

## Christianity, Evolution Not in Conflict

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**BY JOHN RICHARD SCHROCK**

Walk past the biology faculty offices of your nearest university and ask each scientist where they would be on Sunday morning. Many will be in church.

How can scientists whose research usually involves evolutionary questions be Christian? No problem. The majority of Christians belong to denominations that have no difficulty with evolution.

In 1998, Molleen Matsumura of the National Center for Science Education found, "of Americans in the twelve largest Christian denominations, 89.6% belong to churches that support evolution education."

Churches that have no problem with evolution are non-literalist. They include: United Methodist Church, National Baptist Convention USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), National Baptist Convention of America, African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, and others.

Under eleven percent of Americans in the twelve largest denominations attend literalist churches, those that take the Bible literally regarding creation. Is this accounting precise? No. Many people simply do not know the position of their denomination. I know biologists who attend literalist churches on a don't ask, don't tell basis. And there are break-off groups from non-literalist churches who were vehemently anti-evolutionist at the 1999 KSBE hearings. Many of the much smaller, uncounted, unaffiliated churches may be literalist. And their distribution is not random, hence a "Bible belt."

The many Christian biologists who study and teach evolution usually belong to the major denominations. This produced

puzzling answers to a survey I conducted of Kansas high school biology teachers in the 1990s. When I added up the percentage who agreed with statements approving either evolution or creation, it totaled well over one hundred percent—many agreed with both! A public school teacher who was Roman Catholic eventually explained the paradox. He had no problem with the evolution of a four-and-a-half-billion-year-old earth but saw creation in its beginning, and in the installation of a soul when pre-humans evolved into humans. Such supernatural concepts did not enter into his science teaching. Nor do they interfere with the research of scientists who are Christians.

In today's debate, the majority report of the science writing committee continues to define evolution in a manner that does not exclude bona fide research from Christian researchers. However, the Harris "minority" report narrowly redefines evolution in order to justify alternatives. This reflects the testimony of one participant in last week's hearings who characterized any Christian who agreed with evolution as someone who had not thought very deeply about it.

At least eleven percent of Christians will be pleased. A majority of us are not.

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