

SCHOLAR'S CORNER

I was recently shocked to hear a friend who is otherwise quite intelligent and not narrow-minded or fanatical say she doesn't "believe" in evolution because she is a Christian. I don't see why you can't be a Christian and also accept evolution. I also heard recently that a poll found that more than 50 percent of Americans say they do not believe in evolution. Again I am shocked. I don't understand how so many people do not accept evolution, which I understand has an overwhelming number of facts supporting it.

To understand your friend and that majority the poll found, I think you have to realize that for many people evolution equals atheism. And since they are religious and believe in God, evolution must be wrong, since (in their view) the two are incompatible.

Creationists say that the theory of evolution means that there is no God, that the universe just happened without there being God standing above or

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behind it and that it runs according to unbreakable natural laws without there being any purpose or meaning to anything. And they point out that having all life develop by (purposeless, meaningless) chance and a completely amoral tooth-and-nail, law-of-the-jungle competition for survival is not compatible with belief in a good and loving God. So you have to choose between an empty, cold and impersonal, amoral and meaningless universe (science) or one ruled by a loving Heavenly Father (religion). You can't have it both ways. A Christian cannot be an evolutionist because they are directly opposite viewpoints.

Religious people who accept modern science say you can have a universe that runs according to natural laws, including the laws of genetics (evolution) and still have God exist. You just have to say that God made the universe to be the way it is and to run according to the laws of physics (and genetics). You just can't have God involved in miraculous or supernatural ways in every physical process or chemical reaction or every cell division and reshuffling of DNA. If you accept the way modern science goes about its business, you have to leave God out of your attempts to explain how things work, since science considers only natural, predictable process and explains things without recourse to supernatural factors.

This does not mean, however, that God and the scientific explanation of the universe cannot coexist. God can still be the cause for the whole universe existing. Saying the universe (including animal life) operates by natural

laws does not explain why the universe exists in the first place. There is no logical reason why anything should exist. It could just as easily have been that no physical universe would have existed. So God can still stand behind "life, the universe and everything" (to use Douglas Adams' phrase) as the cause of it all, and science will never be able to dispute it (or prove it), since science only can deal with the world of matter and energy and not with a God who is neither but caused the universe to come into existence.

Next month: More on problems the modern scientific world view poses for religious people.

The Rev. William G. Gartig will answer your questions about the Bible, Episcopal life and other religious subjects. Send questions to 2146 Cameron Ave. Apt. 5, Cincinnati, OH 45212-3631 or at gartigwg@episcopal-dso.zzn.com.

See page 18 for more about evolution and intelligent design