

Foreword

Here is a contribution to a currently expanding discussion in theology and apologetics. Two connected questions are involved. First, is any form of the Bible-based Christian concept of creation compatible with any form of the current biology-based concept of evolutionary development of life? Second, if it is, how precisely do you correlate the concepts? A spectrum of views exists. At one end are scientists who believe in evolution, but not in God. Some of these are agnostic; some think, as did so many in the first half of the century, that the various sciences, put together, have between them managed to disprove all forms of belief in God; all believe that the integrity of science suffers if you try to fit its findings into a theistic, deistic, pantheistic or panentheistic frame. (Polytheism would be mentioned in that list, too, if it was still a live option among religious people.) At the other end of the spectrum are believers in God who do not believe in evolution; these vary among themselves in the way they conceive evolution and understand the biblical witness to God's work of creation. Between the two extremes are many, professional scientists and theologians as well as men and women in the street, who believe in both God and evolution, seeing evolution as one element in God's way of making and ordering his world; and some of these think that natural processes provide evidence of intelligent design, and so reinforce the classic cosmological and teleological arguments for the reality of a rational Creator. There is plenty to talk about here, and the only certainty is that the last word has not been spoken yet.

In the following pages we watch an evolutionary creationist critiquing an anti-Darwinian who evidently believes in intelligent design. The anti-Darwinian strikes back, and reinforcements are brought up on both sides. The seriousness, vigour, rigour, and basic good-will of the disputants are admirable; some of the exchanges are both blunt and sharp, as

is often the case in academic discussion, but if the clash of minds stimulates thought, as I think it does here, it is really no bad thing.

A glum comment in a magazine about science-and-religion dialogues declared: "Fundamental differences in definitions of key terms, in background assumptions, and so on result in frustrating exercises in which opposing parties simply talk past each other. Following many of these debates is like trying to grab a wet bar of soap." The protagonists in the present in-house discussion are both conservative Christians, labouring to hear each other as well as to address each other, and I think their exchanges, plus the additional material deployed by their respective supporters, will be found genuinely clarifying. Regent College serves the Christian world well in making it all available in print.

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