



## *The Young Earth*

### **Lecture 1: Introduction**

This series of lectures attempts to do two things: first, to examine critically the generally accepted view today that all life began as a result of an unaided chemical mix, which is the starting point of all Darwinian evolution, and, second, to provide an intelligent defence of the traditional Christian belief that God created everything in the beginning. This first lecture emphasises the fact that in the minds of most westerners the theory of evolution now completely overshadows the traditional belief of those who accept the creation account in the book of Genesis, that God brought everything into being as a sovereign act of his power. Many have come to accept as an unquestionable fact that biological evolution is scientific truth, and that the Bible account of creation consequently religious fable. Muslims also reject what the book of Genesis reveals about creation. They regard Genesis, and indeed the whole Bible, as corrupt. The creation accounts in the Koran are vague and allow for a range of interpretations. Various liberal movements within Islam accept modern scientific views concerning the age of the earth and evolution, just as those who consider themselves to be liberal Christians do.

The theory of evolution is constantly presented to us these days on television, as well as through other media, as an assumed fact, not only in nature programmes but also in almost every context of life, so that we are being continuously bombarded with atheistic ideas. This has turned the British nation into secular atheists, at least outwardly and in practice if not totally in their inner instinctive beliefs, and so the theory of evolution is probably the single biggest influence in Britain, which has turned people away from, and hardened popular opinion against, faith in Jesus. This has played a fundamental part in undermining Christian values in British society. Many assume that there is no God to be answerable to. Therefore, it is important that we as Christians understand the issues involved in the creation-evolution debate, so that we may give a reasoned account of our belief in Bible creation.

### British Schools

The prominence given to evolution in Britain today is best illustrated in the world of education, from first reading books in primary schools right through to university textbooks. In each of the countries of Britain there is an agreed syllabus for religious education in state schools, but that syllabus does not include teaching creationism; only the teaching of Christianity as just one of several world religions. At the same time, the teaching of evolution is compulsory in publicly funded schools. For instance, the National

Curriculum for England requires that students at Key Stage 4 (ages 14-16) be taught: 1) that the fossil record is evidence for evolution, and 2) that biological variation and selection may lead to evolution or to extinction. This allows no place for God and so it is essentially an atheistic position, and similar requirements exist in the schools of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Not only children at Key Stage 4 but long before they reach their teens children in many schools are familiarised with the general concepts of evolution and the idea that the human race has ascended from the apes.

Over against the official requirement in state schools for evolution to be taught and creation, at best, to be ignored, there are some Christian schools in Britain where an informed presentation of creation is on the curriculum, notably, but not exclusively, in the few Christian Academies in the north of England based in Middlesbrough, Gateshead and Doncaster. These northern England schools belong to the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, previously the Vardy Foundation after its founder, Sir Peter Vardy, a committed Christian and a friend of former Prime Minister Tony Blair. The Foundation's work is continuing to develop and it is intended to set up a total of seven specialist independent schools in the UK. This has not been without opposition, in spite of the fact that the Emmanuel schools are achieving excellent educational standards in all subjects, and have restored much needed 'old-school' discipline, which non-Christian parents have praised. The many Church of England schools are different in that they follow the requirements of the national curriculum and so are not opposed by the public in the same way that the so-called 'fundamentalist' Christian schools are.

The reason that these Christian schools are able to operate is because of the present Government's City Academic's Initiative, which is meant to address the problem of the failing inner city schools. Since the year 2000 the word "Academy" in England has been applied to a type of secondary school, which is independent but publicly funded and publicly run. Such Academies are outside the control of the LEAs or Local Educational Authorities. Since Academies are intended as a method of dealing with the entrenched failure of schools in England that do not achieve academically, the success of the Emmanuel Schools Foundation is noteworthy. The existence of these schools is also favoured by the fact that in 2006 a poll indicated that more than 40% of Britons believe that creationism or intelligent design should be taught in school science lessons. Perhaps needless to say, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, leader of the Church of England, has expressed his view that creationism should not be taught in our schools.

It would seem, however, that evolution is not always taught with absolute conviction even in our state schools. The Scotsman newspaper carried an article on 22nd June 2006 informing its readers that the world's leading scientists have issued a damning statement against the teaching of creationism in schools, arguing that denying the facts of evolution damages the development of children! The article says that the national science academies of 67 countries, including the Royal Society, have issued a joint statement warning that scientific evidence about the origins of life was being "concealed, denied, or confused" in many schools. It added that teaching children about Darwinian evolution and the natural world was integral to protecting the planet! The statement's purpose was to present a united front against the teaching of creationism and intelligent design in schools, whether in the United States, the UK, or elsewhere.

## American Schools

In the United States of America, creationists and evolutionists are engaged in a long-standing battle over the legal status of the teaching of creation and evolution in the public school science classroom. Until the late 19th Century Bible creation was taught in nearly all schools in the United States, as was the case in Britain. In the southern states of America in particular the teaching of evolution in schools was banned for a long time, but halfway through the last century a general feeling was growing that such a ban ignored the need to protect academic freedom.

The matter has been thrashed out over the years in American courts of law. One Christian backlash in this public controversy has been the rise of what has been called the “Intelligent Design Movement”. Intelligent design asserts that what we see in nature is evidence that life was created by an “intelligent designer”, i.e. God. Supporters of ID say they take “all available facts” into account rather than just those available through science. But, as in Britain, an overwhelming majority of the scientific community in the USA regards intelligent design as unscientific, as pseudoscience, or just simply as junk science.

Many regard teaching intelligent design in schools as being on the same level as encouraging children to accept the medieval belief that the earth is flat. In the same vein the US National Academy of Sciences has stated that “intelligent design” and other claims of supernatural intervention in the origin of life are not science because they cannot be tested by experimentation. In reply it has been asserted many times over by Christians that biological evolution is also outside the sphere of observation and experimentation since it is claimed that it has occurred over million and even billions of years. This being the case, Christians argue that not only creationism but evolution is a doctrine of faith.

The public debate over these issues has raged back and forth in the USA for many decades, and it has left many Americans opting for a middle position. Earlier last year a telephone poll run by John Zogby, a noted American political TV pollster, found that 69% of his viewers believe that biology teachers should teach not only Darwin’s theory of evolution, but also “the scientific evidence against it.” The wording of the proposition implied that the argument for intelligent design is supported by scientific data. In contrast just 21% chose the other option given, that biology teachers should teach only Darwin’s theory of evolution. One in ten viewers was not sure what to think, but clearly many Americans are in favour of creationism being taught in schools alongside evolution. In spite of this, in Kansas during the state Republican primary elections on 1st August 2006, moderate Republicans took control away from the anti-evolution conservatives, and as a result it is expected that the teaching of Darwinian evolution will predominate in their schools at the expense of creationism.

## A Young Earth or an Ancient Earth?

The overall title for these lectures is “The Young Earth”. The age of the earth is crucial in the argument either for or against evolution. Creationists have traditionally held the view that the earth is no older than about 10,000 years. This is based to some extent on

tracing back through the Bible the generations of the human race as recorded in the genealogies of the Bible as found mainly in the book of Genesis. On the basis of a literal interpretation of these genealogies the earth could be even younger than 10,000 years. But evolutionists argue that life on earth to have developed from an original chemical 'soup', through early primitive life-forms right up through all the intermediate forms of life to arrive at the great variety of creatures which exist today, including the human race, a long period of time would have been necessary. Not only that but evolutionists say that geological evidence establishes the fact that the earth is very old – millions and even billions of years old – and so it is asserted that geology, the science of the earth, supports evolutionary theory. The geological 'evidence' in terms of the age of the rocks, and the fossils found in them, is what causes evolutionists to speak with such confidence and authority.

It was this supposed geological evidence, which caused belief in young-earth creationism to decline from the 18th century onwards with the development of what was then the new science of geology. The father of modern geology is reckoned to be James Hutton, who was a lawyer, a medical doctor and a gentleman farmer in Scotland. It is significant that he was a close friend of the Scottish philosopher David Hume, who rejected belief in the existence of God and the human soul.

Hutton's study of rock formations in the Scottish highlands during the second half of the 18th century convinced him that the earth is much older than was generally supposed by those who believed the Bible. Hutton's main line of argument was that the tremendous displacements and changes in the strata of the rocks in the Highlands could not have happened in a short period of time. He dismissed the notion that these rock formations could have happened suddenly by means of natural catastrophic events. He believed that the processes of uplift and erosion were very gradual, and so the earth must be ancient in order to allow time for these changes to occur. Before long, scientific injuries building on his claims had pushed back the age of the earth by millions of years. Though this falls short of the commonly accepted belief of the age of the earth held by modern scientists, it was a big move away from the Christian view of a young earth.

Hutton's ideas were called Uniformitarianism and Gradualism. Uniformitarianism is the assumption that the natural processes operating in the past are the same as those that can be observed operating in the present, summarised in the statement: "The present is the key to the past." Gradualism is the belief that changes in the earth's rocks happen only gradually and not suddenly such as through cataclysmic events. The Genesis account of the Flood in Chapters 6-8, provides an explanation as to why the geology of the earth is as it is. The Flood was a cataclysmic event on a worldwide scale, but evolutionists do not accept the Flood and the consequent sudden changes in the earth's geology.

The concepts of Uniformitarianism and gradualism were popularised in the early 19th Century by Sir Charles Lyell, another Scottish lawyer. It was the energetic advocacy of Lyell, which led to the public and scientific communities largely accepting the belief that the earth is very ancient. Many religious groups also abandoned young-earth creationism as a literal description of the earth's history and came to regard the biblical account of creation in Genesis as purely allegorical or mythological.

All this was before Charles Darwin published his definitive work *The Origin of Species* in 1859. The supposed scientific findings of geology provided the backdrop for the book, and the book served to complement the geology by focusing on the fossils found in the rocks. Today an estimated 95% of US citizens with degrees in science reject the idea of a young earth. Among those scientists who work in fields related to geology, the percentage of those rejecting the idea of a young earth is even higher. The situation is no different in Britain.

The debate about the age of the earth will be considered in detail in later lectures.

## Pro- and Anti-Young Earth Organisations

The prolonged tussle between those who believe in a young earth and those who say it is very old has brought into being a considerable number of organisations dedicated to supporting either one side or the other.

Among the Christian organisations in favour of a young earth are:

**Creation Ministries International.** The parent organisation began in Australia in 1977 and has since spread to other English speaking countries, including the UK. In 1978 they launched a magazine called "Creation". The organisation is Bible centred and evangelical. While they recognise that the first priority is to preach the Gospel they also believe that the truth of creation is an integral part of the Bible message.

**The Institute for Creation Research.** The Institute was first established in 1970 in California and reorganised with its present name in 1972 to meet the need for research, publication and teaching in those fields of science particularly relevant to the study of origins. It offers graduate research programmes at a high scientific level. At the same time it regards the book of Genesis as a factual account of creation and that the Bible is the word of God.

**The Creation Research Society.** This is a scientific society based in the state of Michigan but with a worldwide membership. It is recognised internationally for its firm commitment to scientific special creation. The CRS was founded in 1963 by a group of ten like-minded scientists who had corresponded with each other for a number of years. A major impetus for the founding of the CRS was that these scientists had been unable to publish in established journals scientific information favourable to the creation viewpoint. Believing that there were probably other scientists with similar experiences, these men saw the need for a journal in which such information could be published, and so from 1964 the *Creation Research Society Quarterly* came into being.

**The Creation Evidence Museum.** This museum is situated in Glen Rose, Texas. It is dedicated to presenting scientific evidence, particularly in their locality, for creation and design by a personal Creator. It was established in 1964.

**Northwest Creation Network.** This evangelical organisation in northwest USA offers conferences, videos and lectures dedicated to the Bible truth of creation.

Creation Science Evangelism. This is another American evangelical work. It began in 1989. Though it is American based it organises lectures on creation and evolution in churches and universities all over the world.

The Creation Science Movement. This organisation is based in Portsmouth, England. It is the oldest creationist movement in the world, founded in the UK in 1932 as the Evolution Protest Movement by prominent members of the Victoria Institute. They were concerned at the scientific, ethical and the theological consequences that belief in evolution brings to society. Their speakers regularly tour the UK and abroad speaking on creation, science and the Bible.

The Biblical Creation Society. This is another UK evangelical Christian society, based at Rugby in the West Midlands, started in 1976. It advances and defends the Bible's teaching on creation. Their publication, "Origins" provides comment and articles at the technical and more popular level.

There are a number of other creation initiatives run by groups or individuals to be found on the Internet. The Wikipedia Young Earth Creationism site gives details, as it does also of anti-creationist websites.

### The Nature of the Controversy.

The debate between evolutionists and creationists is a debate between two opposing worldviews or mindsets. The creationist view rests on the belief in the existence of God and that he brought all things into being out of nothing. Creation is regarded essentially as a supernatural event. The worldview of evolutionists, however, excludes any possibility of the supernatural. Evolution they say has come about through a long series of natural events. The evidence for these events is found in the earth's rock formations, the fossil record in the rocks, and in the geological strata of the earth. This evidence is assumed to explain the origin of everything as a very lengthy natural process, and so there is no need to propose the existence of God as the one who started it all off. Evolutionists are so convinced of this that as far as they are concerned there is nothing to debate with the creationists. But there are some evolutionists who have taken on themselves, with almost evangelical zeal, the task of promoting evolution at the popular level and deriding creation, such as the British zoologist Richard Dawkins, whose campaign against creation will be looked at in a later lecture.

There are those, including Christians, who seek to combine evolution and creation by arguing that God created everything through the process of evolution. God created the original Chemical 'soup' which made evolution possible. Those who believe that God started it all off and then had nothing more to do with it believe in an impersonal and distant God. This view is called Deistic Evolution, whereas the position of those who believe that God has a personal relationship with his evolved world is called Theistic Evolution. This latter view raises the question as to whether it is possible to combine evolutionary theory with the account of creation in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. This also will be considered in a later lecture.

Before ending this lecture we need to distinguish between macroevolution and microevolution. “Macro” means “big” and refers to the universe and the use of the telescope. “Micro” means “small” and is to do with studying very small life forms through the microscope. Evolutionary theory has gone way beyond the sphere of biology on earth to speculations about the origin of the universe and whether there is life elsewhere in the solar system, in our galaxy the Milky Way, and in the universe generally.

Finally we should mention that the principle of evolution, that everything evolves through slow and gradual development, has also been applied to virtually every sphere of human activity: religion (especially the formation of the Bible), politics, anthropology, the social sciences, medicine, psychology, and so on. The principle of gradual development from the simple to the complex dominates modern thinking in so many ways, and the atheistic mindset behind biological evolution has been transferred to many intellectual disciplines. This is why atheism in its different forms permeates every aspect of modern society.

