A Big Reason Why So Many People are Leaving the Church

Some may wonder why Shane, David and I, and many others in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, are so concerned over the fact that mainstream evolutionary theories are creeping into our schools – being promoted as the true story of origins in direct conflict with the Church’s position on a literal 6-day creation week. What’s the big deal? Who really cares? After all, isn’t it enough to know Jesus? Why is the Church’s stand on origins so critical? After all, as Eddie asks below, who has ever been converted from atheism to Christianity through apologetic arguments for creationism? – especially young-life creationism?

@Eddie:

You wrote:

“Many Christians have lost their faith because of the empirical evidence for long ages of life on Earth. Do you know of any atheist who became a Christian because of the empirical
First off, there aren’t that many true atheists. Only about 1.6% of Americans described themselves as atheists and 2.4% as agnostics (we won’t even talk about ‘atheists in foxholes’). And, when people do end up calling themselves an atheists in a public manner, they’re usually pretty set in their ways, having made up their minds against the idea of God. Because of this, it is pretty hard to convert a self-proclaimed atheist.

Yet, I know of a number of former agnostics or atheists who became Christians due in no small part to the evidence for creation – to include the evidence for a recent arrival of life on Earth: Walter Veith, Clifford Goldstein, Rick Lanser, Jerry Bergman, and John Sanford to name a few.

Really though, such examples are meaningless when it comes to my own basis of faith and a solid hope in the future... and the faith of many who remain Christians because of the evidence in support of the Biblical account of origins.

More to the point, as you point out, many many people do in fact leave the Church because the Church is not offering them good apologetic arguments to counter the prevailing opinions of mainstream science. Hiring scientists who promote the mainstream perspective, or offer nothing but blind faith to counter it, only exacerbates the problem. Flipping your argument around, if the Church were able to provide better empirical arguments for its position on origins, I think even you would agree that such evidence would play a big part in keeping people in the Church. After all, if they’re leaving in droves because of the empirical evidence against the Church, if this evidence is effectively countered, such an effort would obviously play a key role in keeping a great many people in the Church.

Sure, a few like you may stay in the Church in spite of the perceived weight of evidence or because of empirically blind faith alone. But, for many many people, blind faith arguments just aren’t good enough. They aren’t appealing to many rational people who will follow where they think the empirical evidence leads. The Church should be urgently trying to help such people, people like me, who actually need to see the weight of empirical evidence favoring the Church’s perspective as a basis for rational faith. The Church would only be contributing to the vast exodus from its own doors, especially among the youth of the Church, by failing to substantively address the arguments of mainstream scientists that are being brought against it – according to your own argument.

“Let me be transparent about my personal position: I believe in a young age of life on Earth, but not because of the empirical evidence. I see through a glass darkly and I’m not going to lose any sleep over it. Whatever happened in the past happened. Other matters are more important.”

Again, empirically blind faith must be a wonderful thing for you and others who share your view. The problem is that many like me don’t understand a faith that is not backed by empirical evidence as rational or personally meaningful. Simply choosing to believe contrary to what I understand to be the weight of empirical evidence would be, for me, a form of irrationality – kind of like living a lie.

I therefore remain in the Church because I actually see the weight of evidence as strongly favoring the Church’s fundamental goals and ideals – to include its position on origins (a position which I consider to be one of the most fundamental aspects of Adventism and Christianity at large).
This is why, if I ever became convinced of Darwinism or long-ages for life on Earth, I would leave the SDA Church and probably Christianity as well. I might still believe in a God of some kind, but certainly not the Christian-style God described in the pages of the Bible.

Obviously many people feel the same way. They simply cannot see themselves clear to be a member of any organization that is so fundamentally opposed to what they perceive to be rationally true. I, for one, strongly sympathize with this mentality and see a great need to meet the needs of this very large community — many of whom are our neighbors and close friends.

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