

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 162
“A Fresh Look at the Creation/Evolution Debate”
Allen Shepherd, M. D., Physician and Pastor

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Editorial Comments

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A NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS

The New Year date of January 1, holds a great attraction for me, because it comes right after the winter solstice (December 21-22) when in the Northern Hemisphere the season turns the corner and the days start

getting longer again. I find the New Year an exciting and happy time because it always brings the opportunity for what seems a new beginning, a chance to “start over.” We all get to start with a “new page” and it is up to us what we want to “write” on it.

The “New Year” gives us the chance to jettison the mistakes, failures, and other unwanted baggage of the past year, in order to re-focus and move forward. Paul expresses this thought saying: “This one thing I do, *forgetting* those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before (Phil 3:13). Like Paul, we can forget the failures and dark chapters of our past life, because God forgiving grace has taken care of them.

In Rome, Italy, where I grew up, people used to have a “crazy” custom. They waited for the clock to strike midnight to open the windows of their high rise apartments and throw out all their unwanted goods: old sewing machines, dish-washers, furniture, pots and pans, etc. Nobody dared to walk the streets immediately after midnight. I remember going out in the early morning of the New Year to look at all the discarded goods lying on the streets. Sometimes I found a toy worth salvaging.

The New Year offers us the opportunity not only to clear our homes of cluttering, unwanted goods, but also to do some internal moral and spiritual cleaning. It is a time to reflect on some of the rough aspects of our character that we want to smooth out. It is a time to consider how we want to change and improve our lives: our spiritual exercises, our attitude toward people, our family relationships, our professional life, our business practices, and our contributions to the church and community.

Most of the new year resolutions deal with self-centered needs: diet, exercise, loose weight, pay off debts, get a better job, improve professional skills, play more golf, look for a nicer home, travel more, etc. These are all good goals to set. However, 1 Timothy 4:8 reminds us to keep these things in their proper perspective: “**For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things**, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” The vast majority of New Year’s Resolutions, even among Christians, are in relation to “the life that now is, but Paul reminds us that what is most profitable is improving our godliness, which can bless our present and future life.

When I think of exercising in godliness, what comes to my mind is bearing the Fruits of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22). These are the fruits that ultimately reveal if a person is a genuine or a nominal Christian. These are the virtues that we need most today in our stressful, rushing, and tension-filled lives.

A Proposed New Year’s Resolution

Have you faced lately road rage or even internet rage? I have. For example, during this past year several times even “fellow-believers” became extremely rude with me because I failed to remove their email addresses from my list. One pastor went so far as to threaten me with legal action if he would receive another issue of the ENDTIME ISSUE NEWSLETTER.

Rest assured that I have no desire to share my biblical research with those who are not interested. Thirty six years of teaching have taught me that it is a pain to have some students in the class who have absolutely no interest in the subject. We promptly send to TAGNET, the largest internet Adventist service, the addresses of those who wish to unsubscribe (which are very few).

Since there are over 35,000 email addresses on the list, I asked TAGNET’s technical supervisor to investigate the few complaints. In practically every instance he found that the email addresses in question had been automatically removed, but the complainers had other email addresses through which they received the newsletter. Once these were removed, the problem was solved.

The point of this example is that we live today such stressful lives, that even some of the “saints” have “short fuses.” They easily blow up their tops, using abusive language in the internet, at home, in the workplace, and whenever they feel that they have been wronged. Could this be an area where many of us could resolve to improve by God’s grace during this coming year?

Perhaps you may wish to join me in making this New Year's resolution: **Lord enable me daily through Thy Spirit during this new year to be more patient and loving toward people who are irritable and accusative. Help me to control my temper by forgiving and accepting even those who appear to be hostile toward me. May the beauty of Thy Character be manifested in my life more fully during this coming year.**

New Year's resolutions often fail because they are based solely on the human will-power to succeed. The secret is to claim daily the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. We need to learn to live daily depending upon God's enabling power. May each one of us during this coming year claim the promise: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13).

DECEMBER 21-2006: OUR 45TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY A TIME TO REFLECT ON OUR PAST CHALLENGES

This past December 21, 2006, my wife, Anna and I celebrated our 45th Wedding Anniversary. It is hard to believe that 45 years have passed since our beloved Prof. Edward Heppenstall joined our lives together in Holy Matrimony at the Andrews University Seminary chapel on that cold, snowy December 21, 1961. I wrote on the anniversary card to my wife that the 45 years have passed so fast, that I could identify with Jacob experience: "Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Gen 29:20).

As I took my wife out to her favorite "Tosi" Italian Restaurant to celebrate our anniversary, we spent sometime reminiscing over our past life together. I thought some of you might enjoy reading about some of the major challenges we have faced during the past 45 years. Some of you who have been reading these newsletters for several years may be interested to know more about the human aspect of our lives. Who are Sam and Anna Bacchiocchi? Let me share with you a few glimpses of our past life, especially some of the challenges we have faced together.

Love at First Sight

We first met in 1955 at our Adventist Academy in Florence, Italy. I was immediately attracted to Anna, but at that time I did not dare to date

her because a “jealous” Neapolitan was dating her and claimed her as his property. I would have faced dire consequences if I dared to invade his turf. When later I learned that she terminated her friendship with this fellow, I sent her a note from Newbold College where I was studying. A romantic correspondence began that lasted about four years.

A few months later in August 1957, after a successful canvassing experience in England, I stopped in Gland, Switzerland, to visit Anna on my way to Rome, Italy, to spend a few weeks with my parents before returning to Newbold. Anna is from Venice, but at that time she was working and studying nursing at our Adventist Sanatorium “La Ligniere.”

At the restaurant I reminded my wife of that historic first walk we took together in the woods behind the Sanatorium. Though we had exchanged only a few letters, I broke all the rules of courtship by asking her without any preamble: “Anna, will you marry me?” Her face lighted up as she replied: “Yes, I will. I believe that you are the man God has chosen for me.” The conviction that God has brought us together never left our consciousness. Please do not follow my “bad example” by asking for a marriage commitment at the first date. Sometimes the results can be tragic.

Our Wedding Without Parents or Relatives

Four long years of engagement passed before we could marry. I wanted to finish my college training at Newbold and complete at least my first year at the Andrews University Theological Seminary, before inviting Anna to come to America to marry me. I wanted to be sure that I could support her.

We both came to the USA with very few belongings. All my possessions fitted comfortably in a medium size suitcase. Anna brought her dowry in a small trunk that I was able to fit in the back seats of our Volkswagen bug. How proud she was of all the bed-sheet, pillow cases, table cloths, napkins, etc, she had embroidered during the long years of waiting for our wedding day.

Our wedding was very simple. We were two lonely birds, without parents or relatives to honor us with their presence. Yet, the Seminary

Chapel was filled with classmates and community friends. Sister Heppenstall and their lovely daughter arranged for a nice reception in the lower Seminary Chapel. They even saved in their freezer the top layer of the wedding cake which they gave it back to us a few years later. What a gracious people! We shall never forget their kindness to us.

The Challenge of Our Honeymoon

Our life has not always been a bed of roses. We have faced numerous challenges during the 45 years of our marriage. Let me share some of them with you. For example, we spent our honeymoon painting a run-down small apartment—the only one that I could find. Housing was a real problem in those early days of the Seminary. We spent our the honeymoon trying to make our little apartment look more attractive. That was not “the American Honeymoon” my wife had dreamed about. But we never allowed the unpleasant surrounding to dampen our spirits. What counted was the fact that we were together.

The apartment belonged to a very mean “Adventist” who refused to pay for the cost of the paint we bought for painting the discolored walls. He had absolutely no concern for the welfare of his renters. His only concern was to collect the rent on the day it was due. For him it was more important to give money to the church than to be caring toward his renters. After all the church commended him for his generous contributions, but nobody would praise him for acts of kindness to his renters. As Adventist we need to remember that we serve the church when we serve people, because in the Bible the “church—*ecclesia*—” is people, not an institution. I may prepare a newsletter on the biblical view of the church.

The Challenges of our Mission Service in Ethiopia

Upon finishing my M. A. and B. D. degrees, we left at Andrews University on February 1964 to visit our parents in Italy, before proceeding to Ethiopia, where we served for five and a half fruitful years as teachers at the Ethiopian Adventist College. In Ethiopia I almost lost my life when an anti-tank bullet exploded on my right hand, cutting off my index finger, leaving me with a bloody face and shells embedded in

various parts of my body. Some of the shells have never been removed. This happened when I tried to weld a hook to what looked to me like plumb-bob to which a string is attached to provide a vertical line for bricklayers.

My father had come to spend a month with us at Christmas. He needed a plumb line to check the walls of the room he added to our mission home. Since the only plumb line owned by the school was being used, I decided to improvise one by welding a hook to what looked like an old 2 inches wide plumb bob without the screw needed for attaching the string. When I started welding a hook, the inner charge of the bullet exploded, sending fragments all over the workshop. Truly I can say that the Lord spared my life for a purpose.

My wife faced a different challenge in Ethiopia. She contracted the hepatitis C virus which has been largely responsible for the migraine headaches she is still suffering today. Let us never forget that mission service can be costly. I vividly remember the day when we buried the wife of one of our missionaries. She died because of the same hepatitis my wife contracted.

The Challenges of Studying at the Pontifical Gregorian University

From Ethiopia we returned to Rome, Italy, on June 1969. We spent there five busy but enjoyable years, close to our family members, while I was pursuing a doctorate in Church History at the Pontifical Gregorian University. The challenges I faced at the Gregoriana were unique. Being the first non-Catholic to be accepted in 450 years of the University, I faced the challenge of being accepted by my classmates who were priests and monks belonging to different religious orders and coming from different countries. Truly I can say that though I was admitted as “a separated brother,” they accepted as a “real Christian brother.”

The greatest challenge I faced at the Gregoriana was the topic of my dissertation, namely, *A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday*

Observance in Early Christianity. In many ways my dissertation is a response to several recent scholarly studies which attempt to prove the Apostolic origin of Sunday. One of them is the doctoral dissertation of Corrado Mosna on the origin of Sunday (*Storia della Domenica dalle Origini Fino agli Inizi del V Secolo*) which was published by the Gregorian University Press in 1969, at the very time when I enrolled at the University.

Mosna's dissertation was directed by Prof. Vincenzo Monachino—the same professor who later spent two years supervising my dissertation. Mosna attempts to prove that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday by the authority of Christ and the Apostles in order to celebrate Christ's resurrection by means of the eucharistic celebration.

The challenge I faced was to prove to the satisfaction of my adviser, Prof. Monachino, that the origin of Sunday observance was a post-apostolic development, influenced by the Church of Rome, and not an apostolic initiative promoted by church of Jerusalem. As we took time to re-examine the relevant biblical and historical texts, gradually Prof. Monachino came to accept the possibility that Sunday originated after the departure of the apostles largely due to the influence of the Church of Rome.

Prof. Monachino acknowledges my thesis in the PREFACE he wrote to my dissertation: "We gladly mention the thesis that Bacchiocchi defends regarding the birth-place of Sunday worship: for him this arose most probably, not in the primitive Church of Jerusalem, well-known for its profound attachment to Jewish religious traditions, but rather in the Church of Rome. The abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday as the Lord's Day, are the result of an interplay of Christian, Jewish, and pagan factors" (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 7-8).

The successful defense of my dissertation and its publication by the Gregorian University Press with the Catholic *imprimatur*—approval, did not prevent the eruption of a controversy over the legitimacy of my the academic awards and of the publication of my dissertation. Currently I am facing the challenge of responding to the false allegations made against me by officers of the Gregorian University.

As you have read in the newsletters No. 159-160, the General Secretary of the Gregorian University denies that I received *summa cum laude*, a gold medal donated by Pope Paul VI, and the *imprimatur* for the publication of my abridged and unabridged versions of my dissertations. In a few days my formal response to these false allegations will be sent to the Rector of the Pontifical Gregorian University as well as to other University officials. I will keep up updated on new developments.

Some Challenges at Andrews University

The 26 years I spent teaching in the Religion Department of Andrews University were most rewarding, but not without some challenges. In the Bible and Church History classes I taught, the major challenge was to get all the students excited about the subject. This is not an easy task, because some students take their Bible classes because they have to, not because they want to. Over the years I tried different methods to generate more interest for the subjects I taught. Overall the students' response has been very gratifying.

The greatest challenge I faced at Andrews University, came not from teaching, but from writing a dozen of books, some of which proved to be controversial. Perhaps the most controversial book I wrote was *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church*. The book came out in 1985 when the issue of women ordination was hotly debated in our Adventist Church as well as in evangelical churches in general.

Women in the Church shows that while Scripture excludes the appointment of women to the representative roles of priests, elders or pastors, it does include them in the supportive ministries of the church and in the participation in public worship. Such a distinction is based not on the cultural conventions of Bible times, but on the distinctive and yet complementary roles for men and women established by God at creation.

Women in the Church has been favorably reviewed by numerous scholars and adopted by several theological seminaries. I am told that the book influenced the decision of the Southern Baptist Convention to

reverse their decision on women ordination. But in our Adventist Church it stirred up considerable controversy, largely due to the influence of the feminist movement. Some accused me of being an “Italian Chauvinist” who wants to keep women subordinate to man. Nothing could be further from the truth. My wife is a most liberated women. She spends all my money without ever asking me. I trust her judgment. Suddenly I became a *persona non grata*. Most of our campus churches where the feminist movement was strongest, no longer invite me to speak, but God opened many more doors for my ministry.

The conclusion of my investigation is that from a Biblical perspective men and women are *ontologically equal* but *functionally different*. That is to say, men and women are equal by virtue of creation and redemption, but different in terms of function. Men have been created to function as fathers and women to function as mothers. This distinction applies to the home as well as to the church. The role of a pastor is that of a spiritual father and the role of a woman-elder (shepherdess) is that of a spiritual mother. It is as simple as that.

To accept the notion of *functional* interchangeability promoted by the feminist movement, means to open the door to accept *sexual* interchangeability, that is, to open the door for the ordination of lesbian and homosexual as ministers. When I made this prediction 20 years ago, I was accused of being a scarecrow. Today I am no longer a scarecrow. Major splits have occurred in the Lutheran, Methodist, and Episcopal churches over the issues of ordination of homosexuals. Even last week (Dec 17, 2006) eight Episcopal congregations in Virginia voted overwhelmingly to break away from the mother church over the ordination of a gay bishop.

Some Challenges Stemming from Endtime Issues Newsletter

During the past 8 years I have posted 161 Endtime Issues Newsletters addressing a variety of issues from a biblical perspectives. Overall the response from readers have been very encouraging. Every week I receive hundreds of messages of appreciation as well as new subscriptions. The messages of encouragement that I receive, motivate me to continue this ministry of addressing current issues from a biblical perspective.

Islam in Prophecy

A few newsletters posed a challenge because I dared to propose a fresh interpretation. For example, in the newsletter no. 86 “Islam and the Papacy in Prophecy,” I proposed to expand the prophetic role of the Little Horn/Antichrist of Daniel 7, by including Islam as well. After all both the Papacy and Islam arose after the collapse of the Roman Empire, and both of them have persecuted God’s people and promoted false worship.

The Papacy influenced the Western Part of the Roman Empire while Islam gradually conquered and uprooted Christianity in the Eastern part of the Empire: Egypt, all the North African countries, Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor (today Turkey), and it continued its expansion in the Far East (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, etc.). Both of them changed God’s Holy Day: The Catholic Church changed the Sabbath to Sunday and Islam changed Sabbath to Friday. If you are interested in this subject, feel free to ask me for the CD with the study on “ISLAM IN PROPHECY.” I will gladly mail it to you.

Several subscribers protested against my expanded interpretation of the Antichrist. They feel that this interpretation weakens the prophetic role of the Papacy. They asked to have their addresses immediately removed from the list, which we promptly did. My intent has never been to weaken the prophetic role of the Papacy which promotes idolatrous worship, but simply to propose expanding the prophetic role of the Antichrist, to include other Satanic agencies.

The Mark and Number of the Beast

Another newsletter that stirred up considerable controversy was the one (no. 139) on “The Mark and Number of the Beast.” This study was commissioned by two Seminary Professors (Jon Paulien and Ranko Stefanovich) who are our foremost Adventist authorities on Revelation. I shared my initial findings in their three Revelation Classes, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. The same has been true at recent workers’ meeting in Australia.

Eventually the two hours lecture delivered with 200 powerpoint slides, was professionally recorded before a live audience at the Andrews University Towers Auditorium. If you have not seen DVD recording yet, we will gladly mail you the album. Just click here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/BeastAD/> This live, visual lecture will help you understand more fully this central prophecy of the book of Revelation on the endtime showdown over worship.

In many ways the DVD lecture explains why the Adventist church in recent years has abandoned the traditional application of 666 to the Pope's title *Vicarius Filii Dei* and adopted instead the symbolic interpretation of that number. The reasons were briefly given in the Sabbath School Lesson of June 1-7, 2002. In many ways my study expands what has been presented in the Sabbath School Lesson and other major Adventist studies.

A few concerned brethren reacted very negatively to my newsletter. For several weeks I was flooded with negative messages, accusing me of departing from the traditional interpretation proclaimed over the years by leading evangelists. The fact is that our Adventist church papers have warned against the application of the number of the Beast 666 to the popes' title *Vicarius Filii Dei*, allegedly inscribed in papal tiaras. The reason is that Adventist investigators sent to the Vatican, have never found such an inscription in authentic tiaras.

The only tiaras with the inscription *Vicarius Filii Dei*, has been fabricated by clever Adventist artist. He took a genuine photograph of a plain tiara and lettered upon it the three words *Vicarius*, *Filii*, and *Dei*—one on each of the three crowns. This fraudulent picture was published as genuine for several years in Uriah Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation*, until the General Conference ordered its removal.

In an article entitled "Dubious Pictures of the Tiaras," published in *The Ministry*, November 1948, the editor, LeRoy Froom, wrote emphatically: "In the name of truth and honesty this journal protests any such use [of fraudulent papal tiaras] by any member of the Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventist denomination (our worker body), of which *The Ministry* is the official organ. Truth does not need fabrica-

tion to aid or suppress it. Its very nature precludes any manipulation or duplicity. We cannot afford to be party to any fraud.”

In spite of this stern warnings, the traditional application of 666 to the numeric value of the letter *Vicarius Filii Dei*, is still used by some, because it provides a neat interpretation hard to abandon. It has been a formidable challenge for me to expose the problem and propose a symbolic interpretation that we can legitimately defend. I have received a lot of “hate” mail from “concerned brethren” who accuse me of defending the papacy, rather than Adventist teachings.

A Tribute to My Wife

Living with a husband often embroiled in controversies is not easy, especially for my wife who has been blessed with a peaceful nature. Over the years she has constantly urged me to stay out of controversial research. She takes criticism more personally than I do. For me criticism is part of life. After all I grew up in Rome in a climate of constant confrontations for my faith. But for my wife is different. She suffers emotionally when she learns about the criticism and the attacks I am facing. I wish to honor my wife for her willingness to suffer with me and for me.

Especially I wish to honor my wife for devoting her life to bring up our three children in the fear of God. It seems that my life has always been extremely busy with teaching, researching, writing 17 books, articles, newsletters, recording, and lecturing in different parts of the world. This means that my wife has carried a much heavier load in the moral and spiritual upbringing of our children. The fruits of her motherly devotion are evident in the life of our three children.

Daniel, our older son, is a successful architect/builder, serving as financial adviser to the Andrews Academy. He has developed a passion for designing and building in needy mission fields. While I am writing this newsletter, he is in Mexico, spending his Christmas vacation with his wife Michelle and their two children, Christian and Lauren, supervising two building projects.

Loretta, teaches in the Nursing School of the Florida Hospital, and is involved in all sorts of church programs. She leads out in young-adult study groups, teaches a Sabbath School Class, and participate in a radio Health Talk.

Gianluca is a very successful corporate lawyer, serving as elder of his beloved Burr Ridge SDA Church, in Chicago. Together with his wife Silvia, they teach the Sabbath School and are actively involved in church programs. Occasionally, they both preach on Sabbath morning.

I view the devotion of our children to God and His church, as a living monument to my wife's dedication to their moral and spiritual upbringing. Most the credit goes to her because unfortunately all too often I have been an absent father. I can only thank God for having blessed me with a goodly wife and mother.

A WORD OF INTRODUCTION TO THIS NEWSLETTER

At the beginning of a New Year, I thought it would be fitting to reflect upon the very beginning of life on earth: Creation. The popularity of the theory of evolution, has cause many Christians to reject the credibility of the biblical account of creation. Today, however, numerous scientists acknowledge that there are serious problems with the theory of evolution.

It is not easy to find an article which presents in a simple and accurate way the pros and cons of creation and evolution. This is why I am please to post this essay "A Fresh Look at the Creation/Evolution Debate," Allen Shepherd, M. D. His article was published in the November 2006 issue of *Perspective Digest*, a publication of the Adventist Theological Society. When I read it, I was impressed by the fact that it is profound in its content and popular in its style. I thought many readers of our newsletters would appreciate this update on the creation/evolution debate.

Dr. Shepherd is a medical doctor who has spent the last 20 years of his life reading major studies on the creation and evolution research. In his essay he offers an informative survey of the major arguments for

and against creation and evolution. If you find the essay helpful and wish to express your appreciation to Dr. Shepherd, his email address is: <a.j.shep@peoplepc.com>

My personal observation is that evolutionists refuse to allow theology to inform them. They insist on believing only what can be demonstrated in a laboratory. By so doing they choose to trace their roots *downward from biological specimens* rather than *upward from the image of God*. Ultimately, this leads a person to believe in nothing else but himself.

The tragic consequence of evolutionism is that it empties life and human history of ultimate meaning, leaving both life and history with no divine beginning or destiny. Life is reduced to a biological cycle which by chance alone determines its own beginning and end. Thus the ultimate reality is not God but matter, which historically has been viewed as eternal or as evil.

The creation story with its Sabbath-memorial, challenges this nihilism, urging each generation, whether burdened with scientific facts or with mythological fantasies, to acknowledge that this world is a creation and a gift of God entrusted to man, whose life is meaningful because it is rooted in God.

ALL THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF WEEKEND SEMINARS AND THE SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFERS ARE PLACED AT THE END OF THIS NEWSLETTER

**“A Fresh Look at the Creation/Evolution Debate”
Allen Shepherd, M. D., Physician and Pastor**

While I was in my teens, my father subscribed to the journal *Scientific American*. I loved science and read it avidly and continue to read it to this day. However, the magazine uniformly condemns Creationism, a cherished tenant of my faith. John Rennie, the editor, characterizes creationists as irrational, superstitious, benighted, ignorant, and obstructionist.¹ He also likened us to ostriches with our heads in the sand fearing we might see something that conflicts with our faith or shatters our

treasured beliefs. Recently he wrote an article describing 15 ways to expose “Creationist Nonsense.”²

Is that how we as Seventh-day Adventist creationists come across? Do we indeed stop thinking when we read our Bibles or enter the doors of the sanctuary? Are we afraid of the truth? Or do we have a reason (not mere conviction) for the hope within us (1 Peter 3:15)? In the following essay, I share how I personally have dealt with this dilemma. I am a physician, untrained in biologic sciences except medicine, though I do have a BA in Chemistry.

Objectives of this Essay

This essay represents many years of thoughtful reflection on the Creation versus Evolution’s debate. It is laid out in two parts. In the first part I will present my reasons for believing in a God who created the universe, in contrast to atheism. The second part examines the evidences pro and con for the two theories of the origin of life’s diversity: Divine Creation versus Darwinian Evolution.

REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN A DIVINE CREATION

Just how many have fallen for this “irrational, superstitious, nonsense?” The vast majority of Americans believe that God created the heavens and the earth. About 50% hold to a literal 7-day creation though this theory is excluded from the schools and ridiculed by the media and scientific community. Another 35% believe in God directed evolution. About 10% do not believe that God had a hand in it, and another small percentage did not know.³

Atheism or Theism?

Among scientists, the percentage of believers is less, but even among them, 40 % believe in a God who answers prayer.⁴ Throughout history almost all humans have believed in a god, whether Babylonian mystics, Baal worshipers, Greeks thinkers, human-sacrificing Mayans, or fundamentalist Christians. It is as if it were (to put in evolutionary terms) selectively bred into us. Atheism has held little attraction to the vast majority.

But perhaps this huge multitude simply longs with all its heart to believe, and only “brave new world” atheists are the ones willing to face the cold hard facts of reality.⁵ Are the rest of us just attempting to ameliorate the anxiety caused by the harsh meaninglessness of the universe? Or are there evidences for belief in a Creator? Despite what several prominent members of the scientific community say, there are logical reasons for believing that God created the heavens and the earth. The most amazing are the characteristics of our universe favoring human existence.

The Fine Tuning of the Universe

Over the past century it has become apparent that the universe is finely tuned to the needs of life on earth. Although several have written on this topic, called the anthropic principle, a recent and easily readable book is *Just Six Numbers* by Martin J. Rees.⁶ He lists six qualities of the universe described by six fundamental physical constants. Each seems to have been honed to the finest of tolerances so that humans might exist.

The most amazing is Ω , (Omega), the number describing the expansion rate of the universe, or the balance between gravity and outward expansion. This number is accurate to one in a million billion! (1,000,000,000,000,000) (Pag. 88). This is incredible precision. Rees discusses this astonishing finding, and how each of the numbers impacts life on our planet. We could not exist without this accuracy.

Rees does not subscribe to belief in a deity, but his reason for skepticism is telling (pages 148-150). He gives no logic for his rejection of this idea, but merely states a preference, and begins to speculate about “multi-verses” (other universes besides ours). However, there is no evidence presented to support the existence of other universes. In fact we are unable to know of them, even if they do exist. So his thinking is based on speculation he chooses to believe, and a presupposition that eliminates God.

Aside from Scripture, this fine tuning is the strongest evidence for God’s existence. Order, elegance, design and the big bang also point to a Creator.

Order and Elegance

There is much order seen in the universe and in living organisms. The laws of physics and life show thoughtful synthesis. But I find most impressive the order inherent in the Periodic Table of the Elements. This arrangement of the 90 naturally occurring atoms (along with the several man made ones) was discovered by Mendeleev in the mid 19th century. He grouped the families of elements together from lightest to heaviest by examining their shared characteristics, and realized there was a repetitive sequence. He then placed them in an order that predicted some that had not yet been discovered. Discovery of these confirmed the table's truth.

The whole material universe has is made of these elements. We humans are of the same stuff as the stars. The elements' electron properties allow for the construction of a wonderful array of chemical compounds (as especially seen in the chemistry of life: proteins, DNA etc). While characteristics of the nucleus allow fusion to release massive amounts of energy giving light and warmth (The stars burn Hydrogen in their nuclear reactors forming Helium and heavier elements).

But these diverse elements with all their amazing combinations and derivations are concocted using 3 forms of matter: protons, neutrons, and electrons, and three forces: the weak and strong nuclear and the electromagnetic forces. A few basic laws govern their actions. This is an elegant order. Such beauty and complexity from such simplicity!

During my career as a surgeon, I have seen some who operate with finesse, and others who, shall we say, perform with lesser skill. I know the thinking and planning and experience it takes to make an operation look easy. It does not happen by accident. It is deliberate and intentional. And we praise surgeons who devote their lives to the perfecting of their craft in the service of others.

The elegance and beauty in the order of the very atoms of our being does not give the appearance of the workings of chance. But rather that of careful thought and intention, like a well planned operation. I see this as strong evidence for a Creator, who knew the nature of His medium, and used it with grace and skill.

The Big Bang

Although not all would agree with various details of the Big Bang theory, it has been accepted by most cosmologists as a fairly accurate description of the origin of the universe. It has a very interesting feature: a beginning. This theory of origins, is consistent with Genesis 1:1. It also argues against an eternal or cyclical universe. This makes atheists uncomfortable.

Arthur Eddington, a British physicist and atheist who experimentally confirmed Einstein's general theory of relativity in 1919 said, "Philosophically, the notion of a beginning to the present order is repugnant to me. I should like to find a genuine loophole." If the universe has a beginning, who initiated that beginning? A Creator outside the universe itself is a logical deduction.

Design

The biological realm shows amazing design. The eye has most often been cited to demonstrate this property of nature. But there are many examples: wings, hands, social structures etc. Dickinson in the *Scientific American* of June, 2001, reviews experiments on insect flight.⁸

This extremely complex skill is carried out by a creature with the proverbial brain of a fly. And yet these tiny living machines can maneuver like nothing else known to man. How did they develop the ability to do these astounding feats? The belief that this could happen by gradual change through natural selection (There is no explanation mind you, but merely assertion) is a true act of faith.

Skeptics have claimed that the design argument is of itself not strong enough to support belief in the existence of God. I do not hold to that view. As my partner in practice said, "Things just looks to good to have happened by chance." In combination with the order and accuracy seen in the deep realities of the universe, a very strong cognitive position can be taken and defended.

Three Further Points

Some atheists, after listening to these points, have said, “Why doesn’t God reveal himself to us? Why doesn’t he just show himself, (as one suggested) by writing his name in the sky so that we could know? Why isn’t it simple?”

God has revealed himself in nature and scripture, and has given us minds to see and eyes to read. The example of the Israelites at Sinai warns us (Ex 32). They saw the smoke and fire and heard God speak, but in 40 days they were worshiping a golden calf. Jesus cautioned those that were looking for a sign (Matt 12:39) and said that they would not believe even if someone rose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31). Apparently God feels that men must decide on the basis of evidence and the witness of another who writes what he has seen. And who said life would be simple?

Some have said, “How can we know which God this creator is? There are many gods, how do you know it is the Christian God who creates?” The implication is that since it is impossible to know, it is of no consequence.

This is shallow thinking. Man has explored the atom and sent probes deep into space. Is he unable to search out the most significant Being in the universe? Besides, we can simplify the quest by considering only those gods that claim to be Creator. Even the Phoenician sailors taking Jonah to Tarshish knew that the Creator was of a different order. Let questioners examine the various gods’ claims. I think it will be clear.

And third, some have said, “Well then, who created God and who created God’s creator, etc.? This is called an endless regression and it sidesteps the issue. The question under consideration is whether the universe shows signs of intentional creation or the mere workings of chance. It shows the characteristics of intention by its fine tuning and design. From our experience in daily life with cause and effect, only one entity we know can be intentional, a mind. Therefore it is the product of Mind. If we have established this, then we can discuss by what

means and where the Mind came from etc. However, these musings do not change the answer to the primary question: the appearance of intention.

Conclusion

This evidence leads me to believe in a Creator, one who possesses consummate ability. I have excellent evidence for this belief, and can stand without shame when called on by my God to do so. I do not fear the purveyors of purposelessness that some in modern science would endorse.⁹

ARGUMENTS PRO AND CON CREATION VERSUS EVOLUTION

The first part of this essay dealt with the evidence for theism. We have seen that there are good reasons for believing in a Creator God, including the order and fine-tuning of the universe and the evidence from design. Einstein (no dummy) believed an intelligence had made the cosmos.¹⁰ Defending this proposition is not difficult nor does it involve the denial of the scientific evidence. The evidence indeed points to a Creator.

God has called Adventists to take a Biblical position: We are to warn the world of the near coming of our Lord, admonishing them to return to their Creator and show their allegiance by keeping the 7th day as a memorial of a literal 7-day creation. Holding this ground requires something more than scientific evidence, for even believing scientists by and large subscribe to an ancient earth, and Darwin's theory of evolution. The Catholic Church and most Protestant bodies no longer accept the literal truth of the story in Genesis 1.

Can we defend our position logically? Below I present evidences pro and con for each theory. Although not exhaustive, I have tried to look at the issue from many perspectives. Creation will be presented first, followed by the Darwin's theory of evolution followed by my conclusions.

There are some who hold to various combinations of these two systems (Theistic Evolution for example). Any combination will share

in the strengths and weakness of each, and may involve internal contradictions. I have therefore chosen to view them separately so that the contrasts will be cast in sharp relief.

For those interested in a very candid discussion of the problems facing Creationists, Ariel Roth's book *Origins*¹¹ is the best I know. He gives a thorough presentation of the weaknesses and strengths of each position. The book by Leonard Brand, *Faith Reason and Earth History* also takes a creationist stance.¹²

Creation: Pro

The Bible supports this theory. Although this may seem elementary, the Bible has great persuasive power, so much so that it stands, in spite of the assaults of atheists and agnostics for centuries. As mentioned in the first essay, about 50% of Americans believe in a literal 7-day creation,¹³ despite the reported evidence against a literal reading of Genesis 1, and though the media and most scientists reject it.

Two pillars of objective reality support the Bible: The changed lives of those who believe,¹⁴ and the fulfillment of prophetic predictions, such as those found in Genesis 12, Daniel 2 and 7 and 9, and those describing the character and work of the Messiah.

Jesus, the disciples and Paul assumed the truth of this theory. (see Matt 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9, Acts 17:24, Col 3:16, 17, Heb 11:3, II Peter 3:3-7, Rev 4:11 and 14:7) For some Christians and Jews, their endorsement is pivotal.

The story of redemption seems to make no sense without the stories of Genesis 1-3. Bultmann in his small book, *New Testament and Mythology*, noted the close relationship between the story of the fall and the need for salvation. If there were no fall, why need there be salvation and atonement?¹⁵ By rejecting a creation and fall, Darwin's Theory undermines the doctrine of salvation.

The story gives purpose. In Genesis 1 and 2, God works with intention and deliberation to make a world suitable for the crown of cre-

ation, humankind. They have a role to play, and God has given them a work to do, and a place under the sun. They are the children of the Most High, rather than the offspring of the scum of the earth. They are legitimate beings, not an accident. God comes at eventide each day to speak to the man and woman. He talks personally to them at the fall. All this shows more than casual concern.

This contrasts starkly with the purposelessness at the foundation of the evolutionary theory, where there is only chance and ultimate meaninglessness.¹⁶ Stories of redemption are present throughout all great literature and have an appeal to all that is good and great in the human spirit (See Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters*)¹⁷

There is a certain incompatibility between evolutionary theory and the character of God revealed in Scripture. Natural selection ruthlessly culls the infirm and weak, while Jesus stoops to care for the “least of these: my brethren”. Millions of years of death by an uncaring universe, contrast with numbered hairs and heaven’s interest in fallen sparrows.

Notice that these “pros” are not based on evidence that is strictly scientific in nature. But there is other evidence besides that which can be tested using the scientific method. The claims of God in the Bible are of such a character. God challenges the other gods to tell the future (Is 41: 21-24) This is evidence can be checked against history, but does not fall under the rules laid down by science. The testimony of a changed life is outside the ways of science, yet remains a powerful incentive to belief.

Creation: Con

The creation story in Genesis is not really a scientifically stated theory. It is, rather, more like rhythmic prose. It does not lend itself to dissection by using the scientific method, as this technique was not practiced by the ancients. Moses knew nothing of radiometric dating, fossils, sedimentary layers hundreds of feet thick, or pseudogenes. Of course no one was present at the beginning, so that each theory is not demonstrable, nor in the strictest sense, refutable (A scientist has to repeat

an experiment to tell whether it is true or false). All arguments on each side are inferences from the data.¹⁸

There is, however, one statement in the creation story that can be tested: God said that all the animals and plants would produce after their kind. The Theory of Evolution disputes this statement asserting that over long periods of time, a “kind” will gradually change into another: it will become a different “kind.” Strictly speaking, the fossil record seems to support the creationist view. In other words, few transitional forms are found (macro-evolution has not been demonstrated). Geneticists have been exploring the very edges of some “kinds” genetic makeup, (we used fruit flies in biology lab) to see if they can show where transition into another “kind” occurs. Yet they come to a boundary that they cannot cross.¹⁹

The Creation theory has minimal explaining power. For example, an occasional whale is caught that has vestigial legs.²⁰ These do not seem to have a specific purpose. Creationists would say that God just made them that way, while evolutionists would postulate that the ancestors of whales must have had useful legs and walked on land. The theory of evolution thus has power to explain something that seems strange, and unaccountable according to the creation theory.

Situations such as this put creationists in a defensive position. There have been some successes here, but the overall impression is a kind of tentativeness and jerry rigging that makes for embarrassment.²¹ Michael Behe argues that we cannot plumb all the reasons why a Designer would do what He does and therefore cannot use so called design flaws or apparent abnormalities to postulate the lack of a Designer.

The earth appears old. Huge layers of fossil containing sediment, moving continents, radiometric dating, fossil magnetic imprints, etc. all seem to speak of an ancient earth. In his book, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture*, Ariel A. Roth gives an excellent creationist answer to this problem (Pages 233-261).

Almost no scientists accept a literal six-day creation as a viable theory. The intellectual elite of the world do not even consider creation

a “real” theory Even believing while working in an unrelated area of science has caused “banning.”²²

Evolution: Pro

The theory is accepted as truth by the scientific establishment. There is a broad consensus that there is no other explanation for the facts of biology. If one therefore accepts this theory, he can avoid conflict with scientific thought and literature. I have not seen a mainstream scientific article defending creation.

The many evidences for the great age of the earth agree with the theory. A long age for the earth is no problem for the evolutionary theory.

There appears to be a continuity of life or common descent. The plants and animals all have the same genetic code and use the same basic molecules to construct their bodies, trunks and fibers etc. Creationists would say that God did it that way, while evolutions point to this as evidence that all came from a simple common ancestor.

The geologic column suggests progression. The fossils begin as less complex organisms at the deepest layers and become more complex as one ascends to shallower levels. There seems to be a more or less orderly progression. It is not smooth, but it does not seem to be random, nor does order progress from more complex to simpler.

If geologists could find a dinosaur bone firmly and unmistakably embedded in the Precambrian layer (one of the earliest fossil layers, the dinosaurs are to have lived hundreds of millions of years later), it would be strong evidence that both existed at the same time. This would destroy the theory. As far as I know, no one has found such a fossil.²³

Evolution: Con

This theory tends to support materialism and atheism. Dawkins, the prominent British evolutionist, feels it became much easier to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist after Darwin’s theory. Those theists who accept this theory accept a God who is more distant and peripherally

involved in his creation. Atheists will enquire of them, why do you need God, if it all works without him?

Some might argue that philosophy is irrelevant to this discussion. This is not so. Atheism and materialism are not attractive, in spite of what their proponents say. These theories when taken to their logical conclusion embrace a purposeless existence or fatal relativism. Governments with the worst human rights records have been atheistic (the French Revolution, Communism, and Nazism).

Atheists have often accused theists of grave atrocities not without some justification, but their own hands literally drip with blood. The world has seen no greater and more efficient murderers than atheists in power. The Marxist and Nazi experiments of the 20th century are sobering evidence of the bankruptcy of atheistic social theory.

Evolution has no explanation for the origin of life. Evolution has no theory for the origin of life. Much speculation is presented as if it were true, but there is no good theory. Speculation abounds.

An article in the April 2001 issue of *Scientific American*²⁵ demonstrates this. The author, Robert Hazen, argues that certain minerals may have been essential in the formation of life. He suggests one of them, calcite, as a catalyst that would have helped sort the amino acids in the primordial organic soup. But careful thinking shows that this mineral is inadequate for the task. There is no way that more than one protein could form by the chance sorting of amino acids.²⁵

A creationist has responded: “What do you get after cooking primordial soup for a billion years? Very old primordial soup.

There is nothing wrong with speculation. It has opened up vast areas of knowledge unknowable without these flights of imagination. But the above idea has strong arguments against it. However, whenever the popular scientific press reviews new “evidence” on the origin of life, —from Stanley Miller’s bell jar experiments in the 50’s to Hazen’s “Mineral Stars in the Movie of Life” in 2001—there is wild optimism about the “breakthroughs” that have been made. These are uniformly overstated.

There is evidence of design. Darwinians tell us that we are not using our minds when we believe that there is a Creator. But they must deny the use of their senses when viewing the cosmos. The universe and the life on our planet have a purposeful look. They appear as if they were made the way they are for a reason.²⁶

Social Darwinism has failed. A few years after Darwin, Herbert Spencer described ideas to harness the theory to improve the human species. If the rule is: “survival of the fittest,” why not help survival along with a little cognitive input. Thus we saw the birth of Eugenics and the “Super Race.” This thinking was one foundation of Hitler’s social program to exterminate “defective races and individuals”

2 Peter 3:3-7 seems to describe the doctrine of uniformitarianism that has been held by many scientists since the beginning of the 18th century and is a basic assumption of Darwin’s thesis. This theory states that the processes we see active on earth today are the only ones that have operated in the past. Many scientists now include some forms of catastrophism (such as meteors striking the earth.), though few believe in a universal flood. These verses tell us that in the last days, men would be scoffers saying the world had lasted a great length of time and that the flood was a myth. They thus seem to confirm the description found in scripture.

Darwin said: “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down” (quoted by Patterson page 117.) Behe seems to have demonstrated this with irreducible complexity.²⁷

Putting it All Together

I have met God. I have seen him work in my life and in the lives of others. I particularly remember experiences as a colporteur in central California between my first and second years of medical school. God’s Spirit appealed to the people through us as we went from door to door. This answered any lingering doubts in my mind about his existence. The reasoned responses to atheism’s arguments came later, but confirmed my experience.

I have seen God speak to the most basic human needs through His Word, the Bible. There is a solace there that exists nowhere else. I have also seen that if the church had only adhered firmly to scripture, much error and many conflicts could have been avoided. This is not an anti-intellectual position, for study of the Bible requires careful thought, and its deepest secrets open only to the diligent seeker.

I have seen how the theory of evolution has shaken the faith of old and young alike in the truth of the Bible. Some recover and rethink their doctrine of the Bible, or adjust their view of science. But others are unable to do this, and leave the church in body or if unable to do so, in mind. This theory causes such destruction of faith that I cannot see that it is part of the truth of God.

I therefore give more weight to the evidences for creationism and set aside those interpretations of science that support Darwin's theory. I have made a conscious decision to give greater weight to arguments supporting scripture than to the findings of science that conflict with revelation. I have not ignored science nor denied its findings, but accept revelation as a higher more complete knowledge. This is an informed decision, after looking at all the evidence including that of the scientists and my own experience.²⁸ There have been days and nights of prayer and struggle.

Both theories have gaps in their science that must be bridged by belief in something that cannot be proved. Creation has difficulties with the apparent age of the earth, the continuity of life and the geologic column. Evolution has problems with the origin of life, the order seen in living things, and the origin of the laws of the universe, (molecular laws etc.).

Both are logical if certain assumptions are accepted. Each depends on a leap of faith of some kind. The Bible is up front about this. It confesses that belief in creation is an act of faith (Heb 11:3). There is evidence, but faith is required. Many scientists are less transparent, refusing to see that their position also requires faith: faith that science will in the future be able to answer all the questions of life for which it has no answer now.

For those struggling with science, John, in his first letter describes Christ as One seen, heard and touched, that is, scientifically examined. He then writes his thesis on the findings: God is light and there is no darkness in him (1John 1:5).

And what is the conclusion of the skeptics after all their careful research? “The universe that we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but pitiless indifference.”²⁹

I have chosen a life colored by faith. Habitual faith is a treasure I have fought for. It requires exercise to become strong and to remain healthy. We cannot let the world rob us by its sophisticated arguments and caustic ridicule.

The majority of evolutionists would not be convinced by these arguments, but I think it is clear that creationists are still using their brains, in contrast to Mr. Rennie’s contention. Not as atheists use theirs, but using them nevertheless.

Endnotes

1. “A Total Eclipse of Reason,” *Scientific American*, (October, 1999), p. 124.

2. “Fifteen Answers to Creationist Nonsense,” *Scientific American*, (July 2002), pp. 78-85.

3. Gallop Poll Web site. The most recent poll on this topic was February of 2001. The question asked was regarding the origin of humankind.

4. Edward J. Larson and Larry Witham, “Scientists and Religion in America,” in *Scientific American*, (September 1999) pp. 81-85.

5. John M. Robinson, Editor, *Origin and Evolution of the Universe: Evidence for Design?* (Montreal, 1987), pp. 23-25. This is a compilation of rather ponderous essays by scientists who wish to explain away the evidence for design and the very small probability that the universe could have occurred by chance. At the end, at least one (Hugo Meyness) allows that all the speculation might not stand to Ockham’s razor (page 255). (Ockhams razor: the best explanation of an event is the one that is the simplest) However, the essays show the thinking

of an atheistic group addressing these issues. The pages noted are the conclusions reached by Robert H. Haynes in his essay: The “Purpose” of Chance in Light of the Physical Basis of Evolution.

6. Martin J. Rees, *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces That Shape the Universe* (New York, 2000).

7. Cosmology

8. Michael Dickinson, “Solving the Mystery of Insect Flight,” in *Scientific American*, (June, 2001), pp. 48-55.

9. See 5 above

10. John Robson, editor, *Origin and Evolution of the Universe: Evidence for Design?* (Montreal, 1987), pages 273-275.

11. Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture*, (Review and Herald Publishing Assoc. 1998).

12. Leonard Brand, *Faith Reason and Earth History*, (Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs MI, 1997).

13. Gallop Web site. Poll of 2001 regarding human origins.

14. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr., *The Question of God*, (New York, NY. 2002). A fascinating book by a Harvard psychiatrist comparing the lives of Freud the atheist and C. S. Lewis the believer.

15. Rudolph Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology* (1941).

16. Richard Dawkins, “God’s Utility Function,” in *Scientific American*, (Nov 1995), p. 85.

17. Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters*, (NY, 2001). A fascinating book by the son of missionaries to China. He describes the conflict in worldviews between science and religion. See particularly chapters 3, 12 and 14.

18. Colin Patterson, *Evolution* (NY, 1999) p. 45.

19. Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge, *Punctuated Equilibria: The Tempo and Mode of Evolution Reconsidered*, *Paleobiology*, Vol 3, pages 115-151. 1977. Though evolutionists, these two scientists showed that the fossil remains do not record smooth transitions between groups. Rather each species was distinct. They postulated that evolution occurred rapidly in isolated groups that were not preserved. This explained the lack of transitional forms in the fossil record.

20. Kate Wong, “The Mammals that Conquered the Seas,” in *Scientific American*, (May 2002), pages 70-79. The chart on page 74 of this article shows the various purported whale ancestors, but documents no transitional forms between the fossil species.

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21. Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, (New York. 1996), pp. 222-227.
 22. Ibid., page 237.
 23. Roth in *Origins* has a good discussion of this problem from a creationist viewpoint. See pages 147- 175.
 24. Freeman Dyson, *Origins of Life*. (Cambridge University Press, 1999).
 25. Robert Hazen, "Life's Rocky Start," in *Scientific American* (April 2001), pp. 77-85.
 26. See Roth pages 94-112.
 27. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*.
 28. See Behe, pages 232-253 for a discussion on choosing one's philosophical foundations.
 29. Dawkins, page 85

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The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.