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SCIENCE & FAITH

Vol 2, No. 1 30 April 1996
A publication of
The Gospel and Information Network

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Dr William Craig has Phd's in Theology (University of Munich) and Philosophy (University of Birmingham). He has authored numerous published papers, books and reviews. This article originally appeared in The Scholaris Vol. 1 No. 3.

Evolution of an evolutionist: a Testimony....(Peter Taylor)

Dr Peter Taylor is Curator of Mammals, Durban Natural Science Museum and has a special interest in bats.

By Dr William Craig

A couple of years ago, two books appeared that sent shock waves through the American educational community. The first of these, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*, by E.D. Hirsch, documented the fact that large numbers of American college students do not have the basic background knowledge to understand the front page of a newspaper or to act responsibly as a citizen. For example, a quarter of the students in a recent survey thought Franklin D. Roosevelt was president during the Vietnam War. Two-thirds did not know when the Civil War occurred. One-third thought Columbus discovered the New World sometime after 1750. In a recent survey at California State University at Fullerton, over half the students could not identify Chaucer or Dante. Ninety percent did not know who Alexander Hamilton was, despite the fact that his picture is on every ten dollar bill.

These statistics would be funny if they weren't so alarming. What has happened to our schools that they should be producing such dreadfully ignorant people? Enter Alan Bloom, an eminent educator at the University of Chicago and the author of the second book I referred to above, *The Closing of the American Mind*. Bloom's thesis, which the *Washington Times* has characterized as both "frightening" and "convincing," is that behind the current educational malaise lies the universal conviction of students that all truth is relative and, therefore, that truth is not worth pursuing. Bloom writes, There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That anyone should regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question $2+2=4$. These are things you don't think about....That it is a moral issue for students is revealed by the character of their response when challenged--a combination of disbelief and indignation: "Are you an absolutist?" the only alternative they know, uttered in the same tone as ... "Do you really believe in witches?" This latter leads into the indignation, for someone who believes in witches might well be a witch-hunter or a Salem judge. The danger they have been taught to fear from absolutism is not error but intolerance. Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating. Openness--and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings--is the great insight of our times....The study of history and of culture teaches that all the world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all. (1)

Since there is no absolute truth, since everything is relative, the purpose of an education is not to learn truth or master facts--rather it is merely to learn a skill so that one can go out and acquire wealth, power, and fame. Truth has become irrelevant.

Now, of course, this sort of relativistic attitude is antithetical to the Christian world view. For as Christians we believe that all truth is God's truth, that God has revealed to us the truth, both in His Word and in Him who said, "I am the Truth." The Christian, therefore, can never look on the truth with apathy or disdain. Rather, he cherishes and treasures the truth as a reflection of God Himself. Nor does his commitment to truth make the Christian intolerant, as Bloom's students erroneously inferred; on the contrary, the very concept of tolerance entails that one disagrees with that which one tolerates. The Christian is committed to both truth and tolerance, for he believes in Him who said not only, "I am the Truth," but also, "Love your enemies."

Now as a teacher at a Christian liberal arts college, I began to wonder: how much have Christian students been infected with the attitude that Bloom describes: How would my own students fare on one of E.D. Hirsch's tests? Well, how would they? I thought. Why not give them such a quiz? So I did.

I drew up a brief, general knowledge quiz about famous people, places and things and administered it to two classes of about fifty sophomores. What I found was that although they did better than the general student population, still there were sizable portions of the group who could not identify--even with a phrase--some important names and events. For example, 18 percent did not know who Mikhail Gorbachev was. Forty-nine percent could not identify Leo Tolstoi. To my surprise, 16 percent did not know who Winston Churchill was. One student thought he was one of the founding Fathers of America! Another identified him as a great revival preacher of a few hundred years ago! Twenty-two percent did not know what Afghanistan is, and 22 percent could not identify Nicaragua. Twenty percent did not know where the Amazon River is. Imagine!

They fared even worse with things and events. I was amazed that a whopping 67 percent could not identify the Battle of the Bulge. Several identified it as a dieter's problem. Twenty-four percent did not know what the Special Theory of Relativity is (mind you, just to identify it--even as, say, "a theory of Einstein"--not to explain it). Forty-Five percent couldn't identify Custer's Last Stand--it was variously classed as a battle in the Revolutionary War or as a battle in the Civil War. And I wasn't really surprised that 73 percent did not know what the expression Manifest Destiny referred to.

So it became clear to me that Christian students have not been able to rise above the dark undertow in our educational system at the primary and secondary levels. That level of ignorance presents a real crisis for Christian colleges and seminaries.

But an even more terrible fear began to dawn on me as I contemplated these statistics. If Christian students are this ignorant of the general facts of history and geography, then the chances are that they, and Christians in general, are equally or even more ignorant of the facts of our own Christian heritage and doctrine. Our culture in general has sunk to the level of biblical and theological illiteracy. A great many, if not most, people cannot even name the four gospels--in a recent survey one person identified them as Matthew, Mark, and Luther! The suspicion arose in my mind that the evangelical church is probably also caught somewhere higher up in this same downward spiral.

But if we do not preserve the truth of our own Christian heritage and doctrine, who will learn it for us? Non-Christians? That hardly seems likely. If the church does not treasure her own Christian truth, then it will be lost to her forever. So how, I wondered, would Christians fare on a quiz over general facts of Christian history and doctrine?

No one has issued a more forceful challenge to Christians to become intellectually engaged than did Charles Malik, former Lebanese ambassador to the United States, in the address he gave in 1980 at the dedication of the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, Illinois. Malik emphasized that as Christians we face two tasks in our evangelism: saving the soul and saving the mind, that is to say, not only converting people spiritually, but converting them intellectually as well. And the church is lagging dangerously behind with regard to this second task. Mark his words well:

"I must be frank with you: the greatest danger confronting American evangelical Christianity is the danger of anti-intellectualism. The mind in its greatest and deepest reaches is not cared for enough. But intellectual nurture cannot take place apart from profound immersion for a period of years in the history of thought and the spirit. People who are in a hurry to get out of the university and start earning money or serving the church or preaching the gospel have no idea of the infinite value of spending years of leisure conversing with the greatest minds and souls of the past, ripening and sharpening and enlarging their powers of thinking. The result is that the arena of creative thinking is vacated and abdicated to the enemy. Who among evangelicals can stand up to the great secular or naturalistic or atheistic scholars on their own terms of scholarship? Who among evangelical scholars is quoted as a normative source by the greatest secular authorities on history or philosophy or psychology or sociology or politics? Does the evangelical mode of thinking have the slightest chance of becoming the dominant mode in the great universities of Europe and America that stamp our entire civilization with their spirit and ideas?" (2)

Malik went on to say:

"It will take a different spirit altogether to overcome this great danger of anti-intellectualism. For example, I say this

different spirit, so far as philosophy alone is concerned, must see the tremendous value of spending an entire year doing nothing but poring intensely over the Republic or the Sophist of Plato, or two years over the Metaphysics or the Ethics of Aristotle, or three years over the City of God of Augustine. But if a start is made now on a crash program in this and other domains, it will take at least a century to catch up with the Harvards and Tuebingens and the Sorbonnes--and by then where will these universities be? For the sake of greater effectiveness in witnessing to Jesus Christ Himself, as well as for their own sakes, evangelicals cannot afford to keep on living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence." (3)

Those are powerful words. Christians really have been living on the periphery of responsible intellectual existence. The average Christian does not realize that there is an intellectual war going on in the universities and in the professional journals and scholarly societies. Christianity is being attacked from all sides as irrational, and millions of students, our future generation of leaders, have absorbed that viewpoint. This is a war we cannot afford to lose. J. Gresham Machen, in the Princeton Theological Review (1913), warned on the eve of the Fundamentalist Controversy, that if the evangelical community lost the intellectual battle in his generation, then evangelism would be immeasurably more difficult in the next generation:

False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion. Under such circumstances, what God desires us to do is to destroy the obstacle at its root. (4)

Machen's warning went unheeded, and biblical Christianity retreated into the intellectual closets of Fundamentalism, from which it's has only recently begun to re-emerge. The war is not yet lost, and it is one which must not be lost: souls of men and women hang in the balance. What are evangelicals doing to win this war? Until recently, very little indeed. Most prominent Christian scholars tend to be big fish in a small pond. Their influence extends little beyond the Christian subculture. They tend to publish exclusively with Christian presses, and therefore their books are likely to be unread by non-Christian scholars; and instead of participating in the standard professional societies, they are active instead in the Christian professional societies. As a result, they effectively put their light under a bushel and have little leavening effect for the gospel in their professional fields. In turn, the intellectual drift of the culture at large continues to degenerate into secularism.

We desperately need Christian scholars who can, as Malik said, compete with secular thinkers in their fields of expertise on

their own terms of scholarship. It can be done. There is, for example, a revolution going on right now in North American philosophy. Christian philosophers have been coming out of the Christian closet and defending the truth of the Christian world view with philosophically sophisticated arguments in the finest secular journals and societies. The face of Anglo-American philosophy has been changed as a result.

Thirty years ago philosophers widely regarded talk about God as literally meaningless, as mere gibberish, but today no informed philosopher could take such a viewpoint. In fact many of Anglo-America's finest philosophers today are outspoken Christians. According to the respected philosopher Roderick Chisholm, himself no evangelical, the reason atheism was so influential a generation ago was because the brightest philosophers were atheists. But today, he says, "the brightest people include theists, using a kind of tough-minded intellectualism" that had been lacking on their side of the debate. (5) This sort of scholarship represents the best hope for the revolution that Malik and Machen envisioned, and its true impact for the cause of Christ will only be felt in the next generation.

Machen already observed in his day "many would have the seminaries combat error by attacking it as it is taught by its popular exponents" instead of confusing students "with a lot of German names unknown outside the walls of the university." But to the contrary, Machen insisted, it is essential that Christian scholars be alert to the power of an idea before it has reached popular formulation. Scholarly procedure, he said, is based simply upon a profound belief in the pervasiveness of ideas. What is today a matter of academic speculation begins tomorrow to move armies and pull down empires. In that second stage, it has gone too far to be combated; the time to stop it was when it was still a matter of impassionate debate. So as Christians we should try to mould the thought of the world in such a way as to make the acceptance of Christianity something more than a logical absurdity. (6)

I might add parenthetically, surely the most prominent example of the truth of Machen's words is the impact that was had by an obscure German Philosopher that was working alone in a British Museum, that is, Karl Marx, whose ideas resulted in a political system that imprisoned hundreds of millions of people and resulted in the death of tens of millions of people and untold suffering throughout the world. It has only been recently that we have seen the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and there is an intellectual vacuum there that Christian scholars can now help to shape and to fill with a new world view to help replace the world view they had inherited from Karl Marx.

Like Malik, Machen also believed that "the chief obstacle to the Christian religion today lies in the sphere of the intellect" (7) and that objections to Christianity must be

attacked in that sphere. "The Church is perishing today through the lack of thinking, not through an excess of it."⁸

As Christian Scholars, then, we are the church's front line defense in the battle against secularism and she desperately needs her Christian Scholars whether she appreciates them or not. This, I believe, calls for a two-fold response on our part:

1. To strive for excellence in our work. We should see our work as a part of our service to Christ, and therefore, do it as unto Him and not simply as unto others. To borrow Oswald Chambers phrase "Let us give our utmost for His Highest"; and

2. We should seek to do our part in fulfilling the Lord's Great Commission in our professional fields of expertise. We need to know how to be salt and light in our professional disciplines for Christ. Doors will be open to us which will be closed to the average Christian worker, laymen or missionary and therefore each of us is strategically located to have an impact for Christ in our professional fields that few other people will be able to have.

Let us, therefore, as Christian scholars, seek to Glorify God both in our scholarship and in our sharing the good news of salvation through Christ with others in our professional fields.

Notes:

1. Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York:Simon & Schuster, 1987), pp. 25-26.
2. Charles Malik, "The Other Side of Evangelism," *Christianity Today*, November 7, 1980, 40.
3. Ibid.
4. J. Gresham Machen, "Christianity and Culture," *Princeton Theological Review* 11 (1913):7.
5. Roderick Chisholm, "Modernizing the Case for God," *Time*, April 7, 1980, pp. 65-66.
6. Machen, p. 7.
7. Ibid., p. 10.
8. Ibid., p. 13.

EVOLUTION OF AN EVOLUTIONIST: A TESTIMONY

By Dr Peter Taylor

Fellow believers and fellow scientists alike frequently ask me incredulously how it is possible to reconcile being both an evolutionary biologist and a Christian. Many Christians equate creationism with Christianity, and evolution with atheism. This article provides a personal perspective on this matter and identifies three obstacles we need to overcome if we are to experience full intellectual freedom in our Christian faith:

- 1) Confusion over meanings
- 2) Religious dogmatism
- 3) Scientific dogmatism

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First, it may be helpful to give a brief personal testimony,

based on 15 years of soul searching and spiritual "evolution".

A NEW CREATURE

"Therefore if any man be in Christ He is a new creature". - 2 Cor 5:17 (King James version)

An atheistic colleague once observed that there are two species of humans on this planet, Christians and non-Christians. Although he was referring cynically to the divergent outlooks of the two groups, his statement is perfectly true in a spiritual sense as the above scripture indicates. Christians are "new creatures", born from above. While there is much discussion over how new species arise in evolution, the matter of the origin of the "new creature" of the Bible (spiritual rebirth) was settled for me at the age of 18. I personally embraced Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

As a new Christian embarking on a scientific career in biology, I was faced with the challenges that many scientist Christians are faced with. Although I have further evolved in my scientific thinking, all the way from evolutionism to literal, "short-day" creationism to theistic evolution, my faith in Christ as personal redeemer remains unshaken.

THE WHY AND THE HOW OF CREATION

I am now more concerned with the "why" of Creation than with the "how". The "how" has gotten me into all sorts of ideological traps; I only hope my experiences may prevent others from falling into these same traps.

The "why" of creation is beautifully summed up in Romans 1:20 (Amplified version):

"For ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature and attributes, that is, His eternal power and divinity have been made intelligible and clearly discernible in and through the things that have been made - His handiworks. So [men] are without excuse - altogether without any defense or justification".

Creation mirrors the richness and exquisite beauty of its Creator and as such draws mankind to repentance. When I watched a documentary recently about the "ingenious" devices employed by plants to lure animals as diverse as wasps and bats to pollinate their flowers and ensure their survival, my spirit leaped with delight in recognition of the Creator's handiwork.

To give an overview of the "how" of creation, including the various models of evolution and creationism, is beyond the scope of this article.

1. Meanings of evolution & creationism

There is a real danger in oversimplifying the creation/evolution debate by ignoring the fact that a number of divergent meanings can be attached to the terms "evolution" and "creationism".

Keith Stewart Thomson (1982, *American Scientist*, Vol. 70: 529-531) gave 3 commonly employed meanings of evolution: (1) "change over time", (2) all organisms related through common ancestry; (3) theory setting forth mechanism for (1) or (2).

It is vitally important to make a distinction between the theory of evolution by natural selection, and the atheistic philosophy of evolutionism (the notion that all life arose by natural processes alone and without any dependence on the sustaining work of the Creator)

In his book "The Meaning of Evolution", G. G. Simpson (1967) stated: "Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind". One interpretation of this statement is completely innocuous. It merely says that purpose cannot be read off from evolutionary history - not that man has no purpose. Some biologists (e.g. Jacques Monod (1971) in his "Chance and Necessity" deny purpose altogether and so clearly equate the theory of evolution with the philosophy of evolutionism. The theory of evolution is simply the best available explanation of the current body of scientific evidence, and it is not qualified to make sweeping predictions about the existence or lack of existence of purpose or a personal Creator. However, scientists and Christians alike have propagated the myth that the theory of evolution is necessarily a statement of unbelief in a divine Creator.

Like the term evolution, creationism has more than one meaning. Many scientists and Christians associate "creationism" with a literal interpretation of Chapter One of Genesis, which postulates a creation period of six actual days (as opposed to "ages") and a young earth of some 6000 years. In reality, a number of divergent creationist theories have been proposed. These have been usefully summarised by Henri Blocher, under four headings in order of (in his view) increasing probability.

a) The reconstruction theory. First proposed by the Scottish preacher and theologian, Thomas Chalmers (1780 - 1847), the theory supposes the six days of reconstruction following an awful catastrophe, probably when satan and a third of the angels were cast down from Heaven. The action takes place between verses 1 and 2 when the earth "became without form and void". Also called the gap theory,

b) The concordist interpretation. One of the first proponents was Hugh Miller (1869). Based on a broad interpretation of the word "yom" which can mean a literal day or an era of time.

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Thus divine creation took place over millions of years. The chronology in Genesis is remarkably similar to the fossil record. However, the sun and stars appear on the fourth day,

after the earth and its vegetation.

c) The literalistic interpretation. While being the majority theological viewpoint through most of Church history, this view has been defended very vigorously since the early eighties by the Creation Research Institute in the States, lead by Drs Henry Morris and Duane Gish. This group believes in a young earth (few thousand years) and a worldwide flood which produced the fossil record in a matter of months or years.

d) The literary interpretation. This view, with adherents including Augustine and Aquinas, sees the Genesis account as communicating an eternally valid theological message.

2. Religious dogmatism

In 1614 Galileo Galilei was quoted as saying "... a terrible detriment for the souls if people found themselves convinced by proof of something that it was then made a sin to believe". Galileo of course challenged the Church's idea that the Earth was the centre of the Universe, and showed that in fact the Earth rotated around the sun. The Roman Church at the time considered this to be a heresy worse than Luther and Calvin put together! This illustrates the danger of wedding a particular scientific theory to our Christian faith.

A local Christian apologist, Jonathan Wild, coined a term "conceptual idolatry" which aptly describes the attitude of some Christians who dogmatically stick to a particular creationist model, and have no genuine desire to seek the truth. Like those referred to by Galileo, the basis of their faith is a man-made theory (creationism), and logical disproof of this theory would mean the shipwrecking of their faith. My heart goes out to well-meaning Christians who have been compelled to believe that to accept the theory of evolution is to reject Christ, yet whose intellectual honesty compels them to accept this theory.

We do not need to throw away their minds in order to embrace Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that we are tripartite beings. We happen to live in a body. We have intellect and emotions, i.e. a soul. The real "me", my inmost being or spirit, is the part that is immortal. God is concerned about the whole person (body, soul and spirit: see Matthew 6:32; 10:30), and we are to love Him with all our "heart and soul and strength and mind" (Lev. 19:18). We can honour Him with our intellectual honesty and modesty and dishonour Him with our conceptual idolatry and proud dogmatism.

It is equally religiously dogmatic to demand that atheistic evolutionism is the only metaphysical system consistent with the theory of evolution. Not only have the creationists been guilty of religious bias, but according to a statement by the American Scientific Affiliate, it is "equally important to

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recognise 'evolutionary naturalism' as another essentially religious doctrine masquerading as science".

3. Scientific dogmatism

"Evolution and Darwinism are every bit as well supported as the Copernican system. Leaving aside the uncertainties inherent in any science, evolution is a fact". Chermak, J. (1984) The Difficulties of Darwinism. New Scientist 17:28-30.

A dogmatic spirit would be very unhealthy for the continued success of evolutionary biology. Sir Karl Popper, whose philosophy of science is widely accepted, pointed out that while scientific laws are not provable they are testable through falsification. Thus, you need only find one black swan to disprove or falsify the theory that all swans are white. Rather than searching for facts to prove your theory, you should search for facts to disprove it, thereby strengthening your theory every time it passes a test.

Unfortunately, in reality many scientists seek to try and prove their own ideas. Hypotheses become entrenched as laws which everyone accepts. These are termed paradigms. Evolution has become such a paradigm. The danger here is that the general public is too easily hoodwinked into believing everything that scientists tell them. The saying that "Science is a sacred cow" is all too true.

CONCLUSION

It is important to realise that science and religion are different entities. Science explains things, and generates testable facts to produce new information. Religion is a belief which is scientifically untestable. Its function is to guide morals and ethics and to bring us into a right relationship with God. The two are compatible, though distinct, and confusing them can be dangerous.

Christians have nothing to fear from science, or from the theory of evolution. Let us be more concerned with the why than the how of creation. At the same time, let us be humble, open and objective in our search for truth. Such an attitude glorifies our Creator and wins disciples among unbelievers.