

A Magisterial Mutualism

Author: Zimmerman, Michael

Source: BioScience, 58(2) : 91

Published By: American Institute of Biological Sciences

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1641/B580201>

BioOne Complete (complete.BioOne.org) is a full-text database of 200 subscribed and open-access titles in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Complete website, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/terms-of-use.

Usage of BioOne Complete content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non - commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

BioOne sees sustainable scholarly publishing as an inherently collaborative enterprise connecting authors, nonprofit publishers, academic institutions, research libraries, and research funders in the common goal of maximizing access to critical research.

PUBLISHER
Richard T. O'Grady

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Timothy M. Beardsley

SENIOR EDITOR
Donna Daniels Verdier

PRODUCTION MANAGER / ART DIRECTOR
Herman Marshall

**PEER REVIEW / EXTERNAL RELATIONS
COORDINATOR**
Jennifer A. Williams

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Laura C. Sullivan

Editors: Eye on Education: Samantha J. Katz (educationoffice@aibs.org); Feature articles: Cathy Lundmark (features@aibs.org); Washington Watch: Robert E. Gropp (publicpolicy@aibs.org).

Editorial Associate: Barbara J. Orton.

Editorial Board: Agriculture: Sonny Ramaswamy; Animal Behavior: Janice Moore; Animal Development: Paula Mabee; Botany: Kathleen Donohue; Cell Biology: Randy Wayne; Ecology: Scott Collins, Daniel Simberloff; Ecotoxicology: Judith S. Weis; Education: Gordon E. Uno; Environmental Policy: Gordon Brown, J. Michael Scott; Evolutionary Biology: James Mallet; Genetics and Evolution: Martin Tracey; History and Philosophy: Richard M. Burian; Invertebrate Biology: Kirk Fitzhugh; Landscape Ecology: Monica Turner; Microbiology: Edna S. Kaneshiro; Molecular Biology: David Hillis; Molecular Evolution and Genomics: David Rand; Neurobiology: Cole Gilbert; Plant Development: Cynthia S. Jones; Policy Forum: Eric A. Fischer; Population Biology: Ben Pierce; Professional Biologist: Jean Wyld; Sensing and Computation: Geoffrey M. Henebry; Statistics: Kent E. Holsinger; Vertebrate Biology: Harvey B. Lillywhite.

Editorial Correspondence: 1444 I Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005; telephone: 202-628-1500; fax: 202-628-1509; e-mail: bioscience@aibs.org. Instructions for preparing a manuscript for *BioScience* can be found at www.aibs.org/bioscience/resources/Info_for_contribs.pdf.

Advertising: For information on both display and line classified advertisements and deadlines, contact John Rasanen, American Geological Institute; telephone: 703-379-2480, ext. 224; fax: 703-379-7563; e-mail: jrasanen@aibs.org.

BioScience (ISSN 0006-3568) is published monthly except July/August combined by the American Institute of Biological Sciences. To subscribe, call 1-800-992-2427, ext. 29. Individual membership: sustaining, \$90/yr; individual, \$70/yr; family, \$90/yr (includes \$36 for *BioScience*); emeritus, \$50/yr; K-12 teacher/administrator, \$45/yr (includes \$22 for *BioScience*); graduate and postdoctoral students, \$40/yr (includes \$21 for *BioScience*); undergraduate and K-12 students, \$20/yr (includes \$15 for *BioScience*); lifetime, \$1400 (one-time fee). Institutional subscriptions: domestic, \$367/yr; foreign, \$440/yr. Single copies: \$14 plus shipping and handling for up to 20 copies; volume discounts available for more than 20 (call 1-800-992-2427, ext. 29). Subscription renewal month is shown in the four-digit year-month code in the upper right corner of the mailing label.

© 2008 American Institute of Biological Sciences. All rights reserved. Periodical postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *BioScience* Circulation, AIBS, 1313 Dolley Madison Blvd., Suite 402, McLean, VA 22101. Printed in USA. AIBS authorizes photocopying for internal or personal use, provided the appropriate fee is paid directly to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923; telephone: 978-750-8400; fax: 978-750-4744; Web site: www.copyright.com. To photocopy articles for classroom use, request authorization, subject to conditions thereof, from the Academic Permissions Service at CCC. Each copy must say "© [year] by the American Institute of Biological Sciences." Statements and opinions expressed in *BioScience* are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the editors, the publisher, or the institutions with which the authors are affiliated. The editors, publisher, and AIBS disclaim any responsibility or liability for such material.

BioScience

Organisms from Molecules to the Environment
American Institute of Biological Sciences

A Magisterial Mutualism

Despite repeated court decisions establishing that creationism in all of its guises has no place in public school science classrooms, the public's perception of the evolution-creation controversy persists. In short, a significant portion of the public remains sympathetic toward creationism, believes evolution conflicts with their religious beliefs, and is woefully misinformed about the basics of evolutionary theory.

The situation is not surprising, given the relentless attention paid to evolution by many on the religious right. Religious fundamentalists have been very clear about their message: religion and evolution are not compatible. Indeed, citizens are constantly told that they must choose between religion and science. Because the vast majority of people consider themselves to be religious, many will opt for religion when presented with this choice.

If progress is to be made on this front, scientists must adopt new strategies and forge meaningful alliances with new allies. The Clergy Letter Project (CLP) (www.evolutionsunday.org) serves as a model of the necessary collaborative effort.

The CLP began with a short letter, written by a Christian minister, asserting that the dichotomy between religion and science presented by fundamentalists was false. The letter concludes with the following plea: "We urge school board members to preserve the integrity of the science curriculum by affirming the teaching of the theory of evolution as a core component of human knowledge. We ask that science remain science and that religion remain religion, two very different, but complementary, forms of truth."

The Clergy Letter, written from a Christian perspective, has now been endorsed by more than 11,000 members of the Christian clergy, demonstrating that thousands of Christian leaders have taken a public stand in support of evolution and high-quality science education.

Many of these leaders have also participated in the first two annual "Evolution Sunday" events sponsored by the CLP. Scheduled on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of Darwin's birth (12 February 1809), these events have provided an opportunity for congregations worldwide to discuss the compatibility of science and religion and to elevate the quality of discourse on this important topic. In an attempt to be more welcoming to members of all religions, in 2008 Evolution Sunday becomes "Evolution Weekend."

The clergy associated with the CLP have opted to play a very public and often controversial role in defense of their religious beliefs and in support of evolutionary science. These brave men and women, however, are looking for support from the scientific community—a place to turn when they have technical questions. In response, the CLP has created a list of scientific consultants (www.butler.edu/clergyproject/rel_expert_data_base.htm) who constitute a growing resource for the clergy.

By demonstrating that scientists and religious leaders can work together productively, we can convince the public that those who demand a choice between religion and science are ill informed. Even if you don't join the CLP's list, I urge you to consider other ways to promote scientific literacy by building bridges to members of religious communities. Science literacy is too important to be left solely to religious leaders.

MICHAEL ZIMMERMAN
Butler University
Founder, The Clergy Letter Project

doi:10.1641/B580201
Include this information when citing this material.