


1948

Rationalists in Retreat

W. E. Filmer

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs_books

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Biochemistry, Biophysics, and Structural Biology Commons](#), [Biology Commons](#), [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Evolution Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Filmer, W. E., "Rationalists in Retreat" (1948). *Stone-Campbell Books*. Book 174.
http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/crs_books/174

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Stone-Campbell Resources at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Stone-Campbell Books by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU. For more information, please contact dc@acu.edu.

RATIONALISTS IN RETREAT

by

W. E. FILMER, B.A.

Post free prices : Single copies 3d., 2s. per dozen.

Obtainable from :

W. E. FILMER, 23 Dingwall Road, Croydon, Surrey.

Dr. D. S. MILNE, 47 Totara Crescent, Lower Hutt, New Zealand.

J. McKELLAR, 6 Ormsby Grove, Toorak, Melbourne, Australia.

EVOLUTION PROTEST MOVEMENT

1948

RATIONALISTS IN RETREAT

IN October and November, 1947, a series of six lectures entitled "Some Aspects of Evolution" was given by Dr. M. Burton and Dr. W. E. Swinton, both of the Natural History Section of the British Museum. The lectures were delivered at Conway Hall, London, under the auspices of the Rationalist Press Association, but by the end of the fourth lecture so many damaging admissions had been made and so many evolutionist theories discredited, that the chairman looked as if he had got hold of the wrong lecturers to support his case. The position was somewhat retrieved in the last two lectures by resorting to the antiquated Lamarckian theory of the inheritance of acquired characters, and the showing of some realistic but quite imaginary lantern slides of ape-men.

In the first lecture Dr. Burton drew attention to the vast number of known species of animals, both living and fossil, and pointed out that if one of each were to march across the stage in a continuous stream day and night, they would barely be finished by the date of the last lecture in five weeks time. With all this fossil material to choose from it should not have been difficult for him to pick out a series of animals showing all the stages in the evolution of man from amoeba. It is well known that such a series cannot be found, and Dr. Burton did well to draw attention to several serious gaps in the chain.

The first gap occurs between the one-celled animals and those with several hundred cells. No animal is known with 2, 4, 8, 16, etc. cells, and there is no evidence that any such creatures have ever existed. Again, from the sponges and sea anemones to the segmented worms is a big step forward with nothing to show how this step was taken. Moreover, as Dr. Burton said, between the invertebrates and vertebrates there is a very big gulf and very little to bridge it. Dr. Swinton admitted that this is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in the theory of evolution. In truth there is NOTHING to bridge this gap. Neither comparative anatomy nor the study of fossils point to any of the invertebrates as being ancestors of backboned animals. Evolutionists are all at sixes and sevens in this matter: some have tried to derive vertebrates from worms,

others from crustaceans, or Arachnida (the spider group) or sea squirts, while Dr. Swinton put forward an equally strong case in favour of echinoderms (sea urchins and starfish).

Dr. Burton also pointed out that there is yet another wide gap between animals and man, but neither lecturer had anything to say about the many other gaps in the animal world, for example between molluscs and all other phyla, between brachiopods (lampshells) and all other invertebrate groups, or between turtles and pterodactyls (flying reptiles) and all other reptiles and again between bats, whales and Sirenia and all other mammals.

Nevertheless, Dr. Swinton showed a slide of the Sirenian *Halitherium* which he said was the common ancestor of whales and Sirenia. This is a queer ancestor, indeed! The earliest known fossil of it occurs in an Upper Eocene rock, while fossils of whales and other Sirenia have been found in earlier Middle Eocene rocks. Nor is this all: in Abel's chronological series showing the gradual reduction of the pelvis in Sirenia, *Halitherium* is placed after *Eotherium* and *Eosiren*. If whales and Sirenia be derived from a common ancestor, that ancestor was certainly not *Halitherium*.

THE PALAEOONTOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

In the second lecture Dr. Swinton made a determined effort to give from geological evidence the impression that the evolutionary chain was otherwise sound. He, too, was forced to start by admitting that "three quarters of the history of life is a blank." "It is one of the greatest dilemmas of the biologist," he said, "that from the time when life began till the Cambrian era, nothing is known of life." Then in the Cambrian era appeared a tremendous abundance of highly advanced forms.

Dr. Swinton's statement that nothing is known of life before the Cambrian era, while true, must have surprised many of his audience, because most text books, particularly those recommended or sponsored by the Rationalist Press Association assert dogmatically that fossils have been found in Pre-Cambrian rocks. In *The Science of Life*, for example, the authors state (p. 673) "In the last thirty years a number of definite fossils from these beds previously thought barren of life, have come to light. Calcareous masses, possibly

deposited by algae, are not uncommon : among animals Radiolaria sponge spicules of many kinds and unmistakable worm tubes have been found : and there are some remains which may prove to be an early sea scorpion and have been christened Beltina."

It is true that over-enthusiastic evolutionists have described objects which they believe to be fossils, but none of them have stood up to close scrutiny. Dr. Swinton's statement exposes the worthlessness of this evolutionary propaganda.

To explain away the very damaging fact of the absence of Pre-Cambrian fossils Dr. Swinton suggested that before the Cambrian era no animals had shells or hard parts which could be fossilised. The idea is palpably absurd that thousands of different species of animals all over the world suddenly at the beginning of the Cambrian period took to secreting univalved and bivalved shells, some of the former on the right and some on the left side, others on the front and back of the body, horny or bony tests, limey or siliceous spicules, spines, head and tail shields, carapaces, jointed antennae, legs and jaws, etc. The fact that Dr. Swinton had to put forward some explanation shows how fatal to the theory of organic evolution the absence of Pre-Cambrian fossils is. Nor is this all : his own theory does not account for the facts. Fossils of jellyfish in the Cambrian and later rocks have been found, so why not from the Pre-Cambrian ? If soft bodied animals existed in their thousands in the Pre-Cambrian period, they would have left numbers of fossils in the rocks formed during that period. Dr. Swinton himself condemned his own theory by stating that rain drop and ripple marks of 2,000 million years ago are still visible, thus demonstrating that fossils of Pre-Cambrian animals would have been preserved had they existed.

With regard to the origin of life he asserted that about 1,500 million years ago in the presence of a catalyst (whose nature and composition he did not know) a little scum appeared in the primeval ocean which spread and multiplied for purely chemical reasons—this was protoplasm. There is no geological or other evidence to support such a statement, which is pure imagination and unworthy of the name of science. The late Prof. Eugene Guye demonstrated that the probability of a single protein molecule being formed by the action of chance and normal thermal agitation is nil. Dr. Lecomte du Noüy shews the same thing mathematically in *Human Destiny* (Longman's Green, 1947). Nevertheless, in support of this flight of fancy, Dr. Swinton stated that " man has in the fluid of his blood plasma the elements of these ancestors. The salinity

of human blood plasma is the same as that of the primordial sea in which life was first formed."

Here he was stating as a fact a theory put forward twenty years ago by Macallum which has since been contested by E. J. Conway (see Proceedings of the Royal Irish Acad., 1943, p. 161). The idea is based on the fact that the salt in the sea is gradually increasing due to inflow from the rivers. The amount of salt carried annually to the sea in this way can be calculated, and from this the age of the earth deduced from the present salinity of the ocean. Dr. Swinton asserted that the salinity of the primordial sea had likewise been calculated and found to be the same as that of blood plasma. Unfortunately the figures are self-contradictory, for the age of the earth by this calculation comes out at less than 100 million years, whereas Dr. Swinton asserted that life was formed 1,500 million years ago and the sea formed 3,000 million years ago.

The geological evidence subsequently put forward may have given a layman the impression that intermediate forms of life had been found between all the main groups of animals, but the evidence was largely questionable, if not directly false. The gap between the fish and the land vertebrates was bridged by the fossil fish *Sauripterus* of which a lantern slide was shown depicting diagrammatically the bones of the pectoral fin which are supposed to correspond with those of the fore leg of an amphibian. The lecturer did not say that the fin is the only part of *Sauripterus* of which a fossil has been found, nor did he mention that Sir Arthur Smith Woodward stated that the pectoral fins of fishes can only be homologised in part and with difficulty with the anterior extremities of the higher vertebrates (Zittel's Textbook of Palaeontology, vol. 2, p. 19).

Of the thirty odd bones in the fin of *Sauripterus* it is only possible to imagine three comparable with the humerus, the radius and the ulna of the front leg of an amphibian. Not one of the others has the least resemblance to any bone in the amphibian fore leg. In any case *Sauripterus* cannot be ancestral to the amphibians because fossils of the latter occur in rocks as old as that from which *Sauripterus* was dug up.

To bridge the gap between reptiles and mammals a slide of a reptile was shown which Dr. Swinton stated differed from a mammal only in the hinging of the lower jaw. This is an amazing statement. To the best of our knowledge there are at least six skeletal differences between every reptile and every mammal of which the anatomy is completely known, apart from other fundamental differences in the soft parts.

1. In every reptile the articulation of the lower jaw with the skull is not direct, but through the intervention of a bone called the quadrate.
2. In reptiles the drum of the ear is connected with the tympanum by a single rod-like bone—the columella : in mammals the connection is by a series of three bones.
3. In every reptile each half of the lower jaw is composed of six bones : in mammals each half of the lower jaw is composed of only one bone.
4. In all reptiles the ankle joint is between the two rows of ankle bones : in all mammals it is at the root of the toes.
5. There are differences in the breast girdle.
6. There are differences in the hip girdle.

Dr. Swinton has ignored all of these differences except the first one. Even so, his missing link gives no help in solving the mystery of how the reptilian jaw was converted into the mammalian jaw. Evolutionists generally suppose that the bones which formed the hinge of the reptilian lower jaw migrated to form the series of bones in the mammalian inner ear. This solution is, however, so fantastic that even the transformist A. Morley Davies writes, "A sarcastic creationist might get quite good fun out of an imaginary picture of the transitional reptile-mammal, obliged to stop eating in order to hear, since the bone articulating his jaw also transmitted sound waves."

These differences between the two classes refer only to the skeleton and head, and are insignificant in comparison with the changes which must have taken place in the blood system, digestive tract, breathing apparatus and body covering before a reptile could be converted into a mammal. To throw a smoke screen over these points Dr. Swinton told his audience that a reptile had been found which had hair, a peculiarly mammalian characteristic. On enquiry it turned out that this was another dubious fossil which may or may not have had a hair-like tuft on the top of its head. In any case it could by no means lay claim to the honour of being a "missing link" between reptiles and mammals, for it was a pterodactyl.

THE EMBRYOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The third lecture—Embryological Evidence—delivered by Dr. Swinton must have been a great disappointment to the majority of his audience, for he told them bluntly that “in his opinion the recapitulation theory is just not true.” This theory, which was formulated many years ago by E. Haeckel, arch-faker of embryological drawings, asserts that the embryo recapitulates during the few months of its development the past history of its ancestors. The belief that this happens in the case of every embryo has been the main reason for the widespread acceptance of the evolution theory. When told that at an early stage in its development in the womb the human baby has gill slits simply because it is descended from a fish, the man in the street can hardly help believing in evolution. So Dr. Swinton in his lecture has discredited the main witness for evolution, and he gave good reasons for his disbelief in the theory: for example, the amnion (the membrane surrounding the embryo) and allantois (an excretory organ) occur in all mammalian embryos, but they do not do so in the phylogenetic tree. Also we know from mammalian history that teeth were developed before tongues, but in the embryo the reverse is the case.

Those in the know will not be surprised at Dr. Swinton's rejection of this absurd theory, because today very few zoologists accept it, and those who do are laughed at by their brother biologists. William J. Straus Jr., for example, in reviewing Prof. Hooten's book *Up from the Ape* says this: “It is Haeckelism of the worst sort to state that in all vertebrates ‘the throat is pierced or nearly pierced at some stage of the animal's existence by paired gill slits.’ It is misleading to say that the term ‘gill arches’ (how one squirms at the term!) are fishy reminiscences (pp. 214 and 221-222). There are not *three* forerunners of the kidneys. . . . It is a distinct strain on the imagination to interpret the lanugo (the hairy covering of the foetus) in terms of ontogenetic recapitulation (p. 223). There is no longer any justification for regarding the vermiform appendix as a vestigial structure.” (Quarterly Review of Biology, June, 1947).

Not content with squashing the embryological witness for evolution, Dr. Swinton showed that he did not think much of that favourite piece of palaeontological evidence for evolution—the series of horse fossils. He admitted that this is “all very nice”, but he estimated that it would require 100,000 generations to produce a new species of horse. In this series we were dealing with genera, and he reckoned that it would require a million years for the

development of a new genus. This is almost certainly an underestimate, because in the series leading from Eohippus to Equus there are seven intermediate genera in most pedigrees. As the evolution of these genera (nine in all) began over 50 million years ago the evolution of a genus took on the average more than 5 million years. If it takes 5 million years to evolve a new genus, it would take 50 million years to evolve a new family (although Eohippus lived about 55 million years ago its descendants to-day are still members of the horse family). Evolution proceeding at this rate would require 500 million years to produce a new order, 5,000 million years to produce a new class and 50,000 million years to produce a phylum. But according to the view expressed by Dr. Swinton in his first lecture life began only 1,500 million years ago. Thus the famous horse series shows that evolution could not have had time to take place.

THE BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Dr. Swinton shook his audience again when he went on to say that the Darwinian theory of natural selection could not, at any rate by itself, account for evolution. He drew attention to certain dinosaurs which had developed organs or parts, such as vanes on the back and processes on the head, which were of no value to them, and may even have been a hindrance to them, in the struggle for existence. He mentioned many other animals which had in recent times suffered from apparently unwanted growths; e.g. elks having huge antlers which hindered their progress through the forest, the sabre-toothed tiger whose great canine teeth hindered rather than helped it to eat. He suggested that the elephant's tusks were an unfortunate growth which prevented the beast from picking up its food in its mouth; the noble creature had perforce to grow itself a prehensile trunk in order to get even with its tusks!

In reply to a question Dr. Swinton admitted that he did not know the cause of evolution. He said that there was some directing influence, "call it God if you like" which determined whether, and what kind of evolution took place, or even prevented it taking place. He pointed out that there were many things which were incomprehensible to us, such as the migration of birds, and things of beauty such as bird songs which were beyond human achievement.

A similar admission was made by Dr. Burton who gave further cases where natural selection could not account for evolution. He

said that there were four factors to which evolution could be attributed (1) Mutations ; (2) Inheritance of acquired characters ; (3) Natural selection ; and (4) an unknown factor which might be called " an evolutive impetus." It is significant that after all these years the scientists are at last forced to admit that purely mechanistic processes cannot account for evolution. Although these rationalists deny stoutly that they believe in anything supernatural such as God, they have to admit an unknown factor.

The supremely important part which this unknown factor evidently plays in the alleged evolutionary process is realised when the lecturers' views on the other three factors are considered. To Dr. Swinton's list Dr. Burton added further examples of animals which could not have evolved under the Darwinian process of natural selection. Mutations, or the sudden appearance of new varieties, are not capable of producing new species. The appearance of mutations has been used by man to breed new varieties of dogs, pigeons, poultry, etc. But, as Dr. Burton at last discovers, " no constructive evolution has been produced ; dogs are still dogs, pigeons are still pigeons and fowls are still fowls."

Having demolished these two pillars of evolutionary faith, and being averse to attributing everything to the " unknown factor ", Dr. Burton finally pinned his faith to the long-since discredited theory of the inheritance of acquired characters. In support of this he was unable to produce a shred of evidence except of a negative kind, viz., that in his view there was no other way of accounting for evolution. But surely, if there is no evidence that acquired characters are inherited, and the other two mechanistic factors, mutations and natural selection, have been discredited, there remains only the unknown factor which Dr. Burton calls an " evolutive impetus " and Dr. Swinton permits us to call God if we like !

THE ORIGIN OF MAN

Evidence for the evolution of man was left over until the final lecture. By this time Mr. Watts, the chairman, might well have complained that, whereas Drs. Burton and Swinton had been expected to support the theory of evolution, they had in fact made a great many statements unfavourable to it. In order to make good this defect, it would seem that in the last lecture the popular press

method of presenting fiction as fact was adopted, and lantern slides were shown which were pure evolutionary propaganda.

The most amusing of these slides depicted what was said to be the oldest true man of which we have much evidence. This was an imaginative drawing of Piltdown man slouching in a stooping gait across a prehistoric landscape. This posture is an essential part of the evolutionary nonsense which is propagated about the origin of man, although sufficient is known of the skull for us to deduce that Piltdown man walked upright. A second slide gave a portrait of the face of this gentleman. Those unacquainted with the methods of evolutionists would have thought that at least several fairly complete skeletons of Piltdown man had been discovered. Far from it; all we know of this creature, or creatures, consists of four or five fragments of a human skull, and half a jaw which looks very much like that of a chimpanzee, all found in a Sussex gravel pit at various times between 1911 and 1913. It should be noted that in the same gravel pit were found pieces of the teeth of an extinct kind of elephant, two teeth of a hippopotamus and one of a beaver, so that the presence of the jawbone of a chimpanzee would not be surprising among these remains of other animals. On the other hand in a field two miles away were found a bit of a fossil human skull and a tooth which, although not quite like the molar in the ape-like jaw, is of an unusual type for that of a man. Those who regard the skull and jaw bones as belonging to the same species call this *Eoanthropus* (the dawn man), while those who regard the skull bones as human call these *Homo sapiens* or *dawsoni*, and the jaw *Pan vetus* (the ancient chimpanzee) or *Boreopithecus vetus* (the ancient northern ape).

A third slide showed the skulls and lower jaws of six stages in the evolution of man's face. Here Piltdown man was placed second after *Pithecanthropus* (the Java "Man"), although it had already been stated that Piltdown man was the older. However, fossils of skulls of man of *modern* type have been found which are much older than Piltdown man, such as those found at Olmo and Castenedolo in Italy and Calaveras in the U.S.A. It upsets all the ideas of the evolutionists that men of modern type lived so long ago, for it proves that all the so-called missing links which lived afterwards are no such thing. Consequently Dr. Swinton ignored these ancient skulls, as do all evolutionists, so that neither students nor the public ever hear about them.

It is clear from all this that the lecturers did their utmost to put forward every scrap of evidence which they could muster in support

of the evolution theory. It follows that their admissions which are damaging to the theory and their statements which are contrary to it, must be regarded as all the more important, for they would evidently not have been made except in the face of overwhelming evidence.

At the end of the fifth lecture Dr. Burton was challenged by the secretary of the Evolution Protest Movement to debate evolution with a fully qualified scientist who did not believe in it. This he declined on the grounds that "it would be a very dangerous thing to do for a man in his position". If evolution is the established fact which he said it was, surely it would have been a great deal more dangerous for his opponent. The fact is that no evolutionist dares to stand up to critical questioning—they know that their case is indefensible. (See E.P.M. pamphlets "Évolutionists under Fire", "The Tactics of the Science Masters' Association" and "The Royal Society of New Zealand refuses to debate evolution".)

EVOLUTION PROTEST MOVEMENT LITERATURE

- The Man from Monkey Myth.** 4d., 2/- *per doz.*
Obsessions of Biologists. 6d., 3/6 *per doz.*
Pernicious Propaganda by the B.B.C. 2d., 1/3 *per doz.*
The B.B.C. Abuses its Monopoly. 3d., 1/3 *per doz.*
Evolutionists under Fire. 4d., 2/- *per doz.*
Reasons why Biologists refuse to debate Evolution. 2d., 8d. *per doz.*
A Freethinker kicks against the Pricks. 2d., 1/- *per doz.*
How the B.B.C. Humbugs the Public. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
Evolution : How the Doctrine is propagated in our Schools. 5d.,
2/6 *per doz.*
Evolution To-day. 2d., 1/- *per doz.*
Devolution. 4d., 2/6 *per doz.*
Those Missing Links. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
More about those Missing Links. 4d., 3/- *per doz.*
Dr. Julian Huxley's Glorious Paradox. 2d., 1/- *per doz.*
Recent Opinions of Biologists on Evolution. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
The Bible and Evolution. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
Evolution or Christianity ? 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
Science and Pseudo-Science. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
Evolutionary Fables and Geological Facts. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
The Sophistry of Dr. Donald O. Soper and its Antidote. 3d., 2/- *per doz.*
Evolution—The Modern Superstition. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
How the "Daily Telegraph" Stifles Evidence against Evolution.
3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
The Royal Society of New Zealand refuses to debate Evolution. 3d.,
2/- *per doz.*
Why I believe in Creation. 3d., 1/6 *per doz.*
The Yellow Pamphlet. 3d. 1/3 *per doz.*

BOOKS OBTAINABLE FROM THE E.P.M.

- The Bible and Science.** by D. S. Milne, M.B., Ch.B. 2/8.
Why be an Ape ? by Newman Watts. 2/8.
Man : A Special Creation, by Douglas Dewar. 2/4.
A Challenge to Evolutionists, by Douglas Dewar. 1/3.
Evolution, by A Medical Student. 6d., 4/6 *per doz.*
The World and its God, by Philip Mauro. *2/8.

All Prices include postage.