

# Should Christians Embrace Evolution?

Biblical and scientific responses

*Edited by*  
Norman C. Nevin



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## CONTRIBUTORS

**David Anderson** has a master's degree in mathematics from the University of Oxford and a bachelor's in theology from the University of Glamorgan (Wales Evangelical School of Theology). He was involved in church planting in the UK before moving to Eldoret, Kenya, where he currently serves as a missionary and a lecturer at a pastors' training college.

**Geoff Barnard** was for seven years a Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Cambridge, UK. He has been a Senior Lecturer in Biological Sciences at three other UK universities, and a visiting scientist at the Weizmann Institute in Israel.

**Alistair Donald** is a Church of Scotland minister with an interest in apologetics and is currently Chaplain at Heriot-Watt University. He holds a PhD in environmental science.

**Steve Fuller** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick. Originally trained in history and philosophy of science, he testified on behalf of intelligent design theory in *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* (2005). Among many books, he is the author of *Science vs. Religion?* (2007) and *Dissent over Descent* (2008).

**Greg Haslam** is Senior Pastor at Westminster Chapel, London. He has pastored for thirty years and travels widely as a conference speaker, preacher and lecturer. He is the author of several books including *Preach the Word!*, *A Radical Encounter with God*, *The Man Who Wrestled with God* and *Moving in the Prophetic*.

**Phil Hills** has been in pastoral ministry for the past twenty-three years and has led churches in Coventry, Birmingham and Swansea. He is currently pastor of the Elim Church in Dundonald, Belfast. He has a master's degree in theology from Manchester University.

**R. T. Kendall** is an author, speaker, and teacher, and was pastor of Westminster Chapel, London, for twenty-five years.

**Andy McIntosh** has a PhD in Aeronautics from Cranfield and is Professor of Thermodynamics and Combustion Theory at the University of Leeds (contributing here in a private capacity). He has worked for the Royal Aircraft Establishment and has researched for thirty years in combustion and thermodynamics, and more recently in biomimetics (learning from nature for engineering advantage). He is author of *Genesis for Today* (2001).

**Alistair McKitterick** is lecturer in Biblical and Theological Studies at Moorlands College, a Christian Bible college in Christchurch. He has degrees in both physics and theology.

**Norman C. Nevin OBE** is Emeritus Professor of Medical Genetics at the Queen's University, Belfast and Head of the Northern Regional Genetics Service.

**Michael Reeves** is the Theological Advisor for UCCF. Previously he was an associate minister at All Souls Church, Langham Place, London. He is the author of *The Unquenchable Flame: Introducing the Reformation*. He holds a doctorate in systematic theology from King's College, London.

**Andrew Sibley** is studying towards a PhD in theology at Exeter University examining the science, theology and philosophy of the Intelligent Design arguments. He has an MSc in Environmental Decision Making and works as a specialist weather forecaster in the environmental arena. He is the author of *Restoring the Ethics of Creation*.

**John C. Walton** is Research Professor of Chemistry at the University of St Andrews.

## FOREWORD

This is a highly significant book because it persuasively argues that Christians cannot accept modern evolutionary theory without also compromising essential teachings of the Bible.

It may at first seem easy to say ‘God simply used evolution to bring about the results he desired’, as some are proposing today. That view is called ‘theistic evolution’. However, the contributors to this volume, both scientists and biblical scholars, show that adopting theistic evolution leads to many positions contrary to the teaching of the Bible, such as these: (1) Adam and Eve were not the first human beings, but they were just two Neolithic farmers among about ten million other human beings on earth at that time, and God just chose to reveal himself to them in a personal way. (2) Those other human beings had already been seeking to worship and serve God or gods in their own ways. (3) Adam was not specially formed by God of ‘dust from the ground’ (Gen. 2:7) but had two human parents. (4) Eve was not directly made by God out of a ‘rib that the Lord God had taken from the man’ (Gen. 2:22), but she also had two human parents. (5) Many human beings both then and now are not descended from Adam and Eve. (6) Adam and Eve’s sin was not the first sin. (7) Human physical death had occurred for thousands of years before Adam and Eve’s sin – it was part of the way living things had always existed. (8) God did not impose any alteration in the natural world when he cursed the ground because of Adam’s sin.

As for the scientific evidence, several chapters in this book show that deeper examination of the evidence actually adds more

weight to the arguments for intelligent design than for Darwinian evolution.

What is at stake? A lot: the truthfulness of the three foundational chapters for the entire Bible (Genesis 1 – 3), belief in the unity of the human race, belief in the ontological uniqueness of human beings among all God’s creatures, belief in the special creation of Adam and Eve in the image of God, belief in the parallel between condemnation through representation by Adam and salvation through representation by Christ, belief in the goodness of God’s original creation, belief that suffering and death today are the result of sin and not part of God’s original creation, and belief that natural disasters today are the result of the fall and not part of God’s original creation. Belief in evolution erodes the foundations.

Evolution is secular culture’s grand explanation, the overriding ‘meta-narrative’ that sinners accept with joy because it allows them to explain life without reference to God, with no accountability to any Creator, no moral standards to restrain their sin, ‘no fear of God before their eyes’ (Rom. 3:18) – and now theistic evolutionists tell us that Christians can just surrender to this massive attack on the Christian faith and safely, inoffensively, tack on God, not as the omnipotent God who in his infinite wisdom directly created all living things, but as the invisible deity who makes absolutely no detectable difference in the nature of living beings as they exist today. It will not take long for unbelievers to dismiss the idea of such a God who makes no difference at all. To put it in terms of an equation, when atheists assure us that *matter + evolution + 0 = all living things*, and then theistic evolutionists answer, no, that *matter + evolution + God = all living things*, it will not take long for unbelievers to conclude that, therefore, *God = 0*.

I was previously aware that theistic evolution had serious difficulties, but I am now more firmly convinced than ever that it is impossible to believe consistently in both the truthfulness of the Bible and Darwinian evolution. We have to choose one or the other.

Wayne Grudem  
Research Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies  
Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, Arizona, USA

## PREFACE: A TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY CHALLENGE

**Phil Hills**

The twenty-first century is witnessing an aggressive attack on the credibility of Christian faith. Daniel Dennett likens people of faith to drunk drivers in that they are not only a danger to themselves and others but are doubly culpable because they have allowed religion to cloud their rationality. He asserts that religion is one of the greatest threats to scientific progress. Christopher Hitchens has written to explain how religion poisons everything and is invested with ignorance and hostile to free inquiry. Richard Dawkins in his best selling book, *The God Delusion*, makes it abundantly clear that, in his opinion, science and faith are completely incompatible. The underlying argument for all of the above is that evolution has made faith utterly redundant and anyone who tries to hold on to religious conviction in the face of scientific enlightenment is significantly lacking in reason.

For many years scientists who were Christians pursued their scientific education and research without the fear of being derided for their lack of credibility. However, the new atheists are being given a good hearing. *The God Delusion* is Dawkins' best-selling book ever, remaining for fifty-one weeks in the *New York Times*

bestseller list. There has been a call that any scientists questioning evolution should be stripped of their academic qualifications. Some are claiming victimization, others are afraid of voicing their real position. In September 2008 Professor Michael Reiss resigned as Director of Education for the Royal Society after some Nobel laureates embarked on a letter-writing campaign calling for his resignation. They believed that his role within the Royal Society was at odds with his calling as an Anglican priest because of his suggestion that questions about creation should be discussed in school. Even Dawkins admitted this to be like a witch hunt.

In the past Christians have held various views that they believed reconciled their theology with scientific understanding and were accorded respect. However, confronted by attack from the new atheists, any view that doesn't fully accept evolution is now being denigrated by evolutionary creationists. Those Christians within the scientific community who wholly embrace evolution appear to be embarrassed by those who don't. *Third Way*, *Christianity*, and *IDEA* have recently included calls for Christians to celebrate Darwin. The Bible Society has dedicated a whole issue of *The Bible in TransMission* to theistic evolution and distributed copies of *Rescuing Darwin* to 20,000 church leaders in England and Wales. The Theos think tank and the Faraday Institute have commissioned research entitled 'Rescuing Darwin', and though they had not yet completed their research Theos wrote to *The Times* to explain that their response to the new atheists and to those Christians unwilling to accept evolution would be 'a plague on both your houses'. The Anglican Church has recently published an official apology to Charles Darwin for the way they challenged his theory following the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, and Charles Foster has declared in *The Selfless Gene*, that 'Creationism has inoculated a whole generation against Christianity'.

This is a very important time for the Christian Church and our response to this twenty-first-century challenge is critical. It is not sufficient to come up with a response that appears intellectually credible to the scientific establishment if it is not theologically accurate. If the authority of Scripture is to be observed then any theological model must begin with an exegesis of the relevant biblical texts and not a scientific paradigm. Theological rigour must

not be sacrificed on the altar of scientific consensus, and it is high time to unravel the empirically-based scientific information from the metaphysical perspectives imposed on it. It is not enough to make vague assertions about the literary genre of Genesis without engaging in the hard and detailed questions that this gives rise to.

Some are engaging those wider questions. Professors Malcolm Jeeves and R. J. Berry sought to address them in *Science, Life and Christian Belief* (Apollos, 1998), and more recently Denis Alexander has published *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* (Monarch, 2008), in which he seeks to reconcile a commitment to the authority of Scripture with Darwinian evolution. J. I. Packer regards this work as the ‘clearest and most judicious’ to be found on the subject, yet this of itself should give rise to concern as Alexander explicitly states that evolution is ‘incontrovertible’ and he therefore seeks a theological model that will fit with the science. However, Alexander, although not a theologian, does seek to address the significant theological questions that arise from embracing evolution. His theology might be described as novel but it could certainly not be described as mainstream. It must not be assumed though, that there is anything easy about this exercise. Evolution, as intended by the title of this book, specifically refers to the Darwinian mechanisms of mutations and natural selection and the commitment to common ancestry that are central to the ruling scientific paradigm.

As recently as summer 2007 the Faraday Institute (of which Alexander is the Director) invited Professor Michael Ruse to address the question, ‘Can a Christian be a Darwinian?’ Ruse concludes there are two major obstacles in providing a positive answer. First, the special nature that Christian theology ascribes to humanity is in direct contradiction to a Darwinian understanding that makes no distinction between any organisms, each one being necessarily best adapted for their particular environment. The second obstacle is reconciling the concept of a benevolent God with one who purposefully chooses to use suffering and death as the means of evolving life. These are not inconsequential questions and any Christian who embraces evolution must be able to posit intelligent answers if their position is to be considered credible. It is not acceptable to say, ‘Evolution is true, we just haven’t

got a theology that fits with it yet', because that would demonstrate that commitment to the authority of Scripture is secondary!

In the face of the new atheists' claim that evolution has rendered faith utterly redundant there is a flood tide arising that demands that Christians must embrace evolution or acknowledge that they are opposed to science. This book believes that this is a false premise. It is written to set out a clear theological framework on the relevant issues and to confront the questions that arise from it. It is written with a compelling conviction that science and faith are not in opposition. It is written by theologians who are committed to the authority of Scripture and to the exercise of careful exegesis. It is written by scientists who are fully persuaded of the importance of rigorous scientific investigation but who are dissatisfied with the arbitrary exclusion of possible conclusions and the failure to follow the evidence wherever it leads. This is not written for a select readership that already has expert knowledge of the subjects. It is written for ordinary men and women, who have the capacity to weigh the information, seek further clarification and draw their own conclusions.