message of Genesis* were returned to him by Broadman Press, and the book has now appeared as a paperback under the imprint of Abbott Books, the Disciples of Christ publishing house. Before Dr. Elliott's dismissal last fall the following comments appeared in an editorial in *The Maryland Baptist*:

What the Convention said in San Francisco is now clear, in perspective. It said that a professor in one of our seminaries is not free to interpret the Bible out of harmony with the prevailing majority views of the Convention. It reversed the publishing policy of the Sunday School Board; it declared that not various views but only the views of the majority

may be published in Broadman books. The right to dissent, historically championed by Baptists, has been denied in our midst.

Still, the publication of this book was a breakthrough for progressive biblical scholarship in Southern Baptist ranks. John R. Sampey wrote in his *Syllabus for Old Testament Studies* 60 years ago, 'Possibly the higher criticism of the Pentateuch is the most important critical problem confronting students of the Old Testament. Fundamental and difficult, it calls for patience, industry, and the ability to sift evidence and estimate its value.'

After 60 years, Ralph H. Elliott is the first Southern Baptist scholar ever to attempt such a book. Southern Baptists are that far behind!"

Dr. Elliott's effort will make it easier for others. Other scholars will arise to continue the work so courageously begun by this man whose reverence for the Bible surpasses that of a majority of his critics.

But the question is, will such scholars be able to *stay* in the ranks of Southern Baptists?—Walter R. Hearn.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Science and Religion**, by Paul Chaucard, tr. by S. J. Tester. Hawthorn Books, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962. 156 pp., \$3.50.

This is Vol. 130 of the Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, for which 150 volumes are planned; about 89 volumes in the series have already appeared. Dr. Chaucard has a medical degree as well as a doctorate in physiology. He is director of a laboratory of neurophysiology in Paris and connected with the Catholic Institute there.

The three parts of his book deal with the use of science against religion, the separation of science and religion, and the reconciliation of science and religion. The viewpoints expressed are naturally those approved by the Roman Catholic Church, but Protestants will find much of value in this small book. It is much more highly flavored with philosophy than is customary for books written by natural scientists. However, it is clearly written and the arguments are easy to follow. Dr. Chaucard has achieved some success as a popularizer of science in France; at least one of his popular books, *The Brain*, has been translated into English and is available as an Evergreen Profile paperback (Grove Press, N. Y., 1962, \$ .95).—Reviewed by Irving W. Knobloch, Professor of Botany, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

**Science and Christian Belief**, by C. A. Coulson. Fontana Books, Wm. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., London and Glasgow, 1958. 159 pp., paper, 2s6d (\$35).

The McNair Lectures at the University of North Carolina were founded through a bequest made by the Reverend John Calvin McNair of the class of 1849 and becoming available to the University in 1906. The pertinent extract from the McNair will reads as follows:

As soon as the interest accruing thereon shall by said Trustees be deemed sufficient they shall employ some able Scientific Gentleman to deliver before the students then in

attendance at said University, a course of lectures, the object of which lectures shall be to show the mutual bearing of science and theology upon each other, and to prove the existence and attributes, as far as may be, of God from nature. The lectures, which must be performed by a member of some one of the Evangelic denominations of Christians, must be published within twelve months after delivery, either in pamphlet or book form.

*Science and Christian Belief* constitutes the 1954 McNair Lectures delivered by Dr. C. A. Coulson, distinguished professor of applied mathematics at Oxford and a Methodist layman. These lectures, first published in 1955 by the University of North Carolina Press, are now available in the inexpensive Fontana paperback series which also includes titles by C. S. Lewis and J. B. Phillips.

Prof. Coulson goes beyond merely defensive apologetics in his Christian writings to lay a foundation for positive communication of the Gospel to scientists. His willingness to accept and value the work of fellow scientists is perhaps an important note for us in the ASA to catch:

There are many ways by which men may come to this new birth and it ill behoves any of us to deny or belittle the progress that our neighbor has made; not all who cry 'Lord, Lord' will get first places in the Kingdom. Many of those who call themselves scientists will never be able to use these words meaningfully, yet I believe most firmly that they may be said to be religious. [The nearest they come to Jesus Christ through their scientific work may be only some innate sense of the fitness of things and they may not acknowledge that they are thinking God's thoughts after Him, but] we may fairly tell them that this is indeed what they are doing. Most of them will agree that for them science is an imaginative adventure of the mind seeking truth in a world of mystery; and surely we can start with them there, as we started in these pages, and gradually be led to a wider awareness. At least we can tell them that they will not be obliged to renounce that which they do already possess.

A key point that Coulson makes is that science and religion should not be separated in our thinking. For one thing, even today many scientists are also devout Christians, and this is possible without "an unbearable

dichotomy of experience." Secondly, since both represent only partial views of a larger truth, if one separates science from religion there is a danger of making science a type of religion which becomes a substitute for Christianity. We cannot bring God in at the end of science to fill up the gaps left over, so He must be there at the very start; that is, science must be thought of as a religious experience and as one "view" of the "existence and attributes" of God.

However, as others have also pointed out, science and religion must in addition be kept somewhat separate in our thinking. Science is not the tool of religion and one should be wary of trying to use scientific data and theories to *prove* religious dogma; science is dynamic, and if one harmonizes Scripture with some current theory, re-harmonizing may become necessary when the theory has changed. The Ptolemaic theory comes to mind here. While no *proof* of God can come from science, yet it seems easier for one to believe nowadays in a Supreme Being because research in the last sixty years has shown us that the world is infinitely more complicated than formerly thought possible. Complexity in itself does not give proof of a Divine Maker because apparent complexity may be only an indication of our lack of understanding. It does seem logical to this reviewer, however, to believe that every increase in complexity discovered by science makes a spontaneously-formed universe just that much more unlikely. —  
*Reviewed by W. R. H. and Irving W. Knobloch, Professor of Botany, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.*

*The Message of Genesis*, by Ralph H. Elliott. Orig. publ. by Broadman Press, Nashville, Tenn., 1961. 209 pp., \$4.50; now publ. by Abbott Books, The Christian Board of Publication, Box 179, St. Louis 66, Mo., Paper, \$1.75.

*Genesis I-XI*, by Alan Richardson. SCM Press Ltd., London, 1953. 134 pp., 10s6d (\$1.47).

Before being fired over the furor in the Southern Baptist Convention brought on by publication of *The Message of Genesis*, its author was Chairman of the Department of Old Testament at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. The book was allowed to go out of print by the Southern Baptist publishing house but has now become available as a paperback from the publishing house of the Disciples of Christ. It is essentially a theological commentary.

Opinion on the theological posture of the author varies widely. Elliott takes the results of critical studies seriously, accepts a documentary hypothesis of the origin of the Pentateuch, acknowledges that problems in translation and interpretation exist, but always seems to this reviewer to try to find a relatively conservative viewpoint consistent with modern scholarship. In Part I: Authorship and Date, his summary statement exemplifies this:

Many human authors, worship circles, and redactors appear to have had a part in shaping Genesis over a long

period of time. In a special sense, this underscores the fact that God is the ultimate author. In his wisdom, providence, and persuasion, he revealed to the hearts of many generations the story of man's need and God's answer.

This approach to Genesis—the belief that the sovereign God could speak the message consistently and have it comprehended through many human instruments—spells "miracle."

Part I ends with a discussion of the general nature of revelation, pointing to three different levels: the historical events themselves, the interpretation of these events, and finally the transcendent parabolic and symbolic nature of God's message in the Bible. "Genesis is to be understood in this light. It is not science. In the material attributed to J and P, the early writers were in no way trying to give a scientific or literal explanation."

In Part II: The Need of Man, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are seen as primarily a "blueprint for theology" rather than either a scientific textbook or even a detailed historical picture. The theological superiority of the Biblical creation account is shown in comparison to other creation stories. However, the Biblical account uses the concept of the world prevalent at the time as a vehicle for showing the proper concept of God.

Elliott does not seem entirely consistent because he himself attempts some harmonizing of Genesis with science. For example, although he admits that superficially the most plausible explanation of *yom* is that of a twenty-four hour period, "to accept such amounts to a disregard of what science has to say about the age of the earth," so he concludes that the writer meant to indicate a period of indefinite length. Again, in discussing the longevity of the antediluvians, he cites a study of 187 Neanderthal fossils showing that the great majority of them died before the age of 40! In general, however, the impact of specific scientific findings on interpretation of Genesis is not dealt with in as much detail as in Ramm's *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, the sole reference cited in the discussion of the flood. Elliott follows Alan Richardson in the use of the term "parable" and scrupulously avoids the term "myth" except in one case: on the marriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men (Gen. 6) he states merely that the author may have used a fragment of mythology as a literary vehicle.

In Part III: God's Answer to Man's Need, the rest of Genesis is regarded as less parabolic and more historical; the author argues that the New Testament writers accepted Abraham and other patriarchs as historical and that the stories surrounding their lives are essentially accurate, although the material may have been heightened a bit to intensify some dominant characteristic of the patriarch. In this section considerable supporting evidence from archeology is cited.

Although the evidence is not entirely clear on this point, it may be concluded that this book is really the product of many authors. The redactor, whom we may call E (for Elliott), has apparently drawn from many sources, some written and some oral. The principal written sources may be designated R (for Richardson, Ramm, and others) and S (for C. A. Simpson of *The*

*Interpreter's Bible*, John Skinner of *The International Critical Commentaries*, John R. Sampey, beloved Southern Baptist theologian, and several others). To say that he has skillfully blended material from such diverse sources as R and S is *not* to say that E has contributed no original concepts to the final product; furthermore, in spite of the fact that opposing viewpoints are frequently presented, the essential unity apparent on careful study consistently reveals E's worthy purpose in writing—to discover the message of Genesis, not as science or history, but as religion.

Books which are strictly Bible commentaries are not ordinarily reviewed in JASA: Dr. Elliott's book is an exception because of the widespread publicity it has received. Brief mention should also be made of Alan Richardson's little volume, *Genesis I-XI*, in the SCM series of Torch Bible Commentaries, since Elliott refers to it and Dr. Richardson, Professor of Christian Theology at the University of Nottingham, makes some specific comments about science and Genesis (pp. 34-38). Many ASA members will no doubt think Richardson is on the wrong track in his assertion that the early chapters of Genesis should be read as religious parables and that consequently no attempt should be made to harmonize science and the Genesis accounts of creation, the flood, and the tower of Babel. Even those who agree with his major thesis may differ on some specific points. Because arguments about the interpretation of Genesis so often bring in the supposed motives of those on the opposing side, it is important for us to note several things Richardson says.

For one thing, it is clear that his argument cannot be written off as that of a philosophical materialist or

anti-supernaturalist. There can be no conflict between science and Genesis, he says, because the two are talking about different things; however, if we use the term science in the sense of scientism (naturalism, positivism, scientific humanism), "then, of course, there will be a fight to the death between 'science' and religion. Though it is often called 'the scientific attitude' by its upholders, this point of view is not 'science' at all, but a very old kind of materialistic philosophy. The main tenet of this philosophy is that scientific truth is the only kind of truth." It seems to this reviewer that Biblical literalists who insist that Genesis must be "scientifically true" if it is to be true at all are actually closer to philosophical positivism than is someone like Richardson or Elliott.

Furthermore, we simply *cannot* label the most literal interpretation of Genesis as the *only* thoroughly Christian position when someone like Richardson has this to say (p. 40):

Because, through its poetic symbols and basic images, Genesis has the strange power to confront us with the naked truth of our human predicament before the majesty and goodness of God, we may rightly speak of the 'inspiration' of Genesis. Why *this* book, written in *this* way, should have this mysterious power, we cannot say; it is part of the total mystery of divine revelation. Revelation is always the gift of God, vouchsafed where and when he will, and not as we might expect. All we can do is to thank God with humble adoration for his gift of Genesis, as of all the Holy Scriptures written for our learning, and pray that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of his holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he has given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Do not all of us say Amen to that?

—W. R. H.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### GENESIS

*The following open letters are republished with minor editing from Threefold Advocate, the campus paper of John Brown University.—D. O. M.*

Dear Dr. Hearn:

It was a pleasure to have you on our campus Dec. 4, 1962. The talk you gave in Chapel was well received and stimulated much thought and discussion, pro and con, among the students . . .

I write in the spirit of the ASA, that of open, friendly discussion of matters relating to science and our Christian faith. Your comments on Genesis I were quite interesting to me, as I have given considerable study to its Hebrew text. You described the creation account both in your talk and in your contribution to Russell Mixter's *Evolution and Christian Thought Today* (p. 67) as a "beautifully poetic narrative," and so, apparently, not to be taken too literally.

All Hebrew scholars I know of concur that Genesis I is not Hebrew poetry. Even a beginning Hebrew student can easily see that it is in the ordinary Hebrew

narrative form. Keil and Delitzsch, well-known Hebrew commentators, write:

The account of the creation, its commencement, progress, and completion, bears the marks, both in form and substance, of a *historical document* in which it is intended that we should accept as actual truth, not only the assertion that God created the heavens, and the earth, and all that lives and moves in the world, but also the description of the creation itself in all its several stages. (*Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, *The Pentateuch*, p. 37, italics added.)

You also said that the statement of Adam's being made from the "dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7) made it seem to you to be a story primarily intended for children; that we are not to take it literally, because God would not make a man as a child would make a mudpie; that it was so stated in order that even a child could grasp it.

May I suggest that later reference to this act of God requires that it be understood literally. In Gen. 3:19 God tells Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, *till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou*

return." If a man literally becomes part of the ground when he is dead and buried, then it must be true that man was literally formed out of the dirt (or dust) of the ground by the agency of God. If not, language ceases to convey meaning. "Ground" cannot be both figurative and literal in the same sentence, with no indication of change.

Genesis 3:23 shows the same thing: "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." As surely as Adam worked the literal soil to provide his food, fighting literal thorns and thistles, just as surely and literally it must be that Adam was taken from the ground.

Again, thank you for being with us. I hope that frank, open discussion of these problems . . . will continue within the bonds of Christian friendship and love.

Gilbert B. Weaver

Instructor in Bible and New Testament Greek  
John Brown University

Dr. Hearn's Reply to Prof. Weaver:

I am extremely glad you have taken the trouble to write to me. . . . Publication of our letters may stimulate others to contribute to the discussion of these problems and help both of us to arrive at more satisfactory answers than we now have.

I hope I made it clear that my current ideas are working hypotheses only; I intend to keep working with them and on them continually. The ASA through its meetings and publications has served as an excellent forum for friendly discussion of such issues; your letter is certainly in its finest tradition.

First of all, you are quite right about Genesis I *not* being technically in the form of Hebrew poetry . . . . My use of the term "poetic" was not intended to be in this technical sense, but rather in the sense of "esthetically pleasing," as opposed to "analytical" . . . .

I reject the term "myth" for the same reason that Alan Richardson does in his *Genesis I-XI* (London: SCM Press, 1953). In this case "myth" would be appropriate in its technical sense ("a narrative of deep religious significance not intended to be taken literally"), but it undoubtedly would be misunderstood to be meant in the popular sense of the word ("a made-up tale which didn't really happen"). Yet when I use "poetic" in the popular sense, someone always corrects me for my technical inaccuracy. Richardson's alternative (pp. 27-32) is to use "parable" . . . . He says that the word *parable*

has the advantage of not necessarily implying that the happening to which it alludes is only a fiction. When Jesus speaks the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the word does not imply that mustard seeds do not really grow—a conclusion which would surely be implied if we spoke of the 'myth' of the mustard seed. A parable is a story which may or may not be literally true (no one asks whether the Good Samaritan ever literally 'happened'); it conveys a meaning beyond itself.

"Parable" is preferable to "allegory" because in an *allegory* every object mentioned stands for something

else; a parable has just one point, and it is the meaning of the parable as a whole that is the important matter.

It is of the utmost importance to realize that the parables of Genesis are to be read in the way that we read poetry, not prose. Their language is as far removed as possible from that of a scientific textbook. They make use of poetic images and symbolism, which must be treated as such.

Your quotation from Keil and Delitzsch says that the creation narrative in Genesis "bears the marks, both in form and substance," of a historical document intended to be taken literally . . . other commentators argue that the earliest chapters of Genesis are a unique form in Hebrew literature, and therefore technically neither ordinary Hebrew history *nor* poetry. *Saga* is a term I have seen used to describe their literary form. From my non-technical point of view, the first eleven chapters . . . seem to have a style which sets them apart from the rest of Genesis; the format of subsequent chapters seems to be clearly that of a historical document.

I am perfectly willing to let Genesis speak for itself as a part of the inspired Word of God; it is only with interpretations of the creation account that I am willing to differ. I tried to illustrate this by telling about my three-year-old daughter who thought that God must live in a farmhouse around which a harvest of pumpkins had been piled because she had learned in Sunday School that "God makes the pumpkins." I did *not* argue with her statement about God's creative activity in the pumpkin field but merely tried to show her an alternative interpretation.

This leads me to your point about my statement that the creation story seems to be written in a simplified form so that even a child can understand it. I think we are in semantic difficulty here about what it means to take a passage "literally." Language is used for such a variety of purposes that the same word is customarily used by the same person in different contexts with many different degrees of precision or concreteness. Yet you argue that the same word cannot be both figurative and literal in the same sentence or else "language ceases to convey meaning." This points up exactly what I mean by "poetic language," which certainly *does* carry a variety of meaning in a single expression. When I write poetry, I *try* to choose words which will have one meaning on superficial reading but one or more deeper meanings as well.

Even ordinary speech conveys a variety of images to an imaginative listener. When my wife calls, "Dinner is on the table!", she may mean: (1) Dinner will be ready by the time it ordinarily takes you to get your hands washed and the children rounded up; (2) Dinner is now served; (3) Dinner is literally "on the table"—the children have dumped a dish and the tablecloth is soaking up the gravy! If I assume that the customary meaning is intended, I will be right most of the time, but unless I keep alert to other possible meanings, I may be wrong on some very unfortunate occasions. Clues in my wife's tone of voice suggest which particular meaning is intended; in written prose there also

are clues, but in more poetic language the clues are missing or are less obvious.

This is why the question of the literary form of the early chapters of Genesis is so important. If they are intended to be poetic (whether or not in the classical Hebrew form) or "parabolic," we are obligated to read them imaginatively or we may miss the point entirely. Did not Christ choose the parabolic form for much of His message *because* of its double meanings? (See Mark 4:1-34.)

With regard to Adam's creation from the dust of the ground, I did *not* intend to say that we should not take this literally "because God would not make man as a child would make a mud-pie." . . . God could make man in any way He chose; He is certainly not limited to the capacity of my powers of understanding or imagination.

I agree that there is significance to the earthly origin of Adam . . . . Our point of disagreement, if any, lies in the possible interpretations of God's use of the earth in making Adam. "As one would make a mud-pie" is not part of the Scripture but is, I think, the picture that most Christians have from reading the story; many of us conceive of this creative act as taking place "one afternoon." When I said the creation narrative seemed simplified down to the level of a child's understanding, that is what I was talking about—the creation takes place in a specific week, with something new being made each day. However, once we have examined modern scientific evidence that the earth is extremely old, but some forms of life are more recent and man is much more recent, we have had opened up an additional possibility of interpretation.

Indeed, the creation was orderly; man was the last thing made; man was made "out of the dust of the ground"; but now we can get two different images from the words describing these things. Surely the language of Genesis 3:19 may be called figurative to a great extent: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" means something more than that Adam's dining room will be hot, and "dust thou art" in the present tense cannot be taken most literally without stretching the ordinary "literal" definitions of dust or dirt. Clarity is not lost here by the use of figurative language, and dramatic force is certainly gained. We can agree on the significance of the expressions, whether or not they convey to each of us a different set of images, if we are both confident that they are God's message to us.

Walter R. Hearn

Assoc. Prof. of Biochemistry and Biophysics  
Iowa State University

### EVOLUTION

I was so glad to read of Dr. Tinkle taking a stand for Christ in your *Journal*. I feared that he had gone to the *apes*, like the majority of you. Dr. John Howitt of Canada also wrote his timely disapproval of the present evolutionary trend among us. He and I have agreed on this issue since 1946. Although the trend is toward theistic evolution, there are a few other members . . .

who oppose it.

Dr. Tinkle has well said that the evolution you now advocate is definitely not Christian. Evolution tends to be supported, not by a theism at all, but rather by the pantheism of *emergent evolution*. We remember the days when A.S.A. first organized. We were all against evolution then. Satan has thus worked fast to bring us to such a compromise . . . .

Indeed, Fundamentalism seems to have departed from our deliberations, and Neo-evangelicalism, that curse of compromise, has taken its place.

However there are distinctively Christian institutions such as Bob Jones University and Tennessee Temple College where we are not ashamed to be called Fundamental—because we are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

Philip B. Marquart, M.D.  
Tennessee Temple College  
Chattanooga, Tennessee

### MORE ON "OLE MISS"

In the March issue concerning my Dec. letter about the Ole Miss situation you mentioned that an anonymous reader indicated that "eyewitnesses of the desegregation conflicts at the University of Mississippi who have different values from those of Professor Maatman report greatly divergent details as to certain of the events referred to in the letter." . . . We in our family have collected from local newspapers over one thousand articles since the Sept. 30 riot concerning the desegregation conflict. We rechecked these after reading what the anonymous reader said. *Not one eyewitness* disagrees with what I (and others) wrote. *No one* is willing to say, for example, that he saw the marshals start the fight. There *are*, however, countless articles which say that the marshals attacked coeds, incited the crowd, etc.—but no one says he *saw* any of these things. Anyone bringing forth such a story would be a local hero.

I know dozens of persons . . . who were at all conceivable positions in the riot area. All such witnesses give, at their peril, the same evidence. The local AAUP chapter could therefore make its now-famous statement saying the chapter had *eyewitness* evidence that the mob, through many vicious acts, began the riot. Over sixty faculty members signed that statement, and many of those gave individual, public accounts of what they saw.

This evidence is the bone in the throat of those who despise the Mississippi integrationist. They want to change history, to convince themselves that they were attacked by brute Federal power. But they were not attacked.

Is it not significant that the reader who takes exception to my eyewitness reports prefers to remain anonymous? Isn't he guilty of the same thing others have been guilty of when they have anonymously inspired news stories claiming attacks on coeds and other atrocities? . . . My report is well corroborated and was not affected by my personal values. Thank you for giving me another opportunity to discuss the matter.

Russell Maatman



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*American Scientific Affiliation NEWS*, edited by F. Alton Everest (Director, Science and Production, Moody Institute of Science), 947 Stanford St., Santa Monica, California. Issued four to six times each year, this includes news items of interest primarily to members.

*Modern Science and Christian Faith*, (2d ed., 1950, 216 pp., \$4.50). This symposium edited by F. Alton Everest, deals with relationships between Christianity and nine fields of science.

*Evolution and Christian Thought Today*, (2d ed., 1960, 222 pp. plus illustrations, \$4.50). Edited by Russell L. Mixer of Wheaton College, this symposium by thirteen authors was first issued in the Darwin centennial year to assess relationships between the theory of evolution and contemporary Christianity.

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