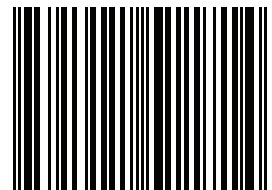


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From the Introduction

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# God vs Darwin

## Will the Creationists Triumph over Science?

Jacques Arnould OP

Translated by Dawn Colsey



Adelaide  
2009

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## Introduction

### When The Author Discovers The Creationists . . .

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One morning, at the beginning of the 1990s, in a laboratory on the Orsay campus, in the south of Paris. The boss calls me: 'Jacques, I've got some work for you!' He holds the text of an e-mail out to me: 'Have you already heard about the Creationists?' I confess my ignorance. 'Some fundamentalists are getting on the nerves of our American colleagues. They are claiming that Darwin got it all wrong and that only the Bible can tell us how the Universe was made, how life appeared on Earth, etc. Apparently Adam and Eve really existed, and Noah's Ark as well, and evolution is a myth! That ought to be of interest to you . . . ' He is right. Dominique Lecourt will publish his book *America between the Bible and Darwin* (*L'Amérique entre la Bible et Darwin*) a few months later, but at first I am tempted to react in the same way as my evolutionist colleagues: with annoyance and outright rejection of these

noisemakers who, while defending the biblical stories at any price, hinder, if not scientific research from advancing, at least theories of evolution from being taught to the younger generations. Then I remember that this is about believers, most often Christians, just like me, who read the same Bible as I do and confess the same faith in Jesus Christ. It matters to go and look more closely.

A few years later, in the fashionable outskirts of Washington, dotted with high-tech industries and companies for federal administration and service, I am invited to visit the offices of a company whose business is the sale of images obtained thanks to a system of French observation satellites. Its business director has come to fetch me that very morning at the Dominican Priory where I am staying. This rendez-vous spot did not surprise him: in the United States, religion plays such a part in society that, in certain built-up areas, priests called to the bedside of the sick or dying have the same parking facilities as emergency ward doctors . . . Once we are there, the managing director makes me at home in his premises. He is surprised that I am not wearing the Roman clerical collar. In the middle of the corridor he stops me and invites me to look at two large photographs hanging on the wall: one is of the city of Paris, the other a vast desert zone. Hoggar or the American West perhaps. Pointing to the first, he asks me, 'Who made that?' Surprised by the question and afraid that I had not understood, I got him to repeat the question. No, I had understood it. Rather taken aback, I managed to stammer, 'It's a picture of Paris taken by a satellite, isn't it?' 'Yes, of course, but I meant who made Paris?' 'The kings of France, Haussmann . . . ' I wonder

what he's getting at, and in spite of his friendly tone, I stay on the defensive. 'Why, no, Father, it was God who created that!' I come back to earth; I don't want to lose face and I manage to retort: 'Oh surely you don't think so! Pigalle, the Moulin Rouge, the ladies of the night . . . : after all, it's not God who is their maker.' I have scored a bulls-eye. It is my interlocutor's turn to appear non-plussed. Out of courtesy, I point to the other photograph which adorns the corridor: 'On the other hand, it's certainly God who created that desert!' I will learn (but too late) that this business- man belongs to a creationist Church. What is more, on my return to France, I find several brochures, sent by him, written by D James Kennedy, a Florida pastor and great defender before the Eternal one and the faithful of his Church, of creationist ideas. Afterwards, for as long as he is at the head of the said company, my host of a single day will send me, when each New Year comes around, a greeting card published with views carefully chosen from his catalogue of satellite images. He adds comments of the kind: 'Here Moses received the tablets of the Law', 'There the Hebrew people entered the Promised Land', etc.

At conference time, I subsequently found myself opposite people whose good faith rested above all on the reading aloud of biblical quotations and who put my own faith in doubt. The views exchanged courteously with my American interlocutor offer other facets of the creationists: a dualist approach to reality (good is on God's side, evil on that of humanity), an interest in the domains of the engineer rather than those of the sciences (this preference being able to turn to disdain, as we shall see, with regard



to the latter, or on the contrary, to redeeming them, the whole in an active spirit of proselytising. Sometimes also, the exchange turns quickly to limiting itself to social and political considerations over the Catholic Church and its hierarchy.

Beyond the picturesque or eccentric nature of these encounters, do creationist movements merit our interest in them today? After all, one American in two says they have never heard of creationism; only four out of ten know the names of the four Evangelists . . . These two figures, gleaned from surveys, would tend to lead us to think that the 'Creationism' dossier is well on the way to being closed within fairly short time limits, and filed in the History antiquities department, from lack of interest and combatants. That would be an error and would link in with the chorus of scientists, including several renowned ones, who have announced the end of these movements rather too quickly. Creationism is not dead at all. The French reader will perhaps find it hard to believe, but in the United States not a week goes by without the media relating a new episode in the conflict which opposes the supporters of what we shall call evolutionism from now on, and those of creationism. Here religious hierarchy members affirm the legitimacy of the science of the evolution of the living being, or politicians witness to their faith in divine creation; there councils of educators quarrel about the teaching of the origins of life and humanity or teachers are asked to limit questions about evolution in their classes. Here federal authorities declare contrary to the Constitution laws voted on by a State concerning the teaching of the (religious) doctrine of creation; there sci-

entists affirm that they have found proofs of the existence of a higher intelligence; in fact there is a survey indicating that half of all Americans believe in a recent 'special' creation of the first human beings. And still, as in Darwin's time, the same recrimination in the mouths and writings of the creationists: 'Scandalous, Darwin is quite simply scandalous. It is impossible to allow that man is the pure product of evolution which is based, what is more, on chaos and randomness. To affirm it or simply accept it is to go against the very principles of religion and the morality which flows from it, the very one which serves as a basis for our societies . . . and in first place American society! What is more, what are the proofs brought by this theory? None! No one has ever been present at the appearing of a species and palaeontologists are incapable of finding the famous missing links among fossils. In short, in order to believe in evolution, the so-called scientist must reject all truly scientific method, all common sense, and finally see himself constrained to distort and gloss over facts. It is they, the evolutionists, who are limited and conservative, and not us!'

There are several ways of envisaging creationism. Some believers will see the mark of God in this struggle of his faithful to defend the truth of the Bible and religious tradition. The atheist will lament over the sight of these remnants of religion which continue to trammel humanity in its march towards a better world, with gods got rid of. The sociologist and historian will pore over these ingredients that make up such a fascinating mixture and will find the decline of the theme science and religion forever renewed. The thinker nourished on evolutionism

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