

Dear Editor

Thank you for the origins debate in the Spring 2006 issue of *ACT Now*.

In order to resolve these issues, our first task must surely be that of clarifying the relationship of faith to scholarship. To write as if there are biblical texts or scientific data that come free of interpretation – whether ‘theistic’ or ‘atheistic’ – is simply to be mistaken.

Every theory of science, and every interpretation of Scripture, is located within a faith perspective (or ‘worldview’). Hence none of us can avoid the task of discerning and evaluating those perspectives. In the sciences the perspectives operate through a hierarchy of commitments from ultimate religious commitments through general and discipline philosophies, to paradigms and theories. See Roy Clouser’s *The Myth of Religious Neutrality* (2nd edition, University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

If we concede the independence of science in relation to philosophy and faith, then it is all but inevitable that we will allow current theories of secular science to control the interpretation of Scripture. If, on the other hand, we recognise that every person lives by faith and that faith is foundational to the practice of both science and Scriptural exegesis, then we will know that we must scrutinise *both* in the light of biblical faith.

Even with this kind of scrutiny, we find no escape from the traditional position that Genesis provides a simple historical account of cosmic origins. To those who would reject that conclusion, the challenge is to justify that rejection in terms of defensible exegetical principles consistent with a Christian epistemology based on biblical faith commitments.

The biblical implications for our science are largely in relation to our guiding philosophies rather than in relation to specific data. The Bible does give some relevant data, but it is quite limited. The Bible says almost nothing, for example, about astronomy and cosmology. It does not describe continental drift, plate tectonics or volcanoes. It says nothing about fossils, or whether Noah’s flood produced all, some, or none of them. It does not tell us how much variation is

Subject: training days are good value for money
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Item responded to: David Edgington’s letter

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Like David Edgington, I am thrilled to see that ACT now offers local, Saturday training events and Quiet Days for Christians working in schools. I am also pleased to note that it is not just members of ACT England who are entitled to a 40% (£5) discount on the standard £12.50 booking fee for each event. Members of ACT Scotland, ACTW and NIACT can also access a full day’s training (inclusive of lunch, afternoon tea, other refreshments and course materials!) for just £7.50.

Suzy Morrison-Jones

possible in living organisms, or what the limits to that variation might be. Unlike the secular evolutionists – pre-committed to the single option of total genealogical continuity in space and time – Christian scholars are free to follow the evidence where it leads.

It is a false polarity to describe creation as a *theological* perspective and evolution as a *scientific* theory. Evolution came out of a rationalist tradition that goes back to the ancient Greeks – the tradition of the great chain of being. For non-theistic Greek philosophers the material continuity of the universe was the only conceivable basis for its order and unity. But they also believed that it had an intrinsic teleology that gave real meaning to attributions of design and purpose. In the course of Western history that teleology was replaced with a purposeless mechanicism. The materialistic Darwin embraced and promoted that modern form of the tradition. Given that history, Christians must ask themselves whether they could possibly come up with Darwinism without that tradition, or, more specifically, come up with it within any form of worldview compatible with the Bible.

Turning to the sciences, it is clear to us that the underlying faith commitments cover up enormous gaps in the evidence proffered for evolution. Two key examples must suffice.

First, evolution assumes as a fundamental tenet that variation is not limited. But in every programme or experiment to date in which scientists have tried to push variation they have always come to a halt at a point where further changes are lethal, or simply don’t occur. No theory that lacks that kind of crucial support can be regarded as robust.

Second, in the evolution of any structure Darwinism posits a process of gradual change in which all the intermediate stages are beneficial. The systemic lack of those links in the fossil record has always been a powerful argument against Darwinism. Modern advances in molecular biology have made the problem much worse. With proteins, for example, we find small islands of functional proteins in vast oceans of non-function. Many of those functional islands are separated by thousands or millions of bits of information. After 150 years of Darwinian biology there is still no demonstration that natural processes can generate the quality and quantity of information required. Indeed, computer simulations show that millions of generations cannot cross even a 50 bit information gap. We may respond by placing hope in future discoveries; but cannot claim that well-supported theories of evolution exist now.

Universal human experience witnesses that only intelligent agency can generate such quantities and quality of information. Hence the rapid growth of the modern Intelligent Design (ID) movement ought to be unsurprising. ID is not just a negative argument against unintelligent (chance-based) theories of evolution; it is primarily about identifying the hallmarks of design and developing research protocols for the study of designed systems.

Those who persist in claiming that intelligent agency was not involved in the origin and diversification of life must tell us their methods and their criteria for detecting intelligence. If they have no such methods or criteria then it is not as scientists that they are excluding design or intelligent agency from consideration.

Arthur Jones and David Tyler