



Published on NCSE (<https://ncse.com>)

[Home](#) > Ayala profiled in Scientific American

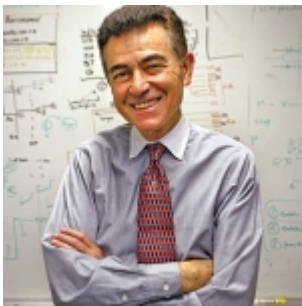
---

SHARE TWEET EMAIL [PRINT](#) [1]

[Glenn Branch](#) [2]

10.22.2008

## [Ayala profiled in Scientific American](#) [3]



NCSE Supporter Francisco Ayala was profiled in the November 2008 issue of *Scientific American*. "After some 30 years of proselytizing about evolution to Christian believers, the esteemed evolutionary biologist at the University of California, Irvine, has honed his arguments to a fine point," Sally Lehrman [writes](#) [4]. "The 74-year-old Ayala is preparing for an exceptionally busy 2009. The year marks the bicentennial of Charles Darwin's birthday and the sesquicentennial of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, and the battle over the teaching of evolution is sure to heat up. Ayala says the need is especially great for scientists to engage religious people in dialogue."

Regarding it as counterproductive for scientists to attack religion in promoting the understanding of evolution, Ayala prefers to "help believers see evolution as an ally" -- as not only compatible with their faith, contrary to the typical creationist claim, but also as enriching it. In particular, Lehrman explains, "Drawing on five years of study in preparation for ordination as a Dominican priest, Ayala uses evolution to help answer a central paradox of Christianity -- namely, how can a loving, all-knowing God allow evil and suffering ... Natural selection can explain the ruthlessness of nature, Ayala argues, and remove the 'evil' -- requiring an intentional act of free will -- from the living world."

Ayala's efforts to address religious resistance to evolution have not always been welcomed by the

scientific community; he told Lehrman that when he proposed to quote theologians in the National Academy of Science's *Science and Creationism*, second edition (National Academies Press, 1999), "I was almost eaten alive." But its successor, [Science, Evolution, and Creationism](#) [5] (National Academies Press, 2008), quotes both leading scientists of faith (including Francis Collins and NCSE Supporter Kenneth R. Miller) and religious leaders and groups (including the late Pope John Paul II and the now over 11,000 signatories of the [Clergy Letter Project](#) [6]), who see no conflict between their faith and science.

A Supporter of NCSE since its founding, Ayala is University Professor, the Donald Bren Professor of Biological Sciences, and Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Irvine; he received the National Medal for Science, the nation's highest award for lifetime achievement in scientific research, in 2002. Among his contributions to the defense of the integrity of science education was his testimony for the plaintiffs in the challenge to Arkansas's 1981 "Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act" (*McLean v. Arkansas*). His latest book is [Darwin's Gift: To Science and Religion](#) [7] (Joseph Henry Press, 2007).

[NCSE](#) [8]

[2008](#) [9]

[+ read](#) [3]

---

**Source URL:** <https://ncse.com/news/2008/10/ayala-profiled-scientific-american-002660#comment-0>

#### Links

[1] <https://ncse.com/printpdf/13296>

[2] <https://ncse.com/users/glenn>

[3] <https://ncse.com/news/2008/10/ayala-profiled-scientific-american-002660>

[4] <http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=the-christian-mans-evolution>

[5] <http://www.nap.edu/sec>

[6] [http://www.butler.edu/clergyproject/Christian\\_Clergy/ChrClergyLtr.htm](http://www.butler.edu/clergyproject/Christian_Clergy/ChrClergyLtr.htm)

[7] [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=11732](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11732)

[8] <https://ncse.com/ncse>

[9] <https://ncse.com/news/2008>