

Can Evolution and the Bible Live Together? By Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E6060212
Psalm 8 and Genesis 1:1-5, 31
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On December 21, 2005, four days before Christmas, U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III ruled against the school board in the town of Dover, Pa., asserting that “intelligent design” is “an interesting theological argument, but ... not science.”¹ On November 9, 2005, the Kansas School board voted 6-4 to change the definition of science so that non-natural explanations can be used.²

We are witnessing the resurgence of a debate carried out in the famous Monkey Trial of John Scopes in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925. Indeed, it is the continuation of a debate begun almost one hundred fifty years ago with the publication of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859. This debate is the result of the mistaken opinion that science and the Bible cannot exist side by side.

I grew up with a love for God and a love for science, and I never considered the two to be in conflict with each other. I have, since early years, believed that God created me through an evolutionary process. The more I studied science, the more awestruck I became with the wonder of God’s creation.

Today has been designated “Evolution Sunday,” since it is close to the 197th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin. I have signed a statement along with more than 10,000 other Christian clergy that reads as follows:

We believe that the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth, one that has stood up to rigorous scrutiny and upon which much of human knowledge and achievement rests. To reject this truth or to treat it as “one theory among others” is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and transmit such ignorance to our children. We believe that among God’s good gifts are human minds capable of critical thought and that the failure to fully employ this gift is a rejection of the will of our Creator. ... We urge school board members to preserve the integrity of the science curriculum by affirming the teaching of the theory of evolution as a core component of human knowledge. We ask that science remain science and that religion remain religion, two very different, but complementary, forms of truth.³

Why would preachers suggest that evolution and science deny the Bible? Such a belief comes from three sources: 1) A fear of the loss of the Bible’s authority in life. 2) Taking the words of the Bible literally, and 3) Making the Bible itself an object of worship.

People see what they believe to be the deterioration of community ethical standards, and are frightened. They say, “If only we restored the importance of the Bible in our society, we could return to peace and prosperity.” But, you see, many desire not simply the return of the authority of the Bible, they desire the literal reading of the Bible.

Let me tell you, God never intended a literal reading of the Bible. If God had, God would

¹Henry Weinstein, *Los Angeles Times*, December, 21, 2005

²David Klepper, *Kansas City Star* November 9, 2005

³The Clergy Letter Project,

have plopped the Bible into our laps in English. A literal reading of the Bible is not even intended by Biblical literalists. Do they give one tenth of their income to the church? Do they turn the other cheek when someone hits them? Do they refrain from eating ham and shellfish as the Bible commands? Do they support capital punishment, or do they follow the command, "You shall not kill!?" Biblical literalists pick and choose which verses will obey literally. You can't have it both ways.

The Bible was not written by God; it was written by humans. The Bible is the story of human life in the presence of God. God has given us brains with which to think and wonder, brains with which to read and interpret for our day what was originally intended for the ears of Hebrews and Greeks thousands of years ago.

Perhaps the biggest sin committed by creationists and intelligent design proponents is that they elevate the Bible to an idol that is itself worshiped. Only one object is worthy of our worship, and that is God. The Bible is only a tool, a record of faith that points us toward the Almighty. God is not contained within its pages. God is far too great to be boxed in by a book or by our minds or by theories about how we got here.

It is time that thinking Christians put a stop to this ridiculous debate of creationism vs. evolution! Let us make some clarifications. There is not one account of creation in the Bible, but many. Genesis 1:1-2:3 is one, where creation is not the result of God's handiwork, but God's proclamation. God creates by speaking, "Let there be light!" This story took shape during Israel's exile; in response to their captors who insisted that their regime held all power, the Jewish exiles told a subversive story declaring that God holds all power.

In Genesis 2:4-3:24, a much older account, creation takes place through God's interaction and contemplation.

Another creation account in Proverbs 8 says that God created Wisdom first and then springs of water, and then the mountains and the fields, and Psalm 8 gives us yet another creation account.

Intelligent design and creationism are not science and not forms of science. They are beliefs. As used in science, a theory is an explanation or model based on observation, experimentation, and reasoning. A clear distinction needs to be made between facts (things which can be observed and/or measured) and theories (explanations which correlate and interpret the facts). Scientific theory can lead us toward the *how* of creation, but it can not help us understand the *why* of creation.

Religion can help us understand why we are here and what the meaning of life is but it should not force us into theories that are unobservable. A religion that leads us to state that the universe is 6,000 years old, and that God planted dinosaur bones and fossils that appear to be tens of millions of years old to trick us, is bogus.

Can the Bible and evolution exist side by side? Of Course! I can believe in intelligent design, but it is not science. I can believe that God created everything, but I do not know how. I can believe that God created evolution and gave me a brain with which to think and reason.

Both evolution and the Bible can lead me to praise God.

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; when I look through a microscope and see the cilia of a paramecium that you have created; when I witness the complex combinations of atoms or the individual deoxyribonucleic acid that makes each being unique, I realize that you have set your glory above the heavens.

Praise God!