

“Creation or Evolution?” published in *United Evangelical* (September 1980): 2-3, 7-9.

## **Creation or Evolution?**

**Robert C. Newman**

“Evolution” is a word of many meanings. In its broadest sense, it merely means “change,” and is in no way opposed to creation. In its narrowest sense, evolution refers to small changes (mutations) taking place in living things – generally detrimental, but occasionally helpful to plants and animals trying to cope with changes in their environments. Most Christians who have studied science believe such a narrow form of evolution is also consistent with Biblical truth.

Two intermediate uses of “evolution,” however, are not so benign. These may be called the general theory of (biological) evolution and cosmic evolution. The former theory claims that all living things – plants, animals and mankind – are relatives, having descended by purely natural processes from one or a few simple one-celled forms of life. Cosmic evolution claims that the universe has always existed in some form or other, and that life arose naturally within it. These two theories together are usually presented as *the* scientific view of origins, in which God forms no significant part – though, of course, He may be added to it by those of a religious frame of mind. The Biblical picture of origins is seen as the attempt of some ancient men to guess how things came to be, not to be taken seriously in any modern discussion. In fact, however, as I shall attempt to indicate, the Biblical picture of creation actually fits modern scientific data far better than these evolutionary views.

Let us look first of all at the nature of the whole universe as best we can observe it. With the development of telescopes of enormous size in the past century or so, and with the improvement of photography and spectroscopes to analyze visible light, we have learned that our Milky Way is only one of at least billions of galaxies – huge “island universes” containing billions of stars each. These galaxies appear to be moving away from one another in such a way that the whole universe is expanding.

This [20<sup>th</sup>] century has also revealed the great complexity existing inside the atom. From Einstein’s formula for the equivalence of matter and energy we have been led to the discovery that the supposedly immutable elements may change from one to another, atoms splitting apart as in the atomic bomb, or joining together as in the hydrogen bomb. As a result, the matter inside stars will naturally in the course of time convert from hydrogen through the heavier elements to iron as the star burns up its fuel and eventually ceases to glow.

These two discoveries, the expansion of the universe and the changeability of matter, have forced atheists to abandon their old cosmology of a static, eternal universe in favor of various types of changing universes. One class of recent cosmologies is the “steady state” theories, proposed by Hermann Bondi, Thomas Gold and Fred Hoyle shortly after World War 2. Observations of galaxies, quasars and radio waves since then have resulted in these theories, too, being abandoned in their original forms. Hoyle now believes that

evidence for or against his new modified theory is forever beyond the reach of human test!

The other class of recent theories in the “big-bang” group, which see the universe as presently expanding from a highly compressed state that existed some 10 to 20 billion years ago. Within this class are three basic models: the oscillating big-bang of Ernst Öpik, presently favored by most cosmologists; the one-bounce big-bang of George Gamow; and the no-bounce big-bang of George Lemaitre. Only the last of these is a creation cosmology, with the universe coming into existence at the time of the big bang. Lemaitre, a Roman Catholic, was apparently influenced by Biblical ideas in constructing his theory. The other two theories of this class have no real creation, as the big bang was actually only a “big bounce,” before which the universe was contracting rather than expanding. These bouncing universe theories differ in that the oscillating cosmology repeatedly expands and contracts, whereas Gamow’s universe had been contracting from eternity past until 10 to 20 billion years ago, and since then has been expanding and will continue to do so forever. But both of these “big bounce” cosmologies suffer from the problem that no known force in nature will stop a universe from contracting and make it start expanding. In addition, the oscillating cosmology needs enough matter for gravity to be able to stop the expansion and begin the contraction. Recent studies of the matter between us and a distant quasar, however, suggest that the universe hasn’t got one-tenth the matter necessary for this.

The upshot of all this is that Lemaitre’s no-bounce big-bang – with creation at a finite time in the past – is the only view around which fits the observations. Yet Lemaitre’s view is also Biblical, so long as one does not require the Bible to teach that the universe is only a few thousand years old. In fact, the young earth view of Biblical history, best known from Archbishop Ussher’s date of 4004 BC for creation, is based upon the assumption that the genealogies from Adam to Abraham contain no gaps. Evangelical Bible scholars have realized for over a century that gaps are common in Biblical genealogies which can be tested by comparison with one another. Also, those Biblical statements which call the church age “the last days” or even “the last hour” suggest that the earth must be very old indeed.

Turning from the universe as a whole to our own earth and sun, the correlation of Biblical statements with scientific data is even more impressive. Both agree that the earth was once shapeless and empty; both that the material which later formed the earth was once immersed in complete darkness that subsequently became light all around. Next, the light and darkness are seen separately, as the material to form the earth is pushed out of the contracting solar nebula. Both agree that the terms “day” and “night,” implying the formation of the solid planet, are only applicable after this point. Both have atmosphere and water forming on the surface after the planet itself takes shape. Both see the earth as a water-covered planet before the continents emerge. Both see plant life as providing an environment for animal life. Even the apparently conflicting Biblical picture of the sun and moon being made after the earth is, I believe, only our misunderstanding. Actually, the plant life oxygenated the atmosphere, decreasing its cloudiness to the point that the light mentioned earlier in Genesis is now seen on earth’s surface to be the sun.

But what about the origin of life? Doesn't Scripture disagree with most scientists when it says God made it and they say it happened naturally? Yes, I think we have a disagreement here, but Scripture fits the scientific data better than theories for a non-miraculous origin of life do. According to Carl Sagan, exo-biologist at Cornell University, the simplest living cell is a very complicated structure, containing an organized information content equivalent to 100 million pages of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Bound into volumes, this many pages would represent about four thousand 25-volume sets, all different! To have life without God's miraculous intervention, a series of random chemical reactions must produce this complexity in less than a few billion years (or, at most, in the 10 to 20 billion years since the "big bang").

But isn't it true that randomness can produce order? If you give a few monkeys enough time, won't they eventually type out the whole *Encyclopaedia Britannica*? Let's see. Suppose we have a sufficient number of "monkey-proof" typewriters with a simplified keyboard of 33 keys – all the letters, punctuation, and a space key, but with only capital letters so they won't have to worry about capitalizing. How long would it take, with each monkey typing at three characters per second, to type merely the title, ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA? A simple calculation shows that the job would be expected to take 100 thousand billion billion monkey-years! That is, one monkey would take 100 thousand billion billion years, or, if we set a deadline of 5 billion years, 20 trillion monkeys would be needed (typing constantly) if we expect to have the job finished on time.

Thus, even getting the complex organization of a simple cell by random processes is virtually impossible in the time available, even without having to worry about the fact that chemical reactions will tend to break down the huge molecules needed rather than build them up. At present, then, the origin of life involves "critical and unsolved" problems for those who deny miraculous intervention. Some may think it is more "scientific" to avoid the miraculous, but if science is the study of what actually occurs in the real world, then ruling out a real cause is not going to bring us to the truth we are supposed to be seeking.

What about the general theory of evolution – that all the diversity of life on earth today arose from one or a few simple life forms? To a certain extent one might think that the Bible and evolutionists are in agreement here, as both see a progression of life on earth, and both put man last. In addition, the Genesis account says "let the waters bring forth" or "let the earth bring forth" several times, which might sound like God is having the plants and animals produced naturally. However, the Biblical account of the creation of man and woman in Genesis chapter two cannot be brought into agreement with evolution and retain any of its own real character. That is, the type of adjustments necessary to make Genesis 2 teach evolution can make any writing say almost anything.

Yet when we actually look at the fossil record and at modern genetic research, we see that the scientific data actually fit a kind of progressive creation better than evolution. By progressive creation, I mean that God created the basic kinds of plants and animals (and

man) in a progression at various times in the distant past, but that these have developed varieties over the centuries through the sort of “microevolution” that can be observed in the laboratory and which evolutionists are usually thinking about when they claim “the fact of evolution is as well-established as the fact that the moon goes around the earth.”

For instance, the fossil record is filled with missing links between all the basic kinds of plants and animals. As George Gaylord Simpson of Harvard says, “It remains true, as every paleontologist knows, that most new species, genera and families, and that nearly all categories above the level of families appear in the record suddenly and are not led up to by known, gradual, completely continuous sequences.”

In genetic research, changes can be artificially produced in living plants and animals in several ways. Many of these changes will be passed on to later generations. Yet because of the extreme complexity and delicate adjustment of living things, almost all such changes are useless or harmful. Continued work over many generations with fruit flies, bacteria and such organisms as have short enough generations to be practical for research have not produced any really large changes. Thus, under favorable growing conditions, there will be more generations of bacteria in thirty years than for mankind in ten million years, yet we see that bacteria after so many generations have only produced bacteria. Horses and dogs after thousands of years of intentional breeding are still horses and dogs, though limited changes have been made. All this seems to fit the Biblical picture better than the evolutionary one.

Turning to man, we come very much closer to home and to matters of direct social, political and religious impact. The usual view of science today is that man is merely a highly developed animal, sharing a common ancestry with the apes. The Bible, on the other hand, speaks of God having specially formed man “in his own image,” so that man shares intellectual, emotional and especially moral and spiritual characteristics with God rather than the animals. Some such enormous gap between man and the animals is indeed recognized by many scientists.

What about the fossil record for man? It is true that fossils suggest that man has been on this planet for longer than a few thousand years, perhaps indeed for a few million years, though the fact that men bury their dead makes it hazardous to date fossil men by the strata in which they are found. Recent discoveries in central Africa and Ethiopia have shown that the detailed scheme for human evolution accepted in the 1960s is incorrect – that the fossils then proposed as ancestors for man are now seen to be younger than fossils which are demonstrably human. As I understand the present situation, there are now no known fossils which could even be assumed to be ancestors of man (genus *homo*) for millions of years before the *homo* skulls dated at 3.5 million years ago. The relation of man to ape therefore remains quite hypothetical.

The Bible and evolution view the problem of good and evil in man quite differently. For the evolutionist, there is a tendency to see human evil as merely the remains of the animal in man, whereas his good is the result of his growing humanity. Scripture, on the other hand, sees man’s goodness as a result of his creation in the image of God, while his

wickedness is due to an intentional rebellion against God soon after his creation, by which man “fell” into sin and passed on this fallen nature to his descendants.

As a result, evolution sees man as improving, as taking charge of his own destiny, as capable of bringing “heaven on earth” by his own exertions. The Bible sees man *not* as one continually getting worse (as it sometimes misrepresented) but like a ruin which still shows evidence of its former grandeur. In spite of flashes of brilliance, man is seen as without hope unless God intervenes.

The evidence of history, we should note, favors the Biblical view. No detectable difference has been found in the general level of human intelligence throughout recorded history. Man, it seems, has had a brain which can appreciate art and music, and even do calculus, for thousands of years during which he has done little more than chip stones and wield clubs. Yet there have been bursts of promise at many different times and places: for example, in classical Greek philosophy, poetry and architecture, in Elizabethan English drama, or in Italian Renaissance art. But morally the world seems to show little improvement. Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot and Idi Amin have matched or excelled most of the ancient depravities on record. True, we are presently at a peak period of civilization and technology, yet all the other peaks in human history have been followed by valleys, some quite awesome in depth. It doesn't take too much imagination to see another such valley before us should we have a nuclear world war or even run out of useable energy sources.

It is into this frightening picture that Jesus Christ comes with a real message of hope. Not that Jesus was some sort of evolutionary fluke, a chance mutation that produced a perfect man. Then indeed we should be left with only despair, for His example is too lofty for our weakness to imitate. He left no physical descendants, and who knows whether another such mutation would arise before man (or the sun) turns the earth into a smouldering cinder? Besides, what hope is there for us if some other species (say *Superhomo perfectus*) inherits the earth?

No, the Christian message is that God, the creator of the physical universe and the ultimate source of all standards – be they moral, logical or esthetic – did intervene. God actually became a human being, humbled Himself to be born in Israel two thousand years ago. As man He kept all God's laws that men have never been able to keep before. Yet, as far more than an example, He accepted the mockery and rejection of men and died as a criminal under the curse of God that He himself might bear the punishment we deserve.

The Christian message of hope, then, the promise of peace on earth, is that anyone of us who will turn back to God, will seek His forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' death as God's sacrifice for sin, will have personal peace and reconciliation with God. More than that, He will change us inside, so that we can really begin to struggle against our own evil impulses, so that we can work in our community and nation for the things that really make for righteousness and peace.

Only then will we begin to see the depth of evil in ourselves and in our society, and realize that the return of Jesus Christ is necessary to bring true peace on earth and to deliver us from our own wickedness. Then we ourselves will be changed into the new *Superhomo perfectus*. Then we will find out what man was really meant to be, which all of us have been dimly desiring all our lives. This is the message of the Bible. The hope of the world is the incarnation of God in Christ, not the evolution of man into superman.