

# The Religion of Science: The Largest Remaining Frontier Defusing the Creation Controversy

by Dean Ohlam

## *Fossils and the Search for Truth*

Packing in their tools, scientific instruments, and lunch, Professor Jeffrey Greenberg and his geology students work up a sweat reaching their target meadow in South Dakota's Black Hills. As a part of their degree program at a Midwest college, they've been spending several midsummer weeks studying this jagged upthrust near the western edge of America's great prairie. Getting out into the field like this is the joy of a working geologist's life. As a boy, Greenberg, like most kids, had a fascination with rocks—but his curiosity led to a career! Jeff is still taken with his desire to understand the story of the earth told by the rock strata and fossil remains that usually go unnoticed beneath our feet.

There is another fact about Jeff that is important for us to understand. In addition to being a man of science, he is a man of faith who accepts the Genesis account of creation. Jeff believes that there is no contradiction between the biblical account of creation and the fossilized remains of plants and animals that lie within the geological record of the earth's history.

Because Jeff is a scientist who embraces the worldview of the Bible, he often finds himself surrounded by disagreement. On one hand, he works with many scientists who do not share his faith. When he needs information of fossil evidence or geological formations, he is likely to consult with a paleontologist, a paleobotanist, a paleozoologist, and others who specialize in ancient life (paleo is a Greek prefix that means "ancient" or "prehistoric"). Many of his colleagues embrace a worldview that rejects the Genesis account of creation.

On the other hand, Jeff's interaction with people of faith is also surrounded by disagreement. Some believe the generally accepted scientific estimates of the earth's age, while others are convinced that the Bible describes a world that is several thousand rather than many millions of years old.

How does someone like Dr. Greenberg handle the controversy? More important, how do any of us live honestly and faithfully in the middle of so much uncertainty and disagreement?

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In the following pages, we will suggest an approach that allows the Genesis account of creation to be read side by side with the evidence of the natural world around us. Our focus will not be on what people of faith disagree about, but rather on the most important question: ‘What does it mean to believe in the Genesis account of creation while living and working among those who believe that the world is the product of natural and material forces?’

### *God’s Two Books: Nature and the Bible*

Theologians have historically categorized the Bible and nature as “two books”: special revelation and general revelation. The inspired Scriptures of the Jewish and Christian faith are together called “special” revelation. Their combined influence extends all over the world and stands at the heart of Western culture, making the Bible the most widely translated, circulated, and studied book in history.

The Bible speaks of itself as the written revelation of God. It claims to teach us what is true and to help us understand what is wrong in our lives. It offers to point us in the right direction and to teach us how to develop good relationships with both God and man (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The second of God’s two books is the book of nature. This is the record of God that is written in the natural world around us and in the pages of the human heart. It is considered “general” in that it is a revelation of truth that has always been available to all people throughout history. It is the handiwork of God in the creation itself, and it serves as the record of God’s actions in earth and human history.

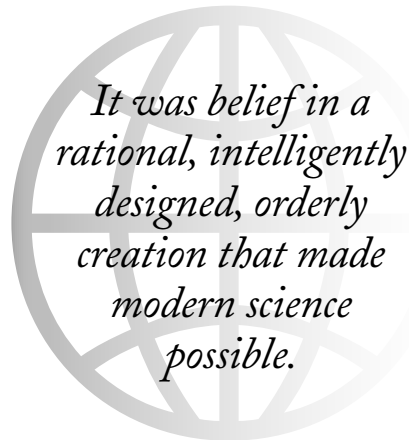
The Bible itself speaks of how God reveals Himself through the book of nature. The apostle Paul wrote, “Since the creation of the world His [the Creator’s] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. 1:20).

The Jewish author of Psalm 19 expressed a similar observation when he wrote,

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters

speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Ps. 19:1-4).

So, according to Scripture, the second book of God, read by all people, reveals God’s glory (splendor and riches), His handiwork (creativity), His everlasting power (including His moral strength



and His capacity to do miracles), and His divine nature (His attributes). Together these disclosures show that the natural world is a vast collection of divine gifts that reveal to us a great deal of truth about the personality and character of our Creator. The creation not only shouts “God,” it shouts that “He is powerful, and wise!”

### *Reading Both Books*

Science, at its best, is an attempt to read the book of nature (or God’s works). For the past 150 years (since the rise of Darwinism), there has often been within the church a general aversion to the sciences, which has been to our loss. The sciences today appear to be made up primarily of agnostics, atheists, or pantheists. But the fact that many science professionals do not accept the biblical worldview does not make the profession itself ungodly. Before Darwin, the biblical worldview predominated in the sciences. In fact, it was belief in a rational, intelligently designed, and orderly creation that made modern science possible. Many of the pioneers of science were devout followers of the Bible who believed both revelations to be witnesses of the truth: Kepler, Bacon, Newton, Pascal, Faraday, and many others.

In an oral essay on National Public Radio, Joseph Loconte pointed out that “too many skeptics have forgotten the massive historical debt they owe to the Jewish and Christian belief in an orderly cosmos. They cast religion as the enemy of science and progress, when in fact it was the religious [biblical] worldview that helped launch the scientific revolution over three centuries ago.”

Perhaps that’s one reason so many influential spiritual leaders throughout the centuries have received their enlightenment while being in the wilderness: They were surrounded by the truth of God’s general revelation (nature) while they were meditating on the truth of His special revelation (the Bible). Many have found that when separated from the noise and distraction of civilization, the book of God’s works and the book of God’s words together can become overpowering revelations of truth. People like Moses, David, and John the Baptist seem to have found in the wilderness a sanctuary where the books of God’s special and general revelation spoke in harmony.

### *The Problem of Reading Both Books*

In our day, many have found that the book of God’s special revelation does not always seem to be saying the same thing as the book of nature. The bones of dinosaurs, for instance, have caused many to wonder if the story of the natural record is in conflict with the record of the Bible. One problem with dinosaurs (the word *dinosaur* is made up of Greek terms meaning “monstrous lizard”) is that they are not clearly and obviously mentioned in the Bible—though some have noted that the book of Job describes two monstrous creatures that do not match existing animals: behemoth (40:15) and leviathan (3:8; 41:1).

A more significant difficulty with dinosaurs and other fossilized remains of extinct creatures is that scientific measurement and evaluation seem to place the vast majority of them on earth millions of years before the appearance of mankind. So it’s understandable that many have wondered why the Bible does not explain in a direct way the appearance of great age nor the story of dinosaurs and other extinct species as it seems to be told in the record of the earth’s crust. This and other scientific

findings about apparent geological time (earth history) and apparent astronomical time (cosmic history) seem to place God's two revelations in opposition to each other. Can both be true?

This is where disagreements are apt to arise. Bible scholars disagree among themselves about where to place dinosaurs in the story of the Bible. Sometimes the disagreements become intense, with both sides accusing the other of not being faithful to the revelation of Scripture nor to the revelation of the natural world. What we need to see, however, is that regardless of how we individually approach the problem of dinosaurs, there are possible explanations. And for those of us who accept the factual nature of the Genesis account, what we agree about is far more important than our disagreements.

Before we look at the dinosaur difficulty more closely, let's focus on the higher ground of belief that all who accept the Genesis account can affirm.

### ***What Does it Mean to Believe the Genesis Account?***

The disagreement among Bible scholars about how to explain the appearance of great age and extinct species of creatures is not the most important issue. More important is that along with the overwhelming evidence of nature . . .

#### ***1. Genesis Affirms the Existence of God***

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that the cosmos owes its material existence to an eternal, personal Spirit. The first words of the Bible are, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

It's important to understand that Moses wrote these words in the historical and natural setting of Mount Sinai. Not only had he seen the evidence of God in the skies and in the expanse of the wilderness, he also saw the special revelation of God through the miracles of the Exodus and through a direct encounter with his Creator on the top of a mountain.

Moses' affirmation that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" is in contrast to the worldview of naturalism. Naturalism, which forms the philosophy of many scientists, denies the existence of God. It takes for

granted that the material world is all that exists. (Hence, naturalism is also called materialism or secular humanism.) Its theology was summed up by Carl Sagan: "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."

#### ***2. Genesis Affirms the Power of God***

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that by the power of His eternal word and wisdom God spoke the material world into existence. By the word of His mouth, God brought something out of nothing, order out of chaos, and light out of darkness. The rest of the Bible repeats this creation theme. The song book of Israel declares, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. . . . He spoke, and it was done" (Ps. 33:6, 9).

This affirmation is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that intelligence, contemplation, and communication are the result of Darwinian evolution and therefore could have no causal effect on the origin of the material world.

#### ***3. Genesis Affirms the Personality of God***

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that the cosmos has its source in a living Person who is good, loving, and merciful, and that the original creation gave evidence of those personal characteristics. The beauty and use fullness of the natural world have their origin in their Creator's capacity for thoughtful and loving purpose. All the original species of the earth were good because they reflected the knowledge, wisdom, and infinite genius of our Creator. His personal character is the source of all that is good, beneficial, and beautiful.

Moses reflected this personal involvement of the Creator with His creation when he said, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Later David declared, "The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps. 145:8-9).

This belief in an infinite, personal Creator is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that does not recognize a creator but claims that personal

attributes are the product of unguided evolution, and therefore could not have had any part in the "creation" of the material world.

#### ***4. Genesis Affirms the Purposefulness of God.***

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that the order of our material world has its source in the purpose and plan of an all-wise and all-powerful Creator. By the design and order of God, the astronomical features of the universe, as well as the oceans, land, and atmosphere of the earth were formed. In six periods of time the Scripture calls "days," the Creator invested His genius in providing for the elemental, the plant, and the animal interdependencies of the natural world. By His purposeful design and order, God created the original families of life and commanded them to reproduce, each "according to its kind" (Gen. 1:24).

The book of God's special revelation explains what we can see all around us. Nature's balance is the result of God's purposeful and intelligent design:

He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion (Jer. 10:12).

It was this great awareness that inspired the songwriter of Israel to declare, "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions" (Ps. 104:24).

This belief that all of life is designed, significant, and purposeful is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that the cosmos is accidental and that the features of the earth, including life itself, are merely the unintended result of matter plus time plus chance.

#### ***5. Genesis Affirms the Sustaining Providence of God***

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying that God constantly oversees and sustains the creation and continues to grant life to all living things.

After singing to the God who laid the foundations of the earth, the psalmist celebrated the sustaining work of the Creator when he wrote:

He sends the springs into the valleys; they flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them the birds of the heavens have their home; they sing among the branches. He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth....These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season (Ps. 104:10-14,27).

This belief in a Creator God who also sustains His creation by the word of His mouth is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that uncreated natural laws sustain and maintain the integrity of the universe.

### **6. Genesis Affirms that God Made Man and Woman in His Likeness**

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that the personality of man and woman has its origin in a personal Creator who made us in His own likeness (image). To crown His creation, God took the nonliving matter of the earth to create a man. Then to provide man with a companion and complement, He took living matter from the man to create a woman. This original human pair was Adam and Eve.

The book of God's special revelation says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27); "and the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7); "then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman" (Gen. 2:22).

This belief that, of all God's creatures, man and woman were made in God's likeness is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that emphasizes that mankind is merely the product of Darwinian evolution and has no special nature related directly to the personality of a supernatural Creator.

### **7. Genesis Affirms that We were made for Relationships.**

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that the relationships we

enjoy have their origin in a God who is eternally relational. The result of God's purposeful creation was a series of relationships that explain the meaning of life itself.

Not only did God create people, He entered into a personal relationship with them. He was in fellowship with Adam and Eve and walked with them in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8).

The relationship of God to the earth was *ownership*. The people of Israel declared their acceptance of this claim when they sang, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1).

The relationship of mankind to the earth was stewardship. From the first days of man's life on earth he understood that his responsibility was to care for the earth that his Maker entrusted to him: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15).

This belief that we were made for relationships that have their origin in our Creator is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that does not acknowledge God and denies the existence of any interpersonal or authoritative relationships or responsibilities aside from those that have evolved among people.

### **8. Genesis Affirms that Disorder is the Result of a Rebellion**

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that there was an original rebellion in the spirit world. This was spread to the material world by a fallen angel who persuaded the first man and woman to disobey their Creator. This disobedience resulted in the spiritual and eventual physical death of Adam and Eve. It also had a devastating effect on the creation.

To remind the human family of its fallen condition, God added consequences to the human rebellion. Other judgments followed, many of which changed the nature of the earth drastically and altered the original relationships. According to Genesis, the problems that burden the natural world have their origin in God's decision to mercifully add pain to the rebel decisions of His creatures. These judgments, which were designed to let us know

that we could find life and light only in relationship to God, can be seen in the biblical descriptions of what happened in the fall (Gen. 3:1-5), the curse (Gen. 3:17-19), the flood (Gen. 6-9), and the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9).

The belief that pain and trouble are the result of human rebellion and God's loving correction is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview, which holds that until the advent of modern man all changes on the earth were unrelated to purposeful and intelligent activity—especially supernatural causes.

### **9. Genesis Affirms God's Desire to Reclaim what has been Lost**

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that immediately after the fall of man the Creator provided a way to ultimately redeem the family He had made in His likeness (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 13:8). Throughout the rest of the Bible, we read the record of our Creator's loving pursuit of a fallen, rebel race. This redemption theme runs throughout the Old and New Testaments and is fulfilled in the most inexpressible and miraculous act of intervention. The New Testament summarizes this redemptive rescue:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.... He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth Jn. 1:1-3,10-14).

This belief that God personally intervened to come to our rescue is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that all people, like all animals, will eventually die, decompose, and be gone forever—that nothing within the human being survives death except our chemical components, which will be recycled by nature to perpetuate life and evolution.

### 10. *Genesis Affirms God's Commitment to Restore what has Been Lost*

When we declare that the Genesis account of creation is true, we are saying we believe that not only did the redemptive intervention of our Creator provide for the rescue of mankind, but it also provides for the eventual restoration of the entire creation. The paradise lost by Adam and Eve will be regained. The Bible goes on to declare:

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-21; see also Isa. 11:6-9 and Rom. 8:19-23).

The belief that God will eventually restore all that has been lost is in contrast to the naturalistic worldview that recognizes no God and no Savior. This view asserts that there is no future hope for the individual person, just hope for a human race that will survive only by doing what it can to assure the progress of evolution.

### *What Does Belief in the Genesis Account Imply?*

Those who accept the Genesis account of creation do so with the conviction that the book of God's general revelation also tells the story of a Designer and Creator of inexpressible intelligence, wisdom, and power. This conclusion brings some additional implications:

#### 1. *Naturalistic Explanations are not Adequate*

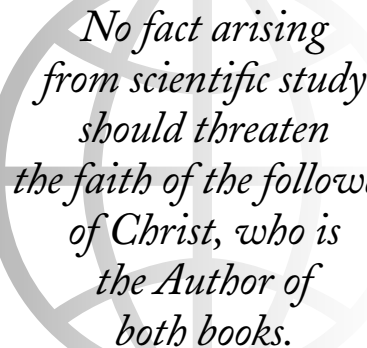
Those who see the reasonableness of the Genesis account reject as inadequate any evolutionary explanations for the origin of mankind that deny an intelligent, loving, good, personal, and superintending Creator who is the origin of everything our senses perceive.

Michael Polanyi, one of the 20th century's great scientific philosophers, disturbed the ivied halls of academia by declaring in 1958: "The book of Genesis and its great pictorial illustrations, like the frescoes of Michelangelo, remain a far more intelligent account of the nature and origin of the universe

than the representation of the world as a chance collocation of atoms."

#### 2. *Darwinian Evolution is not Necessary*

The Bible gives no indication that the creation and development of anything living was the result of a long evolutionary process from the less complex to the more complex. The writers of Scripture, inspired by God's Spirit, did not present



*No fact arising from scientific study should threaten the faith of the follower of Christ, who is the Author of both books.*

the story of evolutionary progression that most scientists believe is evident in the general revelation. Further, the genetic resistance to change found among living things, the overwhelming implication of intelligent design, and the absence of evidence for anything truly simple in the cosmos currently stand opposed to the basic Darwinian explanation of origins.

#### 3. *Unanswered Questions are to be Expected*

Once we understand that the cosmos has been created by an eternal, infinite, personal Creator, who also took the initiative to communicate to us through His two books, we can accept the mystery of what He has chosen not to tell us.

For the honest, God-fearing individual who desires to see consensus between the special and general revelations (the Bible and science), this can create a tension. Such tension, however, does not have to hinder the quest for understanding. Actually, it can empower it. Since both are God's revelations, we can truly enjoy pursuing the mystery. No fact arising from scientific study should threaten the faith of the follower of Christ, who is the Author of both books.

We would gain much by adopting the attitude expressed by George MacDonald's father in a letter to his son about the mystery of God's sovereignty and man's freedom:

[I cannot] bear to see that which is evidently gospel mystery torn to pieces by those who believe that there is no mystery in the Scriptures and therefore attempt to explain away what it is evidently for the honor of God to conceal. I see so much of mystery in nature, and so much of it in myself, that it would be proof to my mind that the Scriptures were not from God were there nothing in them beyond the grasp of my own mind.

#### 4. *Abuse of the Natural World is not Acceptable*

From the beginning it was clear that this natural world was a treasure entrusted by the Creator to those who bore His likeness. We are probably safe to believe that it is more important to our Creator that we honor Him in our care and use of what He gave us than that we be right about what He chose not to tell us. It is our wonderful responsibility to be humble students and faithful stewards of God's handiwork. Those who accept the Genesis account should be among the world's most ardent "earthkeepers."

### *Questions about the Genesis Creation Account*

#### *According to the Bible, how old is the earth?*

We don't know. The Bible doesn't say. Throughout the centuries, devout believers have debated about the age of the earth. Many thought that all you had to do to determine the age of the earth was to apply simple math and some logical deductions to the genealogies of Genesis 4, 5, 10, and 11. But a problem is created by the limitations of words. The word *begot* used in our English Bible to indicate the paternal line between generations does not always mean father to son. It often refers to the great, great grandfather (or any number of "greats") of the named individual, with the in-between progenitors unnamed. So there is no accurate way to measure the generations back from Abraham to Adam.

Even if you could estimate closely the number of years from Adam to Abraham, you would still run into another problem. While the Bible doesn't say how old the earth is, it also doesn't imply anywhere that it is as old as modern cosmological and geological studies indicate. Some Bible scholars suggest that the earth had to have been created with the appearance of age. Since most living things were created in a mature state and had to appear to have grown, so also the nonliving elements would have had to show apparent age. Distant galaxies would appear to have been transmitting light for millions of years. The earth's crust would appear to indicate long-ago sedimentation, volcanic activity, erosion, decomposition, and chemical reactions.

Others are equally convinced that an honest "reading" of the book of natural revelation must acknowledge the appearance of great age. They are likely to point out that there are problems in saying that a literal interpretation of the 6 days of the Genesis creation requires 24-hour periods. The first 3 days passed before the sun, moon, and stars were even created (Gen. 1:14-19).

In either case, it's important to note that the Bible doesn't say how old the earth is. It doesn't say whether thousands or millions of years are hidden between the lines of sacred Scripture. While we might wish otherwise, the Bible does not directly tell us how to read the enormous appearance of age that often seems to be reflected in the book of God's general revelation. But the Bible does humble us by showing that some of the scientific evidence for gradual change could be drastically altered by catastrophic events of judgment such as Noah's flood. When the Genesis account of a great flood is considered, it could suggest an alternative explanation of the geological record.

Because of the different ways people interpret such evidence, it's not surprising that there are differences of opinion about how to read God's two books side by side. Dr. James Sawyer of Western Seminary has pointed out that when the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was formed in 1978, "the founding membership held over 30 discrete positions with refer-

ence to the interpretation of Genesis 1. Only one of these positions involved a 6-day recent creation." Apparently, most of those on the council felt that the book of God's words did not demand that the days of creation be considered standard 24-hour days—or that no time elapsed between the days.

Many committed Christian scholars continue to debate this issue. So it's wise for the church to allow what is uncertain to remain uncertain. There is no need for endless debate when God's two books appear to be in conflict. The important thing is to consider it all with a great amount of humility. As Dr. Sawyer explains, when we cannot distinguish between our understanding of the truth and the truth itself, we are boastfully claiming that "we have, at least on this issue, the complete understanding of God Himself."

Further, genuine humility would also demand that there be as much room for misunderstanding the message of general revelation as there is for our failure to understand the full meaning of the special revelation—the Bible. Both revelations undoubtedly contain much that is beyond our mental grasp.

#### *What does the Bible say about dinosaurs?*

God's special (written) revelation says nothing directly about the dinosaurs. The Bible's primary teaching on the subject is that God is the Creator of all things. So when these impressive creatures were alive on the earth, they would have been cared for and cherished by their Creator (Ps. 104:27-28; 145:15-16).

Some have speculated that the dinosaurs may have been a creation of Satan after he was cast out of heaven, and before God's creation of animals. Others have speculated that they all lived during the time from Adam to Noah and were destroyed with all the other creatures in the flood—and that in order for them all to be taken aboard the ark, only the immature dinosaurs were included. Then after the flood, because the earth was so vastly different, they could not survive. Still others say that because God knew that the change in the earth after the flood would not allow dinosaurs to survive, He let them die in the deluge. Some have even concluded that the fossilized remains are part of a decep-

tive scheme concocted by the devil to weaken the faith of Bible believers.

Such speculation is inconclusive—and often the cause of unnecessary dissension in the church. The revelations from both of God's books show that many of the animals that were created by God have appeared on the earth for a time and have then become extinct. Dinosaurs are one class of animals that the creation itself indicates became extinct so long ago that their remains have become fossilized.

It's always the best policy to be dogmatic only where the Bible is dogmatic. If the Bible doesn't make a clear affirmation about dinosaurs, we must be content with that fact. It's almost certain that we have not seen the end of our great Creator's delightful surprises! We know that the paradise lost by a sinful Adam and Eve will be regained through the work of Jesus Christ, the sinless last Adam (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 8:19-21). How do we know that in the restored and renewed earth, flocks of pterodactyls won't be as common as starlings, and schools of plesiosaurs as familiar as porpoises? Our imaginations can work as creatively about the future as they do the past.

#### *Does the Bible say anything about man evolving from simple, primitive life?*

No. There isn't even a suggestion that mankind is anything less than the direct result of a special act of God's creation. Nature itself (God's general revelation) shows us that the spiritual, emotional, contemplative, communicative, creative—and destructive—capacity of people is so far removed from the rest of the creation that it is impossible to imagine an evolutionary origin for mankind that is not entirely speculative.

Perhaps the greatest barrier to the "molecules to man" idea is that science has never discovered anything truly simple. Molecular biology and the study of subatomic particles have done little more than demonstrate a complexity that defies scientific explanation. Cosmology, the study of the origin of the universe, also has recently produced a vast amount of knowledge about the seeming impossibility of the existence of life anywhere in the cosmos—except on earth. The exist-

tence of life anywhere in the universe remains a miracle—even to science.

The Bible says nothing about the Darwinian hypothesis of man's sub-human, natural origin without a superintending God. No doubt this is because if Darwin's "discovery" was a truth also revealed clearly by the Holy Spirit to the writers of Scripture, it would have appeared as ludicrous then as it still does to most people today. So it's reasonable to conclude that the Bible says nothing about this form of evolution because Darwin's theory was wrong.

*Can someone believe the Bible and still believe in evolution?*

It depends on what is meant by believing in evolution. It's important to understand that the word *evolution* merely means "to change" or "to develop." We make a mistake to equate the word *evolution* with the Darwinian scheme, which declares that all of life came about through the undirected and random process of organisms progressing through billions of years from simple nonliving molecules to mankind.

No believer in the Bible accepts this Darwinian concept. If the Creator is a personal, loving, and sovereign God, nothing in His creation takes place without His intimate oversight. The God who attends the death of a sparrow certainly would have attended its creation. What appears to be random in creation is merely that—a *human perception*, not a *fact*.

Those who have closely examined God's general revelation recognize that the characteristics of many living creatures do change over time (like many of the fascinating creatures of the Galapagos Islands studied by Darwin). God created them with the capacity to adapt to a changing or restricted environment. This is a form of evolution. These adaptations that Darwin and other scientists have observed over the years are sometimes called "micro-evolution": small-scale changes that may actually produce new species (new forms that cannot normally breed with the old forms). But there is no evidence that such a capacity has actually produced entirely different creatures that have progressed through billions of years from molecules to man without the superintendence of God.

This large-scale, self-creating process is what many call "macro-evolution," and it is this Darwinian scheme that the general public understands to be evolution. In this regard, the term *evolution* is a frail donkey upon which has been heaped such a huge load of speculation and philosophy that it would topple a sturdy packhorse. No wonder Darwinism has not progressed much over its 150 years of existence!

*Here it is wise  
for believers to refuse  
to make the process of  
divine creation,  
rather than the fact of  
divine creation,  
a test of Christian  
orthodoxy.*

There are, however, among people of faith those who are referred to as "theistic evolutionists." While not taking the Genesis record literally, they believe God directed the evolutionary process from the least complex to the most complex of creatures. They firmly reject the Darwinian suggestion that this occurred without the supervision of a Creator. Theistic evolutionists don't believe *natural selection* could create anything without *supernatural attention*. They believe that the adaptation hypothesis suggested by Darwin is a marvelous natural process instituted by God, just like the dozens of other natural processes God instituted for man's survival—the water cycle, the carbon cycle, photosynthesis, plant germination, sexual reproduction, and so forth.

Another group, calling themselves "progressive creationists," believes that the days of the creation actually mark out times when God supernaturally stepped into a long natural history with periodic supernatural acts of special creation, and that between those creation events are sandwiched the millions of years most geologists believe are required by the evidence.

The fact remains, however, that the special revelation of God gives no hint of such a process. Those who accept the "billions of years" scenario do so without any direct support from the Bible. Nonetheless, it's important for Christians who disagree on this issue to do so in grace and love.

Here also it is wise for believers to refuse to make the process of divine creation, rather than the fact of divine creation, a test of Christian orthodoxy. Many renowned evangelical theologians over the centuries, from Augustine to B. B. Warfield to J. I. Packer, have believed that a long and gradual creation process directed by a loving and superintending Creator is not at all contrary to the Genesis account of creation.

Once an individual understands and accepts the essential truth of Genesis, the remainder of the Bible is much easier to understand—as, for that matter, is the remainder of history. The astronomer with his vast figures seems to be telling us, after all, what the ancients said: There are no limits, there are no ends, there are no beginnings we can see. Bigness gets forever bigger and smallness gets forever smaller. The attempt to bring it all into the scope of limited human understanding and intelligence has done what it has always done—we either see God and worship Him in great awe and humility, or we "suppress the truth" and wander in self-chosen blindness (see Rom. 1:18-25).

### *Living In Two Worlds*

When Dr. Greenberg and his geology students return from their studies in the Black Hills, they go their separate ways to different residences and churches. Some journey along I-80 and pass through the "Thornton Deposit," where on each side of the highway steep walls of rock drop 200 feet into an enormous limestone quarry. The pit is merely a dent in the top layer of what most geologists believe is an ancient saltwater reef that extends down almost a mile into the earth's crust. They're convinced that this formation is composed primarily of the remains of small sea creatures that once occupied a shallow ocean for about 20 million years.

Other scientists, however, are just as convinced that this amazing formation could have been created only by the catastrophic forces and sedimentation process that would have occurred in the Genesis flood. They believe that the biblical flood account should compel the geological mainstream to give more attention to flood factors in the deposits that are examined.

Those different perspectives bring us back to where we began. How does someone like Dr. Greenberg live within these two worlds? More important, how do any of us live honestly and faithfully in the middle of such uncertainty and disagreement?

The answer is found by being as honest as we can with the records of God's two books. Both books declare with eloquence the power and wisdom of

the Creator. Both books demonstrate that it is God who has made us and not we ourselves. Yet both books stop short of giving us final answers about many questions of time and process. In these matters, we must live faithfully, graciously, and humbly with our differences. What we know and agree about is far more important than what we don't know or fully understand.

All of God's great creation gives each of us reason to worship and praise with the psalmist:

Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all you stars of light! Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were

created. He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all the depths; fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word, –"mountains and all hills; fruit trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl; kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens; old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven (Ps. 148:1-13).

### For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-hunts, and the End of Slavery

By Rodney Stark

Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003  
488 pp., ISBN 0691114366

—Reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

**N**ot in my lifetime (to my knowledge) has any professor in a secular university produced such a ringing defense of Christianity and as cogent and extensive a correction of secular biases as Rodney Stark, in his three books published by Princeton University Press: *The Rise of Christianity*, *One True God* and *For the Glory of God*. The latter is the best. The dust jacket boldly claims that

Whether we like it or not, people acting for the glory of God have formed our modern culture.

He gives 80 pages just to the essential dependence of the rise of science itself upon Christian belief. There is nothing like it. He steps on a lot of toes. He shows how consistently biased most historians and sociologists are in the mainstream of academia. Astonishing. Every mis-

sionary should have this book. Pastors and all seminary students should have this book. Every student of science. Well, every student, period—every Evangelical who is in touch with educated non-believers.

Quite honestly I regard this book to be one of the most valuable books I have ever owned. I would almost give my entire library for it.

Stark's academic credentials are secure with a whole string of books and technical articles to his credit. For many years he has been on the faculty at the University of Washington. Now, in retirement, he has recently agreed to teach at Baylor University.

Why am I so high on this book? (I have written Princeton for permission to reprint those 80 pages as a separate book.) Because it meets the "Religion of Science" frontier head-on. It goes to bat with exhaustive hard facts to disprove a wide variety of myths that have flourished in the arid air of contemporary secularity. It is a credible case for overturning many negative viewpoints with which wall off secular people from us. It sets the record straight. It can be cited with authority. It is truly a sensation without being sensational.

You should hear him destroy the conventional story of Columbus. He cites it

in a page and a half and then observes that nothing he has related is true. The truth, as usual, is even better than fiction.

However, for this issue of IJFM, the huge science section is very, very relevant. Incidentally, he gives fifteen pages to a devastating review of Darwinism. He promises, "To give the greatest possible reassurance to readers, I have been careful to draw my statements about deficiencies of the theory of evolution only from well-known, enthusiastic Darwinians."

One more quote:

The battle over evolution is not an example of how "heroic" scientists have withstood the relentless persecution of religious "fanatics." Rather, from the very start it has primarily been an attack on religion by militant atheists who wrap themselves in the mantle of science in an effort to refute all religious claims concerning a Creator—an effort that has also often attempted to suppress all scientific criticism of Darwin's work.

Get this book. Devour it entirely. Church history, for example, looks very different after he deals with longstanding myths and popular misunderstandings. If IJFM were on another subject, his section on Church History would possibly be the highlight of the book.

