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Several Theological Considerations concerning the Creation vs. Evolution Debate¹

“We shall lament the blindness of those who only allow the validity of tradition in physics instead of reason and experiment; we shall be horrified at the error of those who in theology put the arguments of reason in place of the tradition of Scripture and the Fathers.”
(Blaise Pascal)²

The theory of creation-evolution can be defined from the following twenty points of view:

1. The interpretation of the Bible, genres
2. The God of deliverance; God, the Creator
3. The Bible and the scientific world view of the age: acceptance
4. The Bible and the philosophy-world view of the age: resistance
5. The Reformed standpoint about the freedom of science, the relationship of the book of Genesis and natural science
6. The ideological aspect
7. The theory of creation versus the theory of evolution as a cultural war
8. Overcoming Darwinism by the methods of common sense
9. Do we need to distinguish between the domains of faith and science? Yes!
10. Can we separate the two domains? No!
11. Mutual violation of frontiers
12. Is God present in the missing links?
13. The time of evolution into Man - in a historical/biological sense
14. The time of evolution into Man – for the theology
15. How does the theory of evolution affect the theological thinking?
16. The standpoint of the Catholic church
17. The Protestant standpoint
18. The Greek-orthodox standpoint
19. The standpoint of the methodist-neoprotestant-evangelical churches
20. Ending: the patience of faith

Keywords: freedom of science, faith and science, Darwinism and Christianity – a cultural war, God and the missing links, standpoint of the churches.

1. Lately this polemic of North-American origin has started to become increasingly popular in this part of Eastern and Central Europe as well. Newspapers publish articles about it (*Krónika*, November 11–12 2000; December 23–24 2000; etc.), theological journals and works study it (*Az Út*, July–September 2001; *Theologiai Szemle*, 2001/2; Henri Blocher, *Kezdetben [In the Beginning]*; Thaxton–Bradley–Olsen, *Az élet eredetének rejtélye [The Mystery of Life's Origin]* – both published by Harmat Publishers in 1998), public lectures chose it as their topic (Cluj-Napoca, MásVilág Klub, November 2000) and there is also a group of biologists and theologians – to which the author of the present study belongs – who discuss it during their regular meetings. These are the precedents which led me to conclude that it was necessary to offer several basic theological considerations which would offer help in considering the matter further (without dealing extensively with either of the premises).

2. Quoted by J. Moltmann in: *Theology Today* (July 2001), p.155.

I. Interpretation of the Scripture

1. Bible interpretation, genres

a. The Holy Scripture – as an analogy to the twofold nature of Christ – has a *godly* and a *human* nature, which cannot be mixed, but which cannot be completely separated either. We believe the Holy Scripture to be the Word of God. At the same time, the Holy Scripture is not merely a book. It is an entire library consisting of various books written down and gathered together over a period of one thousand two hundred years. Within this collection of books we find an entire range of genres³: *parables*; *hymns*; *psalms* (and such a variety within this genre alone, from the laudatory to the cursing psalms!); *love songs*; *chronicles* (accurately recorded historical events); *legends* (some written down one thousand years after they were first told, in the meantime being shaped by retelling, although the core of the events, whose primary role was to convey the theological message they contained, was kept); *myths* (conveying purely theological teaching); *narratives* (for instructional purposes), eschatological *visions*; *the gospel* as a literary genre demonstrating a specific style; *aphorisms*; a collection of *laws*; *narratives of Christological content*, etc. Interpreting biblical texts by means other than those specific to their genre can lead to fatal misunderstandings. After David has taken Bathsheba away from her husband, Nathan, the prophet tells him a parable (2 Sam 12) about a poor man who had only one lamb which was taken away from him by a rich man who owned whole flocks. David falls into the trap. Had he been aware of the specific traits of the literary genre, he could have avoided this, since a narrative beginning with the words “there were two men” is known to usually be a parable. But David takes the narrative *literally* and a righteous anger arises in his heart: “The man who did this deserves to die!” Nathan responds: “You are the man!” Another example: Jesus’ teaching about the “few” who find the “narrow road” and “the many” on the “broad road” is *not a piece of metaphysical information* on the best possible ratio of those saved and those cursed being 49 to 51 percent! And the examples of such misinterpretations could go on infinitely.

b. The (reliable) trend of theology today has already reached agreement regarding the interpretation of the first chapter of the book of Genesis, namely, that *it should not be interpreted literally*. The reason for such a view is not a liberal degeneration yielding to the spirit of the age, but the fact that *the biblical text itself requires such an interpretation*. For it is obvious that we have *two creation narratives* in the Bible.⁴ Genesis 1:1–2:4a is the more recent, the so called priestly version, dating back to the 6th century BC; Genesis 2:4b–24 is the so called Yahwistic version dating back to the 10th century BC. (Recent commentaries show this latter version to be a deuteronomic version, i.e., this text was created after the

3. An illuminating book on this topic, which I dare say cannot be disregarded, is Gerhard Lohfink’s *Jetzt verstehe ich die Bibel [Now I Understand the Bible]*. Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, Stuttgart, 1973; or its French translation, *Enfin je comprends la Bible*. Labor et Fides, Geneva, 1987.

4. See the questions regarding scientific and Christian anthropology in *Evangelischer Erwachsenen Katechismus*, an absolutely balanced work offering a great amount of material. Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, Gütersloh, 1975. There is a collation of the two creation narratives on page 174.

priestly version as a commentary to it; however, the considerations offered below are still valid.) Comparing the two versions we can formulate some interesting findings:

Genesis 1:1–2:4a	Genesis 2:4b–24
– tells us about the creation of the universe;	– concentrates on the creation of man and is interested only in man’s position within the creation;
– primary state: water;	– primary state: desert;
– God created the universe through his word: “God said;”	– God created the universe through his actions: “God made;”
– God created land, he divided the waters; from the desert;	– God made streams to come up
– man is the culminating point of creation; creation;	– man is the starting point for
– the text has been carefully drawn up and uses consistent language.	– a simple popular narration.

This twofold nature is admitted also by Louis Berkhof who brings arguments against evolution based mostly on a liberal interpretation of the Bible.⁵ The Holy Scripture does not shrink from variety and is not afraid to make up God’s face from various colorful pieces of puzzle, often using incomplete sentences, narratives, etc., for in its childlike freedom it is aware of the fact that the only complete and perfect face of God without any flaws is Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The Gospels show the same variety. The ancient church and the patristic church had the courage to set these two versions of creation next to each other in the process of canonization, despite the most obvious differences between the two synoptic narratives. Neither did they, from the four Gospels, make up a “truthful” one. It was important that historical data be accurate, but these data were considered *primarily a means* of transmitting the revelation contained within the gospel. Therefore, no one was upset by the differences and inconsistencies that could be found in the texts regarded from a *strictly chronological point of view*. This is how the Bible is different from the Koran. It is widely known that in the formation of the Koran there was a historical moment 30 or 40 years after Muhammad’s death when the caliph gathered together all the existing manuscripts, one final version was agreed upon, and then all the other manuscripts were burned. For, they said, divine truth can be only of one kind. These two points of view regarding the Scriptures have had an immeasurable effect on intellectual history, culture, and politics up to this day. “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” However, we should not forget that the Spirit is “carried” for us by the letter.

c. 2 Timothy 3:18-17, *All Scripture is God-breathed*” (theopneustos), so often quoted, also speaks about the function of the Bible in the above-mentioned respect. It “*is useful for*

5. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1939, reprint 1988, p.190: “What can be said against the view that we have in Gen 1 and 2 two different and more or less contradictory accounts of creation?”

teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” And another quote: “you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.” Indeed, the Scriptures are useful for that purpose and not for replacing or evaluating scientific works in the fields of astronomy, cosmology, paleontology, history, or molecular biology. Certainly, the reformers regarded the Bible in this way. The Second Helvetic Confession states it very precisely: “And in this Holy Scripture, the universal Church of Christ has the most complete exposition of all that pertains to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God” (Ch. I.). Such a statement is not a “generalization” of the role of the Holy Scripture, but formulates a keenly conscious *hermeneutical principle*; i.e., the Scripture has to be explained and interpreted with respect to these two things. All this being said, we might wonder what the theological core of Genesis 1 and 2 might be.

1. *In the beginning* (böresit, en arkhé, in principio). This means nothing precedes, nothing surpasses the reality of God. See also the prologue of the Gospel of John: the Word is the primary pattern, the primary basis for whom and by whom all things were created.
2. *Lo, everything is good!* Meaning, everything coming from the creative action of God is good. Good is the “primarily original,” ontological reality.
3. God holds exclusively *the knowledge of good and evil* and this can never turn into something we definitively possess, something we can simply capture and keep. We receive the wisdom to tell good from evil as a gift from God.⁶
4. *The fall, evil*, is historically the “secondarily original.” It is secondary compared to the reality of God’s creation, since it comes from the actions of man, although it is original compared to man, for evil precedes man, the individual; it is a “*déjà là*” reality.⁷ Therefore, it is greater than man and this is the reason man needs salvation from a source other than himself, namely,
5. *from the offspring of the woman*, from Christ, who crushes the serpent’s head.

6. See the introductory thoughts of D. Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics*. Moreover an argument in favor of the fact that the biblical idea of paradise does not refer to a geographical area (somewhere between the Tigris and the Euphrates), but is entirely a heavenly reality is Revelations 2:7 where the glorified Christ promises that “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” The emphasis on the verb ‘is’ in the present tense (ho estin) shows that paradise always existed in the present manner: with God. As the paradise ‘is’ now, so it was earlier and will be anytime in the future. It is a place, the reality of the righteousness and life of God, which can be entered by man through Christ.

7. Pierre Gisel, *La création [Creation]*. Labor et Fides, 1987, Geneva, p.49: “Adam n’est pas le premier homme, surnaturel, mais une figure (paradigmatique) dont la constitution est homogène à la nôtre. Gen 3. ne raconte donc pas, *stricto sensu*, la chute d’un état ontologique parfait dans un autre perverti.” (Adam is not the first, the supernatural man, but a paradigmatic figure whose constitution is absolutely identical to ours. Literally, Gen 3 does not tell about a ruin from a perfect ontological state to a fallen state.) See the theological considerations of this topic in the exegesis-narrative of Augustine on Romans 5:12 (“in quod omnes peccaverunt”), in the analyses made by the reformers, in the works of representatives of dialectical theology (Barth: Adam, as a projection of Christ is not a historical person - keine ‘historische’ Gestalt ist; *Der Römerbrief*. Chr. Kaiser, München, 1933, p.149), and in the explanations of present day exegetes (Stuhlmacher, Leenhardt).

6. The concept of man as being created *in God's own image* – no matter whether by this we mean man's intelligence, his freedom, or his relational features – always refers to the foundation of the true dignity of man, which is to fulfill man's purpose in life-communion with God.
7. This purpose is carried out within a relationship between *a man and a woman* blessed by God and
8. within man's *commission*, namely, to rule over the Earth according to God's commandments.

2. *God the deliverer, God the creator*

The people of Israel had experienced God, the Deliverer (who rescued them from Egypt) before they started believing in God, the Creator of the universe.⁸ This conclusion within the domain of the history of religion is of utmost theological importance – in general, and concerning the present issue. This conclusion helps us understand that faith is not born of the fact that somebody is convinced of the infallibility of the book of Genesis and *therefore* starts believing in God the creator of the galaxies and *later* accepts the fact that the same God revealed himself in God, the Christ. On the contrary, those delivered in Jesus Christ who become part of the reality of the new creation will grow to understand the mentality of faith: namely, that the God of Re-creation is obviously the God of creation as well.⁹ The one who “made his light shine in our hearts” cannot be different from the one who said “in the beginning,” let there be light (2 Cor 4:6). Pierre Gisel, a Lausanne theologian, puts it most appropriately: creation means grace only to those who know that grace itself is creation. The theology of creation serves in every case the purposes of confession and as such, it both depends on the latter and interprets it.¹⁰

3. *The Holy Scripture and the “scientific” worldview of the age: submission*

The Holy Scripture – both the Old Testament and the New – accepts, or rather, takes notice of the general “scientific” worldview of the age without any polemic. Let me give just

8. See Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments [Theology of the Old Testament]*. Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Berlin, 1963, p.149ff. G. Von Rad mentions in the same context, beside the book of Genesis, the other “crown witness” of the theology of creation, Deutero-Isaiah: “So spricht Deuterocesaja. B in Kapitel 42,5 oder in 43,1 in hymnischen predikationen von Jahwe, ‘der die Himmel geschaffen, ‘der dich geschaffen, gebildet hat, um dann im Hauptsatz zu soteriologischen Aussagen überzugehen: ‘Fürchte dich nicht, ich erlöse dich’. Hier, oder auch in 44,24b–28, steht das Wort von dem Schöpfer im Nebensatz oder als Apposition; sichtlich hat es in der Verkündigung des Propheten nur eine dienende Funktion und tritt niergends selbständig auf; es soll das Vertrauen in die Macht und in die Hilfsbereitschaft Jahwes stärken.” (For example, Deutero-Isaiah speaks in hymn-like sermons in Isaiah 42:5 and 43:1 about Yahweh ‘who created the heavens,’ ‘who created you and formed you’ to lead his train of ideas to the central statement of soteriology: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you.’ In this passage, as in 44:24b–28, the statements regarding the creator have a secondary status, serving the accomplishment of the central purpose of the prophet’s sermon. They do not even appear in the text on their own, but are only a means to deepen the believer’s faith in Yahweh’s power and helpful presence.)

9. The Heidelberg Catechism follows the same train of ideas. The answer to the first question begins by speaking about “my faithful Savior Jesus Christ” and from hence gets to the providence of “my heavenly Father”

10. Gisel, *ibid*, p.22: “Mais la création n’est une grace que dans la mesure ou, réciproquement, on aura su et compris que la grace est création.”

one example.¹¹ According to 2 Peter 3:5, “long ago ... the heavens existed and the Earth was formed out of water and by water... .” Some of the Hellenistic Jews lived in the midst of Greek culture, which contained Thales’ theory that first there was water and everything was born out of it. And water was not regarded as merely a physical matter, but also a matter that comprises the creating principle (the capability of self-transcendence as we would call it today) in it. The author of Peter’s epistle does not deal with the “scientific” aspect of this idea, rather, he quotes that the Earth was created from water as a fact and does not place the book of Genesis in opposition to this idea.

4. The Holy Scripture and the philosophy/ideology/worldview of the age: resistance

Instead, the author of Peter’s epistle makes a relevant correction. He does not argue with the “physical” aspect of the idea, but simply demythologizes¹² the text by dispossessing the primary element of water of its mystical power through which it is capable of self-transcendence, by simply introducing in the afore quoted text the words: *by God’s word*. The specifically Christian worldview of the epistle is not shown by the author’s arguing with the scientific views of the age that, no, the Earth was not born out of water, but out of nothing. He does not deal with the major scientific and worldview issues of the time. Rather, seemingly, he submits to the description of the “mechanism” of creation, but he rejects whatever materialistic ideology may lie behind it. All things were created by the word of God.

The Holy Scripture opposes the worldview of antiquity only when it attempts to limit the universal rule of God, the final revelation through Jesus Christ, the renewing power of the Lord, or the hope concerning the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. As a matter of fact, early Christianity had its most extreme fights not with Greek philosophers, mathematicians or scientists, but with dualistic Gnosticism, which declared the creator to be an evil demiurges, and opposed Jesus Christ to his loving Father in the same way that, in anthropology, it played the body against the soul with such devastating effects. In this case, it was not belief and science that were fighting each other to the death, but belief and false belief. And even today, the basic issue of Christianity is not whether the six days of creation mentioned in the book of Genesis correspond to 6 days of 24 hours each or not, or whether “dust” can go through various developmental phases from the geosphere to the biosphere and the noosphere, from the first molecule to man, but whether Jesus is the Christ with all the ethical, soteriological and eschatological consequences the answer to that question may bring.

11. János Bolyki, *Hit és tudomány [Faith and Science]*. A Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1989, p.23.

12. As a matter of fact in the book of Genesis the very same thing happens. For example, the sun, the moon and the stars are not pictured as gods, as in the Canaanic cults of the age. In fact, the first creation narrative means to oppose these very cults: there is but one God compared to whom all the celestial bodies are mere lanterns dispossessed of their mystical powers. This might be the explanation also of the fact that from the very first day there is light, although celestial bodies come into being only on the fourth day.

5. *The Reformed standpoint concerning the freedom of the sciences and the relationship between the book of Genesis and natural science*¹³

Luther clearly distinguishes the viewpoints of an astronomer and of a theologian regarding creation. Although both speak of “heaven,” “The astronomer uses terms like spheres and epicycles and it is legitimate for him to do so... But for myself, I will be satisfied with recognizing the goodness and power of God in these wonderful and also very useful creatures which God created through his Word and which he maintains and governs in order that they serve us and be useful to us. This is the proper attitude of our calling and a specifically theological viewpoint.”

Calvin opines that the ability for scientific research is a gift from God, attributed to both believers and non-believers, for in matters of faith we can see the work of the “sanctifying Spirit,” but in all other matters, such as government, crafts, astronomy, medicine, mathematics or music, talents given to people are the work of the “generally enriching Spirit.” Obviously, Calvin does not mean to say there are two different spirits, rather different gifts of the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, “Since it was the will of God that we should be helped by the work and service of non-believers in the fields of natural sciences, dialectics, mathematics and the like, we need to accept the work and services provided by them.” Because – as the 1561 Belgic Confession of Faith, bearing a strong Calvinist influence, puts it – the created world “... is before our eyes as a most beautiful book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to perceive clearly the invisible things of God.”¹⁴ Therefore, “one must not reject or condemn such a science for the mere reason that some foolish men are in the habit of rejecting everything they do not understand. For astronomy is not only a beautiful science, but also a very useful one and it is indisputable that this field of science reveals the wonderful wisdom of God.” Regarding the book of Genesis, Calvin writes the following: “I have already pointed out that Moses did not intend to write a book of natural sciences... he chose to write in a form that could be understood by simple people without any scientific knowledge also. On the other hand, astronomers seek to discover everything the human mind is able to comprehend with respect to the creation. Therefore, we need not reject their attempts or condemn the scientific research they are pursuing.”

Obviously, the reformers were still able to view the world in its unity and not only because they were people of the late Middle Ages, but due to the fact that they worshiped God as both God of creation and God of revelation.

II. Ideology – belief – mechanisms

6. *The ideological aspect*

Faith, philosophy, and art have an ideological nature as long as they do not suggest a worldview which is accounted for rationally. This type of intuition is admittedly and

13. Quotations come from the above cited book by János Bolyki, pp.36-37.

14. *The Belgic Confession of Faith*. Hungarian translation by Juhász Ágnes. Koinónia, Kolozsvár, 1998, article 2., p.17.

legitimately considered to belong to this domain of spiritual life, i.e., ideology. However, viewing “scientific ideology” in the same manner is a dangerous attempt since, using the mask of objectivity, it preaches of worldviews impossible to verify. Thus we need to distinguish between: 1. *the concept* of evolution (mutation, selection, etc.); 2. *the theory* of evolution, which is a working hypothesis and, as such, legitimately defines a direction to be followed by scientific research; and 3. *evolutionism (Darwinism)*, an atheistic ideology, a kind of “negative belief,” not based on the relations of cause and effect so characteristic of science, for it is not even in its nature to originate from such relations. A good (and rather sad) example of how little these categories are properly understood and distinguished is the position statement of the American National Association of Biology Teachers published in 1995¹⁵ which states, “The diversity of life on Earth is the outcome of evolution, an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable and natural process of temporal descent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance, historical contingencies and changing environments.” Reading this statement, one wonders whether the authors of these lines scrubbed to remove ideological pathogens before proceeding. Obviously, they did not. And it was certainly not the much stressed objective viewpoint so characteristic of their field that led them to use specifically religious terms. They probably did not notice that they used the language of the *Providencia Dei* chapter of the classical dogmatic handbooks: supervision/providence, predictability, personal nature, except that they added negative particles and the prefix un- to them. Distinguishing the *mechanism* of a natural phenomenon and the *ideology* forced upon it, and admitting that there is no causality between the two is basic to the intellectually honest attitude required of any natural scientist.

7. Creationism vs. evolutionism as a cultural war

Let us be plain – this is a typical American phenomena. The passion of the debate on this subject is completely unknown on this side of the Atlantic. Why? I think the answer lies in the Newtonian (Hegelian) theory of effect and counter effect, which manifests itself also in spiritual life. In the countries of the Commonwealth and especially in North America, Darwinism had a more explicit role as an atheist ideology than on the old continent (e.g., in Europe, even the atheistic existentialism of Sartre and his group is not so directly connected to evolutionism, although, of course, it is an unalienable part of these views). A meaningful example of this state of facts is the Congress of Chicago organized for the centenary of *On the Origin of Species* in 1959. The keynote speaker was Julian Huxley, one of the most reputable scientists of his age. Huxley was one of the founders of UNESCO, the educational, cultural and scientific organization of the UN, a propagator of a natural religion of a specific kind (the so called evolutionary humanism), and the grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley, the first man to popularize Darwin’s theory, so much so that he was given the honorable name of “Darwin’s bulldog.” Julian Huxley’s exact words from the

15. Quoted by Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1997, p.15.

congress were: "In the evolutionary pattern of thought, there is neither need nor room for the supernatural. The Earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion. Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge from his loneliness in the arms of a divinized father figure whom he has himself created, nor escape from the responsibility of making decisions by sheltering under the umbrella of Divine Authority, nor absolve himself from the hard task of meeting his present problems and planning his future by relying on the will of an omniscient, but unfortunately, inscrutable, Providence."¹⁶ I quoted this passage at such length in order to make it clearer: by the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Darwinism had gained an increasingly self-confident and demanding attitude and had begun acting as an anti-theology which brought about understandable (but not justifiable) fundamental reactions in certain Christian circles. The battle continued during the entire 20th century and the cries of combat are still far from dying away.

On the other hand, we might risk the statement that regarding the relationship of Christian faith and science, the American spirit *in some circles* is experiencing its adolescent years, which the old continent went through with much difficulty, but irreversibly, when the flames of Giordano Bruno's stake and Galileo's suppressed murmur ("Eppur si muove") faded in the 17th century.

A third (last, but not least important) aspect would be the fact that the different manner in which Europeans and Americans pose this issue has considerable precedents in the history of ideas. I think it will be enough to refer to the fact that Immanuel Kant who traced with an absolute precision the competence of reason lived in Europe...

8. "Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds"?¹⁷

It is my conviction that, Darwinism – like all kinds of isms – is impossible to defeat merely by "opening minds," i.e., through common sense. Common sense should set itself somewhat less self-complacent goals (although, in some cases, of course, common sense cannot be omitted without risking major errors). Common sense can show, for example, the difference between the two areas. It can show that the relationship between *ism* and *mechanism* is not a logical one, neither has it to do with natural science, but it is of an ideological nature. Furthermore, common sense can organize various arguments within the field of the philosophy of religion, "proofs of divinity," while perfectly conscious of the fact that these are relevant only to believers, and even they do not regard them as *proofs*, but rather as *signs* pointing to God. Within this train of ideas, common sense can rightfully point out information existing independent of matter, or the spiritual nature of the information organizing matter, or even the idea of *intelligent design*¹⁸ – all of which are

16. Ibid, p.99.

17. The title of Johnson's work, suggesting the great endeavour involved in proving his worldview.

18. See William A. Dembinski's book of this name with the subtitle: *The Bridge Between Science – Theology*. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1999.

valuable arguments from the point of view of the philosophy of religion.¹⁹ But isms, among them Darwinism (and social Darwinism, which became famous due to its role as the spiritual guide of fascism), are a kind of religious belief, a substitute for God, namely, an idol, and idols can be driven out only by God; common sense is not sufficient. 1 John 5:4: “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (The Hungarian version says, “The victory that has overcome the world is our faith”), not our reason. This is not a confrontation between belief and science, but rather belief and false belief.

9. *Should the fields belonging to science and belief be distinguished? Yes, indeed!*

If in the field of the philosophy of religion conclusions are brought forth according to which certain phenomena in the logical-sensual-physical world refer to God – i.e., I draw an ideological conclusion from physical phenomena – one could ask, and with good reason, why should scientists not have the same right, namely, to talk as materialists of the *blind clockmaker*,²⁰ of chance, of an aimless, impersonal drift?²¹ They do have the right, but *not because* they are compelled by the rules of their exact science. It is not his biological knowledge that compels²² Richard Dawkins to have a deterministic worldview, even if – quite strangely – he seems to think so: “The DNA does not know anything and does not think anything. It simply exists. And we dance as it plays.” And he is not forced to see chaos in the cosmos either (even if that poor gene can be shown biologically to be as egotistical as he describes it): “The universe around us behaves exactly in the same way as we should expect if there were no plan, no purpose, no good or bad in it, just blind, ruthless indifference.”²³ This is a kind of belief, a frightfully distorted belief according to which the ultimate foundation of existence is “blind, ruthless indifference.”²⁴ A belief diametrically opposed to the Christian hope that the ultimate foundation is the God “who sees, who is mercifully compassionate and a long-sufferer,” the God who loves us (1 John 4:16).

In the same way, the believer (even if he is a scientist) does not state that nature, information, conscience, etc., refer to God on the basis of Cartesian-logic. *To him* all these refer

19. See also Johnson, *ibid*, p.58, and L. Hegedűs, *Aspekte der Gottesfrage [Aspects of Questions Related to God]*. Siebenbürgischer Distrikt der Reformierten Kirche in Rumänien, Klausenburg, 1998, p.81ff.

20. Richard Dawkins.

21. The personal and directly perceptible form of this worldview is the feeling of being existentially lost. And this is the context in which the words of Viktor E. Frankl prove so deeply true: “Wer ein Warum zu leben hat, erträgt fast jedes Wie?” (If someone has something to live for does not care *how* he lives. Literally the second part translates: bears almost any *hows*.) Quoted by Hegedűs, *ibid*, p.104.

22. Vilmos Csányi, *Az evolúció általános elmélete [The General Theory on Evolution]*. Kriterion, Bucharest, 1986, p.77: “Although one cannot completely exclude the possibility that special physiological mechanisms present and functioning only within the highest animals have a role here, I still believe that the modeling activity of the mind using conceptual structures is a *per se* cognitive function.” Most definitely this italicized definition can be extended also to human thinking itself, opposed to the despotism of the DNA.

23. Richard Dawkins: *Folyam az Édenkertből [River Running Out of Eden]*. Kulturtrade, Budapest, 1995, p.119.

24. Martin Honecker: *Einführung in die Theologische Ethik [Introduction to Theological Ethic]*. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York, 1990, p.217: “Neuerdings wird der Grundsatz ‘vivere secundum naturam’ von der Soziobiologie (z. B. R. Dawkins) aufgenommen. Die Moral ist, dieser These nach, genetisch programmiert. Die Ethik ist ein Produkt der Evolution.” (Sociobiology – e.g., R. Dawkins – took up again the thesis of ‘vivere secundum naturam.’ According to this thesis, morality is a genetically programmed attitude. Ethics is a product of evolution.)

to God, the creator, *because* he first came to know Christ, the Savior. What does this differentiation mean in terms of belief? That theology can neither confirm, nor disaffirm, the theory of evolution. It is not within its competence to opine for example on the statement that 3.5 to 4 billion years ago “all the conditions for the biogenic synthesis of all the basic compounds of present organisms, of the most important ‘building stones,’ sugars, amino acids, purin and pyrimidin bases were present,” just as were “all the conditions for the linear polymers formed of the above mentioned building stones, proteins, polynucleotides and other macromolecules to come into being.”²⁵ Instead, theology can state that Christian faith does not depend on the correctness or the unsubstantiated manner of statements such as this. These types of issues are a matter of indifference to the believer, although the thinker may find them to be of great interest. Let the theologian be wise and refrain from offering arguments in the scientific field, because whether or not “the DNA has a greater, more direct role in cell replication than a non-vital enzyme or metabolite,”²⁶ and of what importance this might be for the formation of the entire *mechanism*, cannot be defined on the basis of the Apostolic Confession of Faith or the Bible.

This is why I find odd questions such as, “If scientists did not take God into consideration, would that also lead to correct scientific conclusions?”²⁷ I try to understand the inner logic of some of the creationist thinkers. Do they think these details cannot be decided using the above mentioned methods, but that there remain a few solid biblical points to which all research dealing with the formation of the Earth should arrive? For example, if we take 2 Peter 3:5 quoted earlier, do they think that all scientific research dealing with the formation of the Earth should conclude that the initial matter of planet Earth is H₂O? And if findings differ, does this mean that the scientist took a wrong path or drew an incorrect conclusion or, even worse, has a pact with the devil? Actually, if we consider the dogma of “*creatio ex nihilo*” which faithfully sums up the biblical view on creation (and which, by the way, is not explicitly present in the canonic Scripture, only in the book of Maccabees), it means all scientific research should point in its findings to “nothing.” Still, water and nothing are not the same, are they? And we could go on enumerating such examples. The Biblical truth, by its spirit, does not lie in avoiding such contradictions, for according to the spirit of the Bible, truth is what/who brings salvation. Therefore, it is only wise if the theologian accepts the fact that he does not have *the scientific means* to decide, in effect, the validity of *scientific issues*. “Expressing spiritual truth in spiritual words,” Scripture says (1 Cor 2:13). And, we could add, issues of molecular biology should be expressed both by the natural scientist and the theologian in the words of molecular biology.

25. Csányi, *ibid*, p.10.

26. *Ibid*, p.28.

27. Dr. Péter Szentpétery, *Alkotásainak értelmes vizsgálata [Finding God From What Has Been Made]*. Theologiai Szemle, 2001/2, p.80. As far as I am concerned, I “state and sustain” along with Abraham Kuyper “that Aristotle alone had broader knowledge about the universe (emphasis by the author) than all the fathers of the church together.” In: *Kálvinizmus és modernitás [Lectures on Calvinism]*. Koinónia, Kolozsvár, 2001, p.120.

10. *Can these two fields be separated? No!*

Unity is formed by the perspective of faith. Faith in the one by whom and for whom all things were created. There is no other element that could stitch these things together. For those not sharing this belief, the world is an eternal turmoil of unfathomable, witchlike signs, just like in the final scene of Umberto Eco's book, *The Name of the Rose*, where the monk puts into a bag the remnants of the library that has been burnt down. He literally gathers fragments of expressions, of letters, which are completely unable to form meaningful words or sentences. For only God has the privilege to see the entire sentence and he teaches only people of his choosing how to read that sentence.

So how can faith link matter and spirit together? For example, if we ask what is a rainbow?

Scientist: the white light refracted through the prism of raindrops.

Christian: the sign of the covenant which God made with mankind.

Christian scientist aware of his limitations: both. The first answer I understand by the lab equipment I use, the other by my faith.

Non-Christian scientist aware of his limitations: the first answer is certain to be valid. Of the second, I am unable to affirm anything by the means of science; I have to admit to its possibility.

Non-Christian scientist unaware of his limitations: only the first answer is valid. The phenomenon of refraction excludes the possibility that the story of the covenant can be true.

Biased Christian (fundamentalist) unaware of his limitations: the rainbow is nothing more than the sign of the covenant God made with mankind, for *it is written so*. The two explanations mutually exclude each other. Describing *the manner* in which a rainbow is created would mean to question its true, spiritual meaning. (Mutatis mutandis: studying man from a paleo-anthropological point-of-view would mean questioning the basic truth of his being a creature of God.)²⁸

The train of ideas presented above can be applied validly also to the elements of Communion and their spiritual meaning. (What is the bread of Communion? *Scientist*: plain bread. *Christian*: the body of Christ, etc.) There is no ultramodern microscope that could show the presence of the Risen Christ within the bread and wine of the Communion. But there is no decent scientific procedure that could prove the opposite either.

Our belief is that the Creator of matter and of the human intelligence studying it (regardless of the manner in which it came into being) is also the Savior God embraced by *faith in Christ*. Only the believer who is saved and in Christ is able to recognize and praise the wonderful work of God in creation. *And this is the link which connects the fields of sci-*

28. Robert Spaemann, a Munich philosopher, raises the question: "Wann müssen wir teleologisch denken? – Nie. Wann können wir teleologisch denken? – Immer." Quoted by Max Thürkau in: *Die Spatzen pfeifen lassen*. Christiana, Stein am Rhein, 1992, p.51. If accepting expedience as opposed to randomness is part of the theological view, than we can safely paraphrase – switching from the 'teleological' to the 'theological' – as follows: When *must* we think in a theological manner (i.e., under the pressure of scientific evidence)? – Never. When *may* we think in a theological manner (i.e., in spite of ideologized sciences)? – At all times.

ence and faith, initially so different from each other! Such a view is the basis for thanksgiving, rather than the attempts of doubtful value to adjust scientific data to the biblical view, the coincidence of the two fields, or the aggressive asseveration of the statement that the Earth is but six thousand years old. What is the significance of such a connection between the physical and the spiritual from the viewpoint of faith? It means one is no longer compelled to live in a schizophrenic duality. It means "the fight of faith," as the apostle Paul understands it, would not be fought against science, but against sin and unbelief which sometimes, indeed, does take the form of false belief and uses science in an unworthy manner. I do not think it necessary to remind the reader in detail what a great and unbroken motivation this same connection meant for science for almost eighteen centuries. Thus we can but pray for and work for the restoration of this worldview which regards the field of science and theology as being connected in the above mentioned way.

11. *Mutual violation of boundaries*

In a wittily titled article, *Darwin – The Origin of Troubles*, published in the May 2000 issue of *Természet Világa [Kingdom of Nature]* magazine, Gábor Hráskó presented the reverberations of the creationist debate in America. In response, the Hungarian-language Transylvanian daily newspaper, *Krónika*, in its November 11-12, 2000 issue, published György Koppány's article, originally published in the October 2000 *Természet Világa*, entitled *The Origin of Troubles - Creationism*. So, which causes the problem, Darwin or creationism? The true origin of troubles lies in the violation of boundaries. The statement that "in the beginning there was the particle..." may be correct if it points to the beginning of historical times and refers to the reality that can be defined by scientific means as the earliest factual event. But if the statement continues with, "...and nothing more" (like the eternal Logos preceding-creating-sustaining the particle, for example)," then we are dealing with the crime of violating boundaries. In the same way, the line "in the beginning was the Word..." is sure to refer to the principle of the *factual occurrence* of creation; but if someone would add "...and the only *manner* in which the physical reality created and sustained came into being is the one offered by a literal interpretation of the Biblical description," that would also be a violation of boundaries. The apostle Paul does not fight on such a battlefield. He states that the world through its wisdom did not know God, but he does not doubt for a second that it knew *nature* in an adequate manner. He does not question the astronomic or hydro-dynamic knowledge of "the wise" just because it seems to contradict the story of the crossing of the Red Sea. On the other hand, one can certainly state that "the ability to pass from an ontologically lower level to a higher one is inherent in nature" (György Koppány), but no natural science can legitimately exclude (or legitimately maintain as a matter of fact) the possibility of this ability being given by an all preceding and all sustaining transcendent power. And why should we think of someone who believes that "evolution was created by God"²⁹ that he is trying to ride two horses

29. This is an expression borrowed from academician Dr. András Falus, the head of the Department of Genetics, Cell- and Immunobiology of the Semmelweis University of Medicine. See the same idea in the above cited work of Phillip E.

going in opposite directions?³⁰ What compels these horses to go in opposite directions? They do not go in opposite directions on the same course; rather, they go on parallel courses in the same direction. And we know parallels meet in the Infinite. And only in the Infinite. But there, they are sure to meet.

III. Where can we discover God's work?

12. God within the missing links?

Of course man's inquisitive spirit would not allow him to be reconciled to the idea of God and his created world being dealt with parallelly (although the parallelism is only methodical). Eschatological unity seems too far away, even if we can have our share of its reality in the present day. Therefore, man attempts to grab, from behind at least, the hem of God's train, he who majestically pervades all natural phenomena. And these attempts materialize in passionately seeking the white spots for which there is no explanation no matter what the present state of science may be in any moment. He seeks in history, in the lower and higher strata of the human intellect and mind, in the structure of the micro and macro cosmos, in matter, in energy, at the borderline of successive social constructions, everywhere. And always, in the enigma. And, in the case of evolution (even if we generously accept the modification of the chaffinch-beak within one species), he seeks in the secret land between two successive species. But is it really a wise thing to squeeze God into the constantly narrowing cage of spots unexplainable by natural science?³¹ In Heaven, there is great rejoicing over the repentance of a sinner, but I do not think they would be particularly glad about the uncertainty of carbon isotopic age dating (hurrah, Biblical chronology is still valid!) or about the fact that "no link has been found yet between the fossils."³² Champions of such rejoicing offer the explanation, "The link is missing, because

Johnson, p.14: "Evolution is the science that studies how God created the species." Or the statement of Theillard de Chardin: "Evolution is not the creator, as science believed for a moment, but is the expression of the way we experience creation in space and time." Quoted by Tamás Nyíri, *Emberreválás és teremté [Becoming Man and Being Created Into Man]*, Vigilia, 1968/1, p.1. Also, Endre Gyökössi, *Az őstörténet [Ancient History]*. Szent Gellért Egyházi Kiadó, Budapest, 1994, p.59: "Why should I not consider the statements of Psalm 139 regarding man to be valid also for mankind, as the great scientist and theologian, Thielicke did, in the following manner: "For you created the first cell of me, / you covered me to be formed at the bottom of the seas, / then in the bowels of the earth. / I praise you because you made me wonderfully different from all the other creatures. / Your works are wonderful / and I know that full well. / My being was not hidden from you, / when I was still primordial matter, / when I was made in the secret place, / when I was woven together in the bowels of the earth. / Your eyes saw my forming body, / and all these were written in your book - / also the millions of years during which / you called me by my name and made yourself known to me, / you called me into your mighty presence / and gave me dignity that no other of your creatures has, / while I was still a prehistoric man, / at one point of my development lasting for many million years. / How precious to me are your thoughts, / O God! How vast is the sum of them!"

30. Johnson, *ibid*, p.14.

31. Alistair McGrath, *Híd [The Bridge]*. New ways in apologetics, Harmat, Budapest, 1997, p.72: "...scientific research constantly fills up the unexplainable and as a result, God is gradually driven out from a series of constantly narrowing white spots. In my opinion, focusing on the facts 'offered' by science and not on those 'left open' by science is a more authentic and an increasingly accepted attitude within Christian apologetics."

32. Helmut Thielicke calls the attempt to avert the danger lying in Darwinism by trying to take apart the theory of evolution itself, rejoicing over the missing links in the transition line between animals and man, the job of amateurs ("...sich der darwinistischen Bedrohung dadurch zu entziehen, dass man die Evolutionstheorie selbst zu zersetzen suchte und sich

God created every species separately.” Or – as the more advanced version puts it – because God himself intervened in the area that needed linking. He injected the necessary energy for the transition between the species. So we managed to locate God. We know of his whereabouts, in the evening and in the morning and at any time of day or night. Jesus’ admonition, “But a time is coming – and now is here – when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,”³³ is valid in this case, too. To such true worshipers, God is present preceding every process and behind every process and within every phenomenon; and to them all things represent *the transparency of God on Earth*. And such a view can be held while keeping a decent distance from both deism, claiming that “the machine works by itself while the constructor is resting,” and from the Aristotelian and Aquinian view of “God as primus movens,” as well as from pantheism (which according to Schopenhauer is nothing more than a polite form of atheism).

On the other hand, Darwinists ought to reflect on the fact that not *all* earthly phenomena can be explained in terms of causality. Forcing the matter leads only to brutal reductionism. Human thinking in its billion forms, the thousand moves and checks of freedom, can never be reduced simply to biochemical, social, economical, etc., processes. The things regarded by 19th century science as impregnable causes when seen with the eyes of today’s science, have proved instead to be a net. The wind blows wherever it will. And the feathers of the peacock gleam ostentatiously in this wind and have no role in the fight for survival...³⁴

So, where can we discover God’s work? Nowhere – if we look for it with physical equipment. Everywhere – if looking for it with the eyes of faith.³⁵ Could anyone have demonstrated the presence of God on the cross? Not at all! So does that mean God was not present? There is no other moment in history, no other place in the universe, where God’s presence was so obvious as right there. Yet the only man who realized the obvious

über jeden Knochen freute, der beim Übergang vom Tier zum Menschen noch zu fehlen schien”). *Glauben und Denken in der Neuzeit*. Tübingen, 1983, p.362.

33. John 4:20–23.

34. The *Theologische Realenzyklopedie*, 693 exposes legitimately the mystical features of evolutionism as a worldview. It is not content to be able to explain the functioning of the components (bio-physical phenomena), but overestimates scientific results in a mystical manner and presents them as if they would be able to apprehend the entire truth (“ganzheitliches verstandnis der Wirklichkeit”). But there are also inevitable and disturbing stumbling-blocks on this road, “details” that do not fit into the big scheme of evolution, the ones that cannot be explained exclusively by the evolutionist argumentation. In his letter of April 3rd, 1860, addressed to botanist Asa Grey, Darwin expresses his worries precisely regarding these details, talking about “the irritating features of the structure.” “If I only as much as glimpse a peacock, wherever that may happen, wherever I come across it, I become literally ill.” In: Max Thürkhauf, *ibid*, p.50. Job, also, can only wonder at the features of the ostrich, the hippopotamus, the steed, etc., utterly lacking causality and cannot make anything of it. They are not to be understood (as well), but they can (also) be accepted within God who acts without any reason and whose every action has as an only “cause” his unexplainable love.

35. Anthony de Mello, In: *Fohászok és vallomások [Prayers and Confessions]*. Vigilia, Budapest, 1988, p.391: “Excuse me,” said an ocean fish. “You are older than I, so can you tell me where to find this thing they call the ocean?” “The ocean,” said the older fish, “is the thing you are in now.” “Oh, this? But this is water. What I’m seeking is the ocean,” said the disappointed fish as he swam away to search elsewhere.”

there and then was the criminal at his right hand. For God is a transcendent God right in the middle of our life, in the middle of nature and in the middle of history.³⁶

13. *The moment of turning into man – from a historical/biological perspective*

The two stories of creation from Genesis 1 and 2 reveal with great vividness the basic condition of man (and as far as historical time is concerned, the *present* condition of man as well, since only those living at present are preoccupied by theology), namely, that he receives his unique dignity distinguishing him from all the other creatures directly from God. This is not a “natural” dignity, not a mere biological difference, but something with which God endowed man (represented in one of the stories by man being created in God’s image, and in the other by the breath of life being breathed into his nostrils). Man’s unmistakable dignity is his ability to be in communion with God. The Holy Scripture does not intend to speak of man in any other respect than his relationship to God. Should we not think of man *in these terms*, should the distinguishing dignity of man be only a question of his DNA,³⁷ there would be a point in his not being linked at all with the species before him in the chain whose members do not yet have human dignity. If that were the case, we should indeed cling with might and main to the idea that man appeared on Earth suddenly, without his formation having any historical precedent at a certain moment in history. If we do not consider this entirely *theological anthropology* of the Scripture, we can rightfully shrink back from that (indeed terrifying) thought that we are not able to define who was the first creature that could be regarded as a human being on Earth. Was it one of the Australopithecuses, or rather a homo habilis, a homo heidelbergensis, a homo neanderthaliensis, a homo sapiens or a homo sapiens sapiens? *Ignoramus et ignorabimus*. We do not know and we will never know, but we know one thing by faith: God, who gave man his own image and dignity, who divided so precisely land from waters and night from day, was no less precise in this case.

And he is just as precise today regarding the very narrow border between the not-yet-human and the already-human, although in the case of the development of the embryo, we people are unable to define the borderlines exactly. “Thus we can safely draw the conclusion that in the process of turning into man the same thing happens as in the case of conception... Humanization and ontogenesis have a basic similarity, namely, that a not-yet-human organism is developing toward a biological state when there is enough basis for a soul to be risen from it.”³⁸

36. Paul Tillich: “Gott ist mitten in unserem Leben jenseitig.”

37. Talking about cloning, Umberto Eco observes that this “science-fictional chicanery has something of a simplistic materialist determinism about it, as if a man’s faith would depend solely on the genes he inherits.” In: *Gyufalevelek [Leaves of Match]*. Európa, Budapest, 2001, p.299.

38. Nyíri, *ibid*, p.4.

14. *The moment of turning into man – from a theological perspective*

In his impressive painting in the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo presents the last moment of prehistoric man. God's finger has not yet touched him, but it is moving closer to him. Man is still bound to the dust from which he was formed, but he already longs for the presence of God (Helmut Thielicke). One can almost see the flaming arc at the tip of God's fingers, the spark that will jump out in the next moment: and lo, a man is born into the world! *Man becomes man because of this touch*, whether God spread the spark over millions of years or concentrated it into one particular moment. István Török expresses this basic theological point of view – held also by a series of decisive theologians such as Karl Barth, Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, and Wolfhart Pannenberg – in the following manner: "According to biblical revelation, man was created by God. He is one of the creatures, as shown by his biological structure and his natural life conditions. And the essence of this revelation would not be altered very much even if, based on his biological traits, we attempted to find man's place in the gappy scheme of evolution theory which still needs much research. *Man was born at that particular moment when, reaching a high level of development, one of the creatures heard the voice of his Creator and responded to it. This is where homo sapiens begins.* However, we are not concerned by the natural scientific, but by the theological aspect of this process. We are involved in finding out not the how, but the who. Who is man?..."³⁹

15. *How is theological thinking affected by the model of evolution?*

Professor J. v. Genderen, PhD⁴⁰ sums up the most sensitive issues in the following three points:

a. "The belief that everything was created by God contrasts with the idea that everything was formed as a result of a natural process." We dealt with the tension between the view of *Creation* and that of *formation as a natural process* in point II and we showed there that the two cannot be played off against each other. We may just as well ask from whom does a child originate. From its parents, of course! Would we then say it cannot come from God, i.e., it cannot be a creature of God, because the process of its fertilization, birth and development are known to us? Job, who surely must have known he was born of his mother, interprets his "coming into being" as a process of creation when he describes it similarly to the creation of Adam: Remember that you moulded me like clay.⁴¹ Or should we take this literally? We should? We should not? Why? Is there any demonstrable difference between the Genesis account and this sentence in the book of Job? Or, taking the opposite order, when John writes that those who received Christ were "born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God,"⁴² does he mean to deny the

39. Dr. István Török, *Dogmatika [Dogmatics]*. Free University Press, Amsterdam, 1985, p.245, emphasis mine (S. B. V.) A powerful literary formulation of the same idea can be found in Frigyes Karinthy's poem *Az Így így született [This Is How the Word Was Born]*. In: *Új aranyhárfa [The New Harp of Gold]*. A Magyarországi Református Egyház Zsinati Irodája, Budapest, 1992, p.42.

40. In: *Evolúció és hit [Faith and Evolution]*, KOK, Kampen, 1975, p.39.

41. Job 10:9–11. Cf. Nyíri, *ibid.*

42. John 1:12–13.

fact that these people were born also by natural descent? Of course not! The contradiction posed by the thesis above is a false contradiction, a false dilemma. The two aspects can cause a problem only if someone elevates the theory of evolution to the status of God, making a mystified theory of creation out of it, or the reverse, when someone attempts to substitute or measure scientific research with sentences from the book of Genesis.

b. "The belief that man created in the image of God is the masterpiece of creation contrasts with the idea that man is the last outcome of evolution." A few sentences earlier it was clarified that evolution cannot be a substitute for God, although many regarded it as such during the past one hundred and fifty years.⁴³ It was also clarified under points 13 and 14 that human dignity and nobility⁴⁴ is an *attributed* reality⁴⁵ and does not depend on DNA or genetic mutations.

c. "The belief that man was created to be good and has fallen, contrasts with the idea that there is a continuous process of development without any perfect beginning or fall." Of these three objections, this is the most serious. Indeed, faith emphasizes in a perfectly consequent manner that God's entire work, all of his creation, "was very good." On the other hand, our experience is that the world as it is today is not very good.⁴⁶ It seems logical, therefore, to conclude that somewhere in the meantime a decisive split must have taken place between the world as God's original creation and as it is today.⁴⁷ Therefore, the world and man in it cannot be regarded as the direct creation of God, since once we regard the present state of man and the created world as "natural," as created "directly" by God, nothing would stop us from deferring the responsibility of all the evil raging in the world to God. "The woman you put there with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree!"; "The serpent you created deceived me!" This dilemma is solved in classical theology by interpreting the fall of Adam and Eve, the first real human couple and ancestors, as a caesura intervening between the original and the present creation at a certain point in historical time. Within this model, the two theological foci of the elliptical biblical text are expressed in a very vivid manner:

1. the world is God's creation and the creation is something very good. One can and may rejoice in it and no misanthropy is justifiable; 2. all the evil of the present world arises from man's sinful actions and no one/nothing else can be held responsible for it. One of

43. In the revision of William A. Dembinski's book of (see note 16.) Henry F. Shaeffer writes: "...the most sacred twentieth-century intellectual idol – the unproven notion that all of life can be explained in terms of natural selection and mutations."

44. This is the meaning of masterwork, and if we add also a time dimension, it will perfectly suit the model of evolution: man is the cherry on the cake of creation. Erich Sauer expresses the same concern in his book, *The Nobility of Man*: "If man does not come directly from the hands of God, but only indirectly, developed through many intermediate animal-like beings, what becomes of the nobility of man?" (Evangéliumi Kiadó, Brockhaus Verlag, Wuppertal, n.d., p.26).

45. As in the case of Luther's *iustitia aliena*, God attributes to us the righteousness of Christ, endows us with it as a *truth alien* to our nature.

46. At least it takes a great deal of enlightened optimism to agree with Leibnitz when he states that "this world is the best of all the possible worlds."

47. Abraham Kuyper calls "abnormalists" those practicing Christians who state, based on these arguments, that the present state of the world is "abnormal" compared to its original one. Their views are opposed by the conviction of the "normalists." And he regards the two (world)views irreconcilable. See his *Lectures on Calvinism*.

the main challenges to theology coming from natural sciences is whether the above-mentioned theological beliefs can be considered valid still even if the structure bearing them – the story of creation interpreted literally, Adam and Eve as the first human couple, as the first forefathers, creation as a historical event before which there was a historical time during which an ideal state ruled, an earthly paradise – is about to collapse under the weight of a continuously developing evolutionary model. And here we find ourselves asking the old question: can the form be separated from the content, the core from the shell, the narrative structure from theological belief? Is it possible to transfer the core of a belief, the “good deposit that was entrusted to us,”⁴⁸ into another kind of narrative, in the same way that information can be “collected” from the nucleus of a cell and written on another medium, in the way one piece of software works on different types of hardware? It is my conviction that it is possible. Of course, that does not mean that we make up a different story or that we call the characters in the story Cro-Magnon man and woman instead of Adam and Eve, but we realize that the biblical text was intended to express the focus-belief detailed above and *only that* - in a radical and irrevocable manner. How can today’s theology be able to tell all this in a different manner than the well known Genesis model with a strong historical and chronological aspect? Well, for example, like this: “Sin does not mean falling from a higher reality, but rejecting the higher reality of the communion of love with God.”⁴⁹ Or as Paul Tillich puts it, “The moral and tragic elements of nature overlap”⁵⁰.

“The tragic element: evil is a “*déjà la*” reality, preceding all individuals and stronger than any of them. The moral element: man’s moral responsibility despite all things. The two – Creation and Fall – overlap. “Newly born babies are creatures of God, but as a creature the child falls into the state of alienation specific to life. This is where Creation and Fall overlap.”⁵¹ The weakness of the traditional model was that it did not regard as *creatures proper of God* anybody, but Adam (not even Eve was considered entirely a creature proper!!!), which means all men are creatures of God only in a secondary way. Tillich regards all people as creatures proper of God. But this leads to one inevitable question: “Is not sin an ontological necessity in this case?”⁵² I.e., if Creation and Fall overlap? If I consider myself a creature *proper* of God with all my history, which is partly encoded into my genes, with my psychological profile and my instincts always ready to become aggressive, would not this ruin the belief in the goodness of creation? And still the answer to the question displayed by this latter perspective is, no, it would not. “Adam before the fall” and “nature before its being cursed” are potential states:⁵³ the tragic (and in a certain sense, determined) state of freedom of every person. Every man has to make his decisions as if he were absolutely free,

48.2 Timothy 1:14.

49. H. Berkhof: *Dogmatika [Dogmatics]*, 1973, In: *Hit és evolúció [Faith and Evolution]*, p.42.

50. Paul Tillich: *Rendszeres teológia [Systematic Theology]*. Translated by István Szabó. Osiris, Budapest, 1996, p.268 and following.

51. *Ibid*, p.271.

52. *Ibid*.

53. *Ibid*, p.269.

but always keeping in mind that the idea of his absolute⁵⁴ freedom is nothing more than a mirage. “Man can do what he wants, but cannot want what he wants.”⁵⁵ (Schopenhauer) Let us be realistic: it is obvious there is no model without unfinished threads, unsolved questions, hanging from it. The traditional model has its faults as well, e.g., that it “turned sin into an ontological necessity” (with Adam as the only exception) by displaying the thought of a historical one-time (and not of an existential all-time) Fall, which later was formed into the dogma of “original sin.” Besides this, by “man” it does not mean individuals, but a faceless mass of people, typical to the way of thinking of the Middle Ages when it was believed firmly that “man” existed independent of Peter Black and Paul White. This is also the spirituality of Anselm of Canterbury who influenced the reformers who wrote the Heidelberg Catechism.⁵⁶

QUESTION (9): *Does not God then do injustice to man,⁵⁷ by requiring from him in his law, that which he cannot perform?*

ANSWER: *Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own willful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts.*

This is a logical shift modern man can no longer follow. The question is posed about people living today, but the answer is about the character of Adam as thought of in a historical sense.⁵⁸ In a logical sense, the gap can be bridged only by accepting the idea rejected even by the book of Ezekiel, i.e., “the fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” But we do not mean to deny the idea accepted also by Tillich and called “the tragic element of existence” (whose soteriological counterpart can be expressed by the phrase that self-salvation is impossible), but rather urge everyone not to make an idol out of a “paradigm” or any other media, since these are only shadows of the things that are about to come and the truth belongs solely to Christ.⁵⁹ In Romans 9:21, Paul shows no intention of rationalizing (not even by referring to Adam’s fall) the seemingly scandalous fact that God does indeed have the power (and the right!) “to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use.” No matter what the context of our thoughts regarding these facts may be, the mystery remains a mystery. And not even Paul can avoid the paradox: “For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may

54. Ab-solutum am. Unchained.

55. Quoted by András Falus. In: Andrea Ferenczy, *Genetika – génetika [Genetics – Gene Ethics]*. Harmat, Budapest, 1999, p.65. Although the apostle Paul questions even as much as that in chapter 7 of the Letter to the Romans: For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.

56. I do not mean to deny the evangelical content of the Catechism. My goal is only to draw attention upon a shift in formal logics.

57. Emphasis mine, S. B. V.

58. Sadly there is no possibility here to display the detailed meaning of the expression “in Adam” as meant in the Letter to the Romans.

59. Colossians 2:17

have mercy on them all!”⁶⁰ Indeed: creation is an act of God and the responsibility of man. O, the Lord, how unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!⁶¹

IV. Standpoints of various churches

16. *The standpoint of the Catholic Church*

regarding evolution has gone through three distinct phases during the 20th century. In 1909 the encyclical letter of the Biblical Papal Committee beginning *Unitas Generis Humani*⁶² displayed the view that the “sensus litteralis historicus” of the first chapters of the book of Genesis cannot be given up without producing serious injuries to the Christian faith. In 1950, in his encyclical letter beginning *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII cut the Gordian knot. He accepted that it is possible that the body may have come into existence through evolution, under the condition that this would not call into question the universal nature of original sin that is passed from fathers to sons. However, he considered that the church could not yield in the matter of the creation of the soul, which was done directly by God. In the third phase of this process, the Second Vatican Synod emphasized that “humanity has turned from viewing world order as being in a state of repose to being mobile and developing.” Referring back to Galileo’s case, the papal letter found it regrettable that there had been Christians (not the Catholic Church) who did not show sufficient respect regarding the legitimate autonomy of sciences and thus gave the impression that there was a contradiction between science and faith. It admitted to “all things having their own autonomy, truth and benefit, their own laws and order.” Thus science and faith cannot contradict each other. This is the reason Tamás Nyíri can write thus: “Creation is not building, but grounding... therefore it cannot be considered to be equal to development or replaced by development. It rather backs up development as the transcendental condition that renders it possible.”⁶³ Or to quote again the final document of the Second Vatican Synod: “God is the transcendental ground of development, the condition under which development of human life became possible.” Pope John Paul II’s letter to the Papal Academy of Sciences in 1981 expresses in a very apt manner the basic direction of both fields. Writing on the purpose of the Bible, he says it “...does not wish to teach how the heavens were made but how one goes to heaven.”⁶⁴

60. Romans 11:32; emphasis mine, S. B. V. Of course, one could ask in this case whether God did this by the act of creation, i.e., ontologically, de facto; or “only” de iure, in a declarative manner, i.e., by his laws. It is important that we understand that *this* is the main difference of the two aspects.

61. Ibid.

62. The source of these data is the relevant chapter in *A Dogmatika kézikönyve [The Handbook of Dogmatics]*. Vigilia, 1999, p.210ff.

63. Ibid., p.2.

64. In: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* vol.18, p.859.

17. *Within the Protestant world*

there is no *official* standpoint, although there are several theologians whose opinions on the matter have been considered authoritative. Within the theme of creation and evolution their opinions *are in total agreement*. This is how Heinrich Ott expresses this harmonious opinion: “The evolutionist theory of Darwin and the idea of biblical creation are not contradictory theories. In one respect, the idea of the world being created within six days has long been overrated by the evolutionary worldview. On the other hand, it is obvious that it is not compulsory that the biblical view of creation be taken literally. It is more important to have a biblical interpretation of the world and its realities which in the case of the creational-evolutional dispute means to have a belief, unalterable by any theory or hypothesis of the natural sciences or history of sciences, that we and the reality surrounding us have been created by God. That man is created in the image of God, is not a theory of natural sciences, but rather the core definition of man.”⁶⁵ At the end of the 19th century there existed a theological view according to which the gap between creation and evolution could be bridged.⁶⁶ Theologians at the beginning of the 20th century also, who were considered to have conservative views, opined that creation does not exclude every kind of evolution. The main principle should be that “evolution viewed in a biblical sense is not precisely an evolution unfolding of its own powers, but rather one controlled”⁶⁷ by God through the laws and “ordinances” of nature. The views described above are shared by many Protestant thinkers, such an extract should suffice. Therefore, I will only conclude this presentation with some of the sub points of the ideas of Karl Barth expressed in a detailed manner in *Kirchliche Dogmatic* [Church Dogmatics] III/2 as follows: scientific dogmas should not be opposed to the dogmas of the church; evolution should be accepted as a theory, but it should be emphasized that man needs to look “forward” and “upward” in order to be able to correctly evaluate his biological origins when looking back through the tunnel of time from *such* an existential situation; scientific issues have become so highly specialized that we have no other choice but to rely on the scientists concerning these issues, whether we like it or not (of course, if scientists are aware of their limitations);⁶⁸ and finally, unanswered questions about the natural sciences should be left to the scientists of tomorrow and there is no need for them to be decided prematurely by biblical quotations.⁶⁹

65. Quoted by Dr. Sándor Szathmári, *Theológiai antropológia dióhéjban* [A Small Treatise of Theological Anthropology]. Református Zsinati Iroda, Budapest, 1990, p.16.

66. A. H. Strong in one of his reference books edited in the USA in 1885 entitled *Systematic Theology* writes, “We grant the principle of evolution, but we regard it as only the method of divine intelligence.” And again in the same work: “The wine in the miracle was not water because water had been used in the making of it, nor is man a brute because the brute has made some contributions to its creation.” In: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *ibid*.

67. Prof. Dr. Jenő Sebestyén, *Református Dogmatika* [Reformed Dogmatics]. Budapest, 1940, I/141.

68. Let us defer the scientific importance of “non-reducible complex systems” to the scientists as well. Even if this theory described correctly the mechanism itself, one could think about its significance as a “sign” from a religious philosophical point of view, but regarding it as a “proof that God exists” would be quite an exaggeration. See the above cited article by Péter Szentpétery.

69. When I speak of a united Protestant view on creation and evolution, I mean *theological writings* (specialized literature).

18. *Greek Orthodox theology*

has remained practically untouched by any achievement of the enlightenment so far. This situation has its advantages, as Orthodox theology has been spared the struggle over the unsettling questions that Western Christianity *nolens volens* has had to go through. However, there is also a great danger lying within this maidenly innocence, namely, that the church is unable to offer any answers to the problems, questions, and doubts of modern man. As I glance through the treatise of dogmatics of one of the most famous Orthodox theologians of the 20th century trying to find any thoughts on our topic, I have to realize that my search is in vain: he does not consider the matter worthy of being written about. This problem – and so many others posed by these last centuries – simply does not exist for him. Instead he has a lengthy theory on how long the first human couple may have lived in a state of innocence in Paradise. One cannot know – thus goes the answer – but it was obviously not long enough for them to be strengthened in obedience to God, since if it had been otherwise, it would have been impossible for them to fall so easily.⁷⁰ Sadly, this kind of theological thinking dwells too much on topics relevant only for the innocence of Paradise and remains imprisoned in the times of the church fathers.

Fortunately a new generation of Orthodox theologians has appeared and they are on the best way to modifying these views by emphasizing the harmony of faith and thinking based – interestingly – on the evolution related thoughts that can be found in the writings of the same church fathers.

19. *The main defensive lines of creationism*

lie within the fundamentalist branches of **the Methodist, neoprotestant and evangelical communities** whose main characteristic in this respect is that, contrary to the Greek Orthodox Church, they are keenly aware of the challenges posed by the various findings of natural sciences and philosophical ideas and they are able to gather together all this vast material.⁷¹ However, the answers and solutions they offer are no different than those of the Orthodox circles who do not know about such things (in fact, they are aware of them, but they think these issues do not belong to the main circle of theology). Their answer is: biblical literalism and a dichotomy of faith and sciences based upon it.⁷²

I do not intend to deny the obvious fact that there are persons and communities within the Protestant world who share instead the views of the evangelical trends presented at point nr. 19.

70. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă [Orthodox Dogmatical Theology]*. București, 1996, I/319: "Nu știm cât a rămas omul în starea primordială. Însă el nu a apucat să se consolideze în ascultarea lui Dumnezeu și să progreseze în cunoașterea lui, pentru că în acest caz căderea nu s-ar mai fi produs cu atîta ușurință, sau nu s-ar fi produs deloc." ("There is no knowing how long man resided in the primordial state, but it is certain he did not become stronger in his obedience to God and make progress in knowing him, for if he had had he would not have failed so easily or would not have failed at all.")

71. See, for example, a six volume work by one of the most popular theologians, Carl F. H. Henry, entitled *God, Revelation and Authority*. The issue of creation vs. evolution is dealt with only in volume 6. (Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1999).

72. The relationship of science and theology is presented in the afore-mentioned *Erwachsene Katechismus* in an expressive three-fold model: 1. submission (of science to faith – in the Middle Ages; of faith to science – in the modern era); 2. resistance, struggle (Darwinism, religious fundamentalism); 3. mutual complementarity, admitting the limits of one's

20. *Final clause: The patience of faith*

“does not give an answer to everything right away. It does not demand that science would prove it right immediately in every aspect. It is not scared if some phenomena seem to contradict God’s Word. Faith believes in the Word so strongly that it is able to reveal its doubts cheerfully and to wait until ambiguous things are clarified.”⁷³

competence (dynamic, complementary view – in modern Catholicism and historical Protestantism). In his article published in the above mentioned issue of *Theology Today* (July 2001) Michael Welker depicts in a more detailed, six fold model the possible solutions to the tension created between science and theology: 1. *Modernist* view: a universal perspective, common conceptual frame and linguistic toposes that make bridging the gap between the two possible; in this case the boundaries of both fields need to be artificially extended so that a cross-section would become possible; 2. the *reductionist* attempt: to constrict the content of both fields until they meet in a cross point (e.g., both faith and science search for the “ultimate truth”); 3. perfect dichotomy, parallelistic dualism of faith and science, rendering the two as two completely different fields; 4. this is strongly connected to usage of clichés and schematic approaches: the one deals with facts, the other with illusions; 5. particular theological clichés (e.g., ‘eschatology is interested only in the future’) against; 6. particular scientific clichés (‘science deals with reality, which means exclusively matter’).

73. Henri Blocher, *Kezdetben [In the Beginning]*. Harmat, Budapest, 1998, p.272.