

THE DEBATE ABOUT CREATION AND EVOLUTION

Now that the correspondence in *The Chronicle* about creationism and Noah's ark has been closed, perhaps a few remarks are in order. Though we disagree strongly with many of the things that were said, we should admit that we are grateful that *The Chronicle* was prepared to carry on this debate. It is important that questions about the Christian faith are not pushed aside, but given public airing. In addition, we can be grateful that a number of writers on the creationist side put their case very well. It is curious that some of the people who attack the Bible on the creation and the flood are quick to make allegations that the facts do not support, or indicate that they have not even read the Bible very carefully.

Mr David Fasold, a marine salvage expert, who accepted for nine years the claim that the remains of Noah's Ark had been found near Mount Ararat, has rejected that conclusion. He has sued Dr Allen Roberts for allegedly lying in his national lectures about his examination of the structure. Roberts's lectures are available on video and audiotapes. The legal hearings began in the second week of April. It was at that time that the first letters on creation and evolution began to appear in *The Chronicle*. Allen Roberts holds a doctorate in Christian education. Professor Ian Plimer, a Melbourne University professor, a geologist, and a strong critic of the theory of creationism, has joined Mr Fasold in the court action against Dr Roberts. In 1994 both Plimer and Fasold went to Turkey to examine the site. Professor Plimer has put up \$150,000 for his court battle. He took action under section 52 of the Trade Practices Act, and accused Dr Roberts and his Ark Search Incorporated of "misleading and deceptive conduct" under the act. He sees the court case as a way of making creationists either put up or shut up. He has assembled a group of witnesses, including an Anglican archdeacon and a Presbyterian elder.

We do not know whether there has been any conclusion to this court case. However, it has revived the conflict between people who believe that the world has evolved over millions of years, and people who accept the account of creation in Genesis at face value. What is at issue is how and when living species began, several billion years ago, or how and when the Bible says they did.

Dr Roberts originally had his interest kindled by a photograph of the site in the old *Pix* magazine, in 1948. He has been to the boat-shaped formation in eastern Turkey a number of times, with Roy Wyatt and others, and written books and made videos about it. He claims that the group has found fossilised laminated timber planks, remains of ancient rivets, anchor stones, and so on. He claims that radar read-outs show that the remains resemble the dimensions and structure of the ark as described in Genesis. The Turkish government promotes the site for tourists to visit.

One of the points made by several of the writers in *The Chronicle* was that Archbishop Peter Hollingworth, the Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane, wrote the foreword in Ian Plimer's book, *Telling Lies for God*. The archbishop described people who support creation science as "anti-knowledge, anti-religious, and anti-science." On the contrary, the acceptance of God's account of creation does not involve a sacrifice of the intellect in the name of faith. However, Archbishop Hollingworth's assertion reminds us that evolutionists and Christians are divided both ways. Strictly, evolution is not science, but evolutionists make fundamental assumptions that are against the Christian faith. Evolution is not the foundation of true science. There are scientists who accept evolution, some, like Michael Denton, in *A Theory in Crisis*, point out flaws in the theory of evolution, without being creationists, and some don't accept evolution at all. There are Christians, like the archbishop, who ought to reject evolution, and don't. Both evolutionists and Christians like him agree when they regard God's account of creation in Genesis as a myth.

For Christians there are clear teachings that should not be surrendered. These include the absolute authority of God's Word, God's creation of the world out of nothing reasonably recently, compared with the billions of years that evolutionists claim, God's creation of plants and animals, all of which reproduce after their own kinds, and the special creation of man in God's image. No human beings were present when God began His six-day work of creation, and Christians' acceptance of creation is a matter of faith in ____, in the Scriptures, that He spoke, and things were so.

One of the claims that some evolutionists make is that the chapters in Genesis do not set out to present a scientific account of creation, but to express much deeper spiritual truths. It is a truism to say that Genesis is not a textbook on every aspect of science. However, that is not the end of the story. No one has the right, when the Scriptures say that certain things were so, to say that they were not so. The most basic truths of all are that sin and death, which Adam's disobedience brought into this world, have been done over and set right by Jesus Christ, the second Adam. It is impossible to have a mythical Adam in an actual Garden of Eden; and it doesn't make sense to contrast the historical Jesus Christ with a mythical Adam who had a mythical fall into sin in a

mythical Garden of Eden. For St Paul the contrast between Adam and Jesus Christ is absolutely fundamental (See Rm 5:12-21). Those who call themselves Christians and want to take the early chapters of Genesis as a myth take on themselves the impossible task of saying where myth ends and facts and history begin. The New Testament fully accepts that the accounts of Genesis I -3 are absolutely factual. That is also clear from the ways in which Jesus referred to those chapters in his answer to questions about marriage and divorce, and in His prediction that conditions just before the end of the world would be like conditions just before the flood at the time of Noah. However, the pervasive doctrine of original sin, which is behind all of mankind's woes, including the assumptions of evolutionists, is anchored in Genesis chapter 3. Sadly, the acceptance of "godless" evolution is a foolish attempt by human being_ to evade their responsibility to their Creator, and their own accountability for their sin (See Rm 1: 18-21).

Christians can have full confidence that what is presented in the Scriptures, even in points of history, geography, and science, will stand up. Archaeology and other records have often dispelled earlier doubts about what the Scriptures have recorded. Sometimes the stones have cried out where people have blurred over the real facts, or wrongly accused the Scriptures of error. Evidence about the destruction of Jericho is a good example.

The assumption of evolution lies at the root of many things that are wrong in our society: the view that there is no difference between human beings and animals except in degree of intelligence, the assumption that rules for good conduct are simply a matter of convention in certain societies, the idea that this present life is all there will ever be, the assumption that this world operates on the basis of blind chance, purposelessness in life, and lack of sympathy for the ill and the aged. All these maladies were present before Darwin's theory, but evolution has entrenched them all worse than before. .

The courts are not the places to debate these important issues. The Religious Freedom Institute believes the court action by Professor Ian Plimer against Dr Roberts, if successful, could lead to religious leaders having to prove their beliefs in court more generally.

However, faith in God's good creation, and the parallel faith God, who is all-powerful and all-knowing, and loving, forgiving, and saving, give us confidence that there is both purpose in this present life, and a glorious life to come. This gift of faith in God, in the name of His dear Son, gives us confidence and hope. God will destroy this present world with fire, just as He destroyed it at Noah's time, in the flood. None can escape God's just judgment, for all are accountable to Him. What is to come for believers, for Jesus sake, will be the recapitulation of all that went wrong .in Adam, and that new heaven and new earth will be much more wonderful than the Garden of Eden itself.

Whether Alien Roberts has made some claims about the ark-site that have gone too far, we do not know. The Creation Science Foundation is not supportive of Dr Roberts. Dr Carl Wieland has said, "We are of the view that various researchers made misleading claims which Roberts and Ark Search relied upon in good faith." Certainly the assumptions that are made without proof by evolutionists go far beyond any unwarranted claims by Dr Roberts, if he has made any. A decision of a law-court, where, on a subject such as this, decisions by juries and judges are bound to be influenced by personal religious bias, do not decide the issue. There is a greater judgment to come, and we already know the verdict that God delivers on those who doubt His Scriptures and His power.