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THE SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE

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"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him:
but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21).

The spirit of compromise that prevailed among the people of God in Elijah's time also manifested itself in the mid-nineteenth century, as Christians labored to accept both God and evolution, both the Bible and the ages of geology. This was not surprising, for in every age there has been conflict between God and the Devil and a corresponding tension between the world-system and the community of the saints, and always there have been those among the latter who seek to ease the tension by yielding up some of the distinctives of the Bible-founded separatism to which they were called. Neither is it surprising then that the same spirit of compromise is moving strongly today among erstwhile Bible-centered Christians.

This age-long conflict has always been basically the same, although it assumes many forms. On one side there is the omnipotent God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. On the other stands a finite creature, who presumes to deny the primacy and sovereignty of God, sometimes explicitly and more often implicitly. The conflict sometimes centers around the doctrine of salvation, whether by grace or works, sometimes over the question of authority, whether the Word of God or the wisdom of men, sometimes over the goal of history, whether the kingdom of God or a humanistic utopia. It is always a question of priority: is the universe God-centered or man-centered? Is our approach to the study of any question to be based on the sovereignty of God and the authority of His revelation, or is it based on the autonomy of the human will and wisdom?

The idea of evolution did not, of course, originate with Darwin or with his predecessors of the Enlightenment. The revelation of fiat creation ex nihilo is essentially unique to the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures. Other traditions or philosophies of origins all visualize development of the world and its inhabitants out of pre-existent materials of some kind. Basically, all such cosmologies are evolutionary, always in opposition to the concept that the

This paper was presented at the joint meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation and the Evangelical Theological Society at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, on June 20, 1963. It has been slightly revised for Grace Journal.

eternally self-existent Creator in the beginning brought all things into instantaneous existence out of nothing.

Sometimes the Mosaic cosmogony of Genesis is said to have been written as an accommodation to the culture of the early Hebrews, who were too naive to have understood the idea of evolution. But this is patently absurd, since it would have been far more natural to the Hebrews or any other ancient people to think in terms of an evolutionary origin of things than in terms of special creation from nothing. Evolution is the natural way to explain the origin of things for those who do not know and acknowledge the true God of creation.

In fact, some kind of evolution is absolutely necessary for those who would reject God. Thus, the idea of an evolutionary origin must have had its first beginnings in the mind of Satan himself, as the only means by which he could rationalize his rebellion against God. The only evidence he had that he was actually a creature of God was the fact that God said so. If he rejected the Word of God, then he must assume that he, along with other beings in the universe and with the non-living components of the universe, and even God Himself, had somehow evolved by innate processes of an eternally-existing universe into their present state. Thus, God's rule may simply have been a coincidence of priority of time of evolution, and might be overcome by a well-planned and executed rebellion.

It is instructive to trace the history of this rebellion throughout human history, as recorded in the Bible. In its essentials it boils down to a conflict between those who worship and serve the Creator and those "who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator" (Rom. 1:25). It is a conflict between God-centered and creature-centered religion. Any sort of religion which denies the Creator the place of absolute primacy and sovereignty in the universe, which prescribes limits of His action or power or which seeks to judge His deeds or His Word at the bar of human reason, is fundamentally a system of evolution. The universe or some aspect or component of it is held to be the focus of ultimate Truth and the idea of God is accommodated, if at all, in some derivative place in the system. This framework appeals to creaturely pride and thus has a strong appeal to fallen men. Acknowledgment of God's absolute sovereignty and man's total depravity, on the other hand, requires complete submission of man's wisdom and will to that of God, and this humiliation is stubbornly resisted by human nature.

Whenever God has created a new thing in the earth, calling out a man or a group of men who are to receive and propagate His Word, Satan has bitterly opposed Him and sought to incite opposition to His Word and purposes. Usually, Satan has developed this opposition most effectively through a spirit of compromise on the part of God's people.

Mother Eve was led first to doubt the absolute reliability of God's Word ("Yea, hath God said . . .?") before she fell into overt disobedience. Cain was undoubtedly a religious man, bringing his offering to God, but he did not offer it "by faith," as did Abel (Heb. 11:4), and Abel's faith, as is true of all genuine faith (Rom. 10:17), must have been centered in the Word of God. The inescapable conclusion, therefore, is that Cain brought an offering according to the decision of his own will and wisdom rather than according to the Word of God, and thus he was assuming for himself the prerogative to correct and revise God's Word. He

did not reject God's command to bring the sacrifice, but he judged it more expedient and agreeable to bring one which indicated growth and beauty rather than a bloody sacrifice speaking of decay and death.

The antediluvians became so self-centered (note the blasphemous self-assertion of Lamech in Gen. 4:23, 24) and opposed to God (note Enoch's testimony concerning the "hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" as recorded in Jude 15) that the only remedy was complete destruction of mankind and the earth itself by the Deluge. This was not only for the destruction of the descendants of Cain. The descendants of Seth had eventually compromised with the Cainitic culture to the extent that they were also destroyed and "Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the Ark" (Gen. 7:23).

And even then it wasn't long until men again began to reject the Word of the Lord and desired instead to "make us a name" (Gen. 11:4). Because men refused God's Word, therefore God then confused their words and they were scattered. From that day on, the history of the Gentile nations has been predominantly one of spiritual deterioration, as recorded in Rom. 1:18-32. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:22, 23).

And what is idolatry and paganism but evolutionary pantheism? The transcendent Creator is identified with His creation, so that he must be depicted in terms of men or beasts or other created objects. God is a fish, or a cow, or a superman, or the sun, or the elemental forces of nature. He is a part of, and limited by, the universe. He is rejected as omnipotent, sovereign Creator of all things.

In this morass of evolutionary paganism, God spoke to Abraham and called him out to a position of complete separation from the world-system, to establish a new people of God through whom the Word of God might be transmitted. By faith, Abraham believed and obeyed the Word of God. He did not submit the Word of God to his own reason or Chaldean education or to the wise men of Ur, but simply "went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8), because God had spoken.

But again the spirit of compromise plagued the heirs of Abraham. His nephew and companion, Lot, "pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Gen. 13:12), and though "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," continued to "dwell among them" (II Pet. 2:7, 8) until the Lord turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes. Ishmael, the first son of Abraham, turned from his father's position of separation to marry a woman of Egypt. Esau, the first son of Isaac, wed two women of the Hittites. The descendants of Ishmael and Esau have ever since been bitter enemies of the chosen people, Israel.

When God, through Moses, called His people out of Egypt, they complained and longed to turn back time and time again. Once they went so far as to fashion a calf of gold, and call it God, and Moses was forced to make a clear-cut separation of those who were "on the Lord's side," and those who would compromise with the paganism of Egypt (Ex. 32:26).

The period of the judges was characterized by cycles of revival, compromise and apostasy, repeated over and over again. The Israelites for a while would worship and serve the true God, then begin to compromise with the pagan systems of the Canaanite nations, and finally would embrace Baal and Ashtaroth.

Eventually, again through a desire to be more like the surrounding nations, the people of God demanded a human king, and God gave them their request. But the same old cycle of revival, compromise and apostasy continued to operate. The spirit of compromise is always the prelude to apostasy.

The men whom we honor today as the great heroes of faith, on the other hand, are invariably those who stood firm against compromise with the world system of their day, who endured ridicule, suffering and often martyrdom because of their strong faith in the integrity of the Word of God. One thinks of Daniel and his three friends, willing to go into the den of lions or the fiery furnace rather than compromise with the pagan religions of Babylon and Persia, --of Nehemiah, rejecting the proffered alliance with the people of the land when building the walls of Jerusalem, --of Elijah, Josiah, Jeremiah, David, and the other great men of God who firmly believed and acted upon the Word of God in the face of tremendous pressure to compromise and accommodate their stand to public opinion.

Then there are the Christian martyrs, from Stephen on to Wycliffe, and even to those who suffer for their faith today in Siberia, in Red China and other great citadels of modern science and progressivism. All have been men of virile faith in the Word of God, believing that God is able to say what He means and that He means what He says. Apostate or compromising Christians do not fit into this category. They "love the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn. 12:43). Like Demas, they "love this present world" (II Tim. 4:10). They would like their "faith... (to) stand in the wisdom of men" (II Cor. 2:5).

The Bible warns in clear terms against this spirit of compromise with the philosophies and systems of the world. It is made emphatically clear that there must always be conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, between the world-system and the believer, between God and the Devil. Only a sampling of the numerous Scriptural exhortations is necessary to demonstrate this.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (I Cor. 1:20).

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (Jas. 1:4).

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Rom. 12:2).

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light

with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (II Cor. 6:14, 15).

And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words... Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Col. 2:4, 8).

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so-called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith (I Tim. 6:20, 21).

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, ...having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away (II Tim. 3:1, 5).

...they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness (II Pet. 3:16, 17).

In view of such urgent admonitions and exhortations to the Christian believer (and similar warnings could be multiplied many times from other passages of Scripture), one should be extremely resistant to any spirit of compromise with any of the anti-Christian beliefs or practices of this world-system. And this should be true more than anywhere else in connection with the philosophy of evolution since, as has been pointed out above, this philosophy is really the foundation of the very rebellion of Satan himself, and of every evil system which he has devised since that time to oppose the sovereignty and grace of God in this universe.

Those who advocate a compromising approach to the world do so hoping that this will relieve somewhat the tension between the Christian sphere and that of the non-Christian, and thereby make it easier to win such people to Christ. But, as important and urgent as it is to seek to win men to Christ and the Gospel, it is more important and more urgent to honor God and His Word.

And besides, men are never really won to Christ through compromise, anyway. No one is genuinely saved who imposes certain conditions before he will accept Christ and His salvation. He must come as a helpless child and as a hopeless sinner, trusting fully in the sovereign God for mercy and forgiveness, simply on the basis of the atoning death of His Maker and Redeemer. Compromise has no place in such a transaction as this.

The only reason, therefore, why an evangelical Christian would seek a more intellectually palatable version of the Gospel is that of alleviating its offence. A Christian today can maintain an open and vocal belief in real Creation, in the Fall and Curse, in human depravity, in blood atonement, in salvation by sovereign grace alone and in the coming judgment, only at the cost of suffering ridicule and rejection, in greater or lesser degree, by the "intel-

lectual" world. To a Christian with intelligence and ability, as well as ambition, this is very difficult to accept, and often leads him, whether consciously or subconsciously, into a spirit of compromise. And this spirit, of course, has led to numerous and varied devices by which it was thought the Biblical revelation could be harmonized with modern science and philosophy. Basically, all such "harmonies" in one way or another represent accommodations to the theory of evolution, for this is the basis of all anti-theistic movements and teachings.

The only firm and proper ground on which a Christian should stand, however, is the sure foundation of the Word of God, inscripturated in the Bible. It is certain that no one can possibly know anything of the prehistoric past or of the eschatological future with any certainty unless these matters are revealed by God. Science can only speak with certainty on things which are now. Science can measure and correlate and evaluate present processes and phenomena, but has no way whatever of knowing that these have always been the same or that they always will be the same. The principle of uniformity, which assumes this, represents therefore not a scientific law, but rather an act of faith. But that faith is faith in the eternity of matter, in materialism, in evolution, rather than faith in God and creation and revelation. The decision between these two faiths is not a scientific decision, but a spiritual decision, and is therefore made on the basis of moral and spiritual considerations rather than scientific evidence.

If one is willing to recognize that truly reliable knowledge of these matters can come only from God and to accept by faith the proposition that God has revealed them to us in the Bible, then it becomes apparent to the eye of faith that the Biblical framework is wonderfully consistent and satisfying and that the date of empirical science and recorded history all fit perfectly into it. As the Scripture says: "Howbeit we speak wisdom...: yet not the wisdom of this world" (I Cor. 2:6).

This basic Biblical framework, as recorded in Scripture, is built around the following key facts of history: (1) a real and special creation of all things, ex nihilo, in six days, following which God stopped creating; (2) the introduction of rebellion, disharmony, decay and death into the world through man's Fall and God's Curse on the whole creation; (3) destruction and renovation of the antediluvian earth and its inhabitants at the time of the great Deluge; (4) the work of redemption, whereby God Himself became flesh to reconcile the world unto Himself, by His substitutionary death and justifying resurrection; (5) the consummation of God's purposes for the world when Christ returns, involving wrath and judgment for all who have rejected Him, and the creation of a new earth and heavens as the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed.

This basic framework of earth history is emphatically rejected, in every part, by both ancient and modern intellectualism. This rejection is, and must be, based squarely on the assumption of uniformity. The study of present processes could not possibly lead to a knowledge of the above facts of Biblical history, for the simple reason that none of them could possibly be accomplished through present processes.

The study of such present processes is really the only legitimate domain of science. The only processes which can be actually studied and scientifically evaluated are those which are

in operation now or which have been in operation within the historic past, as pointed out above. But philosophers have projected these processes into the past and future, on the basis of the premise of uniformity, and have called this projection evolutionary science. It is clearly only philosophy, or even a religion of sorts, rather than a true science, but the highly vocal advocates of this kind of extrapolation have succeeded in persuading many people that "science" indeed has disproved the Biblical framework of earth history.

This, of course, has in essence always been the position of the unbelieving world and so is only to be expected. But the tragedy is that many Christians, even conservative, evangelical Christians, are so intimidated by this pressure that they are willing to compromise the Biblical framework in order to relieve the tension with uniformitarian philosophers. This happened in wholesale fashion in Darwin's generation, and is being repeated in ours. And now, as then, and as has always been true, compromise is but the prelude to apostasy.

Because one compromise merely leads to another, and then to another, until there is finally nothing left to compromise, the Christian must finally go fully over to the position demanded all along by the uniformitarian.

For example, the materialist will insist that geological science has proved the earth to be millions or billions of years in age and therefore that the Biblical record of a creation of all things only a few thousand years ago is in error. The Christian apologist, not wishing to incur the ridicule of the geologists, decides to accept the geological ages as presented, but to insert them in a possible "gap" between the first two verses of Genesis. The original creation was, he suggests, destroyed by some kind of pre-Adamic cataclysm, and the creation narrative of Genesis really tells about a "re-creation" of the earth, with its animal and human inhabitants.¹

But this compromise does not satisfy the geologists. The geological ages, with their purported record of a billion years of gradual and progressive development of all kinds of animals on the earth, including man, simply cannot be so easily disposed of. There is no indication geologically of such a worldwide pre-Adamic cataclysm, for one thing, and furthermore the fossil record preserved in the rocks representing the geological ages is essentially composed of the same kinds of animals as the Genesis narrative describes. The fossil record of man himself is also a part of these supposed geological ages, so that this theory soon leads to some kind of "pre-Adamic man," who lived and died before Adam, even though the Scriptures make it plain (e.g., Rom. 5:12; 8:19-23) that death first came into the world as a result of Adam's sin.

¹It is recognized that many Christians have advocated the gap theory on exegetical grounds rather than as a conscious attempt to correlate Genesis with geology. However, it should be recognized that the theory was first put forth about 150 years ago with exactly this primary purpose. Also it should be recognized that the theory, if valid, must be defended on exegetical grounds only; it cannot legitimately be offered as a means of reconciling the Bible and the geological ages, for this it does not do.

So it must finally be conceded that the "gap" theory will not really work, geologically speaking, not to mention the many serious Scriptural difficulties it entails. Uniformitarians simply will not accept any such cataclysm and re-creation. Therefore, the evangelical will sooner or later agree that the geological ages must really be contemporaneous and equivalent to the account of creation and development of the earth and its inhabitants as outlined in the first chapter of Genesis. But, he says, we can interpret the "days" of creation to be "days of God," rather than literal days. Thus the six days of creation correspond to the geological ages, during which God was "creating" all things. There are certain admitted gaps in the fossil record, and these correspond to acts of creation; at other times, the created kinds were developing into their various families and genera. This concept we can call "progressive creation," and the Biblical exegesis employed we shall name the "day-age theory."

This seems at first thought to be a very satisfactory way out of the dilemma, but it soon appears that the geologists do not respond with much enthusiasm. They point out that there are so many conflicts and omissions in the Biblical order of events of creation, as compared with the accepted evolutionary order of development in the geological ages, that the Genesis record must still be rejected as far as any historical and scientific accuracy is concerned. And they have a disconcerting way of insisting that the first two chapters of Genesis even contradict themselves on the order of creative events. Furthermore, the account of Eve's creation out of Adam seems to make no sense at all from the perspective of the evolutionist. Many of them seem to have a better sense of exegetical propriety than do the harmonistical expositors, recognizing that any system of interpretation which insists on reading "age" for "day," in the absence of any real contextual justification, is merely "wresting the Scriptures" rather than true exegesis. As far as the fossil "gaps" are concerned, they refuse to acknowledge these as evidence of creative acts, but rather continue to hope that the gaps will be continually narrowed and finally closed with increasing knowledge of paleontology and evolutionary mechanisms. And so the "day-age theory" finally proves an inadequate compromise.

So the historical and scientific significance of the Genesis record must be abandoned. But the evangelical now insists that this really doesn't matter after all. The Bible is not a textbook of science, but is a textbook of religion and morals. It merely tells us the "fact" of creation, and science must discover the method and time in God's other book, the Book of Nature. The creation record in Genesis is not meant to be taken literally and historically, but is rich in theological truth, teaching man the wonderful fact of divine order and purpose in the universe. Further, there is a wealth of religious significance in the allegory of creation and the fall of man, even though the events themselves did not actually take place. What difference does it make, they say, to the great doctrines of salvation whether man was a special creation or not, or whether the Flood was universal, or whether Eve was really fashioned out of Adam's side. These are peripheral matters and do not affect our basic Christian beliefs one way or another.

Now surely this compromise ought to be fully satisfactory to the evolutionist. We have adopted fully the interpretive framework that he uses; we can now participate with him as full partners in his research into the mechanisms of evolution, into the evolutionary phylogenies of animals and man, into the investigations of the origin of life itself and the development of

the cosmos, and at the same time maintain our faith in the integrity of the Word of God and of the Christian Gospel!

But somehow the evolutionist remains stubbornly unsatisfied with our concessions. If evolution satisfactorily explains all things, he says, why do you insist on bringing religion into the picture? The order that appears in the universe is largely only a construct of our own minds, and anyway it can be explained by chance variation and natural selection; the idea of Design has no scientific utility and is quite unnecessary. As far as Purpose is concerned, there is certainly no evidence in the scientific data themselves, with all their indications of false starts, inversions, extinctions, blind alleys and other facts of evolutionary history, to suggest that any sort of divine Being has any control over, or interest in, the evolutionary process. As Julian Huxley, perhaps evolution's chief protagonist, says:

Darwinism removed the whole idea of God as the creator of organisms from the sphere of rational discussion... Darwin pointed out that no supernatural designer was needed; since natural selection could account for any known form of life, there was no room for a supernatural agency in its evolution... There was no sudden moment during evolutionary history when 'spirit' was instilled into life, any more than there was a single moment when it was instilled into you... I think we can dismiss entirely all idea of a supernatural overriding mind being responsible for the evolutionary process.²

And when it is further realized that the writers of the Bible all seemed plainly to accept the Genesis account of creation as literally and factually true, as well as the Fall, the universal Flood, and the other great non-uniformitarian events of Biblical history, there is finally no recourse from regarding all the writers of Scripture as subject to cultural limitations and human error in what they wrote. Thus, even Jesus Himself, who frequently referred to and obviously believed in these events recorded in Genesis, must have been fallible in His judgment and limited in His knowledge.

Still further compromise would be necessary if we are to please the real leaders of evolutionary thought, such as Huxley, but we have already gone so far that there is nothing of Biblical Christianity left but a hollow shell. Compromise is a one-way street, ending in a precipice. Its only logical and normal outcome is utter apostasy from the Christian faith, and this is the road that has already been traveled by great numbers of Christian schools, churches, organizations, and publications in this post-Darwin century.

And it is all so tragically unnecessary! The Biblical revelation of origins is wonderfully satisfying, fully self-consistent, and perfectly harmonious with the character and purposes of a sovereign, gracious God. There can never be anything in true science (which really deals only with the present) which can ever impugn its literal, historical, factuality. May God in these last days guard His people against this Spirit of Compromise which is today threatening

²In Issues in Evolution, Sol Tax, ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 43.

to remove the last vestige of Biblical Christianity even from supposedly Christian America.

The Lord Jesus, looking forward to the time of His return, and seeing the characteristics of the last days, was moved to pose the question: "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Perhaps this was meant as a direct question to those who would be professing a faith in Him and His words in those last days. May God grant His people the courage to answer His question: "Amen, Even so, come Lord Jesus."