

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT EVOLUTION

**PROFESSOR
EDGAR
ANDREWS**

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT EVOLUTION

Creation has been in the news recently because Emmanuel Technology School in Gateshead had been found teaching special creation as an alternative to evolution, as a theory of origins, of human origins in particular. This discovery spurred a number of academics plus several Bishops to write to the Secretary of State for education Estelle Morris demanding, or perhaps suggesting, I'm not quite sure where it fell between those extremes, that the national curriculum should be modified to prevent special creation being taught as an alternative to the science of evolution. There were even questions asked about it in the House of Commons which the Prime Minister was very adept at ducking. Nevertheless the whole thing produced quite a lot of publicity. In response to that letter by the evolutionists to Estelle Morris 27 of us who believe in biblical creation got together and wrote our own letter to the secretary of state. But the question remains then, what should we teach children, and indeed anyone else regarding origins? It seems to me that there are a number of options and I want to speak to those various options.

What should we teach?

The first option is that we don't teach them anything. We just avoid the subject, we steer clear of it. This I'm afraid is what largely tends to happen in Christian churches, because often the minister does not know any science and does not feel competent to handle the issues, especially when they become technical. Because it is an area of potential conflict one of the easy ways to avoid it is to say nothing. But that really isn't an option. One of the first questions that a small child asks its parents is 'where do I come from?' Although you don't have to get into a dissertation of evolution and creation to answer the toddler, nevertheless it is a question that the individual asks either explicitly or within their own heart with increasing urgency as time goes by and they grow up. Because what I am depends very largely on where I came from. If as a human being I am just thrown up on the shores of the ocean of time, some accident which could not have been predicted or no meaning then I as an individual either have no significance in the grand scheme of things, there probably isn't any grand scheme of things anyway, or at best I am left to generate meaning for myself in my life. If on the other hand I am a being created by a creator God, in the image of God I am something very different. I am an

accountable being and I have to heed what the apostle Paul says when he tells the Corinthians that we all have to stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ, to receive the things done in our body, whether they be good or ill. So then, not teaching anything is not an option, it is a subject we have to face up to. A subject that we have to address, whether in our own lives or teaching in school or in the context of teaching in the church.

The second option is that we should only teach special creation and that we should do our best to eliminate the theory of evolution from the stage completely. Now you may be interested to hear me say that this is not an approach that I advocate. Indeed I do not know of any serious creationist who would want to follow that line of action, because it is not biblical to suppress the opposition. The biblical approach to matters of this kind is beautifully summed up by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 10; speaking of the spiritual battle, he said 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' Now that's fighting talk, and that's Christian talk, New Testament talk. Because in the New Testament (which has to be our authority) we have the exhortation to take on the enemy, to take on godless philosophers, to take on the theories of the world. We have the challenge placed before us that we are to fight in this realm of the mind, in this 'battle for the mind' as someone has called it. This is a warfare in which we do not have to be ashamed and a warfare which we know, if we believe in Christ, that Christ will win. Therefore I would not advocate that we try to cover up evolutionary theory. I would say let every man speak, let every man put forward his opinion and let us test those opinions by the criteria of which are first of all biblical, secondly intellectual/rational, and thirdly scientific. Let us put them to the test and as a creationist I am very prepared to do that and have no concern or fear that I will be embarrassed as a result.

The third option is that we should teach nothing but evolution. This of course is the thrust of the letter sent to the Secretary of State for education, the idea that anything other than Darwinian evolution or technically neo Darwinian evolution, cannot be taught. They don't mind creation being taught in religion as a myth, but you must never set it in any way in opposition to the Darwinian viewpoint. This is the de-facto assumption that is followed and practiced in our own country and indeed in many other

countries/lands. There is a certain dominance, (a philosophical dominance), of the theory of evolution over all alternatives.

Now we need to define our terms. This is one of the problems of this debate that the word evolution is used very loosely, and it is used to describe two quite different things, micro evolution and macro evolution. There are other names given to them, but these are the names I'm going to use because I think they are very descriptive and explanatory titles.

Now **micro evolution** is a genuine and valid science and it concerns itself with such things as genetic mutations, random spontaneous changes in the genetic code, perhaps induced by radiation or chemicals or other things, sometimes happening for no apparent reason. Natural selection operates in a very limited way and most evolutionists today will not put too much weight upon natural selection. They understand that natural selection is to some extent a circular argument, not a very strong philosophical or scientific principle. But nevertheless, natural selection to a limited, extent does operate, it does function, it does produce changes in animals and organisms. There are other mechanisms of micro evolution, for example the population of sea gulls gets separated geographically and the two separate populations then develop separate characteristics. They eventually became different species, or are recognised as different species because they have changed or diversified to a sufficient extent.

Now all of that is science, it is valid and is in no way to be opposed. You can go into a laboratory and carry out experiments in this area of micro evolution. In fact the best way to illustrate micro evolution is by reference to breeding. Ever since civilization began, men have been breeding animals. They've been breeding horses, dogs, cattle, plants, grain, flowers etc. Enormous amounts of work have gone into breeding living things e.g. we just have to look at Crufts to see the enormous variety of dogs that have been produced by breeding. But the great point about all breeding experiments, whether it's on grain, cattle, horses etc is that you can only go so far. You can breed enormously different dogs but you cannot breed a dog into a cat, and that is the distinction. You can alter the characteristics of organisms and explain the changes by a neo Darwinian mechanism – random mutations operated upon by natural selection. But those explanations are then taken and extrapolated to the generation of the whole biosphere, the whole world of living things. They are extrapolated to explain **macro evolution**, to explain the origin of life itself, the origin of

living creatures, no matter how simple it might be, and then the development of that original life form into the vast diversified biosphere that we know today. Many creationists (and non creationists) maintain that macro evolution cannot be explained scientifically by the mechanisms of micro evolution.

Macro evolution not scientific

Now you might say 'he would say that wouldn't he' so let me quote a very famous evolutionist, a man called Ernst Mayer. He writes:

'The nature and cause of trans specific evolution (macro evolution) has been a highly controversial subject during the first half of this century (20th Century). The proponents of the synthetic theory (neo Darwinian theory) maintain that all evolution is due to the accumulation of small genetic changes guided by natural selection, and that macro evolution is nothing but an extrapolation, a magnification of the events that take place within populations and species. A well informed minority however, including such outstanding authorities as the geneticist Goldschmidt maintained until the 1950s that neither evolution within species nor geographic speciation could explain the phenomenon of macro evolution. These authors contended that the origin of new types and of new organisms could not be explained by the known facts of genetics and systematics.'

Although this was written 40 years ago, nothing has changed. If you read the serious evolutionary literature you will find many comments of that kind. You will find the admission that whilst micro evolution is an established and scientific fact, macro evolution is still a tentative concept. I had an interesting experience in this respect, about a year after the so called revolution in Czechoslovakia. I was invited by some people over there to go on a lecture tour of Czechoslovakia to speak on this subject. Evolution was a dogma subscribed to by the communist regime of course, and my hosts felt it would be good to have some biblical creation injected to show people that there were alternatives. At one of the meetings I was fixed up to speak to the faculty of the institute of biological evolution, an institute in Bratislava, which was entirely devoted to the study of evolution. Up to a year previously no one would have had a job there who was not approved by the communist regime and was not a thorough going atheistic

evolutionist. I don't think my host knew what they were letting themselves in for when they booked this meeting. Anyway I went along and I spoke to them feeling very much like Daniel in the lions den, but I was absolutely amazed that, when I had finished speaking, one of them said 'we can't disagree with anything you have said, for us evolution (macro) is simply a working hypothesis, we know it's full of flaws and claims that cannot be proven, but we haven't got anything else, it is a framework, something for us to work with.' I was very encouraged by that, because it is one thing to have creationists with a religious axe to grind tell you these things, but to have atheistic communistic academics humbly confirm what I was saying is something we don't see in our present society. We do not see this humility on the part of those who advocate a blind process of chance, of evolutionary progress that has given rise to mankind.

The facts against evolution

I want to outline the reasons why we should not teach evolution as fact. I'm very happy for it to be taught as a science based philosophy, for that is what it is. I'm very happy to debate with evolutionists the pros and cons of their claims and of their theory. But what we should not allow to happen and what is happening by default is that these things are being taught as fact. I want to zero in on one aspect of the shortcoming of the complete inadequacy of the evolutionary theory to account for the world of living things and that relates to a book recently published. A biochemist called Michael Behe, wrote this book several years ago now in which he produces what is in my mind the most devastating critique of Darwinian evolution that is available. I'm going to read some of the argument. The reason comes down to something he calls irreducible complexity, the irreducible complexity of living things.

'Darwin knew that his theory of gradual evolution by natural selection carried a heavy burden. Says Darwin "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not have possibly be formed by numerous successive slight modifications my theory would absolutely break down." Most of the scientific scepticism about Darwinism in the past century has centred on this requirement, the requirement to prove, or not prove, according to which side you are on, whether there does exist an organ or a creature that could not be formed by numerous successive slight modifications'.

He quotes some of the people who have criticised Darwinism. ‘Critics of Darwin have suspected that his criteria has been met, but how can we be confident what type of biological system could not be formed by “numerous successive slight modifications.”’ He says ‘a system that is irreducibly complex, by this term I mean a single system composed of several well matched interacting parts, that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of those parts causes the system to cease functioning. An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced by slight successive modifications at a pre-cursor system, because any pre-cursor to the irreducibly complex system that is missing a part, is by definition non functional. An irreducibly complex biological system, if there is such a thing, would be a powerful challenge to Darwinian evolution. Since natural selection can only choose systems which are already working then if a biological system cannot be produced gradually it would have to arise as an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have anything to act upon.’

Well if that left you behind, in my book ‘from nothing to nature’ there is an explanation of the same sort of thing written originally for teenagers but many adults appreciate the book. What is he saying? He is saying that the biological world is completely composed of irreducibly complex systems, and since he is a molecular biologist, he gives a number of examples in the book, one of them is the immune system, the other is the blood clotting mechanism.

Blood Clotting

Now if you did not have a blood clotting mechanism you could not survive, or at least it would be extremely difficult. Haemophiliacs of course suffer from a lack of a blood clotting system, that is why they are in constant danger of bleeding to death unless the missing factors are injected into them. What he shows is that biological research has revealed eleven different factors and anti factors which have to work in complete harmony in order to produce an affective blood clotting system. For example the blood has to clot only when a wound is inflicted. Different molecules, different proteins all have to work hand in hand, in order for that system to work. He throws down the challenge: “How can you get to such a system by gradual improvements according to the Darwinian mechanism” and he

quotes the people who have tried to explain it in that way and shows how they cannot do so.

Now that we have access to the molecular level of life it is amazing how complex and intricate and irreducibly complex the components of all the systems that make our bodies work are. Although very little publicity has been given to this book and other arguments like it, we have in these days not only the old queries being raised against Darwinian evolution (e.g. the fossil record) but new objections. New objections based upon new knowledge, new objections based upon our growing understanding of how life works at the molecular level.

Teach the Truth

Now I maintain that these things ought to be taught, that the present situation in which Darwinian evolution is presented to children and to the populous in general, in the media, in books and text books, as fact, presented as reality, as ultimate truth, is a denial of truth. By all means let Darwinian theory be taught but let us teach its defects, its problems, its unanswered questions, its inability for example to explain the origin of life. If I came to you with a code, which allows you to say anything you like with an alphabet of just four letters, and it is a code which allows you to generate organisms of vastly different kinds all out of different codes of the same four letters. I say could that have happened by accident and I'm sure you would say 'no', but that is exactly what the neo Darwinian theory teaches. But the genetic code is brilliant, magnificent method of incoding the properties of all living things into a single type of molecule using only four different letters arranged in different ways. Could that have happened by accident? Information theory tells you that you don't generate information theory from noise, you don't generate meaning from nonsense, and yet again that is what the theory of evolution teaches.

We are now in a situation in which if anyone opposes the theory of evolution, if anyone points out its defects, points out that it doesn't explain what it says it explains, points out that the fossil record does not support the theory of evolution, if anyone in the intellectual world dares to point out the improbability of life being created accidentally, they are hounded. They are hounded out of court.

A prime example of this is the one time Britain's foremost astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle who was very respected 50 years ago. In his later years, Fred Hoyle collaborated with a man Chandra Wickram. They produced a book and that book was titled 'evolution from space.' They were not Christians, one was a Buddhist and one was an atheist. But by examining the scientific evidence they came to the conclusion that it was more plausible that life had arisen somewhere else other than this planet, and had actually been seeded onto planet earth. They drew the conclusion that this was infinitely more probable than Darwinian evolution. They based their argument on probability theory. Some of you may remember the famous illustration they gave in that book where they said the probability of life arising by chance was about the equivalent of the likelihood of a Boeing 707 being produced by a whirlwind in a junkyard. Behind such comments there was a serious scientific assessment of the probability of Darwinian evolution having any chance of being true.

Now we should not be teaching our children, our church members, our congregations, the public in general through the media that Darwinian evolution is a fact when it is in fact nothing like a fact. Indeed, some might say it is nothing but speculation. Why were these men hounded out of their professions? There are other examples of people being sidelined and treated as ignoramuses and flat earthists and so on, because they dared challenge the received wisdom of evolutionary theory. I say that these truths must be known and that the church of Jesus Christ has a particular responsibility to make them know. If we are members of that church then surely we do believe in a creator God and we do not accept the philosophy that lies behind evolution that everything can be explained mechanically by physical processes and laws. Even logic means you have to reject that viewpoint because even if everything did happen in this world by the operation of natural law, the laws of physics and chemistry, then who put the laws in place? Where did the laws come from? The answer of course is that science cannot answer that question, it is not within the remit of science. Science takes the laws of nature as its data, as its ground. It assumes that the laws of nature are there and it examines those laws, it discovers those laws, it relates them and works out their implications.

The whole edifice of science is built upon the fact and the assumption that the laws are there, that the universe operates in a lawful fashion. But where did the laws come from? Who put them in place? Well there is an answer in the Bible and that is given in that glorious christological passage at the

beginning of Hebrews. It speaks of Christ, by whom He made the world and appointed Him heir of all things. 'By upholding all things by the word of His power when he had by Himself purged our sins and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.' There's far more in that statement than the matter which concerns us now. But one of those attributes that is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ is the fact that He, in the present tense, upholds all things by the word of His power. To me as a scientist and a bible believing Christian that is an eminently satisfying answer to these ultimate questions. The laws of science and the laws of nature are the word of the power of Christ. They are God's power being set forth in the present tense, in a continuous sense. We are told in Colossians chapter 1 that in Christ all things hold together, all things consist, it is the same statement, the same argument. The very existence of this universe, the laws of nature by which it is upheld are the moment by moment and eternal will of God being worked out in nature and in providence just as they are worked out in the spiritual realm through the saving work of the Spirit of God and the atoning work of Christ. It is a glorious whole, a great unity that you come to if you take the bible seriously and if you don't take seriously the unjustified claims that are made from macro evolution.

This address was delivered to a fringe meeting at the General Synod in July 2002. Professor Edgar Andrews is Emeritus Professor of Materials in the University of London.



For further articles and other issues see

www.churchsociety.org

Church Society exists to promote a biblical faith which shapes both the Church of England and the society in which we live for the sake of Christ. Such a faith is carefully expressed in the 39 Articles of Religion and in the Protestant liturgy entrusted to us after the reformation.

Church Society works through publishing, supporting churches, campaigning and the administration of charitable trusts and properties.

If you long to see the Church of England upholding a clear biblical faith and being a faithful witness in the nation then we invite you to join us. Please contact:

Church Society, Dean Wace House,
16 Rosslyn Road,
Watford WD18 0NY

Tel : 01923-235111 Fax : 01923-800363
admin@churchsociety.org