

The Hand of God: Evolution and God's Action

Last Sunday after Epiphany

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Texas City

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2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

opening prayer

I'm here to talk with you because Tuesday will be Charles Darwin's 208th birthday, and every year the weekend closest to his birthday is designated **Evolution Weekend** by a group of clergy who think it wise to remember at least once a year that science and evolution are not the enemy of religion, that the scientific version of the creation story we call **evolution** is good for religion, and that Christians have something to celebrate about evolution. This weekend over 1000 Christian and Jewish congregations will be celebrating evolution with a reminder like this one.

So why are science and evolution good for religion? Science tells us a lot about how the world got to be the way it is. I think that how the universe got to be this way can tell us a lot about **why we are here** and **what we're supposed to be doing**. We see in the two biblical creation stories in Genesis Ch 1 & 2, reason enough to talk about science and evolution in church at least once a year.

I believe that there is an even better reason. I believe that the scientific creation story **illuminates** and **reinforces** the biblical creation stories and the whole story of salvation history as told in the Bible. Not just the "In the beginning" creation stories, but the full story of creation, from the beginning of time itself through the emergence of human consciousness on to the end of time.

Consider the **scientific story of creation**: of how the galaxies and stars and planets got to be the way they are. Our universe seems to have started off as some very hot ball of energy in a very tiny space some 14 billion years ago. Space itself expanded, and the very hot stuff of it cooled and clumped together to form hundreds of billions of galaxies, and within each of those galaxies, thousands of billions of stars. Within the early stars, enormous heat and pressure fused tiny hydrogen atoms into helium and heavier atoms. Eventually, the early stars exploded, spewing out heavier atoms into interstellar dust and gas that condensed forming new stars with small rocky planets and giant gaseous planets revolving around them. Our own Sun and solar system formed in this way about 5 billion years ago, including our own very special rocky planet, Earth. We don't know everything we would like to know about those early times and processes, but we do have mathematical models that nicely describe the cosmos as we see it today. In those mathematical models, the initial expansion rate of the universe is a very delicate, very finely tuned parameter. Had the expansion rate been either faster or slower by a very tiny fraction, we would not have the galaxies we do.

The fundamental forces that formed the heavy elements in stars and explosions of stars are also very finely tuned. If the balance between nuclear forces and electric forces were very slightly different, we would never have the heavy elements needed for life. Moreover, the earth is just **the right distance** from our Sun to be not too hot and not too cold, like the porridge in the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, **just right**. Our moon stabilizes the earth in an orbit having regular seasons for growth and renewal of plant life.

Initially, 5 billion years ago, the earth was a turbulent and hot planet formed by collisions between debris left over from the formation of the Sun. Gravitational energy from the impacts of the debris raised the temperature so the early Earth was molten. Over time it cooled and developed into an environment with a rocky surface and an atmosphere primarily of Carbon Dioxide, methane, and other gases from the interior. By the time a billion years had gone by, it's atmosphere changed as colonies of early single-cell life forms developed in the oceans fixing the atmospheric CO₂ in their shells. When these organisms died, their shells formed limestone on the ocean floor. Those organisms polluted the atmosphere with oxygen that is now just right for humans. More complex organisms slowly populated the land and the oceans. Some of these were plants and animals which you learned about in school - the dinosaurs, ancient trees and plants, insects, and mammals. New dominant species multiplied and ruled the ocean or the land one after another. After the demise of most of the dinosaurs about 65 million years ago, mammals became dominant. Through time species changed the Earth and its atmosphere.

How do these conjectures about how our Earth was formed illumine and reinforce the biblical creation stories? Listen to these words written by Brian Greene, a superstring theoretical physicist and author of The Elegant Universe:

"It's one thing to go outside on a crisp, clear night and marvel at a sky full of stars. It's another to marvel not only at the spectacle but to recognize that those stars are the result of exceedingly ordered conditions 13.7 billion years ago at the moment of the Big Bang. It's still another to understand how those stars act as nuclear furnaces that supply the universe with carbon, oxygen, nitrogen and even iron, the raw material of life as we know it."

Knowing the scientific details greatly enhances the awe and wonder and sense of grace that I feel when I gaze out at a starry night, **but where is God in this scientific creation story?** God is of course seen in it only through the eye of **faith**, but that faith is not blind. We see not only with our eyes, but also with our telescopes, and with our experiments, that reveal the finely tuned productivity of the natural laws, such as gravity and the nuclear and electric forces.

And, what about those natural laws that have produced the galaxies, stars and rocky planets, and lit our sun to provide our planet with energy for life? These laws not timeless are but working in time. Are they and other still unknown natural laws not **everywhere**, working within **every atom** and **every organism**? Were they not there in the beginning? Do they not hint at that through which all things were made and without which was not anything made that was made? Are not the natural laws we know and

those we don't know only crude approximations to some **underlying unity**, a unity signaled by the delicate balance that allows them to work together? Are these laws not like the fingers of the gracious hand of God, seemingly distinct from one another, but working in harmony? And does not that **grace** with which we were created and nurtured feel like a cosmic version of the love we feel for **our** children and **all** children?

So, as we are told in the beginning of Psalm 19, the heavens do indeed tell the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork, and God's' love for us as his children.

What about the earth below, where not long after the earth cooled and quieted down, life evolved from non-life? We don't know what the earliest life forms were single celled organisms. Whatever it was, it did not fossilize very well. The earliest life forms we have found was already as complicated as the simplest bacteria we have around today, capable of all the basic functions of contemporary cells and organisms. From those early bacteria there emerged, over billions of years, vastly increased complexity, as bacteria developed internal structures and mechanisms, and colonies with cooperative behavior, and multicellular organisms, until eventually there was an explosion of plants and animals with specialized internal organs, all based on structures and mechanisms developed earlier by bacteria.

As Charles Darwin himself put it in the last lines of his first great book, published 158 years ago this year, "endless forms most wonderful and most beautiful have been, and are being evolved."

But where is **God** in biological evolution? Again, **we see God with the eye of faith**, but not blind faith, not requiring that some or any account be literally true, or even that there must have been a preconceived design. We see in the increasingly complex order that has evolved and is evolving a **guiding hand**, natural laws that **channel behavior** like gravity channels water into rivers. We give that guiding hand a capital G for God and also for Glory and Grace and Gratitude.

We also see in evolution that natural selection favors cooperative behavior within species and among species. Ecosystems flourish in delicate balance. If any factor gets too far out of balance, the whole system may collapse. Yes, we have dominion "over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over all the earth." So much so that **we have become very dangerous to our ecosystems and also to ourselves**. The more we study biological systems and communities, the more we see the value of cooperation, compassion, and altruism, love of neighbor, **not for what the neighbor can do for us**, but for the good of the whole. The secret of **abundant life** lies in **relationships**, relationship to each other, relationship to all others, relationship to the whole Earth. Isn't that what Jesus told us? And science says, "That's right!"

Evolution isn't finished yet. What about the future? We who cannot predict the weather more than a few days out will probably never have a very clear idea of what God has in store for us, where his love may lead. **BUT**, we do sense that the universe is alive and like all living things it will have a season for flourishing and a time to die. Our sun will eventually use up its fuel and die. The universe itself may continue to expand and cool to a Deep Freeze. The ultimate meaning of our lives lies inscrutably **deeper** than the stuff of which we are made and surround ourselves, **deeper** than we can see with the eye of science. It is then that **the eye of faith reaches deep within, where Christ is, for inspiration**. St. Paul seems to have understood that it is through faith that we have

hope despite the eventual frustration of the material universe, when he wrote (in Romans 8):

"For the created universe waits with eager expectation for God's children to be revealed. It was made the victim of frustration, not by its own choice, but because made so; yet always there is hope, because the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter into the liberty and splendor of the children of God."

We **are** God's children. As God's children **we can rejoice in the glory of God** as revealed by science as well as by Faith! Science can reinforce our confidence that **compassion and community** are the source of abundant life. We can have **hope** for the significance of our lives in the long run, when we are freed from the shackles of mortality. That's Faith.

We stand now at a crossroads for life on Earth. We have changed the Earth more than any previous living organism. Will we choose to control our use of the Earth? Will we choose to preserve a broad diversity of other species or will we ruin it by making the Earth unlivable due to our boundless appetites?

For that and other questions, thanks be to God.

Amen.

The Collect

O God, who before the passion of your only-begotten Son revealed his glory upon the holy mountain: Grant to us that we, beholding by faith the light of his countenance, may be strengthened to bear our cross, and be changed into his likeness from glory to glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

2 Kings 2:1-12

When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."

Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

Psalm 50:1-6

Deus deorum

1 The Lord, the God of gods, has spoken; *
he has called the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

2 Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty, *
God reveals himself in glory.

3 Our God will come and will not keep silence; *
before him there is a consuming flame,
and round about him a raging storm.

4 He calls the heavens and the earth from above *
to witness the judgment of his people.

5 "Gather before me my loyal followers, *
those who have made a covenant with me
and sealed it with sacrifice."

6 Let the heavens declare the rightness of his cause; *
for God himself is judge.

The Epistle

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel

Mark 9:2-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Notes: Sermon on Evolution and Faith

In a dynamic universe, everything is in motion. This assertion isn't merely theory; it's verifiable by empirical observation. As a person of both science and faith, I recognize this dynamic state as evidence that the medium in which everything resides is God, and I attribute this energetic movement as not only a consequence of the mechanics of the stuff in the universe, but also a function of the medium in which it all resides. It is comforting to speculate that the invisible and rarified environment that I've always thought of as "space" isn't vacuous nothing, but rather something tangibly enervating and life-giving enough so that every constituent of the universe is dancing—vibrating with possibility. The spectroscopic evidence of this motion is awe-inspiring, and prompts one to recognize that when it comes to the physics of "stuff," relationship is everything. In a crystal, the proximity of one atom to another and the intrinsic properties of each element determine the geometry of relationship, and in turn, the geometry of relationship determines the way the atoms vibrate!

If material and motion affect relationship, and relationship between bits of matter feeds back to affect subsequent motion, changing the behavior of the material, evolution is a necessary consequence!

Motion and relationship change through time. Each relationship leads to the formation of new materials, and as the materials become more complex, new behaviors and properties emerge. This IS evolution, broadly stated. Evolution is so much more than the story of the biosphere, or in particular, humans. It is the story of minerals and planets, of all creation, and when we fail to grasp the broader understanding of evolution as an emergent property of a dynamic universe, we miss a valuable opportunity to speak to people of faith about the consistency of scientific (empirical) observation with a doctrine of creation that celebrates the Divine Gift of motion and relationship.

It's time to think much more broadly about evolution as a universal process and a consequence of residence within the medium of the divine.

I received an email from [The Clergy Letter Project](#) this week asking me to sign their letter affirming that science (evolution) and theology can get along. They have also published an [op ed in the Huffington Post](#) which may give readers a bit more background. My first reaction was, "Why should it even be necessary for us to have to do this? Of course the two are compatible, even complementary. Why would it be necessary to write a letter stating the obvious?" As such, my first inclination for a title here was, "Evolution, Christianity, and Stupidity" but that would not go over very well, me being an ordained Episcopal Deacon...

But these are times that try men's souls and the slaughter of one of the jewels of our western heritage and the centuries of biblical scholarship that Christians have labored over and loved for centuries by mindless "literal interpretation" does indeed try my soul. I have read the Bible cover to cover multiple times and the designated bits of it to the congregation every Sunday for over three decades. My favorite books are Job and Ruth (the source of my wife and my

wedding vows). I have also read everything I could find about it over more than those 30 years of ministry. The only book I have re-read more often is *The Lord of the Rings* but then, I had young sons to read to every night and fighting Orcs is much more fun than Pharisees.

We all should be familiar with the literalist interpretation by now. God created the world in six days, and took Saturday off. The literalists may fumble about the length of days, including the lame fabrication that maybe a day is really an “eon” or an “age”. Atheists love to hold this view up to (justified) ridicule but they also miss the point. Both creation stories (yes, there are two) in Genesis have nothing to do with biology, documentable history, or paleontology. So let’s try a different “translation” to make the point.

Genesis 1

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God’s spirit hovered over the water.

God said, “Let there be light”, and there was light. God saw that the light was good and said, “Now I can see what I am doing.” God had done this before and remembered how much work it was the first time as He had labored for six whole days making stuff by hand. He also remembered how the earth had evolved last time to produce a lot of good things like Ikea so He said to Himself, “I’ll make it easier this time.” And he reached for his Ikea catalog. He got online and ordered up everything he needed for next day delivery. Evening came and morning came: the first day.

Everything arrived on the second day and God saw all the boxes he had ordered and saw they were in good condition and delivered early enough in the day for him to get started right away. This was going to be easier.

...

Five days later, God had finally assembled everything. He was sweaty and his thumbs were really sore. He looked out and saw his creation and could see that it was of good quality. He also had a huge pile of the first (but fully recyclable) packaging. And He had a couple of coffee cans full of angle wrenches, funny looking screw things, and lots of extra wooden dowels. Evening came and morning came: the sixth day.

His creation was indeed good so God rested from his labors (and sore wrists). On the seventh day he had Swedish meatballs and gravy for dinner and enjoyed all that he had made.

This may not be how you remember it in Sunday School but it is correct and faithful to interpretations of the original in spite of my taking liberties with the translation. The original (Jewish) authors wanted to make two important points in writing this first chapter. The rest is extra although very familiar to their ancient audience. But what about all the things He made that I truncate away in those five days? What about kangaroos and fish? That is all common Mesopotamian creation myth. I could get the same list and order from my grandson when he was five years old who would be a perfect candidate because he is very bright, outrageously creative, and has a strong affinity for the “magical”. In other words, the best science in 900 BCE was equivalent to a smart 21st century five year old. I could sit down with him and ask questions like, “What came first?” and “What came next?” and get the same result as the Babylonian myth or its adaptation by the Jewish authors in exile.

So let’s get to the core of this “adaptation”. The authors added two important things. First, as I retain in my “translation”, over and over again, “And God said it was good.” This is an important distinction because the prevailing dualistic (Manichaeist, Gnostic) view of the physical world at that time was that it was imperfect and evil. Not that we don’t have that attitude today. Their important point was and still is that “creation”, i.e. the world we live in is good. It is beautiful and benevolent.

We still have that problem today. The prevalent attitude seems to be creation, the earth, is of little use beyond digging it up for a few bits of wealth and for dumping our rubbish; that our economy and social world will always be dog-eat-dog and made up of good (us) and evil (them). The Jewish and long held Christian point of the story is that the creation in which we live is good and should be a valued gift from God, not turned into a dump or feared and fought.

The second point is in the enumeration of seven (a “perfect” number since ancient times) days. In particular, there are six days of work and one day of rest. If you are a slave, you don’t get a day of rest, even if it is you yourself who makes yourself a seven day a week slave. The life of a slave is one long monotony followed by death. Take a day off and enjoy and appreciate your life and the world you live in. Otherwise, what is the point of living? A significant part of being human is to have the time to reflect on and study to understand the life we have been blessed with. All Genesis asks is that we devote 14% of that time away from striving toil and be in spirit regenerating time.

This is a far cry from the literalist rubbish that passes itself off as the absolute word of God. These may sound like harsh words from a supposed man of God but I confess that there is so much good insight about our beautiful world and

the lives we could live in the Christian tradition that gets lost in ridiculous arguments based on ignorance. We could get into a whole series of articles on how and why literalism came about (in the mid-1800s in the U.S.A.) but we can do that at another time. The sad thing is these ideas are not only bad science, they are also incredibly bad theology.

This first creation story is great literature, not the *The History Channel*. Its passages, my favorite image being, "... and God's spirit hovered over the water." (New Jerusalem) have inspired (in-spirited) countless creations of art and literature and have provided centuries of spiritual insight and sustenance ever since — only to be cheapened by hacks. Yes, it is myth. But the true purpose of myth is to reach the deep truth inaccessible through factual data. It may sound like history just like *The Lord of the Rings* may sound like history but both are really about the timeless human condition, that in which we live today.

There is another creation story (Gn 2:5-3:24) about Adam (Hebrew for "man" as in humanity or "everyman") and Eve (Hebrew for "mother"). This is even better when we can get past the political nonsense and the wildly out of control doctrines about "Original Sin" which, by the way, was St. Augustine of Hippo's (cir 430 CE) idea, a radical change to church doctrine prior to his time. This creation story is also myth but it is a tightly crafted one, wasting few words, about the human condition and what coming of age as a human being is all about. What follows is my own interpretation from many years of reflection and study. In other words, it is but one path, my path to understanding and you may see things I don't. I will leave most of the detail as an exercise for the reader and only sketch a few things from what I've learned.

We introduced Adam and Eve, not individuals with Social Security cards but generic, primeval man and woman. But there are more characters (besides God going on walk-about in the garden). The serpent is a interesting character. As Joseph Campbell points out, the serpent is Life with its power over both life and death. It sheds its skin which has been understood to be renewal or rebirth. It also takes life with its venom (remember this was the ancient middle east and toxicology was at a mystery filled five year old level too).

The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil", or as my Dad used to say, "Soup to nuts", i.e. all of knowledge, is the center of the garden (orbis mundi) for a reason. If mankind wants to stay in the Garden of Eden... The observation that "Ignorance is bliss" says it all. Note that life teaches the mother who then teaches the man. Yea, and he blames her... Where have we heard that before?

Well, they start to learn about the wider world. And what is the first thing they do? They hide and "cover their nakedness". Anyone who remembers their puberty years (sorry to bring that up) or has raised children through those years knows enough about growing up to get the point. Girls who used to run around

the house and yard in their buck nakedness are now obsessing over their looks, covering up, and locking themselves in the bathroom for hours. The same applies to boys. I have five sisters and we had one bathroom. I also lived in military barracks with no privacy in the latrines so I have a deep understanding of at least this topic.

Puberty is also the age at which we start to learn about the wider world and the consequences of our actions. We are also old enough to be confronted with death. Most of my six paternal uncles died during the time I was in eighth grade through high school. I was a sophomore when my cousin, who was two years ahead of me, was called to the Principals office and it was announced over the school PA that he was sent home and we were to take time out from class for prayer because his Dad, my uncle had died. We leave the innocent garden of our childhood and we know we can't go back. As Adam and Eve (we) leave, off in the distance, we can see the Tree of Eternal Life, knowing that like everyone before us, that is not going to happen. We all die.

The purpose of myth is to make sense of living by way of a story, frequently from a no longer accessible time. I find this particular one moving. It has helped me make sense of the turmoil of my growing up an awkward, skinny kid. These are stories that were written by older adults who had the perspective of age, something I'm just starting to glimpse.

What winds my clock is is the tawdry cheapness and shallowness of theological understanding that is so prevalent in the teachings of certain vocal "Christian" leaders. I fully realize that church attendance is declining and has been since almost before I was born. Those of us who have signed the letter have been very aware of the diminishing role of church in American life for a long time. Speaking in my own tradition (denomination), the Episcopal Church has made great effort to renew that which had gone stale and rediscover that which has been neglected for far too long. Many other traditions have also entered the struggle to re-examine what it means to live a religious and spiritually centered life in these changing times. This is hard work but we, as humans, are evolving, maybe slowly in a physical and biological sense, but we are evolving quite fast rate at a social, psychological, and spiritual level. Those of us invested in the tradition that brought us this far need to evolve the tradition so that it continues to contribute to a way forward rather than be a just a signpost in the rear view mirror.

Unfortunately, some of my colleagues cannot or will not adapt. The [Scopes trial](#) in 1925 was a severe blow to the "literalism" at the base of American Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christianity, something that many Evangelicals still fuss over as shown by the continued indirect and veiled promotions of "Creationism" and "Intelligent Design". As these groups sense at some level that their influence and credibility in American life is slipping away, they have

become more strident, somewhat intellectually compromised, and politically assertive. Please note that I am critical of my colleagues, not the folks in the pews. Leadership has its price in responsibility. Many of the people who come through the door to our churches are vulnerable, seeking sanctuary, and we have a responsibility to not only assist them but to do no harm. They are not pawns and numbers to inflate our own power and control.

This, in my view, is more than just unfortunate. Our American culture is richer and blessed by the diversity of the all world's cultures that have migrated here, bringing their unique religious and spiritual traditions with them. I rejoice that this blending has created things like the [Vietnamese Pho, burger, and biker bar](#) near my home, a combination that still staggers my mind. A Taco truck on every corner is not something to be feared but something to rejoice in.

Those of us from a European heritage can also rejoice in our western cultural tradition, not in a dominant-over-everything-else-way, but as a significant contribution we can offer to the mix. As one of my English professors wisely told us: "If you want to understand the language of modern American and English literature, read Shakespeare. If you want to understand Shakespeare, read the Bible." The very language we use everyday is steeped in those linked works. The same linkage applies to the literature of the other European cultures. They may not be the only and best value but they are valuable beyond measure none the less.

This is why we have to write and sign such a letter. It is a shame that we have to but those of us who have taken the time and effort to study and understand our western Christian contribution to that marvelous blend called America need to speak up for that ancient tradition. Otherwise, a valuable part of our culture and spiritual center as a country and people will be lost, debased and drowned out in the clamor and noise of just one flailing and increasingly shallow and compromised portion of that heritage. I'm sorry to be blunt but as it expresses itself today, American Evangelicalism is just a less than 200 year old, in many parts stunted, offshoot of a richer 3000 year old tradition. I have signed the letter and have spoken up here because it would be a tragic loss if that ancient tradition, so devalued by the ranting currently going on under the guise of "religion", is lost to our diverse culture. So many of our people wisely reject those who are doing the ranting and I agree with a lot of what [#emptythepews](#) critiques. I cannot argue with much of their advocated action. In many respects, it is long overdue. But at the same time, hacking down the whole tree because some of the branches are diseased only leaves us out in the hot sun with no cool and refreshing shade. Cutting us off completely from our past cuts us off from our future.

Hence, I have signed.

Peace.

In full disclosure:

Although I was not a very good student in my youth, I was fortunate to have a good Jesuit education in high school in spite of myself. When I grew up (after 4 years in the Air Force), the Jesuits had another crack at me at the university level and this time it took. Regardless what one may say about the Catholic Church, the Jesuits, in my experience, are very good and rigorous in their calling to be educators. They have been doing it for 500 years. They demand intellectual rigor and did not suffer fools (like me) lightly. I also have a degree in Computer Science (UCSC 1974) and worked over 40 years in the Internet and systems engineering field. If I had been born 25 years later, I may have studied Computational Biology which didn't exist at the time, hence I messed around with TCP/IP and UNIX/Linux instead. I think working on the code and genetics for DNA sequencing would be really cool. I also have a Bachelors in Theological Studies from the School for Deacons, Berkeley, CA. I will readily admit that my knowledge of C and GO is better than my Hebrew or Greek... Yes, it has been an interesting mix.

So I come to this topic from both ends and it is frustrating to read/hear the silliness that comes from the authority figures of American Evangelical Christianity. Note that their literalism is uniquely American. Nowhere else do their ideas about "creationism", or "the rapture" appear unless their missionaries traveled there to preach it.