DANGER: 
Polite Evolutionists from NSTA

Mark Bergemann

A National Science Teaching Association (NSTA) book states,

[Science teachers] have an ethical responsibility to help students learn science without feeling that their religious beliefs are being challenged or contradicted by us or their peers. Students may have questions about the interaction between science and religion, but no student in a public-school classroom should feel as though he or she needs to choose between science and faith.

[Science teachers should] consider a teaching approach that guides students to understand evolution but not necessarily to believe it.

These points are advanced in a new 217-page book published by the NSTA, _MAKING SENSE OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION – Strategies for the Classroom and Beyond_. The four lead authors, and the sixteen authors of individual chapters, represent a wide swatch of US science ed-

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1 NSTA “is the largest organization in the world committed to promoting excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning for all. NSTA’s current membership of 50,000 includes science teachers, science supervisors, administrators, scientists, business and industry representatives, and others involved in and committed to science education.” “About NSTA - An Overview,” National Science Teaching Association, [https://www.nsta.org/about/overview.aspx](https://www.nsta.org/about/overview.aspx) (accessed 1-30-20)


ucation, including some Christian teachers.⁵

At first this may seem like a good development, but it is not as it seems. This NSTA proposal seeks to destroy students’ faith that God created as He says He did. As we will soon see, the authors’ purpose is that Scripture be interpreted so that it conforms with evolution. The authors wish to define what constitutes correct Christian doctrine.

Many champions of evolution, like Howard Bloom (THE GOD PROBLEM), biologist Richard Dawkins (The God Delusion), and biologist Jerry Coyne (Faith vs. FACT), are atheists who openly mock God. Other champions of evolution are seemingly more accepting of a god who may have initiated the Big Bang. Some of these polite evolutionists belong to scientific groups like the National Academy of Sciences and the National Science Teaching Association (NSTA). Both organizations include Christians who believe God used billions of years of death and suffering to create.

The LSI Journal previously showed that the National Academy of Sciences, while more polite than Bloom, Dawkins, and Coyne, still has as its goal that students reject their Creator God.⁶ This is also the case with the NSTA, as demonstrated in their new book.

The book points out that classroom tension often exists when students who believe in a 6-day creation and a young earth are taught about billions of years and common descent. Meadows, the second lead author

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⁵ Authors include teachers from ten universities and two high schools, five administrators from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and two representatives from the Smithsonian. Religious views are represented in this group of twenty authors, such as by a Baptist university science professor (Mark Bloom) and a Baptist high school science teacher (Josh Hubbard). The lead author (Joseph Shane, a college professor of chemistry and science education) mentions his teaching of Sunday school at Christian churches, “In 2007, the pastor at my church asked me to teach a three-week adult Sunday school class on science and religion, and I have been teaching similar courses ever since at regional Christian churches” (page vii). He also describes himself as a “practicing Christian” in the “Presbyterian denomination” (page 13).


8 Polite Evolutionists from NSTA
along with several others writes,

Many American science teachers know the issues faced by students who are resistant to learning about evolution. We have seen them struggle. We have had a student raise her hand and say, “You mean God didn’t create the world?” We have seen a little bit of fear in her eyes. We have watched a bright student take his first zero ever because he would not even attempt the evolution test.7

The book proposes a solution: “a teaching approach that guides students to understand evolution but not necessarily to believe it.”8 Classroom questions should ask how scientists explain the earth’s origin, not what the student believes about it. The authors tell their students (grade 9-12), and the students’ parents, that students do not have to “compromise their articles of faith” while learning about evolution [italics not in original],

Even with carefully constructed questions, Lindsey and Nathan have had occasions when a student answered in a religious sense. They use these as opportunities to have a conversation with the student to clarify how they do not intend to force students to choose between their beliefs and learning science. They point out the intentional wording of assignment and test questions to the student as an example of their commitment to honoring students’ journeys as learners and a sign of respect that they deserve the space and freedom to learn new science without being required to discard or compromise articles of their faith. Similar conversations have helped concerned parents feel more at ease with this approach to science instruction, even when it seems to conflict with their views. Ultimately, when students are allowed to walk between both worlds, they stand a much greater chance of understanding and accepting scientific ways of thinking.9

7 Meadows, 77.
8 Meadows, 80.
9 Meadows, 85.
Notice the last sentence in this quote. It hints at the authors’ goal behind their recommendations: They hope that in the future the student will change his religious views so that they conform to evolution. Shane, the first lead author shows this goal in clearer words. He will “often direct students” to learn about two Christian scientists who think God used billions of years of death and suffering to create [italics not in original],

Like many scientists from the past, Francis Collins (2006), current director of the National Institutes of Health, and Kenneth Miller (2007), cell biologist and public advocate for evolution, view their scientific work as a form of worship and argue for the general consistency of science and their religious faith. I often direct students to these two scientists, and the following statement from Collins (2007) is something I recite in every science-religion course that I teach: “But why couldn’t this [evolution] be God’s plan for creation? True, this is incompatible with an ultra-literal interpretation of Genesis, but long before Darwin, there were many thoughtful interpreters like St. Augustine, who found it impossible to be exactly sure what the meaning of that amazing creation story was supposed to be. So attaching oneself to such literal interpretations in the face of compelling scientific evidence pointing to the ancient age of Earth and the relatedness of living things by evolution seems neither wise nor necessary for the believer. I have found there is a wonderful harmony in the complementary truths of science and faith.”

The NSTA advertises MAKING SENSE OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION to grade K-12 teachers. In its 68-page fall 2019 print catalog, the NSTA claims that “science and religion can co-exist.” Its description of this book begins with these words,

It’s inevitable: If your lessons deal with evolution, genetics, the origin of the universe, or climate change, some

10 Shane, 16.
students are bound to question whether they can reconcile what you teach with what they believe about religion. *Making Sense of Science and Religion* is the book that will help you anticipate and respond to their questions—and help students learn science while maintaining their religious beliefs. Understanding that science and religion can co-exist can also make students more willing to learn, regardless of the messages to the contrary that they may hear outside your classroom.\textsuperscript{11}

The NSTA leads Christian students to adopt the false religious doctrines of liberal Christians

The NSTA website goes even further. It claims that this book will “help students reconcile their religious beliefs” with evolution. It claims that there is only a “perceived conflict between science and religion.” It claims that “educators have an ethical obligation to minimize” the students’ belief that such a conflict exists. The NSTA website states,

The book will help you anticipate and respond to students’ questions—and help students reconcile their religious beliefs even as you delve into topics such as evolution, geochronology, genetics, the origin of the universe, and climate change. …[The authors] know that educators have an ethical obligation to minimize the perceived conflict between science and religion. As the authors write, “When students hear a consistent message during science instruction—that they can learn science while maintaining their religious beliefs—they are much more willing to learn regardless of messages to the contrary that they might hear outside of your classroom.”\textsuperscript{12}


*Polite Evolutionists from NSTA*
Leading Students to Reject What God Reveals in Scripture

By insisting that Christianity and science are *not* in conflict, and that students can “reconcile their religious beliefs” with evolution, the NSTA leads Christian students to adapt the false religious doctrines of liberal Christians. These unbiblical teachings include:

- Scripture must be interpreted in a way that agrees with science (human reason is above Scripture).
- Jesus knew that creation and the Flood are not true, but he taught them anyway, because that’s what people wanted.
- Writers of Scripture did not understand modern science, so they got some things wrong.
- God used billions of years of death and suffering to create.
- The Bible reveals *why* God created, not *how* God created.
- Death and suffering are not the result of sin, they are the means God used to create.

Science is NOT neutral about the supernatural
Rejection of the supernatural is an unprovable presupposition of science

Is Science Neutral About God?

The authors describe science incorrectly when they write, “Humans often use supernatural explanations, but students understand that science has to stay neutral about the supernatural, arguing neither for nor against it.”13 These authors certainly know that science is based solely

13 Shane, 11.
on natural explanations, rejecting supernatural ones. They actually state that in the very next paragraph\textsuperscript{14} and several other places in the book.\textsuperscript{15} Rejection of the supernatural is an unprovable presupposition of science. Science is NOT neutral about the supernatural; it rejects the supernatural (miracles and a creator) before any science is started.

While the above quote was from the chapter on professional teaching responsibilities, here is a somewhat similar quote by another author, this time in the chapter on college instruction,

Science is limited to empirical questions and cannot be used to support or refute supernatural explanations. After instruction emphasizing how acceptance of a scientific theory does not necessarily preclude the existence of a supernatural entity, college freshmen were less anxious about learning about evolution. Some students with spiritual views integrated their religious understandings into scientific ones and others claimed that their faith was strengthened upon learning that evolution does not necessarily conflict with religion.\textsuperscript{16}

Here we see that students are instructed that science need not conflict with religion. It is falsely claimed that science “cannot be used to support or refute supernatural explanations.” The truth: Evolution IS used to refute the supernatural explanation of biblical creation. These students

\textsuperscript{14} “Now, if you continue that focus on evidence as you begin the evolution unit, students are less apt to cry foul that you are teaching offensive content. Instead, you can make clear that they are going to be looking first at actual evidence for evolution, basing all of their learning in real data, and then working together to see how scientists explain that evidence \textit{limiting themselves to natural processes}” (bold added), Shane, 11.

\textsuperscript{15} Two additional examples: “Additionally, science can only provide explanations that employ natural processes and cannot invoke supernatural causes” (Binns and Bloom, 69). “Science is limited to natural phenomena and natural explanations of them. This characteristic of science is critically important for discerning science from non-science, particularly when it comes to interactions between scientific and religious claims” (Binns and Bloom, 75).

are being misled into rejecting their Creator God.

Conclusion

Evolution is incompatible with the Christian faith. Christians who accept evolution place their Christian faith in jeopardy. False teachings about creation are just like all other false teachings, they lead away from Jesus. They are extremely dangerous to a person’s Christian faith. … Evolution attacks the gospel and the need for a Savior. Evolution denies the doctrines of sin, the law, and death. Evolution dispenses with the need for a Creator. … Even though parts of the evolution story are true, much of the evolution story goes against Scripture. We can be CERTAIN that the parts of evolution which go against Scripture are FALSE, because we know that the Bible is true.\(^\text{17}\)

In some ways, I think it may be better for our students to have an outspoken atheist teacher closer to Dawkins than a more polite Christian teacher like NSTA author Shane. At least Dawkins lets you know to keep your guard up, because you know he intends to destroy your faith in God. Shane hides his intention to destroy your faith in the Creator God of Scripture, and you may not notice how he slowly damages your faith day by day.

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