

Faith and Thought

A Journal devoted to the study of the inter-relation
of the Christian revelation and modern research

Vol. 98

Numbers 2 & 3

1970

RICHARD J. P. ACWORTH, M.A., D.-in-L.

Creation and Evolution

Before we begin to discuss the subject that we have come together to consider, I should like to say, very briefly, what a joy it is for me to speak before this meeting of the Victoria Institute, a body before which my late father, Captain Bernard Acworth, lectured on aspects of this very subject during the 1930's. And I should like to express my gratitude, *our* gratitude, I am sure, to Dr. Spanner and Mr. Barnes, who suggested that this discussion should take place when they were present at a lecture which I gave in Westminster Chapel, with Dr. Lloyd-Jones in the Chair, on the subject of *Creation, Evolution and the Christian Faith*. (This lecture has now been published as a booklet by the Evangelical Press, under the same title, price 12p). The subject that we are to discuss is one that is of vital concern to every Christian, I believe; and I therefore welcome this opportunity of discussing it with fellow-Christians, not all of whom see eye to eye about it. I hope that it will be axiomatic during this discussion that everyone involved is presumed to be in good faith, and genuinely concerned for the cause of Truth. So far as we are concerned, no personal attack on anyone is intended, even when the ideas of some are subjected to strong criticism. I am sure that you all understand that. But it is most important that we should discuss this matter thoroughly. For evolution has become the most widely accepted philosophy of the modern world. In an age which is marked by widespread and far-reaching scepticism, when previously accepted values and beliefs are almost universally under attack, belief in evolution and progress is probably the nearest thing that can be found to a generally held presupposition of thought – a presupposition that is held by many with an almost religious fervour. And there can be little doubt, I suggest, that this general acceptance of the theory of evolution has been the chief factor which, during the past century, has undermined popular

belief in Christianity, and, amongst those who have remained Christians, belief in the reliability and strict truth of the Scriptures as the Word of God.

In this discussion of the theory of evolution, it has fallen to me to examine the theory of evolution from the biblical and religious point of view, and in particular to examine some of the attempts that have been made to reconcile the theory of evolution with biblical Christianity. I shall not in this paper be entering into the scientific evidence for or against the theory of organic evolution, but shall confine myself to suggesting that this theory is not reconcilable with the biblical account of origins. Mr. Arthur Jones and others will be approaching the question from the scientific side. Nevertheless I feel that I ought to make it clear that my own rejection of the theory of evolution was not in the first instance based on its incompatibility with the scriptural evidence. It was based on the lack of convincing scientific evidence for the truth of the theory, and on the strength of the scientific and philosophical arguments against it. I have never actually believed in evolution, but I long thought it a matter of only secondary importance, hardly relevant from a religious point of view. In the course of time, however, I came to see to what a large extent 'progressive humanism' both inside and outside the Christian Church was based on the premiss of evolution; this renewed my interest in the subject, and I turned to the scientific evidence with a new realisation of its importance. It was then that I came to see once again, for myself, how weak the scientific evidence for evolution is, and how unreasonable are the arguments which are advanced to support the theory that higher and more complicated organisms (including man) have evolved gradually, over a period of many millions of years, by a process of descent with modification, by means of natural selection, from lower and simpler ancestors. It was this realisation of the unreasonableness of the evolutionary theory that enabled me to return to a much stricter view of the authority and inerrancy of the Bible than I had previously held.

But the subject that I want to consider with you now is that of the relationship between the theory of evolution and the

Bible. *Prima facie* at least, it seems to me, it is evident that there is a sharp contrast between the Genesis account and the evolutionary theory of origins. Where the theory of evolution teaches that the world began in an unorganised form, and that life has gradually evolved, over a period of hundreds of millions of years, by means of struggle and death (natural selection) acting on random variations (or mutations), through which higher forms of life have appeared only gradually, the Bible tells us that the whole world of living things was created within a week, according to all their various kinds, at no very remote period in time. It is indeed possible to dispute whether the 'days' mentioned in Genesis i were literal days of 24 hours each, but Genesis ii. 4, seems to make it plain that the creation did not take any great period of time (compare the same usage of *beyom* – in the day that – in Numbers vii. 84, where it is also used comprehensively to sum up what was done at one time – i.e. in a succession of natural days), while Exodus xx. 11, seems to suggest that the days of creation were indeed days in the ordinary sense. Be that as it may, however, there can be no possible doubt that Genesis i. repeats ten times that the different 'kinds' of creatures were created separately, to reproduce 'after their kinds'. This may not indeed mean every precise species as it exists today, for the Bible, teaching that all races of men now alive are descended from Noah, implies that species are variable within quite wide limits; but it does exclude any transformation of one basic kind of creatures into another. This teaching of Genesis on the fixity and permanence of the basic kinds of creatures is confirmed in the New Testament, where St. Paul tells us that 'All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds' (I Cor. xv. 39), thus reminding us that man differs from the animals, not only in respect of his immortal soul or spirit, but also in respect of his body, and that animals, birds and fishes are essentially different amongst themselves.

These are far from being the only points on which the Bible appears to contradict the theory of evolution. The creation of Eve from Adam seems irreconcilable with an evolutionary

view, since it seems difficult to suppose that, while man evolved, woman was produced directly by God. The biblical account of the Flood, too, tells of a world-wide catastrophe which, if it truly happened, must have accounted for many of those features of the physical world, and of fossil distribution, which evolutionists interpret in terms of gradual processes operating over long millennia. But the most fundamental contrast between the biblical and the evolutionary accounts of origins does not depend on a literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis; rather does it concern the whole tenor of the scriptural teaching on the relations between God, man and the world, and on the origin of evil. For the Bible everywhere supposes that the world and man were created good, and that all the disorder that we now find in the world is a result of human (and angelic) sin. On an evolutionist view, however, disorder and conflict are necessary features of the world that God has made, and of the means that He has chosen to bring it to perfection; they must thus be attributed to God Himself as their cause, and not to any sin on man's part. As a result, consistent Christian evolutionists play down the seriousness of Original Sin, since it is difficult to see how creatures that had only just evolved into human beings could be capable of committing a sin of such absolute gravity as to involve all their descendents. But in fact evolutionism undermines our whole realisation of our own and mankind's sinfulness, since it leads us to think of our present condition as normal in a being who is only gradually on his way up from the beast, instead of seeing it as terrible in someone whom God created in His own image and likeness. All the evil and selfish tendencies which the Bible regards as the effects of sin are, on an evolutionary view, entirely natural, as animal instincts not yet wholly overcome in man. The theory of evolution tends to minimise, it would seem, human freedom and moral responsibility; more seriously still, it seems to compromise the moral nature and character of God Himself. However, we shall return to these points when we consider some of the attempts that are made to reconcile the theory of evolution with Christianity.

There is one further point which, I think, needs to be mentioned while we are considering the *prima facie* opposition between the theory of evolution and biblical Christianity. And that is this. If the theory of evolution is adopted in a consistent way, it seems that one must allow that man is continuing to evolve. If this is so, it seems that Christ Himself cannot have been a perfect man. Christian evolutionists, it is true, do not generally accept this conclusion, and many of them believe that the upward movement of evolution ended with the appearance of man; but it is possible to regard this as a lack of consistency in their acceptance of evolution.

Further aspects of the contrast – which I believe to amount to a contradiction – between biblical Christianity and the theory of evolution, will come to light in the course of the rest of this paper; but it is hoped that what has been said will have been sufficient to show that anyone who attempts to reconcile the two has undertaken a most difficult task. And it is important to notice that, contrary to what some writers say (cf. L. Gilkey in *Science and Religion*, ed. I. G. Barbour), Christian opposition to the theory of evolution is not due to any objection to the general scientific conception of a world governed by uniform natural laws; on the contrary, there is nothing in the concept of unchanging natural law which, properly understood, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. No; it is the actual contents of the theory of evolution to which exception is taken, as being both unsound from a scientific and philosophical point of view, and contrary on many points to the specific teaching of Scripture.

We have seen, then, that there is a very wide divergence between the biblical and evolutionary accounts of origins. Nevertheless, there are many Christians who manage to reconcile the two accounts in their own minds. The main object of this paper is to examine some of the attempts that have been made to reconcile the theory of evolution with the Christian faith. It is not my purpose to examine the views of those who, while making some concessions to the evolutionary outlook, nevertheless continue to believe that God created the main orders of animals, and in particular man, by His own

direct action. I shall confine my attention to those who consider that man is derived from sub-human ancestors, by a process of descent with modification, but who think that this view can be reconciled with the biblical account of Creation.

Many people, first of all, have tried to reconcile the biblical doctrine of creation with the theory of evolution by accepting evolution as the source of the human body, but attributing the origin of the soul to special creation. On such a view, God waited for the evolutionary process to produce – or, if you like, guided this process to the production of – a body fit to be united to a spiritual soul; and then He created human souls, made in His own image, to inhabit the body that had been evolved. People who hold this sort of view think of the soul as what makes a man a man, and they tend to think that, in this way, they can accept the evolution of the human body without having to modify the rest of Christian doctrine to any serious extent. In my view, this theory would represent the most hopeful way of reconciling creation and evolution, if one was prepared to accept a strict dualism of body and mind, and thus to attribute man's entire conscious life to the specially created soul, and to deny that animals have a consciousness at all similar to that of human beings. In a strictly Cartesian framework, evolution would not raise most of the difficulties for a Christian that it raises once one accepts psychological evolution; though even then it would remain contrary to the teaching of Genesis that God created the different kinds of creatures separately. But in fact no evolutionist whom I have met or read accepts such a dualism; evolutionists uniformly regard psychological evolution as inseparable from the evolution of the bodily structures of the various species. On a view such as this, it is not possible to separate the creation of the soul from the evolution of the body in a meaningful or helpful way.

Despite these and other difficulties, a view such as that which has been outlined was until recently the most widely held one among people who thought that evolution had been proved, but who nevertheless wanted to retain their Christian belief. It is a view, for instance, that has been very commonly held by Roman Catholics. But in recent years this compromise solution

has been breaking down, not least under the influence of Teilhard de Chardin. Thoughtful people have realised more and more that evolutionism claims to give an overall picture of the development of the world and of man, and that, if it is to be taken seriously, it demands the complete rethinking of Christianity in evolutionary terms. And this is precisely what Teilhard de Chardin tried to do: to reformulate Christianity in terms of evolution. In doing this, I consider, Teilhard turned Christianity completely upside down (cf. my chapter in the 2nd edition of Philip E. Hughes's *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, published by Eerdmans, of Grand Rapids, Michigan); the resultant 'neo-Christianity' (Teilhard's own term) reverses the biblical picture of man's relations with God and the world, and regards a movement of mankind towards conscious and organised unity as the culmination of the evolutionary process and the ultimate standard of value, thus overthrowing the supremacy both of the Bible and of the individual conscience. As Teilhard did not claim to base his system in any fundamental sense on the Bible, it is not necessary for us to discuss it here today; but the eagerness with which his ideas have been accepted by so many people shows, I think, that Christians who have accepted evolution are not in general satisfied for long with a compromise solution such as the one which we considered before, but realise that a consistent evolutionism requires a complete rethinking of Christianity.

There are, however, many people who hold that a view of this kind, an integral adaptation of Christianity to evolutionism, rests on a misunderstanding. In particular, many Evangelicals who believe in evolution make a sharp distinction between the scientific theory of evolution, on the one hand, and the evolutionary philosophy on the other, and, in contrast to Teilhard de Chardin and those who think like him, they accept the former, at least as a working hypothesis, but reject the latter. This distinction has been strongly urged by Professor Jeeves (*The Scientific Enterprise and Christian Faith*), and is also accepted by Dr. Spanner and, it seems, by Gareth Jones. According to these writers, the theory of evolution is a purely scientific theory, with no necessary repercussions on one's general view

of the world. Evolutionary ethics, in particular, they would say, rests on what is known as 'the naturalistic fallacy', the fallacy of arguing from what is the case to what ought to be done. Moral imperatives, they hold, are known either intuitively or by revelation from God (cf. Jeeves, *op. cit.*, p. 3); they do not depend on what one may think about the nature of the world. Most of those who hold this view also regard the biblical teaching on creation and the scientific theory of evolution as complementary accounts of the origin of the world and of man. This question of complementarity we shall be examining in some detail in a minute; but may I just say in passing that the theory of evolution cannot be separated from 'evolutionism' as easily as they think? For although it is true that 'ought' cannot literally be deduced from 'is' (i.e. from two premises neither of which contains an 'ought'), yet it is also true that moral imperatives are not unrelated to matters of fact. The moral judgements that we make are necessarily judgements about the world as we think it to be; and the acceptance of the theory of evolution cannot fail to affect our whole understanding of man, and hence our views about how he ought to behave and to be treated. We shall have to return to this point again in due course.

We must now examine the claim made by many today, including Dr. Spanner and, I am sure, others who are with us today, that the evolutionary account of origins and that contained in the Bible, though they seem contradictory, are really complementary. When the two accounts are described as complementary, what is meant is that they can both be true, because they refer to different levels or different types of explanation. The concept of complementarity, in this sense, is one that has arisen in the recent history of science. In the past, scientists usually advanced their theories as 'really true', as giving, that is to say, a picture of the world as it really is. But today they tend to see them rather as descriptions of only one level of reality, to which other explanations – perhaps even seemingly contradictory ones – need to be added. Which answer or explanation is to be given will depend on what question is being asked. The classic example of two apparently

contradictory theories which are today taken as complementary is that of the two theories of light. In the past, these two theories, one regarding light as a stream of particles emitted by a source, the other thinking of it in terms of waves spreading through space, were regarded as mutually exclusive. More recently, however, it was discovered that, while light behaves in some situations like waves, it behaves in others like a hail of tiny particles. Eventually the viewpoint has been widely accepted that despite the appearance of contradiction between them, both theories (or pictures) could be valid, because they represent answers to different questions. Neither picture, it is said, gives us a literal picture of the objective world, but both are true at their own level. And now – and here is what we are coming to – it is suggested that, just as the wave and corpuscular theories of light are apparently opposed to each-other, but are really complementary, so too the biblical and evolutionary accounts of origins are seemingly opposed, but really complementary.

What we might call this Complementarity Model, this suggestion that the biblical and scientific accounts of origins are really complementary and are therefore both true at their own levels, has been developed by Dr. Spanner in his little book *Creation and Evolution*. He likens the complementarity of Genesis and evolution to that of two accounts of the origin of a book – one in terms of printing techniques, paper and ink, the other in terms of the inspiration, intentions and meaning of the author. In this sort of way, two seemingly complete but quite different accounts of the origin of a book could be given. And so too, Spanner suggests, two different accounts of the origin of the world and man can be given – one in terms of divine creation, the other in terms of evolutionary development. This analogy, however, it seems to me, with all due respect to Dr. Spanner, is not really an adequate one; for in his example there is no real contradiction between the two origins of books, whereas there is between the Genesis and evolutionary accounts of human origins. To this he would reply, however, that there is an apparent contradiction between the wave and corpuscular theories of light, and yet both accounts are accepted

as true and complementary to each other. Why not creation and evolution?

We come here to a most important point. I am no physicist; but the question at issue is really one of philosophy rather than of physics. We must say, I believe, that, to the extent that the wave and corpuscular theories of light truly contradict each other, they *cannot* both be true, whatever may be *said* about their complementarity. I do not for a moment dispute that light behaves in some contexts like particles and in others like waves, but I contend that, in this case, neither theory can be regarded as giving a true account of the nature of light. Rather we must say that the ultimate nature of light is *unknown* to us, but that, if we wish to foresee its behaviour, in some contexts a 'wave model' is helpful, in others a 'particle model'. Probably neither model is really *true*, in the sense of representing what light is really like, but in different contexts both models are *useful*. This type of view, of course, is by no means peculiar to me; it is widespread among philosophers of science. But it is important in this context because it enables us to say clearly that two explanations which contradict each other cannot both be true; at most they may be useful fictions which enable us to correlate or foretell certain aspects of the behaviour of the objects in question. But the Bible certainly claims more for itself than this: it claims to give an account of what really happened; and so too, if I am not mistaken, does the theory of evolution. If this is so, the biblical and evolutionary accounts of origins, insofar as they contradict each other, cannot both be true, unless we are willing to throw over our whole concept of truth and of rational argument.

In view, then, of the *prima facie* opposition between the Bible and the theory of evolution, the claim that the two accounts of origins are complementary cannot be convincing unless we are given some idea of how they can be combined into a single, more complete account. Otherwise the claim to complementarity is purely gratuitous, if indeed it does not imply an abandonment of the principle of contradiction itself. In *Creation and Evolution*, Spanner does indeed tentatively suggest a possible reconciliation of Genesis with the theory of evolution,

a reconciliation which is based on the analogy of regeneration, of what happens when a man is 'born again' or converted to Christ. Man's immediate ancestor, Spanner suggests, who arose by evolution, was similar to an unregenerate man today. Such a being might be cultured and artistic and even religious, but his life would still be, in biblical terms, 'of the flesh'. Only when God breathed something of His Spirit into him did he acquire a potentiality of responding to God; only then was he transformed from a superior sort of animal into a man made in the image of God. Just as a man today can be educated, artistic and religious, and yet not born again, so, according to Spanner, even highly developed cave-art and evidence of religious burial doesn't prove that a creature was a man, in the biblical sense of someone made in the image of God. According to this suggestion, then, Adam differed from the man-like creatures that preceded him (and from which he was descended) only in having received a capacity to respond to God; all his natural make-up, both bodily and psychological, had arisen through evolution from sub-human ancestors.

To me at least it is plain that no reconciliation of the Bible with evolution along these lines is possible. For Spanner's suggestion rests on the presupposition that the Bible is concerned only with man's relationship to God, with what we might call a new, supernatural dimension in man, whereas the whole of ordinary human life – bodily, psychological, intellectual and cultural – is purely the affair of science and history. And Spanner also considers that the image of God in man consists purely in this new capacity for entering into a personal relationship with God; a man, he thinks, can be cultured and intelligent without being made in the image of God. In this way, Spanner attempts entirely to separate man's spiritual relationship with God from his understanding of the rest of his nature. But this dichotomy is really an impossible one, since man's relationship with God is rooted in the natural order. If it is not rooted in the natural order, if man's relationship with God depends on a 'special creation' but every other aspect of his life is simply the product of evolution, then, it seems, religion and spiritual life become a sort of optional extra, irrelevant to the rest of human life.

In truth, however, the Christian revelation concerns the whole of human life. God is not the creator of our spiritual life only, but also of our bodily and mental life, and indeed of the whole world. It is man as a whole who is made in the image of God, in that he can love and know, and can aspire towards beauty, freedom, truth and justice. The tragedy of fallen man is that, though he remains in God's image, that image has become twisted and corrupted through sin. It is because man, as man, is made in the image of God that he always has an inkling of the reality of God and of his own moral responsibility (cf. Romans i. and ii.). But it is also because man has this basic and indelible knowledge that fallen man is without excuse before God. Man as a whole is made in the image of God: that is why man's life as a whole stands under the righteous judgement of God.

A view such as that of Spanner, then, attempts to separate man's spiritual understanding of his relationship with God and his natural understanding of the human situation into entirely watertight compartments. And this is even more true of those who assert that the biblical and evolutionary accounts of origins are complementary, without attempting to show in any detail how they can in fact be reconciled. One of the chief roots of these theories seems to be the desire to remove Christianity from the realms where empirical facts have any relevance to its truth or falsity. Those who try to do this, it seems to me, are doing little more than repeating, in more sophisticated terms, the attempt of older liberals and modernists to separate spiritual truth from historical fact. In so doing, they cut the ground from under the relevance and importance of the Christian revelation for ordinary life. In the Preface to his book, Spanner explicitly writes, 'This book is not concerned to discuss scientific evidence, but rather to establish, on the basis of evidence of a different sort, a position for faith which no amount of scientific discovery will ever overrun'. In saying this, he is (no doubt unconsciously) echoing T. H. Huxley, who is quoted by Dr. Schaeffer (*Escape from Reason*, p. 75) as prophesying in 1890 that the time would come when, having removed all empirically verifiable content from religion, people would

say that, 'No longer in contact with fact of any kind, Faith stands now and forever proudly inaccessible to the attacks of the infidel'. But though such faith may be 'inaccessible to the attacks of the infidel', the infidel really no longer has any reason to attack it, because it has given up contradicting his view of the world at any point. A statement that is reconcilable with any conceivable observation or theory, however seemingly contradictory, is devoid of rational meaning. This is a fact that is well known to modern agnostic philosophers, who are much more clear-sighted in this matter than are those Christians who try to retain the meaning of Christianity while abandoning its claim to factual truth. If we remove Christianity, or if we remove the doctrine of creation, from the realms where empirical facts have any relevance to its truth or falsehood, then at the same time we give up their claim to say anything meaningful or relevant about the real world. Nothing is then relevant to the acceptance or rejection of Christianity except a purely esoteric 'religious experience', and the Christian revelation has no contribution to make to the rational understanding of the world. In Dr. Schaeffer's phrase, we retreat to a non-rational position, 'above the line', where what we say can very reasonably be ignored by the rest of mankind. And this, I consider, is tragic, because the world needs the Christian understanding of its dilemma, the Christian answer to its needs.

It seems to me, then, that what those Evangelicals who consider that the Genesis and evolutionary accounts of origins are complementary have done, is to divorce faith, in this respect at least, entirely from reason. I have sometimes heard it suggested that we creationists exalt faith and denigrate reason, but this is not so; we insist that reality as a whole is understandable in biblical terms, whereas those who believe in complementarity deny in practice that any overall view of reality is possible. In a book such as Jeeves's *The Scientific Enterprise and Christian Faith*, this distrust of reason is expressed on several occasions. It is expressed in his assertion that moral imperatives depend on revelation alone or on intuition, without reason having any part to play; it is expressed, too, in his regarding man as an integral part of nature, not only necessarily

subject to error in his thinking, but also ruled by the same determinism that characterises the behaviour of animals and purely material beings. Jeeves regards this low view of man as a biblical one, but he seems to forget that, according to the Bible, man is made in the image of God and is also, unlike animals, a sinner, and therefore free and responsible to God. Most important of all, however, for our purposes, this distrust of reason is seen in the way in which these writers seek to separate the meaning of Scripture from the facts of history and science. And this separation of spiritual truth from historical fact is contrary to the whole nature of the biblical revelation. For in the Bible God reveals Himself as much through what He does as through what He says. Jeeves contains a classic example (*op. cit.*, p. 108) of trying to keep the meaning of Genesis i.-ii. while abandoning its claim to literal historical truth, rather in the way in which some modernists try to retain the meaning of the resurrection while denying that Jesus actually rose from the dead. But in reality, if the historical facts had been different, so would have been the meaning which they contained.

Thus, for instance, Genesis teaches that God is both transcendent and immanent, omnipotent yet interested in man; in common with the whole of Scripture it teaches that He is both just and righteous. And it teaches these things largely by reporting how God has acted. If however God had produced the world by means of evolution, then we should have a God who used evil as a means of creating, without any prior sin on the part of creatures. For on an evolutionary view animals share human feelings to a greater or less extent, and they must have been fighting, suffering and dying for millions of years before man appeared. And this suffering would not be something incidental to God's manner of evolving the world; it would be the very means that He used to achieve His purposes. But a God who used such methods would not be a just God, still less a God of mercy and love. God reveals Himself in the Bible as a God of justice, mercy and love, whereas a God whose method was evolution would show Himself indifferent to all moral considerations. God also reveals Himself as a God of infinite

wisdom, knowledge and power, attributes which hardly seem consistent with the hit and miss fashion in which he allegedly evolved the world. For if man brings his inventions to perfection only gradually, the reason is that he lacks the knowledge and control of natural forces to make (for example) a perfect machine at his first attempt. A literal understanding of God's creative act, on the other hand, harmonises perfectly both with what reason and the analogy of man at his best would lead one to expect, and also with what God reveals of Himself and His character throughout the Bible.

When I on one occasion suggested to a distinguished evangelical believer in evolution that the evolutionary process was not a means of creation that could be used by a just and righteous God, he replied that I was wrong to attribute to God a justice or a goodness like that which we know. In truth, he said, 'God's ways are not our ways' (Isaiah lv. 8), and it is mere rationalism to affirm the contrary. In my opinion, this is another example of that exaggerated distrust of reason on which I have already commented. For though 'God's thoughts are not our thoughts', His thoughts are *above*, not below ours: God is *more* just, more righteous than we are, not less so. But if God's attributes have nothing in common with what we know of justice, mercy and the rest, then His call to us to be 'followers of God, as dear children' is nonsense, and the Bible's descriptions of God as 'a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right' (Deut. xxxii. 4), 'merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth' (Ex. xxxiv. 6), have no descriptive meaning for us but only an emotive one. Such descriptions would make one think of God as just and merciful; they would make one think of Him as more just and merciful than any human being can be; they would thus tend to colour our attitude to God, but they would not in fact tell us anything about Him or His way of acting towards us. In truth, I suggest, a God who produced the world by an evolutionary process such as that envisaged by Darwinists and neo-darwinians would be a God who was entirely indifferent to morality, a God whose character bore no resemblance to what the Bible leads one to think about Him. Alternatively, if the God who

'evolved' the world were indeed good, then one would have to see Him as lacking either power or knowledge in the face of disorder and evil. In neither case, however, would He be the just, holy and almighty God of the Bible, whose work is perfect. For God's character is known by what He does, as much as by what He says; and, we may add, He can be known by what He says only if the words through which He reveals Himself have the same meaning for Him as they have for us.

Meaning, then, cannot be divorced from facts. The early chapters of Genesis cannot be a parable in which God reveals the meaning of what He did when He 'evolved' the world, for the evolutionary process is the reverse of that described in the Bible. In Genesis, God reveals that He made the world good, and that the only disorder in it results from human sin; if evolution is true, however, He made it disorganised and imperfect, and it is only by a labouring process that it begins to approach to goodness. Genesis cannot give the meaning of evolution; the meaning which it contains is the reverse of the evolutionary perspective, and is inseparable from its account of how God actually created the world. But if in this case the theory of evolution necessarily leaves us with a concept of God that differs radically from the biblical one, it also leaves us with a widely different view of man. For the Bible tells us of the greatness, the nobility of man, made in the image of God, only 'a little lower than the angels' and having dominion over the works of God's hands (Psa. viii.). So far from presenting man as a part of nature, as Darwin does, the Bible shows him to be uniquely related to the God in whose image he is made. But at the same time the Bible gives a very realistic picture of the lostness of man, of the evil and sin that is in his heart, and of his alienation from God; and it traces this lostness, the abject failure of man, back to its source in human sin, beginning with that of our first parents. The Bible teaches that man is truly sinful; it thus insists that he is *responsible* before God for all that he does, a truly moral being who is accountable to God, and ultimately to God alone, for all his actions. The Bible thus sets forth the tragedy of man in all its contrast: it shows us both the nobility and the failure of man, and tells us of the gracious way

in which God has intervened to make possible the restoration of man to his true relationship with Himself. From an evolutionary standpoint, on the other hand, man cannot but see himself as essentially an animal; he is to be understood in terms rather of his relationship with his sub-human ancestors than of his relationship with God. In this context it seems natural that man should be dominated by 'animal' drives; human freedom and responsibility is minimised, and man is assumed to be subject to the same determinism as the rest of nature. Such a change in one's understanding of man cannot fail to have effects in every department of life and thought – in political and economic thinking, for instance, and in one's views on the administration of justice; but above all it will have an effect on one's attitude to religion. For on an evolutionary view man is not responsible for the state in which he finds himself; his condition is perfectly natural, and he cannot see that he stands in need of God's forgiveness. This, it seems to me, is the attitude which naturally follows from acceptance of the theory of evolution; the attempt to keep the Christian understanding of man while accepting the evolutionary account of his origin is doomed to failure. The world in general has already adopted the evolutionary understanding of man, with the disastrous effects (from the Christian point of view) that we can see all around us. And, we may add, it is difficult not to see, in the low view of man propounded even by an Evangelical such as Professor Jeeves, a reflection of his acceptance of the theory of evolution as applied to man.

And so we see that the theory which regards the biblical and evolutionary accounts of human origins as complementary presents us with no merely academic issue. It undermines the whole relevance, and indeed the truth, of the Christian message. In the long run one cannot give up the facts and keep the meaning, because the facts (for example the supposed facts of evolution) themselves imply a meaning. We cannot, therefore, accept the Bible as our final authority and at the same time accept the truth of the theory of evolution; or at least, we cannot accept these two at once and be consistent. If we believe the theory of evolution to be true, then our attitude to

the Bible cannot help changing. Either we must allow it to be interpreted in terms of passing human philosophies and theories, or else we must seek to divorce its spiritual meaning from its historical truth. The former is the path chosen by people such as Teilhard de Chardin; the latter, as we have seen, is that taken by Evangelical believers in 'complementarity'. But if the Bible is God's own revelation of His truth, then neither of these attitudes is satisfactory. The Bible, it is true, is not a scientific textbook; but if it is true, it is true on every level, authoritative in all that it teaches. If we accept the Bible as God's Word, then we must allow it to judge human theories, and not be judged by them. Otherwise we are not regarding it as finally authoritative.

It may help to clarify this point about our attitude to the Bible if we turn our attention briefly to the New Testament. If we approach the New Testament with the same attitude with which believers in complementarity approach Genesis, we shall have no difficulty in explaining away the Virgin Birth, the miracles of Jesus, His resurrection and His ascension into heaven. We shall think it possible to retain the meaning of these events while doubting or denying that they occurred in history. In fact there is a startling similarity between the way in which Evangelical believers in evolution approach the Old Testament and the 'demythologising' programme with which Bultmann and others approach the New. This approach, however, cannot be reconciled with the acceptance of the final authority of Jesus and of His apostles, and of the New Testament as an authentic record of their teaching. According to the Gospels, Jesus had no hesitation in referring to the opening chapters of Genesis as being factually true (cf. Matt. xix. 4-6; xxiii. 35; xxiv. 37-39), and the Apostles also did so in the most explicit terms (cf. Romans v. 12ff.; I Cor. xi. 8; xv. 21ff.; II Peter iii. 3ff.; I John iii. 12). If the theory of evolution is true, and if the New Testament is substantially authentic, then either Jesus was mistaken, or else He accommodated His teaching to what His hearers expected Him to say. In either case, it seems, we shall be unable to take His teaching at its face value.

I should like to take one of these passages from the New

Testament as the starting point of the last reflection that I shall be putting before you this morning. In II Peter iii. verses 3-7, St. Peter tells us that in 'the last days' many will deny the prophecies of the Lord's return, on the ground that 'all things continue as they were from the beginning'. They are willingly ignorant of the fact that the heavens and the earth were formed by the word of God, that furthermore the old world perished, overflowed with the waters of the Flood, and that this present world will one day perish by fire. In these ways, St. Peter seems almost to be warning us in advance against that philosophy of uniformitarianism which is one of the chief roots of evolutionism. For, philosophically speaking, the theory of evolution is rooted in the attempt to explain the present state of the world entirely in terms of processes that can still be observed in operation. It does not fall to my part today to examine the scientific evidence for or against the theory of evolution, but I will just say that no scientific evidence has been discovered which would force one to accept it as true. Evolutionists have been unable to find any processes now operating which would be able to account for the origin of life and the progressive development of more complex and really different organisms. But the attempt to find such an explanation continues, because evolutionists are imbued with the uniformitarian ideal. If the Christian revelation is true, however, this attempt is doomed to failure: as St. Peter reminds us in the passage to which I alluded, the world was made by God's word, by His externalized thought and creative *fiat*; it has moreover a cataclysmic history, and will have a catastrophic end. A uniformitarian explanation of its history is therefore impossible. Since a scientific explanation is necessarily in terms of processes which can still be observed, this means that a scientific account of origins is impossible. But this, in truth, it seems to me, is no more than the nature of the case would lead one to expect. Scientific observation and experiment enable us to get to know the regular working of natural processes, and these we are able to formulate into scientific laws. These laws explain or express the regularity of nature, the fact that each type of material being always acts in a particular way; but they do not

at all explain how these beings came to be what they are. From a Christian point of view, the natural processes that we observe and the laws that we formulate to describe them represent the orderly way in which God conserves and administers the world; they do not explain how He created it. In terms of the often derided analogy proposed by Paley, scientific laws describe the functioning of the mechanism of the world, just as one could describe the functioning of the mechanism of a watch or a machine. But the laws which explain the functioning of a watch are not adequate to explain how it came to be. No more are the observable forces of nature adequate to explain the origin of the world, with all the varied organisms that we find within it.

To conclude: the scientific facts, I suggest, do not warrant our accepting the theory of evolution as proved. The impulse behind the continued attempt to establish the truth of evolution is the uniformitarian ideal, an ideal which is neither compelling from an intellectual point of view nor compatible with Christianity. But if we do accept the theory of evolution, and if we are consistent and realise its implications, then we can accept neither the final authority of Scripture nor the biblical teaching on the creation, fall and redemption of man. The attempts that have been made to reconcile these two accounts of origins are, as I have tried to show, unsatisfactory. Has not the time come, therefore, for a return to a straightforward acceptance of the biblical account of origins, and thus to a Christianity which can give an answer to the crying needs of mankind?

* * * *