

Dear Editor

As an evangelical Christian of 50 years and (still!) a practising science teacher, I felt compelled to reply to the debate on evolution in the last issue of this magazine (*ACT Now*, Spring 2006).

Sylvia Baker points out that an atheistic interpretation of the theory of evolution is very attractive to those in our society who wish to reject God. However, a theistic interpretation of the theory is just as possible. Surely, as Christian teachers, it is our responsibility to help our pupils consider both frameworks, and show them by our own spirituality that we maintain a robust faith without sacrificing our scientific integrity.

The theory of evolution in itself is not anti-God, it is simply a possible explanation of experimental observations. God could have created the universe in seven days or 15 billion years. Regardless of the timescale involved, He is still the Creator and is worthy of worship. 'Chance' is not a god. To claim, as one of Sylvia Baker's sources did, that 'Hanging in the balance is the fate of orthodox Christianity' is an enormous, unwarranted exaggeration. I was under the impression that God is a God of Truth, and that we are saved by faith alone in the redemptive sacrifice of Christ! Christianity has survived for 2,000 years in many varied forms, God is still in control, and I doubt whether arguments between Christians over one scientific theory will finish it off!

Our problems arise when we try to read the Bible as a scientific text-book, which it most certainly is not. It needs to be understood as the type of literature it is. As teachers, we apply sensible rules of interpretation to written information in a newspaper, a novel, a history book, etc. We don't believe every word as literal truth if that was not the intention of the author. Biblical literature is more difficult for us as it is very ancient, and also contains some symbolic types of literature that we never see in modern times. We need to ask: 'Who were the intended readers?' and 'What was the author's purpose?' Lately I read the suggestion that Genesis 1 was written at the time of the exile in Babylon, where the Israelites were in danger of losing their faith due to the overwhelming chaos of their situation.

Subject: scratching where it itches
ACT Now issue: Spring 2006
Item responded to: David Edgington's letter

Dear Editor

David Edgington asked whether *ACT Now* is up to scratch.

I think it is.

Over the years what we have come to know as *ACT Now* has grown and developed from a small newsletter to a predominantly black-and-white magazine with longer articles to what it is today: probably one of the best full-colour membership magazines produced by a Christian workplace association anywhere in the world. Keep up the good work!

Brian McEwen

Their captors were obviously more powerful and successful, and worshipped the sun, the moon and sea monsters, among other deities. Genesis 1 is a message from a loving God to His beleaguered children. 'Don't worry. The gods of your oppressors are no more than toys in my playground. I am the Creator of the Universe, and I can bring order out of chaos. I am in control.' This is a message that, as Christians living in the UK in the twenty-first century, we need almost as much as they did.

There are profound pastoral implications to sowing in children's minds the idea that there is a conflict between the findings of science and the Bible, and I care passionately about the children I teach. Adults may be able to retreat into cosy Christian ghettos but children cannot avoid the marketplace of ideas. How many people do we know who have rejected the gospel because they could not accept the arguments of a Young Earth or a Seven-day Creation story? Or colleagues who no longer attend church because they cannot maintain their professional integrity and swallow the version of Christianity which they have encountered? There is well-documented evidence that Thomas Huxley and other atheists at the time of Darwin, calling themselves 'The X-Club', deliberately perpetrated exaggerated stories about a conflict between science and Christianity. They did this because they wanted to discredit Christianity. There was no substantial evidence for the stories they disseminated, but once something had been printed few people bothered to check up the original references. Consequently, the same distorted ideas were printed again and again. There

was no major conflict between science and Christianity prior to that era. To this day, Christians who insist on taking sides in this erroneous debate simply advance the X-Club's mischievous mission to discredit Christianity.

Sylvia Baker is on her home ground as a biologist when discussing evolution and I am happy to go along with some of her assertions, but as a physicist I can say that the evidence for an ancient Earth and universe is completely overwhelming. The Bible is an area of truth answering 'why' questions, science is an area of truth answering 'how' questions. We should be capable of integrating the two as professional teachers. Rethinking long-cherished ideas may be an uncomfortable experience but Jesus never promised us a comfortable life. Let's calm down over the whole issue and demonstrate humility and willingness to grow as Christians and learn from all sources of truth, however unlikely they may seem.

Hazel Lucas

