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Creation, Science and Scripture

As one of those responsible for this meeting I would like to say that I could have wished that it had taken a different form. Serious questions like the bearing of Holy Scripture on the scientific theory of evolution are rarely decided by public debate; the matter is too emotive, and many of the arguments too technical for headway to be made that way. I would far rather the subject had been discussed in an unhurried way in a limited group, where numbers were small enough for those taking part to get to know and respect each other. We are, after all, christian brethren, concerned for the 'defence and confirmation of the gospel'; and we all recognize that much of the teaching abroad today which bases itself on the biological theory is for many destructive of belief in the inspiration of Scripture and a stumbling block to faith in Jesus Christ. 'The Naked Ape' by Desmond Morris is just one instance of the form which the popular modern evolutionary understanding of man can take; and we are all agreed that somewhere here is an enemy and we must fight it. Where we differ is in the strategy and tactics which we judge to be the right ones to employ, and I imagine that most of us look upon this meeting as an opportunity to help one another to discover them.

What exactly is the enemy that confronts us? We need to be clear about this or we shall find ourselves at cross purposes. I shall argue that it is not the scientific theory of evolution (for I do not personally believe that Holy Scripture forecloses the issue of biological evolution) but rather the idea of evolution raised to the status of a philosophy and even of a religion. We might call it in fact 'Evolutionism'. This outlook commonly regards the scientific theory as providing the necessary and sufficient clue to an understanding of man and all that concerns him including his ethics and religion. Accordingly it has no place for a Personal Creator; no valid questions remain to be

asked beyond the level of mechanism – how did life originate and what course has it followed? Beyond this, however, Evolutionism has become a religion as well as a philosophy. It has pantheistic and mystical connotations, and may even borrow extensively from Christianity. The influential ideas of Teilhard de Chardin fall into this category. Between these two extremes, the atheistic and the pantheistic, lies a whole spectrum of outlooks; but all of them are characterized by denying in one way or another the biblical God of Creation and Providence, the God ‘with whom we have to do’. Evolutionism then, and not the theory of natural descent, is the target at which I shall direct my remarks.

Must we reject the biological theory?

To reinforce the distinction between the scientific theory of evolution and the religio-philosophy of Evolutionism I should like to draw a parallel. One of the curses of present-day thought is relativism, the idea that, for all practical purposes, all the knowledge that is accessible to man and that has a bearing on his existence is relative. Absolute statements about God, about human nature, about ethics and so on cannot be made. All truth is relative, and changes with time and situation. Thus modern man loses contact with the solid ground that gave his forefathers conviction and steadfastness; and just when the exponentially mounting pressures of his plight call for firm directives all he has is ‘situation ethics’ or a religion with no absolutes. All of us would agree that it is this relativism in morals and religion that has as much as anything else landed us in such a sorry mess. Now it may be a subjective judgement, but I cannot help feeling that the present mood draws some support, at least, from the triumph of relativity in physics. For what Einstein’s insight did was to detach us from the conviction that in space and time we have contact with an absolute frame of reference, and to convince us that every observer has a view of things peculiar to himself but of equal validity to everyone else’s. Almost all observations in other words, became relative. Of course a few invariants remained,

common to all observers, and chief among these was the velocity of light. But relativistic ethics can, after all, boast the same: it has love as the invariant, the common quality of all right moral decisions. Thus the parallel between relativity (in physics) and relativism (in religious morals) is fairly close; it is only their spheres which are different, and it is reasonable to maintain that the one bolsters the other. But no one, I imagine, would go on to argue that because relativism is abhorrent to the Christian therefore he must oppose Einstein. On the level of physical mechanism relativity is entirely appropriate. But in religion and morals men come face to face with God; and at least if God is the God of the Bible this means they meet the Absolute and Final, and to advocate relativism, of any sort, in connection with Him is to become futile in one's thinking.

It is in this way that I view the distinction that has been drawn between evolution, the scientific theory, and Evolutionism, the religio-philosophy. One is a theory of mechanism; the other, taking it for granted that the theory is true, proceeds to make an entirely unwarranted extrapolation into the realms of philosophy and religion. It is unwarranted because while it usually poses as a logical consequence of the theory it is in fact nothing of the kind. It is merely one of a number of possible interpretations of it; and any fair-minded person would admit that there are other equally possible interpretations, such as the view often and inadequately called Theistic Evolution. I would therefore seek to emphasize the point that rejection of Evolutionism does not *ipso facto* mean rejection of the scientific theory, any more than rejection of relativism in ethics means rejection of relativity in physics.

Where then does this leave us? Rejecting Evolutionism in all its forms, where do we stand with regard to the theory of descent? I think it leaves us with an important preliminary decision to make. Before we proceed to evaluate the theory of descent we must first decide the *grounds* on which we are going to make our evaluation. There would, for most of us, seem to be two possible grounds. Firstly there is an examination of the scientific evidence; secondly, there is an appeal to revelation. This question, of the direction in which we are to look for our

answer, is not perhaps quite so clear-cut as it appears at first sight. It would be easy if scripture only made pronouncements where the avenues of scientific and historical enquiry clearly had nothing to offer, and vice versa. But this is not always so, a case in point being the Resurrection. Why do we believe in the Resurrection? Is it because the Bible asserts it authoritatively as revelation, or because 'it is one of the best-attested events of history'? No doubt this is more a theoretical problem than a practical one, and no doubt belief in the Resurrection comes in point of time in the first place to different people through different channels, i.e. firstly through the impress of authority or firstly through examination of the evidence. What matters is that ultimately both testimonies converge to the same point. But we need to remember that the New Testament writers don't belittle the visible, tangible, public evidence of this great event; they insist on it, and do not just fall back on a word of revelation. The purpose of the latter is not primarily the declaration of the physical event (for which 'ordinary' evidence is available) but *the proclamation of its significance in ultimate terms*. With this analogy in mind therefore we may turn to the question we have just raised, namely on what grounds we are to assess the biological theory of origins. Certainly, on the face of it, evidence of a visible, tangible, public nature (that is, scientific evidence) does exist to be consulted, and the believer is bound to regard this as God-given. On the other hand Scripture is not silent either on the matter of origins. Clearly, we need further light on the relationship between Nature (which furnishes the tangible evidence) and Scripture in order to come to a decision as to the right basic approach. This light the Bible itself may be expected to give us.

The beginning of wisdom

The Bible makes it abundantly plain that all true understanding begins with God and a right attitude to Him. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Prov. ix. 10) knowledge (Prov. i. 7) understanding (Psa. cxi. 10) and insight (Prov. ix. 10 R.S.V.). The man without it is wrong from the start, and

hasn't really a clue to the final meaning of things. It is no accident therefore that the Bible opens with the phrase 'In the beginning, God'. John takes this up at the opening of his gospel with the same emphasis, and the Psalmist adds his own testimony, 'With Thee is the fountain of life; *in Thy light* do we see light' (Psa. xxxvi. 9). To the Bible God is One to whom the true seeker first directs his attention. He is not the end of a philosophical argument; He is the starting point. It is wrong therefore to come to the God who reveals Himself with a preformed philosophy of our own, into which we expect His revelation to fit. The Bible teaches us rather to come to Him as little children (Mark x. 15, Matt. xi. 25), whose thoughts are to be moulded and informed by the light He delights to give. We ought not to come to Him determined beforehand, for reasons of our own, to hold to a philosophy of Evolutionism; equally, we ought not to come having decided in advance on a philosophy of Non-Evolutionism. It is here that it is so easy to fail. What the Bible insists on is not at first a correct conceptual framework, but a correct spiritual attitude. Where the fear of the Lord is present, truth can find an entry; no preconceived philosophy of one's own stands in the way. Surely this is what the Bible means when it speaks of the man 'who is humble and contrite in spirit, and *trembles* at my Word' (Isaiah lxvi. 2). Such a man isn't commended for his correct ideas, but for his childlike spirit, and this spirit God promises to enlighten (Psa. cxix. 130).

Coming to God

Coming to God for instruction implies submission to revelation; for revelation is God's systematic instruction of men. It is of more than one kind, and Scripture itself directs us to several modes which God uses. Nature in all her manifestations is divine revelation (Rom. i. 19, 20; Psa. xix. 1-4), and God teaches men through her (Job xii. 7; Matt. vi. 26ff.; Gal. vi. 7). God uses history also (II Kings xvii. 7, 19; Luke xiii. 1-5); and inner experience (Prov. xx. 27; Isaiah xxx. 20; II Cor. xii. 7-9). However, verbal revelation has a unique and pre-eminent place

among all these different modes. This may be the meaning of Psa. cxxxviii. 2 and it may reasonably be read into such passages as Psa. ciii. 7 and I Kings xix. 11-12 where history and nature respectively are also in view. However that may be, this conclusion is evident when we consider the enormous emphasis placed in the Bible on the medium of words, from the burden of the prophet (Exod. iv. 11, 12) to the teaching of Jesus Christ (John xiv. 24). Compared with words, Nature and history are equivocal indeed. The sunset says one thing, the earthquake another, and history too can very easily be read in quite contradictory ways (Jer. xlv. 1-3, 15-18, 20-23). Language however has a power, a range and a precision that are unequalled among modes of communication; it is one of the principal symbols of man's superiority to the animals and distinguished him from the first (Gen. i. 28, 'said to them'). Thus the conclusion that of all God's methods of communicating His thoughts to man publicly and permanently the written word stands supreme is inevitable if only in terms of our ability to understand.

Nature and Scripture

It is because of this pre-eminence of the written word that it is proper to turn to the Bible to find our right attitude to Nature, just as we turn to it for an ultimate understanding of history. When we do so we find not only that the Bible attributes theological meaning to natural happenings (e.g. Matt. v. 45), and gathers from them precepts for the practical conduct of life (e.g. Prov. vi. 6) but also that it regards knowledge gained from Nature by the methods of scientific enquiry (i.e. observation and experiment) as also God-given. This surely is the implication of Isaiah xxviii. 23-29 with its insistence that the agricultural expertise of the farmer exists because 'his God teaches him'. The Bible would seem to suggest that knowledge on this level (i.e. the scientific and technological) is open to men irrespective of their spirituality or otherwise; indeed the ungodly may even excel in it, as the narrative of Gen. iv. 17-25 indicates. But it is still the result of divine instruction. If this is so then it has an obvious bearing on our theme.

To sum up, we may say that these various aspects of the biblical testimony to Nature justify us in believing that Nature has many different things to teach us from God, and these things are not all on the same logical level. At what may be called the scientific or phenomenal level we learn techniques and the relation of physical cause and effect; at the behavioural level how to relate our daily conduct to the constitution of things; and at the theological level how to grasp God's purposes in what we observe. At this last level Scripture has to interpret things for us (and it clearly takes this role on itself) for nature's meaning is not self-evident. But on the purely scientific level nature is largely an autonomous revelation and capable of self-interpretation. 'The earth bringeth forth fruit *of itself*' (Mark iv. 28) seems to add point to this conclusion; nature appears to have built-in laws which suffice to govern her development, and we do not have to look outside her for explanations of why one phenomenon follows another. She is a closed system of cause and effect this verse seems to say, explicable within her own terms. The biblical miracles of course place a limit on Nature's autonomy; but in doing so they in fact establish the very point we are making, for the miracles are recognised by Scripture as 'wonders' i.e. events to understand which we feel impelled to invoke some special action of God. Nature therefore has a proper pattern of her own, or no event could be a 'wonder'.

However, outside her own terms Nature is not self-explanatory; she has to be understood as a continuing manifestation of the divine activity (Psa. cxlviii.; Col. i. 16, 17; Heb. i. 3). It is most important therefore that we don't stop at Nature, lest we worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator (Rom. i. 25).

These principles enable us to form a conclusion as to the relative dominions of the two revelations, the book of Nature and the book of Scripture. Inevitably there will be occasions when they treat of the same subject. When they do so, what course are we to take when they do not seem to agree? Which is then to be attributed the decisive word? Here we may invoke the Reformer's great principle (itself biblical): that since God

chooses to make Himself comprehensible to the 'plain man' (the man with an 'honest and good heart', Luke viii. 15) we should interpret revelation in the 'plain sense', i.e. in a way which will commend itself to men of good will who have no particular axe of self-interest to grind. In accordance with this principle it would therefore seem right to decide our question as follows: Nature is to have the decisive word when the interpretation in question is on the phenomenological (i.e. scientific) level; and Scripture when it is on the theological level (i.e. the level of the unseen). This will mean that natural observations, or scientific conclusions fairly based on them, must be allowed to 'warn us off' certain interpretations of Scripture when these fall within the provinces of science, and of course vice versa. This may not be a conclusion that immediately commends itself to all Christians; but for the reasons we have given it would seem to be a biblical one. Further, it is one which almost all Christians do in fact in particular cases subscribe to. As an example such passages as *Psa. xciii. 1, xcvi. 10*, are informative. The medieval church interpreted these in a mechanical sense: the earth was a fixture. Today all of us accept it as a matter of course that scientific observations have made this interpretation untenable. Nor do we feel that we are 'giving in' to science when we do this. It was plainly never the intention of the Bible to assert this. We do in fact allow science the last word because the interpretation displaced was on the scientific level, which Scripture nowhere claims to be within its own domain. As a result we have the positive gain that we are led to seek a more significant meaning to this verse which we might otherwise have lost: the world is established because God's throne is established, and cannot be moved any more than the righteous man can (*Psa. xv. 5. Jeremiah v. 22*, i.e. on the level of the unseen). If this principle is accepted it will prevent many incursions of science into theological matters; equally it will prevent many incursions of theology into scientific ones. This may not be a conclusion which immediately commends itself to all Christians. However it would seem to be a biblical one, and one to which nearly all Christians do in fact conform on occasion; for instance, over the interpretation of

Psa. xciii. 1, or of Jer. v. 22. The first passage we now no longer insist (as the Church one did) implies the mechanical fixity of the earth; as for the second – none of us imagines it to be a denial of the erosive power of the sea, or of its ability to encroach. God has taught us otherwise, through observational science, and we recognise that the passage must have a less superficial meaning. Thus again we are led to seek an interpretation more relevant to the sphere which Scripture claims as its own, viz. God's moral government of men and nations.

It is similar in the complementary situation. Many birds can be observed to die in hard winters, and the superficial may conclude from this that either they have no watchful Provider or that He is callous. But Scripture assures us that this is not so (Matt. x. 29). Its testimony is to be given precedence, because this is a sphere in which it *claims* to speak with authority.

This question of the sphere in which we are to recognize that the written Word has final authority is often obscured by posing it in a tendentious manner. 'Science versus Scripture' is the form in which we often meet it; and in this form the verdict, for the sincere Christian, is almost inevitable. But the anti-thesis is unfair; the question should be stated in terms of two sources of revelatory instruction, not in terms of one, and a human construct based on the other. It is a decision which in fairness concerns the book of Scripture and the book of Nature; or if one prefers it, one which must be settled between our systematisations from these, namely Theology and Science. Further, it should not be posed in terms of an animosity, a 'versus'. It should be the Christian's conviction that both books, as instruction manuals of the God of Truth, are harmoniously related, and our proper enquiry is when to turn to one and when to the other. That each has its own sovereign sphere, and that Scripture is not intended to cover the whole range of human interests, has always been the conviction of great men of God and one which is in fact implied in many of the great confessions (e.g. Art. VI of the Anglican articles) and fairly explicitly stated in the Bible (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

The biblical basis of Science

As a further help in getting our ideas straight it is useful to consider the biblical basis of science, or whether indeed it has any. The biblical teaching about the life of man in the world is not by any means a thing capable of a snap statement. In their eagerness to do justice to the Bible's doctrine of a world in the power of the evil one (I John v. 19), with him as its ruler (John iv. 30) and god (II Cor. iv. 4), and with its wisdom impotent to find out God (Matt. xi. 25, I Cor. i. 21), many earnest Christians have belittled, and continue to belittle, the whole scientific enterprise. This is surely a damaging mistake. In the first place it forgets such scriptures as Psa. xxiv. 1, Psa. civ. 24; Isaiah vi. 3; in the second misses the fact that Scripture underwrites the scientific and technological enterprise in a fundamental way. It records God's mandate to Adam to 'have dominion' over every living thing', and to 'fill the earth and subdue it' (Gen. i. 28). In illustration of what was intended by this we have man's technological use of natural resources (Deut. viii. 9) and of animals (Deut. xxviii. 4); his systematic gathering of knowledge (I Kings iv. 33); his interest in the mysteries of the creation (Psa. civ. 24; Psa. xix.; Psa. cxi. 2) resulting in knowledge commended in general terms as God-given (Deut. viii. 18; Isaiah xxviii. 23-29).

In the third place the anti-scientific emphasis misses the point that what has made the enterprise so often seem wrong is much more likely to be not its essential character but its motivation (cf. Gen. xi. 4). It is because science is an enterprise which gives man such power (cf. Gen. xi. 6) that it is peculiarly liable to be exhibited in a bad light. In this however, man's scientific capabilities are like his artistic ones, a gift from God (cf. Gen. ii. 9, 12; Exod. xxxi. 1-4) though very liable to be misused (Acts xvii. 29; Rev. xviii. 11, 12) so however are many of God's other gifts. Technological advances have, as a matter of history, often been prompted by a spirit of arrogance and self-assertiveness (Isaiah ix. 10) especially when military objectives have been concerned (Isaiah xxxvii. 24). All this must be recognized, but the lesson to be learned is surely not that science (and art)

should be belittled, but that they should be prosecuted in a spirit of thanksgiving and answerability – in the spirit of faith evinced by the centurion (Luke vii. 8) to whom the power he possessed spoke most loudly of the Authority to which he was responsible. Science carried on in this spirit has a divine mandate. It is a reading of God's book of Nature with wonder and profit. But even when the spirit of its enquiry falls short of what it should be, science still has about it many qualities which should commend it to the Christian. For one thing, it is in principle committed to an objective reality, the created order. It is never primarily speculation. For another, it does in practice return again and again to this reality to be reformed by it. It is rare indeed for its theories to be regarded as exempt from correction by new observational data; few scientists reject data merely because they don't like them. Compare theology! It is in rather a different case. It has often been far less committed to Holy Scripture, far less ready to be reformed by it, and far more prone to pick and choose. The difference between science and theology is no doubt one of degree in this respect, but it is hardly in question which of the two has been truer to its real self, at least within our present century.

What we must insist on in science therefore is a spirit of reverence towards its subject matter and responsibility towards God; but granted these, we must allow that science has divine backing and within its limits embodies Divine instruction. Such would seem to be the teaching of Scripture.

The Biblical idea of Creation

A clear appreciation of the biblical mandate for science and technology is one element which must enter into an informed judgement about the question we set out to discuss. Another, entering in a different way, is an appreciation of the various aspects of the biblical doctrine of Creation. The Bible's doctrine is hardly the simple, unsophisticated conception that it is often made out to be. We have only to look at the Hebrew word for 'create' (*bara*) to realise this. This word is frequently taken with clear justification to signify the production of something

from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). In the biblical record Man is said to have been 'created' (Gen. i. 27). However he is also said to have been 'formed from the dust of the ground' (Gen. ii. 7). Whether these two statements come from different sources is a matter I am neither competent nor concerned to discuss; it is enough for me that they have come to men woven into Holy Scripture as the gift of the all-seeing and all-disposing providence of God. To me therefore they represent 'data', to be received and not argued with. But clearly they present a problem as they stand, just as the dual nature of the electron presents us with a problem. There is evidently more to the biblical notion of creation than at first appears.

It was an insight of Augustine that creation involved not just material objects, but also the space-time framework (to anticipate a little) in which they exist: Creation to him was *non in tempore sed cum tempore*, time itself belonging to the created order. This idea is not therefore a modern one. Augustine's conception is certainly in harmony with Gen. i. 1 and with Heb. xi. 3 (where the Greek for 'world' is a temporal one, 'ages'); and that space too must be similarly comprehended would seem to be agreeable to the thought of Psa. civ. 2 and Isaiah xl. 22. These considerations lead us to the conclusion that the springs of creation arise not within our space-time framework (even at ultimate distances in space or time) but outside it in the eternity where God dwells (Isaiah lvii. 15). If that is the true implication of biblical thought then it follows that in the final analysis God's creative activity cannot be spoken of adequately in spatio-temporal terms at all, and the attempt to do so (to bring home to men the great lessons it is essential for them to learn) is bound to present us with an account which must not be probed too far or too unimaginatively. In its twin theme of Redemption the Bible expresses itself in temporal language of which the same might be said. It speaks about 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev. xiii. 8) or the saints as 'chosen in Him before the foundation of the world' (Eph. i. 4), and it would seem beside the point to ask to what instant on our physical time scale these verses refer. The answer might well be, to none,

and this may be the correct reply to similar questions in our present context of Creation; for example, to what physical time intervals do the six days of Genesis refer?

But the Bible also speaks of creation as a process within our setting of space-time. If its springs are in eternity the stream nevertheless flows within our continuum. Man *created* in God's image, was 'formed from the dust of the ground' (Gen. ii. 7) and the word used (*yatsar*), in its 'plain sense', indicates not instantaneity, but process (compare Isaiah xlv. 10; xlv. 9). Further, the word *bara* itself, to which appeal is so often made by those who insist on the suddenness of creation and its character as the antithesis of process, is itself applied by Scripture to situations where the processes of God's continuing providence are the very things being spoken about. This application of the idea of creation is very wide; it embraces the cycles of Nature in which one generation or turn of the year follows another (Psa. civ. 29, 30), the Divine sovereignty in history (Isaiah liv. 16), and the inner experience of the restored sinner (Psa. li. 10). With all this in mind, it is very difficult to see on what grounds some have maintained that process is the very opposite of creation, or that to ask how God created is to deny that He created at all. Rather, these instances justify us in maintaining that the spatio-temporal sequence in which God has brought His created works into being may well form the reverent object of study of the embryologist, the historian or the psychologist in the examples quoted. Their findings will not disclose the Creator: but to those who 'understand by faith' that there is a Creator they will provide cause for thanksgiving and worship. In fact, the understanding of creation as an aspect of God's continuing providence gives point and emphasis to the Bible's call for a life of early devotion; God is *my* Creator not merely because He once formed Adam (and has now turned things over to natural processes) but because He is the One to whom, in an immediate sense, I owe the fact of my existence (Eccles. xii. 1).

In seeking for human analogies to help us to understand the Divine activity – and we have clear biblical authority for seeking such help not only in its revelation that we are made in

the image of God but also in the Bible's very frequent use of such analogies itself – we come across one which because it sets out to deal with human life in its many-sidedness goes as far perhaps as any in throwing light on the problem. This analogy, due I believe to Dorothy Sayers, concerns the human writer and the character he creates. The characters originate in the living and thinking of the author, within the space-time in which *he* exists, so to speak. But they also originate in the events described in the narrative, in the space-time within which *it* moves. The two space-times have no necessary connection; the author's may be London in the Victorian era, the narrative's, Mars in the year 2001. Nor is the order of appearance of the *dramatis personae* necessarily the same in the two settings, for the author may have worked out his last chapter before he plans the first, though perhaps some rough correspondence in order is more likely. What we must emphasize however is that it can be said of *any* character, at *any* stage of the narrative, 'this person is the creation of the author' without denying that *within* the narrative such a character has grown naturally from a young man or a family circle. The ageing David Copperfield was a creation of Charles Dickens; notwithstanding, he developed within the story from the young David Copperfield and still earlier from his parents. The older man therefore does not have to appear fully grown without antecedents; he can develop quite naturally within the narrative *without losing his created status*. Thus we if ask, how has the mature David Copperfield come-to-be? we can answer in two ways: he is the creation of the author, who thought him out and determined his nature; and, he is the outcome of the events of the narrative. Both answers are true, though the first is the more final. It is this first aspect that corresponds most closely to the biblical idea of creation; the second answers rather to its doctrine of providence, though the distinction must not be pressed. What we are suggesting is that in the human analogy there are two logically quite distinct space-time frameworks: the human author's, in which he eats, sleeps, shaves or travels to his office; and the narrative's, in which the same things are true of his creatures. Similarly, in the divine reality we meet

two frameworks; the eternity which God inhabits, and historical time in which his creatures live out their little days. Accounts of God's handiwork referred to these two frameworks, may properly be spoken of as complementary.

'God finished His Work'

One aspect of creation needs to be returned to in view of the Bible's regard for creation as a continuing feature of God's world. In what sense is it true to say that God 'finished' His work if it is apparently still going on? This is not perhaps such a difficult problem as might at first appear. The completion of God's work is signaled by the creation of man. He is the crown of the created order, and nothing higher is contemplated or perhaps in the circumstances possible. Now this can easily be reconciled with the facts of Nature. In many respects material systems are clearly limited by their physical properties. Land animals have an upper limit of weight, animals with an exoskeleton an upper limit of size. The limitation arises from such physical characteristics as strength-weight ratios, or the diffusion coefficients of oxygen and carbon dioxide. There is every reason to believe that such limitations, which seem to be inherent in the very constitution of material systems apply also to intelligence and mental powers. Granted therefore that the created order has attained this limit in man the language of finality and completion used by Genesis appears quite natural. God had no further advance to make; His work was finished.

Drawing together the threads

It is now necessary to draw together the rather diverse threads of the arguments and show how they bear on the attitude of the believer to the biological theory of evolution. This will be our concluding task.

In the first place we recognized that God instructs man through various avenues of revelation, in particular the Bible, Nature, history and inner experience. Firstly because of its own claim and secondly because of the nature of the case we recog-

nised Scripture as having the precedence among all these avenues in the sense that it is interpretative of the others on the ultimate, theological level. Nevertheless this does not mean that the others are superfluous, thrown in for good measure but if need be dispensable. They have things to tell us which Scripture nowhere claims to tell, and *on their own level* have every right to be given the last word. Especially is this true of Nature, whose fixed order (Jer. xxxi. 36 R.S.V.) exists independently of Man. Scripture claims as its own sphere what pertains to 'instruction in righteousness' (II Tim. iii. 16); methods of good farming must be learned elsewhere (Isaiah xxviii. 23-29). This naturally leads us to ask how we can decide whether a point is to be settled by appeal to Scripture or to one of God's other books, such as Nature. This may require some consideration; and it is probably true to say that sometimes the growing experience of the whole church is needed to come to a right conclusion. It would be foolish to ridicule our medieval forebears for what we now believe was a false exegesis of the verses which speak of the earth's fixity; a new perspective had to be achieved to see this. However two principles can, on biblical authority, be accepted; nothing that God has revealed anywhere is to be despised, and everything that He has revealed belongs to His one self-consistent truth. Thus the fossil record of early man-like creatures is not something to be disparaged for it is part of God's book of Nature. Nor can it, in the long run, prove to be inconsistent with the Genesis account. This, at least, is the conviction of the author.

This question of 'proper understanding' throws into prominence another, that of proper attitude. God requires of us that we receive His instruction as little children. First of all it is 'data', something given and to be accepted on Authority (not of course *human* authority) even if not understood. Second, it is to be pondered over, though never questioned. The pattern is the same whether the data are from the Bible and addressed to the theologian in us, or from Nature and addressed to the scientist in us. This attitude implies that the data are to be our starting point, our touchstone, and our anchor. The test of truth is not to be conformity with our philosophy, but

with what is 'given'; our speculations (and we must all needs be speculative to some extent) are to be firmly attached at this point. Third, it is to be taken in its entirety (Luke xxiv. 25). We are not to pick and choose, either on the irrelevant grounds of our preconceived ideas, or because certain elements of the 'given' seem irreconcilable with others. As particular examples of this we saw that according to Scripture God's creative activity is associated with the present as well as the past, and we are not free to deny this to save our system; nor on the other hand are we free to deny unwelcome evidence from the fossil record. Fourthly, we are to recognise that, conformably to our position as little children, some elements of God's instruction will be for the moment incomprehensible (John xiii. 7; Dan. xii. 8). We are to expect this, and not to be stumbled by it. To be offended on this score is to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, and to forget the Psalmists injunction given in a very relevant context (Psa. cxxxi. 3) to 'hope in the Lord' i.e. to look confidently for Him to resolve our difficulty in His own time. We need to take to heart the lesson of the Crucifixion. *With a wealth of Old Testament revelation* and with no personal doubts as to whether it was to be received or not as the Word of God the early disciples yet misunderstood completely (until after the event) the nature of the Messianic mission, and the misunderstanding was profound. Is it inconceivable that our understanding of the Creation narrative might not be similarly at fault until corrected by the march of events and renewed attention to *all* God's avenues of instruction?

We need to remember that the Christian life is a life of faith. If hope has not yet attained its object (Rom. viii. 24, 25) neither has faith (I Cor. xiii. 12); and this means that we must expect life to be beset with problems, including intellectual ones. It is part of the exhilaration of the life of faith to see how God will overcome our problems, whether they are the material ones of making ends meet, or the intellectual ones of harmonising apparent irreconcilables. To shirk the discipline of living with a problem till God is pleased to resolve it is to opt out, to this extent, of the life of faith. It is my belief that the constant invoking of the miraculous, without adequate reason,

is just this. No evangelical Christian doubts that the Creator could, if He wished, call the entire cosmos into being, fully formed and operative, in six literal days or even in six literal seconds. What the Christian has to ask himself however is whether *all that God has been pleased to reveal to him*, through the Bible, through Nature (Gal. vi. 7), through history (Psa. cvii. 43), and through inner discipline (Psa. xvi. 7) compels him to take this view. One of the great lessons of the Bible is that God works more often in ways we describe as ordinary than in ways we regard as miraculous (Matt. xvi. 4); its miracles are often all relatively rare events, and (performed before their eyes) designed to arrest the attention of weak and sinful men. There seems therefore no *biblical* *raison d'être* for the Creation to have involved such 'miraculous' elements as have just been mentioned, i.e. six literal days and the instantaneous appearance of adult forms. To maintain that *we cannot accept that the Creator was at work* unless it be conceded that the events were outside the scope of a principle of uniformity may be a sign, not of faith but of unbelief (John iv. 48).

My conclusion therefore to the question of how we are to decide the issue of the origin of Man is this. Where the points at issue are theological and ultimate they must be answered on biblical grounds¹. Where they are biological and phenomenal they must be answered on scientific grounds². Where there seems to be a double reference, i.e. an issue which touches both the theological and the scientific, care must be taken to do justice to both³. Sometimes, indeed the way to do this may not be at all clear. In such a case we must be willing to live with the problem, until the God of All Truth is pleased to bring us to a right understanding, and to a grateful appreciation of the consistency of all His avenues of instruction.

1. e.g. whether man was made in the image of God.

2. e.g. whether man has genetic continuity with the animal creation.

3. e.g. in what sense man is made of the 'dust of the ground', or creation was accomplished in six days.