



# News Release

Tuesday 16 March 2002  
00.00hrs For immediate release

## **Bishops must not suppress debate.**

A recent letter to the Prime Minister signed by a group of Bishops and academics has angered Christians who want a serious debate about what is being taught to children in schools.

The letter is part of a concerted attack on Emmanuel City Technology College, a successful secondary school in a deprived area of Gateshead. The writers seem intent on suppressing debate on the teaching of science and theories of human origins and want the college to be strictly monitored to ensure that it only teaches what they find acceptable. It is incredible that a handful of Bishops saw fit to sign it.

The Bishops claim that '*Evolution is a scientific theory*' which '*can be refined, confirmed and even radically altered by attention to evidence.*' However, as far back as 1967, two scientists wrote in an article in *Nature* that evolution is a theory '*which cannot be refuted by any possible observations... it is thus "outside of empirical science"*'. Likewise the philosopher of science Sir Karl Popper described aspects of evolution as '*not a testable scientific theory but a metaphysical research programme.*'

The contradiction arises from the slippery way in which the term 'evolution' is used. Evolution at its simplest is a theory for explaining changes in genetic information (and hence life forms). No one would seriously doubt that evolution in this sense is a scientific theory. However, what many people mean by evolution is far more than this, namely a general theory of human origins – 'particles-to-people'. There are many parts of this general theory that are beyond the scope of empirical science because they cannot be tested.

Educationalists who are entrusted with teaching children must not teach general evolution as if it were a scientific theory. Where aspects of evolutionary theory are scientifically testable then disputes about evidence and its interpretation must be taught in accordance with the requirements of the National Curriculum. The Bishops and academics appear determined to dictate how and what children should be taught in order to suppress views with which they disagree. This is not beneficial to education or the future of scientific enquiry.

Footnote: 'Particles-to-people' evolution (sometimes misleadingly called 'macro-evolution') has been increasingly under attack in those areas where it can be scientifically tested. Biochemists have argued that evolutionary theory cannot account for the complexity of life at the biochemical level. In palaeontology, although Charles Darwin predicted that the fossil record would show numerous transitional forms only a handful of disputable examples have been found, together with a few high profile frauds. In the field of genetics, although the theory of evolution predicts frequent increases of genetic information no such instances of new information have yet been observed, only instances of sorting or loss of information.

*For further information please contact: Revd David Phillips, General Secretary (01923-235111)*

*Church Society exists to uphold biblical teaching and to promote and defend the character of the Church of England as a reformed and national Church.*

Dean Wace House, 16 Rosslyn Road, Watford, Herts WD18 0NY <http://www.churchsociety.org>  
Tel : 01923-235111 Fax : 01923-800362 e-mail: [admin@churchsociety.org](mailto:admin@churchsociety.org)  
Charity No: 249574 A company limited by guarantee No. 213142