

Christianity and Evolution are Compatible

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Editor:

Since relocating to this city a year and a half ago, I have had several conversations on the subject of evolution/creation. After reading John Baumgardner's lengthy letter, I feel I must object and, I hope, more briefly respond.

I am not a scientist and do not wish to dispute the issues of molecular biology Mr. Baumgardner has raised.

As a Christian who accepts the evolutionary hypothesis as our current best explanation of how we and things got to be where we are in this physical world, I dispute Mr. Baumgardner's description of evolution as an atheistic dogma.

I believe in God's creation, I submit, as much if not more than he, but I am not bound to a more or less literal reading of the Bible. It is my belief (and, I submit, the belief of a large number of Christians, perhaps a majority) that God's creation as taught in Genesis and throughout the Bible means that the Divine Person is responsible for keeping all things in history in existence ontologically, metaphysically. By what means he chooses to do so, whether direct intervention or by using creatures over an evolved period of time, is not the point.

I hardly think my viewpoint is unique; just yesterday, at Mesa Public Library, I read an article in the Aug. 16 issue of *Commonweal* magazine, "So Finely Tuned a Universe (Science and Religion)," which I believe espouses a more balanced position without easy labeling of other views.

More problematic than having my position labeled "atheistic" (though I am not sure that this term should be implied to be derogatory, even if I do not agree with the basic position), is the problem of Mr. Baumgardner's approach to

questions impinging on Christianity. I submit that God's creation is one of the basic Christian beliefs, and a believer seeks salvation in making a (rational but daring) acceptance of those beliefs; this is why, as St. Paul keeps emphasizing, from Abraham on down, it is faith that saves. Mr. Baumgardner seems at great pains to show us what science is, and (he indicates it) will show what he thinks Christianity teaches about creation - and that will destroy the value, if he is correct, of the act of faith the believer makes.

I sense, at this point in time, in a number of issues, a strong outcry from a part of the Christian community to make its voice heard; it believes strongly, among other things in a somewhat narrow reading of the scripture. It would be a terrible injustice to try to impose that view in our open society or even present it as the Christian point of view.

It also strikes me as unfortunate at least to imply that values and viewpoints held by nonbelievers are less valuable or wrong because of my own beliefs. At any rate, I think what science is taught in our schools should be determined by scientists without any a priori reference to one's religious beliefs, which can and should stand on their own!!

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