



## STONYHILL

Evolution from Primitive Ego to Enlightened Consciousness

### 26-EDITORIAL: THE DEBATE OVER EVOLUTION ONLY REFLECTS A FEAR OF CHANGE

It's hard to believe that anyone in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is unable to accept the overwhelming preponderance of fossil and other biological and scientific geologic evidence that tells us that the universe, the stars, our planet, and the life on our planet are all being created through the process of evolution. The scientific evidence is clear that life has been evolving on this planet for more than 3.5 billion years. Fossilized stromatolites and other fossil remains offer clear evidence that life has evolved from small single celled-organisms into the incredible diversity of life that currently surrounds us on our planet.

So why is it so difficult for conservative Christians to accept not only the universally accepted biological evidence of the evolution of life, the geologic evidence of the evolution of our planet, the astronomical evidence of an evolving universe, and over 300 years of biblical scholarship that is calling us to "theologically evolve" by challenging many of the beliefs that Christians have held for 2000 years.

I believe the answer is simply fear. If the science of evolution is accepted, Christian theology and beliefs will have to undergo significant change. This causes great anxiety for many Christians who, for 2-3 thousand years, have found the ultimate meaning of life and death in the ancient scriptures found in the Christian bible.

The ancient theology of Christianity is based on the assumptions contained in the Garden of Eden creation story that we are a fallen, sinful people who can survive only through the grace of God and God's forgiveness. Since ancient times, Christians have believed that God sacrificed His son Jesus on the cross, and through Passover theology Jesus became the "sacrificial lamb" that washed away the sinfulness of humanity. Through faith in Jesus' death we are "saved". This religious belief brought comfort and a sense of safety to many of our ancestors.

However, if we accept the scientific evidence that creation is accomplished through the process of change and evolution, then we are not a fallen species, we are a *very young emerging, evolving species*. Evolution makes it clear that we have never been a perfect species that somehow fell into sinfulness, we are merely an evolving species of life that only recently achieved self-awareness or reflexive consciousness; perhaps as recently as 35 to 50 thousand years ago.

The Garden of Eden story may only reflect the reality that with the birth of reflexive consciousness and thought (i.e. our awareness of being aware), which came through the process of evolution, we *simply lost our innocence*. The self-awareness that we would eventually die would have caused great anxiety to our more primitive ancestors. Thus, as an evolving species, we were forced to leave a psychological place of innocence and begin a spiritual journey to find ultimate meaning. With the birth of self-consciousness, humanity could never again return to the Eden garden of innocence.

If evolution is accepted as a scientific reality, then the theology of Christianity must be reexamined. It too must evolve to reflect and be meaningful for humans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can no longer literally embrace scientific and social beliefs written 2000 to 3000 years ago. This causes great fear for conservative Christians who are grasping frantically to their faith by rejecting 2000 years of biblical research, and 2000 years of scientific knowledge. This grasping to the past was clearly illustrated when the Pope only recently accepted the work of Galileo by admitting that the earth is not the center of the universe.



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Conservative Christians know that the only way their 2000 year old Christian theology can survive is by passionately rejecting change; virtually all change. That means vigorously rejecting modern science and the reality that virtually all of the modern, educated world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century embraces the science of evolution; a claim that must be of course, vigorously rejected.

In reality, the evolution of Christian beliefs does not mean the death of Christianity. It only means that like everything else in the universe, our 2000 year old theological beliefs must also evolve. Religious supremacy, that claims to own the truth, must give way to a more flexible and gentle interpretation of ultimate meaning. The message of love and compassion contained in all the world's great religions must be redefined so as to be understandable and meaningful for educated, and modern humans of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I believe this is a work that is long overdue. It is a vitally important work that we must undertake if we are to find paths to peace in a rapidly shrinking and increasingly diverse global community.

Conservatives and fundamentalists of all religions fear change and have been creating great pain and suffering for thousands of years; a reality we continue to struggle with around the globe as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But, like all other supremacy beliefs ( racial, male, sexual, Arian), the conservative, rigid, unchanging religious beliefs of all the major world religions will eventually yield to the growing and evolving consciousness of the human species; *a consciousness that understands the urgent need for a flexible, compassionate, global spirituality.*

Over time, we must *all* come to understand that, in the end, only love and compassion bring meaning to the journey. Fear can be a powerful force: but so too are reason and compassion.

Whether we are comfortable with it or not, change is the force behind creation. So perhaps God is simply change?? If so, then God is creation?? Hummmmm.....

Rev. Dick Rauscher