

WORLDS APART

THE UNHOLY WAR
BETWEEN
RELIGION AND SCIENCE

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The Crime Against Galileo

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The doctrine attributed to Copernicus, that the earth moves around the sun . . . is contrary to Holy Scriptures and therefore cannot be defended or held.

Cardinal Bellarmine

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In 1163 at the Council of Tours, Pope Alexander III decided that it should be the task of the clergy to search out heretics. The recommended procedure was known as an inquest, in which witnesses would submit suspicions of heresy to an inquisitorial board who would then investigate the implicated heretics. The heretics under investigation would not be informed about the specifics of the suspicion, nor would they know the identity of their accusers. If convicted, the heretics could be excommunicated, which would mean, among other things, that they would go to hell when they died. The threat of excommunication was usually sufficient to persuade the most convinced heretic to change his mind. Some heretics still refused to recant, however, so about a century later, Pope Innocent IV, clearly misnamed, authorized the use of torture in the process of interrogation to help with the persuasion.

In 1592 the now-experienced Inquisition put a renegade Dominican monk named Giordano Bruno in prison for heresy. Bruno had dared believe in Copernicus' new astronomy and had even speculated that the universe might be infinite, filled with many worlds populated by diverse peoples. After eight years of imprisoning Bruno, the Inquisition tied him to a stake

at Campo del Fiori and burned him alive. His ashes and his boldness were scattered to the four winds.

On October 1, 1632, a third of a century after Bruno met his untimely death, another old man received a summons to appear before what had by then become the most frightening examining committee in human history—the Inquisition of the Roman Catholic church. The old man under summons was crippled with arthritis and had developed a serious double hernia condition, which required him to wear an iron truss much of the time.

The timing was ominous. The Black Plague was spinning its evil web across Italy, gathering almost half of the population into its fatal snare. The historically omnipotent Roman Catholic church was watching the termites of reformation nibble at its foundations. Rome had been sacked a century earlier, and Spain had taken control of much of the Italian peninsula. Politics seemed unable to solve the domestic crises, and people were looking for figures of authority in whom to trust. The untimely summons would require a difficult journey of 200 miles, for winter lay deep on the countryside. Medical authorities pleaded with the church to leave the old man alone, but they were not to be dissuaded.

So, on January 23, 1633, the old man set out for Rome to appear before the Inquisition on charges of heresy. Unlike Bruno, the old man was not a professional theologian. He was just a scientist, and his heresy was purely scientific. He was accused of holding the opinion that the sun is the center of the world and immovable and that the earth moves.

The old man was Galileo Galilei, and the trial stands as the focal point of the historical conflict between science and religion.

Outline

This chapter introduces the Galileo affair in some detail. In preparation for the analysis of scientific creationism, which we will argue is analogous in many ways to the former anti-Galileo movement, we will be considering the theological, biblical, and scientific dimensions of the Galileo affair. We will see how

Galileo's antagonists argued that the radical Copernican hypothesis was unscriptural, unscientific, and impossible to reconcile with Christian theology. We will then see in subsequent chapters that these are exactly the arguments now being used by the scientific creationists to attack the modern theory of evolution.

History Repeats

There is a remarkable similarity between the Galileo affair and its modern equivalent—the antevolution movement. There is thus a valuable lesson to be learned by studying the Galileo affair, one that aids immensely in dealing with its contemporary reincarnation.

The story of Galileo is like a gem with many facets, each of which yields a different perspective on the gem, yet none of which can be said to provide a complete picture. Each of the various facets has its own cast of characters, its own heroes and villains, and its own lessons to be learned. Just when it seems Galileo looks most like a persecuted scientific martyr, victimized by a closed-minded and power-hungry church, the light of history will catch another facet of the gem and Galileo will look like an arrogant, cantankerous, self-serving social climber. When the light shifts again, the church will appear as an unwitting third party in the dispute, drawn into an irrelevant scientific argument.

In this chapter we will be considering some of the facets of the Galileo incident, ever mindful that there are other facets with their own and different stories to tell. In particular we will examine the very specific conflict between the literal truth of the Bible and a particular scientific theory. The scientific theory was that of Copernicus, the Polish priest/mathematician who suggested that the earth was moving about the sun and thus was not located at the center of the universe.

Copernicus' new astronomy grew out of the difficulties he had encountered in explaining the paths of the planets from the perspective of a stationary earth located at the center of the universe. Copernicus found that it made more sense to account for the observations by assuming that the earth went around the

sun, and not vice versa. Copernicus knew, however, that his ideas would be difficult to reconcile with the teachings of the Church. He was right, and his ideas were eventually challenged on both biblical and theological grounds.

The Biblical Challenge to Copernican Astronomy

Some of the opposition to Copernicus came from those who read the Bible in a certain very literalistic way and felt his cosmology was incompatible with the Scriptures. Adherents to this extreme literalist position pointed out that Joshua commanded the sun, and not the earth, to stand still. The Psalmist declared that the earth "is firmly established; it cannot be moved" (Ps. 93:1); the sun is described as running: "Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them" (19:6, RSV). The Bible seemed to be quite clear about both the position and the immovability of the earth.

If modern readers could somehow read the Scriptures without the powerful influence of recent tradition, they would probably also conclude that the Bible teaches that the earth is stationary. But we no longer believe that the earth is stationary, and those biblical passages that seem to claim otherwise have been reinterpreted over the years.

We should not be surprised to discover, however, that the Bible claims that the earth is stationary. After all, every one of the biblical writers lived at a time when a stationary earth was the prevailing view. If the inspired authors of Scripture had written that the earth was moving around the sun, their writings would have been dismissed by their contemporaries as nonsense, not preserved as valuable sources for theology.

Modern biblical literalists insist that the Bible does not teach that the earth is stationary. They claim that the biblical scholars who challenged Galileo and Copernicus were incompetent and incapable of interpreting the Bible properly. If they had been smarter, they would not have imputed such falsehood to the inspired Scriptures. But this list of incompetent biblical scholars includes some very important figures. In addition to the Roman Catholic scholars, who included Cardinal Bellarmine—"one of the greatest theologians the world has

known"—Martin Luther, John Calvin, and many of the key figures in the Protestant Reformation fall under the cloud of this indictment.

The obvious question arises: Why were *all* biblical scholars convinced that the Bible taught that the earth was stationary until such time as science clearly demonstrated that this could not possibly be true? Why was it so easy for them to read the Bible and discover an earth-centered universe within its inspired pages? And why is it that no modern biblical literalist can find *any* of these biblical arguments that were so convincing to their medieval counterparts? What is it about the modern approach to the Scriptures that finds them saying something different than they did in the Middle Ages? Can it be that even biblical literalists are so influenced by their worldview that they read the Bible in such a way as to provide confirmation for that worldview?

The medieval theologians were not incompetent; they were honest biblical scholars who failed to understand the influence that their worldview exerted on their interpretation of Scripture. Similarly, the modern fundamentalists are not incompetent. But they also fail to recognize that they are bending the Scriptures to support their worldview. Each of us wants to believe that all the authorities we trust agree with one another. We trust the Bible; we trust science. Surely they must, therefore, be in agreement.

The Theological Challenge to Copernican Astronomy

In addition to the biblical challenge, there was also a significant theological challenge. Copernican astronomy must be rejected because it undermines the very foundations of religion itself.

It upsets the whole basis of theology. If the earth is a planet, and only one among several planets, it cannot be that any such great things have been done specially for it as the Christian doctrine teaches. If there are other planets, since God makes nothing in vain, they must be in-

habited; but how can their inhabitants be descended from Adam? How can they trace back their origin to Noah's Ark? How can they have been redeemed by the Savior?²

This argument seems foolish today. But the words in the Bible have not changed—only the worldview of the readers of those words.

The Triangle of Conflict

The religious challenge to the new astronomy was not immediate. In fact, the first challenge came from the academic status quo, which we would call the scientific community. The church even went along with the new astronomy for a while but eventually was forced to take sides.

The Galileo affair must be understood as the complex interaction of three separate authorities: (1) the church, (2) the new "science," and (3) the medieval worldview, which the educational establishment accepted as absolutely correct.

1. The church was the Roman Catholic church, which had assumed almost full control over the intellectual climate of the day. The great schools in Italy were populated with priests, and even much of *secular* science was being done by scholars directly affiliated with one of the orders of the Roman Catholic church. Significant departures from church teaching were, in principle, punishable by death, but some flexibility was allowed in matters considered to be peripheral, such as esoteric questions of science and mathematics.

2. The new science was Copernicanism, specifically the idea that the sun and not the earth was the center of the universe. Copernican astronomy was well known at the time of Galileo but was widely interpreted as just a *model*³ of the universe rather than an actual description of physical reality. Its popularity stemmed from the simplicity it lent to astronomical calculations. Calendar-makers, for example, found it much simpler to construct long-range calendars by assuming that the

2. *Ibid.*, 130.

3. A well-meaning associate of Copernicus had added a preface to his book that proposed that the new theory should not be interpreted as description of physical reality, but rather just as a model.

1. Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 129.

earth was moving around the sun, rather than vice versa. Very few people actually believed, however, that the earth was moving through space.

3. The medieval worldview was the grand synthesis of Aristotle and Christianity that Thomas Aquinas had achieved in the 13th century. It was a comprehensive description of all reality, a genuine metaphysics that was accepted as practically self-evident by the academic community. Discussed at some length in chapter 4, to which the reader is referred for a more complete description, the key feature of the medieval worldview in this context is the elaborate interconnections that existed between its various elements. Each idea fit so snugly into the overall mosaic that the whole program would crumble if any individual idea were to be extracted. It would be impossible to deny the immovability of the earth, the existence of angels, the planetary spheres, or the immutability of the heavens without bringing the whole metaphysical house crashing down around one's ears. Thus it was that a criticism of certain esoteric notions of astronomy came to be construed as an attack on the theology of the Roman Catholic church.

These three authorities—the church, the medieval worldview, and the new science—were engaged in an uneasy competition to see who should preside over the questions raised by the new Copernican astronomy.

Galileo was a fully committed Copernican. He had subscribed to the new astronomy in his youth and did not consider it to be a mere model, a useful fiction. Copernicus was absolutely correct, argued Galileo, and he proceeded to develop a strong scientific case for his position. Before the Copernican astronomy could be established, however, it was essential to tear down the old Aristotelian edifice. The medieval worldview had to be dismantled to make room for Galileo's new program.

Galileo began by attacking the obvious problems with the physical science of the day, all of which was taken directly from Aristotle. Galileo showed that Aristotle was wrong about the causes of motion, the descriptions of floating bodies, the immutability of the heavens, and so on. Galileo's attacks were frequently personal, making fun of the professors at the universi-

ties as they tried to understand the world at the end of their noses while their noses were buried in books that had been written centuries earlier. On one occasion he wrote a satirical poem in which he referred to his university colleagues as little wax Aristotles, making light of their unquestioning acceptance of all things Aristotelian.

Galileo achieved considerable success with his new scientific approach. He successfully challenged much of the science of the day and managed to introduce many new ideas into science through his discoveries, both in the laboratory and with his new telescope. He became a widely celebrated author, read all over Europe and even in the Orient. The telescope brought him considerable fame, and he made a number of important discoveries, including the moons of Jupiter, sunspots, mountains on the moon, and so on. In subtle ways, though, his discoveries were poking holes in the seamless Aristotelian cloth stretched so comfortably across the Renaissance universe.

Aristotle had said everything must revolve around the earth. So how could there be moons around Jupiter? Aristotle had said the celestial bodies were perfect and smooth. How could they have mountains or spots on them? Aristotle had said that the earth was the center of the universe. How could it be revolving around the sun? In fact, on this last question there were even a number of biblical references that could be quoted in support of Aristotle, thus showing how the science and theology of the day were so thoroughly complementary.

Many of the discoveries of Galileo, such as the moons of Jupiter, were accessible to anyone—anyone, that is, who would look through a telescope. Amazingly, there were a number of Galileo's contemporaries—the wax Aristotles—who refused to look though his "devil instrument" lest they fall under the same heretical delusions that plagued Galileo.

The Church, appropriately more concerned with matters spiritual rather than scientific, went along with Galileo at first. In fact, he successfully converted many of the Jesuit astronomers at the Holy Roman College to the new astronomy, even though it required some adjustments in their scriptural exegesis. The wax Aristotles, however, marching in mental lock-

step with a man who had been dead for 2,000 years, were not to be persuaded. Galileo was humiliating them at every turn, clearly showing that the material they were teaching in their classes was totally wrong. And Galileo's classes, like his fame, were growing in size while theirs were shrinking. It became clear that the comfortable worldview that had provided intellectual security for several centuries was about to topple, as Galileo slowly, and with much fanfare, removed its supports.

The Intrigue

The new astronomy was not going to disappear. Galileo was going to build the new universe, and the academic status quo was going to be very unhappy in that new universe. So they conspired to stop Galileo, hoping also to stop the spread of the ideas that were sprouting up in whatever soil he turned with his new scientific spade. Their strategy was to make the medieval cosmology a matter of faith. They knew people were much less likely to accept a new scientific idea if it contradicted their faith.

It was well known that the Copernican astronomy, if taken literally, was difficult to reconcile with the Bible, even though many of the theologians had expressed a willingness to confront that thorny problem in the event that the Copernican hypothesis could be demonstrated. Galileo's challengers decided that the Church needed to understand just how difficult it would be to reconcile the new astronomy with the old theology. So they convinced the Church that the new astronomy was *absolutely incompatible* with the Christian faith. They forced the Church to take a definite stand on the biblical references to the stationary earth, even though the Church was trying to keep the question open, since they knew that it didn't really matter all that much. However, the Psalmist had written, "The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved" (Ps. 93:1), clearly contradicting any crazy notion that the earth might be rushing around the sun at thousands of miles per hour.

To make a long and fascinating story short, the Church was persuaded to investigate the matter officially. Cardinal Robert

Bellarmino, who held the pompous title of "Master of Controversial Questions," was appointed to study the problem.

Bellarmino was initially open. Although he did not accept Copernicus' theory, he indicated a willingness to consider it, even though he knew it would require a reexamination of some difficult passages in the Bible. But the wax Aristotles soon closed his mind for him. They pointed out that the new astronomy had difficulties that had not yet been worked out, so it seemed there were some scientific problems to go along with the theological ones. Galileo couldn't prove the Copernican theory to be correct, so there was really no reason to abandon good old Aristotle after all these years. Besides, many of the experts in the universities were condemning the theory of Copernicus; the Church might as well join them.

So the Church made a terrible mistake. They officially adopted the Aristotelian description of the universe as the only one that was compatible with their Christian faith. They condemned the theories of Copernicus, put his book on the Index, and made it formally heretical to believe that the earth goes around the sun. Believing this monstrous lie was now sufficient grounds for being burned at the stake. To be a Copernican was to be a heretic, to risk excommunication from the Church, to burn at the stake, and then eternally in hell in that special place reserved for the destroyers of the faith. The wax Aristotles had saved their medieval worldview for the time being.

But Galileo was right. In time everyone, even the Church, conceded this fact. And there are now billions of Copernican heretics on planet earth, all quite comfortable with the notion that the earth is going around the sun.

The Verdict

The Inquisition of 1633 forced Galileo to recant. But that verdict, like the one in the Scopes trial, is of little interest. It has even been officially rescinded by the Roman Catholic church. History has reached a far more significant verdict in its judgment of the Church. The deliberations are completed, the verdict is in, and the Church has been found guilty:

1. *guilty* of compromising the integrity of the Bible by insisting that it said things that turned out to be false
2. *guilty* of enhancing the credibility of science at the expense of religion, since that science was unambiguously vindicated by subsequent history
3. *guilty* of forcing thinking people to regard the teachings of the Church as antiquated, irrelevant, and unreliable
4. *guilty* of initiating the divorce of science from religion and making it appear that one must choose between them

The Galileo affair is officially over. But all of the questions remain as the same basic conflict between competing authorities is being revived in the current quarrel involving the scientific creationists. Before we look at its contemporary reincarnation, it will be helpful to summarize the essentials of the Galileo affair.⁴

1. The Church adopted the erroneous position that the Bible taught a specific scientific theory. Even though there were only a few isolated proof texts to support the dogma of the stationary earth, these were presented as proof that the Holy Scriptures taught that the earth did not move.
2. A scientific theory emerged that contradicted this specific interpretation of Scripture. This theory, that the earth goes around the sun and not vice versa, in reality had a very small impact on the theology of the day and is now considered to be theologically irrelevant.
3. Opponents of the theory, intellectually wedded to the old worldview and afraid to see its authority undermined, condemned the theory. To promote their condemnation, they greatly exaggerated the incompatibility of the new science and the old theology.

4. This summary is a gross oversimplification of a constellation of very complex historical events. Scholars are still fascinated with the Galileo affair, and new information is still being discovered, which forces reexamination of the basic issues. A recent contribution to the discussion is the book *Galileo: Heretic* by Pietro Redondi, which suggests that Galileo's views on the atomistic structure of matter were at the heart of the conflict and the charges of Copernican heresy were just a smoke screen. For our purposes here, I have distilled one aspect of the controversy because of its valuable lesson. The interested reader is referred to the vast literature on Galileo for more details.

4. Specific scientific problems with the new theory were magnified to suggest that the new theory was scientifically unsound, in addition to being heretical.

5. A false dichotomy was set up between the new theory and the faith, forcing people to make a choice, even though there was no need for such a resolution. The new theory became clearly recognized as incompatible with Christian faith. It was clear that the faithful must choose between the two; there could be no middle ground, no compromise.

The schism that emerged out of the Galileo affair has never completely healed. In Italy, where the incident occurred, science never resumed its role of world leadership. Italian science withdrew into an unproductive corner, hiding lest it inadvertently find itself on the wrong side of the heretical fence. The scientific revolution moved to England, where a more open theology ruled. The Church became polarized into two camps: those that accepted the tainted new science with its suspicions of heresy, and those who clung to the medieval worldview. These faithful few, who refused to compromise, became increasingly more out of touch with the culture in which they resided. Like exhibits in a museum, they became more remarkable as time went on; the world around them changed, but they stayed the same.

Once Again: A Worldview Under Attack

Like Galileo's century, ours has been one of frightening change. When the 20th century opened, there was a comfortable worldview in place. Inspired by the "law and order" universe of Newton, this worldview provided a constancy, a sense of the absolute. It had succeeded to some degree in emulating the medieval worldview as a self-evident theoretical system that was vindicated by common sense.

This century began with the discovery of quantum mechanics that demonstrated that the universe was not law and order but rather indeterminacy and uncertainty. The uncertain child conceived by the physicists was adopted by those looking for support for an argument that all knowledge was uncertain. The inherent uncertainty of knowledge, they argued, meant that there could be no absolutes.

Pouring salt into a new wound, Albert Einstein presented his theory of relativity shortly after the advent of the quantum theory. Once again the offspring of science was adopted by those who wanted to argue that everything, not just the space and time of Einstein, was relative. Truth was relative, morals were relative, religion was relative, they claimed, much to Einstein's dismay, as his theory was exploited by those who had no idea what it was.⁵

Relativity and uncertainty were not welcome guests in the house of Newton. Together with Darwin's theory of evolution, they ran about like disobedient children, knocking everything out of place and utterly destroying whatever sense of order had been achieved in the previous centuries. A powerful challenge was being laid before the Newtonian worldview, one that could not be ignored.⁶

The past few decades have witnessed the gradual adoption of the new worldview⁷ as the old one has been weighed many times in the balances and always found to be wanting. But there has been widespread resistance to the new intellectual order on a number of fronts.

Just as the wax Aristotles of the 17th century resisted the Copernican challenge, so the scientific creationists are resisting

5. Einstein was dismayed by those who latched on to the word *relativity* in his theory and used it to argue that anything other than certain esoteric physical quantities was relative. So abused was this aspect of his theory that Einstein later wished he had named it "The Theory of Invariance," which would have been totally appropriate, given that the theory shows that the laws of physics are invariant in different reference frames. (See Nathan Rotenstreich, "Relativity and Relativism," in *Albert Einstein: Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Gerald Holton and Yehuda Elkana [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982].)

6. In *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), professor Allan Bloom argues that "almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative" (25). Bloom's large book is a far-reaching analysis of this unfortunate state of affairs. While the physical theories developed at the beginning of this century should have made negligible contribution to this situation, the fact is that they were perceived by some as providing important scientific support for larger philosophical movements toward relativism.

7. As we argued in chapter 1, there are many diverse elements contributing to the contemporary worldview. This discussion is not meant to imply that the modern worldview, or any worldview for that matter, is solely (or even primarily) the result of scientific developments. But the scientific creationists are arguing that the theory of evolution is adequate to explain the origin of all of the problems of the modern world. Their assumption is that if we could get the right science in place, the rest would follow.

the contemporary challenge to their worldview, which is essentially Newtonian. And the strategy is exactly the same: (1) Convince the faithful that the new science is incompatible with the Bible; (2) magnify any problems with the new theories to make them seem unscientific; (3) force people to reject the new science before it matures to the point at which it cannot be refuted.

The Return of the Wax Aristotles

The wax Aristotles have been reincarnated as the scientific creationists who are once again attacking the science of the day. Quantum theory, astrophysics, geology, paleontology, zoology, genetics, relativity, and cosmology are all under fire because they are the foot soldiers in the war of the worldviews. Galileo has been reincarnated as Charles Darwin, who is the focus of the attack, although the attack is much broader than simply the theory of evolution.

The scientific creationists are using the same strategy employed by the wax Aristotles 300 years ago: They are attempting to convince the Church that their faith demands the rejection of all forms of evolutionary thinking, whether biological, geological, or cosmological.

The same triangle of conflict can again be discerned beneath the rhetorical fog that envelops this controversial subject. Just as Copernicanism was not immediately attacked as heretical, so modern science has had a brief honeymoon with the religious community. And most of Christendom has accepted the results of modern science and simply reworked its theology and biblical exegesis to incorporate the new ideas.

But there is a small group of very vocal Christians who are not willing to let go of the old worldview to make room for the new. They are attempting to marry the Christian faith to the old worldview so that one cannot depart without the other. The modern creationist movement has considerable grass roots support from some conservative Christians, but very little of this support comes from *scientists*.

So the question from the beginning of this book reappears: Who is the *authority* in matters of science? Is the Bible the final authority? Should we interpret the Bible literally and force our

scientific theories to conform to that authority? Or should we allow science to be the eyes through which we read the book of nature?

The historical discussions in the previous chapters have indicated the wisdom of Albert Einstein's famous warning, "Religion without science is blind."⁸ In the first few centuries of the Christian era the Church taught that the earth was flat, that the universe was modeled after the ark of the covenant—clearly a blind science. These follies demonstrate that it is simply not possible to build a credible scientific description of the universe using only the Bible. The Aristotelian influence, which was external to the Christian tradition, improved the scientific literacy of the Church immensely, but when that scientific theory became woven into the fabric of theology, it had to be extracted very carefully to avoid destroying the tapestry of religion.

The lesson of the Galileo affair is clear: It is not safe to use biblical proof texts as support for particular scientific ideas. We are not that much smarter than the Christian scholars from the time of Galileo—men like Luther, Calvin, Bellarmine, and so on. If Martin Luther could not find the correct scientific worldview in the Bible, then what makes us think we can? The truth is that we cannot, and we must be prepared to recognize science as the authority on such questions.

The scientific creationists present their case on two fronts:

1. When addressing the Church, they argue that it is essential that the Bible be interpreted literally, which will always demonstrate the exclusive truth of their particular explanation of origins. Such a perspective on the Bible is essential, they argue, to avoid the long slide into apostasy that has characterized all religious groups that disagree with them. As a leader of this movement writes,

The sad fact is that evolutionism has also deeply affected evangelical schools and churches. After all, even

8. Albert Einstein, "Science and Religion," in *Out of My Later Years* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1956), 26. In this essay Einstein is arguing that the "aspiration towards truth and understanding" that motivates the scientist "springs from the sphere of religion." Science is "lame" without that faith. In the same way he argues that religion needs to learn from science "what means will contribute to the attainment of the goals that it has set up." Without this knowledge, religion is "blind."

modern ultra-liberal theological schools (e.g., Harvard, Yale) and denominations (e.g., Methodist, Episcopalian) were once orthodox and zealous for the Scriptures. These institutions have traveled down the road of compromise with evolutionary humanism farther than most, but many evangelicals today seem to have embarked on the same icy road, unaware of the dangers ahead and impatient with those who would warn them.

Evangelicals . . . generally "dare not call it compromise" and perhaps are not even aware of it, but compromise they have, in many, many instances. Some have accepted full blown theistic evolution, but many more believe in either "progressive creation" or "reconstructive creation" (i.e., the so-called Gap Theory). . . .

That these systems (theistic evolution, etc.) are actually dangerous compromises rather than legitimate interpretations of Scripture should be obvious for anyone committed to the proposition that the Bible really is the inerrant Word of God.⁹

This eloquent passage, reminiscent of the warnings against the dangers of Copernicanism, is very persuasive. Certainly conservative Christian colleges do not want to embrace the liberal theology of Harvard University. But we must remember that Harvard's once-conservative theology was buried deep under its green quadrants before Darwinism ever set foot on the campus. It was not evolution that destroyed Harvard's Christian witness; it was the secularization of society that was proceeding at a very healthy pace without the help of Charles Darwin. It was political evolution, not biological, that was inducing these mutations.

The author of the above passage goes on to indict many of the mainstream evangelical institutions because of their compromises: Wheaton, Gordon, Calvin, and Westmont colleges—the academic cream of the Christian College Coalition; InterVarsity Christian Press; the American Scientific Affiliation—an evangelical scientific organization, generally very well respected; and so on.

9. Morris, *Long War Against God*, 101-2.

2. In addition to the essentially religious arguments stated above, the scientific creationists have a second argument supposedly based entirely on science. In this argument, the creationists attempt to use the actual data of science to support their conclusions. Cloaked in this garb, the creationists begin to resemble mainstream scientists, who generally afford science a great deal of authority. As we will see later, however, the creationists do not really accept the independent authority of science without confirming scriptural corroboration.¹⁰

The scientific creationists believe that it is possible to argue directly from known scientific facts and theories that their particular interpretation of origins is valid. In fact, the entire scientific creationist movement is motivated by the desire to create an apparently nonreligious, scientifically supported theory of origins that can successfully challenge the modern evolutionary theories without invoking the support of religion.

One of the most attractive features of this theory of origins is the remarkable correlation between the biblical account of creation and the scientific account, as the creationists present it. There are thus two separate pillars of support, each complementing the other and providing additional insight. That there should simultaneously be two separate authorities supporting the same worldview is the best possible situation; if you tend to favor scientific explanations, you can find comfort in the additional support from religion; if you prefer religious explanations, you can find comfort in the scientific vindication. In either case there will certainly be no conflict between the two.

The scientific creationist worldview thus provides the same kind of metaphysical underpinning that the medieval worldview provided for Christians in the late Middle Ages. Their worldview was constructed from a synthesis of Scripture and secular science, which were found to be complementary. Their

10. The literature of the creationists, particularly the material written for Christian audiences, makes it clear that they accept the Bible as the final authority on matters scientific. If science is in disagreement with the Bible, then that science is in error. The only authority that science might have would deal with scientific questions that had no connection with anything in the Bible. In fact, many of the creationists argue that Christians should be skeptical of modern science because many scientists are "unbelievers."

worldview was one of harmony; and there were no conflicts, at least until Galileo came along.

The medieval worldview is long gone. Biblical scholars now challenge the exegetical approach of their medieval predecessors as woefully inadequate. The Bible, they argue, does not teach that the earth is fixed in the center of the universe.

History will judge the worldview of the scientific creationists. Will the verdict be the same? Will biblical scholars look back at these decades and lament that a very particular approach to the Scriptures distorted its message? Will the scientific community look back and remark about the incredibly naive notions that almost made their way into science?

These are the two fundamental questions: (1) Does a proper interpretation of the Bible require the adoption of a particular scientific worldview? (2) Do the facts of science support the theory of origins known as scientific creationism?

The next two chapters will address each of these questions individually.