

Misplaced Priorities by Bryan Litfin

I had a disturbing experience recently when I was interviewed on Moody radio about the viewpoint held by some Christians called “progressive creationism.” I’ll explain what that is in a moment, but my goal isn’t to rehash that topic today. It was the *response* from listeners that disturbed me, and that’s what I want to focus on. I think it’s an example of misplaced priorities when it comes to the Bible’s emphasis.

Basically, progressive creationism argues that God created the universe over billions of years. This is not the same as Darwin’s evolution, because progressive creationists do not hold that man descended from other hominid species. They say God directly created certain species, including man, over billions of years. It’s an old-earth view of creationism. In this way, God’s Word and the scientific record can be reconciled. Again, my point here isn’t to revisit that topic. It was the response from listeners that disturbed me.

When I said on the radio that progressive creationism is an acceptable Christian view, and indeed one I find plausible, some listeners responded negatively. They wrote letters to me and to Moody vehemently disagreeing. That of course is fine; there’s nothing wrong with theological debate. But there were accusations flying as well, including the suggestion that certain creationist viewpoints must be a litmus test for teaching at Moody. There were threats about withholding donations, or not sending students to Moody, and even accusations of infidelity to God’s Word. Though I didn’t feel personally threatened by all this, I was bothered by the lack of discernment I was hearing. I thought, “Is this what we’ve come to in the American church today? Have we been so deluded to let a side issue become the centerpiece?”

The Bible doesn’t make a big issue of the age of the earth. Man has done that. Scripture emphasizes God as Creator, absolutely. But the specific “how” isn’t something that reverberates throughout the Bible. Defending six-day creationism is not the lynchpin of faithful Christianity. Nor is belief in evolution the root of all evil in the world. What science textbooks teach about human origins in the public schools is *not* a make or break issue for us.

We as believers have got to let creationism assume its proper place in our list of priorities. Sure, it’s an issue for debate among Christians. But when it comes to the unbelieving world, it’s time to stop attacking science as some massive demonic conspiracy, and stop attacking scientists as godless reprobates. Instead, it’s time for Christians to embrace the scientific enterprise, and engage unsaved scientists in serious debate and charitable apologetics.

Perhaps most importantly, we’ve got to start spending our dollars wisely. There’s only so much money to go around. We live in a world full of massive human need and suffering. Should we here in America become obsessed with our own culture wars at the expense of such need? When children are literally starving to death, and widows are oppressed by thugs, and orphans multiply daily, and young girls are forced into prostitution, day after day after day – do we really need a museum with animated dinosaurs and displays about Noah’s flood? Seriously – where do you think Jesus would spend his time? As for me, I have a hunch it would be with the poor and the oppressed. For Moody Radio, I’m Bryan Litfin.