

UNCOMMON GROUND: WHY CHRISTIANS MUST AVOID THE COMPROMISE  
OF THEISTIC EVOLUTION

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# UNCOMMON GROUND: WHY CHRISTIANS MUST AVOID THE COMPROMISE OF THEISTIC EVOLUTION

## INTRODUCTION

Scientists, theologians, philosophers, and people of various other walks of life have engaged in the debate over the origin of life, especially since the publishing of Charles Darwin's landmark work, *The Origin of Species* in 1859.

However, this paper will take broad looks at both extreme positions of the debate as well as a more focused approach to the neutral or compromised position known as Theistic Evolution. The primary purpose of this evaluation will be to show that Christians should not accept any stance that involves naturalistic evolution. Even more specifically, it will argue that Christians should avoid what appears falsely to be a safe haven in the dispute. By seeking to blend the best of both extremes of the debate, theistic evolution proponents actually fail to engage in the debate whatsoever. Francis Collins' recent work, *The Language of God*, will serve as the primary target for scrutiny, while the works of numerous other contemporary scholars will be employed for the support of the thesis.

Christians over the past two millennia have argued various positions within their own doctrine such as predestination, speaking in tongues, divorce and remarriage, women deacons, Markan priority, and a host of eschatological issues. The overarching message of this work calls for unity among Christians engaging in the evolution/creation debate. While some Christians may believe that a compromising position may be the

solution to the evolution dilemma, it nevertheless remains that in this case a compromise is no solution at all. In fact, the position of compromise only serves to splinter the church's response. Since the debate has arguably been reduced to a struggle between the church and the unchurched culture, Christians who accept the position of Theistic Evolution dilute the efforts of those who aim to save the scientific community from the Darwinian stranglehold in which she has voluntarily placed herself.

This paper will attempt to define Theistic Evolution and show how this particular version of Darwinism falls in the same category of philosophical pseudo-science of which its proponents like to accuse the champions of Creationism and Intelligent Design. While supporting the Intelligent Design movement as a substantial bridge between science and theology, this paper will point to Theistic Evolution's failure to accomplish the same goal. A brief examination of true complementarianism will occur, as will a call to continue the battle with Darwinism, the real enemy of the Christian. The paper will conclude with a look back at the landmark decision against Intelligent Design and a look forward to how Christians can and should defend the faith in this crucial issue.

### THEISTIC EVOLUTION DEFINED

As the moniker implies, theistic evolutionists believe in (at least one part of Darwinian) evolution, but maintain the position that God was involved in the starting point of evolution. Theistic Evolution teaches that evolution is the scientific explanation of how various organisms change with time and that all organisms arrived via "descent with modification." Simultaneously, however, the theistic evolutionist believes that God is both personal and involved with His creation. Theistic evolutionists could be Christian,

Jewish, Muslim, or believers in any other monotheistic faith.

Even among theistic evolutionists, varieties of opinion may develop. One notable leader within the Intelligent Design movement, Lehigh biology professor Michael Behe seems to at least partially embrace this doctrine, believing that God had to be involved in order for abiogenesis (life from non-life) to occur.<sup>1</sup> Others believe that God made the world so that whatever He desires will transpire through nature, and that abiogenesis will likely be completely understood by science one day. Consequently, natural law and the will of God are parallel, if not equivalent.

After using much the same descriptive definition already mentioned, Walter Elwell notes that theistic evolutionists feel “The two levels of explanation should complement instead of antagonize each other.” Later he criticizes the position by noting, “In their efforts to reconcile the naturalistic and theistic approaches to the origin of life they have inadvertently put themselves into the inconsistent position of denying the miracles of creation while maintaining the supernatural nature of the Christian message.”<sup>2</sup>

However, theistic evolutionists are not willing to say that the Bible was wrong in its creation account. They slide into the loophole of saying that the Bible does not say exactly how God created the world, only that He created it. Consequently, evolution could have been the mechanism through which God created. The argument from silence

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Koukl, "Michael Behe's Theistic Evolution," *Stand To Reason*, 2005, [www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5447/](http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5447/) (accessed November 25, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Reference Library, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 389-90.

used in this position is impressive, but not persuasive. Like the entire theory of evolution, the theistic version is based on huge assumptions and drastic speculation. O.J. Simpson could have had nothing to do with his wife's murder, either.

Geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky's essay in 1973 entitled "Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution" placed him clearly in this camp. In this work he said, "Evolution is God's, or Nature's, method of creation. Creation is not an event that happened in 4004 BC; it is a process that began some 10 billion years ago and is still under way."<sup>3</sup>

Another theistic evolutionist of some notoriety is Kenneth R. Miller, who is a biology professor at his alma mater of Brown University. In a recent edition of that institution's alumni magazine, Brown was discussing theistic evolution and his book *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution* (HarperCollins, 1999). The article contains excerpts from that book in which Miller states, "We can find God, therefore, in the things around us that lack material, scientific explanations. In nature, elusive and unexplored, we will find the Creator at work...In biological terms, evolution is the only way a Creator could have made us the creatures we are-free beings in a world of authentic and meaningful moral and spiritual choices"<sup>4</sup> The article concludes with Miller's route to his book's title as he says, "Most students...probably figure that (Miller)...is trying to find a way to be unequivocal about

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<sup>3</sup> Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution," *American Biology Teacher*, Vol. 35, 1973, 125.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth R. Miller, "Finding Darwin's God," *Brown Alumni Magazine* Nov./Dec. 1999-accessed at <http://brownalumnimagazine.com.cfm?ID=1838> Dec. 10, 2006.

evolution without offending the University chaplain. There are always a few...who ask me... 'Do you believe in God?' I tell each of them, 'Yes.' Puzzled, they ask: 'What kind of God?' ...I believe in Darwin's God." The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who came to earth as described in Philippians 3 cannot be Miller's (or Darwin's). It's a pantheistic, warm-and-fuzzy, as-close-to-agnostic-without-using-the-word kind of god.

Christians are not alone in opposing the middle ground. Evolutionist Laurence Moran notes, "In my opinion, the term 'theistic evolution' is another oxymoron. Evolution is science and theism is religion. You can't mix religion and science and still call it science because the practice of science must exclude theistic explanations. There is no middle ground. There are only two possibilities: either what you're doing is science or it isn't science."<sup>5</sup>

Like Darwin and Miller, and as we will soon show, Collins, theistic evolutionists desire to be both in a sorority and a fraternity at the same time. Their position is not like being a minister and a businessman at the same time. It's more like being a minister and a gangster at the same time. If evolution remotely lined up close to a deist, theist, or Christian position, it might be logical for them to want to have their cake and eat it, too. While leaders of design, creation, and evolution movements are on the front lines battling for cultural acceptance of their respective positions, those who endorse theistic evolution choose the "relatively" safe neutral zone. They head for their metaphysical Switzerland, only to find that the Nazis are closer than originally suspected.

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<sup>5</sup> Laurence Moran, "Theistic Evolution: The Fallacy Of The Middle Ground," *Talk About Origins*, Nov. 17, 2006, [http://www.bioinfo.med.utoronto.ca/Evolution\\_by\\_Accident/Theistic\\_Evolution.html](http://www.bioinfo.med.utoronto.ca/Evolution_by_Accident/Theistic_Evolution.html). (accessed November 25, 2006).

## EVOLUTION AS RELIGION AND PSEUDO-SCIENCE

It is quite ironic that naturalist evolutionists often sneer at creationism or intelligent design as lacking science, when the exact same thing could be said about evolutionists. To this day, no substantial irrefutable evidence can be presented to stake the claim as proven as many scientists claim. Scientists can no more prove that life began as a cell and has gradually evolved into what we know today any more that creationists can prove Moses' account of Adam and Eve. So, both sides require faith, even though the evolutionists like to claim intellectual superiority. The irony continues when most of the evidence presented by Darwinists (embryonic drawings, photos of peppered moths, and the skull of an ape named Lucy) has been proven to be fraudulent in recent years.<sup>6</sup>

Collins articulately describes the wonder of DNA, but does Kierkegaardian hop-scotch between his two faiths. He calls DNA God's "language," but seems to prefer the science of self-organization as he says, "How deeply satisfying is the digital elegance of DNA! How aesthetically appealing and artistically sublime are the components of living things, from the ribosome that translates RNA into protein, to the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly, to the fabulous plumage of the peacock attracting his mate!" Creationists and evolutions alike would have been with him up to this point, but he concludes that thought by saying, "Evolution, as a mechanism, can be and must be true. But that says nothing about the nature of its author. For those who believe in God,

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<sup>6</sup> For a more thorough treatment of this, please see Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc, 2000).

there are reasons now to be more in awe, not less.”<sup>7</sup>

Journalist Ann Coulter categorizes evolution as “about one notch above Scientology in scientific rigor. It’s a make-believe story, based on a theory that is a tautology, with no proof in the scientist’s laboratory or the fossil record-and that’s after 150 years of very determined looking. We wouldn’t still be talking about it but for the fact that liberals think evolution disproves God.”<sup>8</sup>

Biologist Jonathan Wells of the Discovery Institute says, “For too long the debate about evolution has assumed ‘facts’ that aren’t true. It’s time to clear away the lies that obstruct popular discussion of evolution, and insist that the theories conform to the evidence. In other words, it’s time to do science as it’s supposed to be done.”<sup>9</sup>

Phillip Johnson, the recognized founder of the Intelligent Design movement inquires, “...how impressive would the evidence for Darwinism look if we did not assume at the start that nature had to do its own creating, so a material creation mechanism simply has to exist regardless of the evidence?”<sup>10</sup>

Cornelius Hunter points out the circularity in evolutionary theory by noting the hypocrisy behind scoffing at design or creation theories as less-than-scientific. He adds, “...evolution should not be taught in science classes, for Darwin’s theory goes far beyond

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<sup>7</sup> Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 107.

<sup>8</sup> Ann Coulter, *Godless: The Church of Liberalism* (New York: Crown Forum, 2006), 199.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Wells, "Survival Of The Fakest," *The Discovery Institute*, 2006, <http://discovery.org/> (accessed November 25, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Phillip E. Johnson, "Darwinism is Materialist Mythology, Not Science," *Direction*, October, 2004, 3.

‘scientific observation, interpretation, and experimentation.’ (These words were cited in a document published by the National Academy of Sciences dealing with the issue that only science should be taught in science classes.) It includes religious presuppositions outside of science...Evolutionists come to these conclusions because they believe in a certain type of God and creation-beliefs that are not open to scientific debate.”<sup>11</sup>

In an attempt to continue her assault on the way liberals use evolution for their science platform and to build support the intelligent design movement, Coulter notes that evolutionists refuse to (because they cannot) answer questions about evolution, and quips, “The high priests of evolution have not only forgotten how to do science, they’ve lost the ability to formulate a coherent counterargument...the evolutionists just scream that evolution is a *FACT* and if you don’t believe it, you must be a fundamentalist who believes the Earth is flat.”<sup>12</sup> Routinely, ID proponents answer questions about human appendixes, parasites, and other issues that trouble evolutionists.

#### THEISTIC EVOLUTION AS A WASHED-OUT BRIDGE

At the outset it should become evident that some Christians diligently seek to avoid a conflict between what they are taught in the science classroom as evolution and what the denominational community might have taught them as creation. Both the positions of parent and educator require extreme trust for the young student in particular. Since it is emotionally disturbing to turn one’s back on either of those trusted mentors, it

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<sup>11</sup> Cornelius G. Hunter, *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 174.

<sup>12</sup> Coulter, 248.

becomes easier to fuse the two “truths” into one “ultra-truth.” Choosing sides can be inappropriate, distasteful, or both, so blending the truth becomes less confrontational.

Moran notes the weakness of theistic evolution blending science and theology as he says, “In order to understand the point of view of these ‘compatibilists,’ it’s important to distinguish between methodological naturalism and metaphysical naturalism. Methodological naturalism is what scientists have to practice in order to do good science. The practice of methodological naturalism does not necessarily lead to the total rejection of supernatural beings—that’s metaphysical naturalism and it’s not the same thing.”<sup>13</sup>

Howard J. Van Till, a professor of physics at Calvin College, documents this shrewd side-stepping when he says, “I believe that God has so generously gifted the creation with the capabilities for self-organization and transformation that an unbroken line of evolutionary development from nonliving matter to the full array of existing life-forms is not only possible but has in fact taken place.”<sup>14</sup> In certain recent works, “self-organization” has actually been separated into a category distinct from theistic evolution.<sup>15</sup>

Collins deftly plays the trump cards of Augustine, C.S. Lewis, and Pope John Paul II as supporters of theistic evolution, which he wants to rename “BioLogos,” due to the system expressing “the belief that God is the source of all life and that life expresses

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<sup>13</sup> Moran.

<sup>14</sup> Van Till, Howard J. *Counterpoints, Three Views on Creation and Evolution: The Fully Gifted Creation*, Edited by J.P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 171.

<sup>15</sup> Please see William A. Dembski and Michael Ruse, eds., *Debating Design: From Darwin to DNA* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

the will of God.”<sup>16</sup> Yet, his attempts to answer his critics portray more of a naiveté than his brilliance as a geneticist would demonstrate. For instance, he attempts to answer the question of Eve’s creation by deflecting toward the necessity of the presence of other humans living at the time in order to produce wives for Cain and Abel rather than admitting to the incestuous act (before the Law was given) of marrying younger sisters.

The language of Collins, though, seems much more like a defense attorney trying to postulate reasonable doubt into a jury’s mind than a persuasive sales pitch. Consider his argument for theistic evolution as he says, “**If** God is outside of nature, then He is outside of space and time.” That seems benign enough, but the conditional language only magnifies as he continues, “In that context, God **could** in the moment of creation of the universe also know every detail of the future. That **could** include the formation of the stars, ...In that context, evolution **could** appear to...be driven by chance, but from God’s perspective the outside would be entirely specified. Thus, God **could** be completely and intimately involved in the creation of all species, while from our perspective, limited as it is by the tyranny of linear time, this would appear a random and undirected process.”<sup>17</sup> So, Collins appears to be giving the directive that since the glove could fit, we must not acquit. However, it also seems that Collins is saying that God, omnipotent though he could be, could not have communicated the proper perspective to humanity through the medium of the written word.

We will see later that Collins dismisses the notion of intelligent design, but he selected (randomly, perhaps) an unusual strategy in his debunking of the young earth

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<sup>16</sup> Collins, 203.

<sup>17</sup> Collins, 205.

creationist movement. One would expect that a scientist of Collins' profile would want to go head-to-head with some of the scientific claims made by Henry Morris. Yet on two occasions, he simply disputes Morris' claims (1-the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of thermodynamics eliminates evolution, and 2-changing decay rates affect the age of the rocks) by parenthetically saying "it clearly does not," and "they have not" without giving scientific reasons to support his claims.<sup>18</sup> The closest Collins comes to confronting Morris with scientific error is the creationists' dismissal of "repetitive 'junk DNA' in shared locations along the DNA of humans and mice."<sup>19</sup>

William Dembski concludes, "When boiled down to its scientific content, however, theistic evolution is no different from atheistic evolution, treating only undirected natural processes in the origin and development of life."<sup>20</sup>

In compiling *Theistic Evolution*, Darwinism is simply assumed to be factual. There are no apparent conditions behind this assumption. There is simply the need to attach God to the process of evolution, almost as if He wound up a toy and let go of it, which would actually reduce it to an impersonal "deistic" evolution. Developing this position clearly places evolutionary processes in a superior position to the biblical account, regardless of whatever hermeneutical maneuvers are required. It may be true that Genesis should not be considered as a scientific textbook, but it cannot be reduced to myth, allegory, parable, or any other simple literary device. If the history of Genesis is

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 172-3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 173.

<sup>20</sup> William A. Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 110.

refuted, the truth and infallibility of Scripture falls into jeopardy. Connecting evolution to God will also destroy the notion of omnipotence as preserved by patristic writers. Arguably the most threatening of the dangers of theistic evolution<sup>21</sup> is the relativity created by the elimination of sin if it is viewed as a harmless act of evolution. For an atheistic evolutionist, sin is obviously not a problem anyway. With theistic evolution, sin must be dealt with more covertly by ignoring it or by reducing the authority of Scripture. The consequence that follows from ignorance of sin is that it does not eliminate the judgment required of sin. If sin does not exist, what does anyone need to be saved from? If there is nothing to be saved from, there is no need for a Savior, and all this discussion about Jesus has been a huge waste of time.

Morris said, “The idea that a loving wise, and powerful God used evolution-with its “struggle for existence” and “survival of the fittest”-as his method of creation is grotesque...Evolution may make some sense in the context of atheism, but it certainly does not fit Christian theism!”<sup>22</sup>

In Mark 10:6, Jesus says, “But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female” (NASB) in a debate with some Pharisees over divorce and remarriage. Regardless of how long creation might have taken place, there seems to be no room in this statement that would allow for humanity to evolve from a single cell. Allowing wiggle room for genre purposes for the verses in wisdom literature that support creation

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<sup>21</sup> Werner Gitt, "10 Dangers Of Theistic Evolution," *Answers In Genesis*, 1995, [http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v17/i4/theistic\\_evolution.asp?/](http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v17/i4/theistic_evolution.asp?/) (accessed November 25, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Henry Morris, *The Long War against God: The History and Impact of the Creation/Evolution Conflict* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2000), 58.

is one thing. Refuting the words of Jesus destroys the theological model of Christianity. Theistic evolution cannot logically respond to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib and maintain that both the Bible and evolution are true, without reducing Genesis past the point of figurative language-all the way down to utter myth.

Colossians 1, John 1, and Hebrews 1 all directly link Jesus as the causal agent behind creation. In order for evolutionists to attach God to their doctrine, they are forced to deny the authority of Scripture in the process. They may wish to incorporate a notion of deity, but if they claim to be Christian, they cannot consider themselves to be hermeneutically consistent.

#### INTELLIGENT DESIGN AS A SUBSTANTIAL BRIDGE

Nancy Pearcey sums up the difference between creationism and intelligent design by noting, "Creationism starts with the Bible, and asks, What does the Bible say about science? That is a perfectly valid inquiry...But it is not the way to do apologetics. In speaking to a non-Christian culture, we must start with data that our audience finds credible. Thus (ID) theory ...begins with the scientific data and asks, Does the data give evidence of an intelligent cause?"<sup>23</sup>

Dembski clearly states that "...intelligent design is incompatible with what typically is meant by 'theistic evolution'...Theistic evolution takes the Darwinian picture of the biological world and baptizes it, identifying this picture with the way God created

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<sup>23</sup> Nancy R. Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 415.

life.”<sup>24</sup>

Thomas Woodward notes how Behe’s use of Darwin’s words against him has been effective. As the evolutionist noted that his system would collapse if evidence could be presented that demonstrated a complex organ’s existence without numerous adjustments, Behe has offered irreducibly complex systems such as the clotting of blood and the bacterium flagellum. Woodward observes, “Here amid Behe’s spinning rotary motors and molecular cascades, the skeptics sense that they have been granted the weaponry to foment an unmistakable paradigm crisis and ultimately a paradigm shift within the scientific community, hence throughout the world.”<sup>25</sup>

Predictably, Collins holds ID in low regard, saying, “...Intelligent Design remains a fringe activity with little credibility within the mainstream scientific community.”<sup>26</sup> Later he attempts to dismantle ID as being a scientific failure by noting, “All scientific theories represent a framework for making sense of a body of experimental observations. But the primary utility of a theory is not just to look back but to look forward. A viable scientific theory predicts other findings and suggests approaches for further experimental verification. ID falls profoundly short in this regard.”<sup>27</sup>

Hunter encapsulates the thrust of intelligent design as he says, “The word *intelligent* distinguishes ID from evolution. It means that the design we observe was

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<sup>24</sup> Dembski (1999), 110.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Woodward, *Doubts about Darwin: A History of Intelligent Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 26.

<sup>26</sup> Collins, 187.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

brought about by an intelligence rather than the interplay of unguided natural forces. ID claims that an intelligence is necessary to account for at least some of the design in biology.”<sup>28</sup>

#### TRUE COMPLEMENTARIANISM AMONG FAITH AND SCIENCE

Searching for research material on the battle between faith and science is like searching for a Porsche in Hollywood. In the creation/evolution debate, it appears that the term “science” is the heart of the problem. Collins frequently fluctuates between using the word as laboratory work and the general theory of evolution. From the vast literature, it appears that if an atheist speculates about something, it should be considered science. If a Christian or theist theorizes about an issue, it is relegated to either “faith” or “pseudo-science,” which seems to be the tag of preference that atheists and activist judges place on creationism or intelligent design. One of the ways William Chalker, a philosophy of religion professor at Albertson College of Idaho, connects science and faith is by showing that, “If we explicitly or implicitly adopt (metaphysical realism) as appropriate for understanding the assertion that the scientific method produces true knowledge-claims about the world, then we thereby make the additional claim that the scientific method produces knowledge that corresponds to metaphysical reality.”<sup>29</sup>

Harry Lee Poe noted that both C.S. Lewis and atheist professor Richard Dawkins of Oxford would have agreed that “the real issue at stake is not which particular

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<sup>28</sup> Cornelius G. Hunter, *Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion over Science* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>29</sup> William H. Chalker, *Science and Faith: Understanding Meaning, Method, and Truth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 45.

scientific explanation will prevail on any particular question. The real issue at stake is whether anything exists besides the physically observable and whether anything can be known except through the scientific method.”<sup>30</sup>

David Van Biema wrote an article in a recent *Time* magazine called “God vs. Science” that summarized the creation/evolution debate, but highlighted Collins’ appeal for common ground between science and faith. Van Biema observes, “Most Americans want the middle ground... We want to cheer on science’s strides and still humble ourselves on the Sabbath. We want access to both MRIs and miracles. We want debates about issues like stem cells without conceding that the positions are so intrinsically inimical as to make discussion fruitless.”<sup>31</sup> Van Biema then interviews Collins and Dawkins. Collins gives answers that square up with his faith, but fail to support why he would have believed evolution. The interview continues with both scientists catching each other in frequent lapses of logic and consistency. Collins continues his love affair with nature, which he, like every other evolutionist, assumes to have evolved, except Collins says the universe evolved not by chance, but by design. As their interchange heats up, Dawkins acknowledges the heat Collins has received from his “Fundamentalist” (young-earth creationist) colleagues, and asks Collins why he bothers with these “clowns.” Dawkins sees no conflict between God and science because in his mind, there is no God. Collins sees God as the author of evolution.

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<sup>30</sup> Harry Lee Poe, "Science and Religion in the Public Square," speech delivered to annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 16, 2006, Washington, DC.

<sup>31</sup> David Van Biema, "God vs. Science," *Time*, November 5, 2006, accessed through <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/0,8816,1555132,00.html> on Nov. 25, 2006.

## IDENTIFYING AND DEFEATING THE REAL ENEMY

In his recent work, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, (Ballantine Books, 1999) the late Stephen Jay Gould, who called for a complete separation between dialogues concerning faith and philosophy and those concerning science, credits Carl Sagan (although Gould added it had virtually become a cliché) with the quip, “Let religion worry about the rock of ages and let geology study the age of the rocks.” To a certain extent, this paper has succumbed to the atheists’ wishes and only slightly addressed any discussion on the age of the earth. Within Christian camps, scholars who will insist on the acknowledgement of an intelligent designer-regardless of specific identity-will disagree over whether the earth is billions of years old (Progressive or Old-Earth Creationism) or merely thousands (Young Earth Creationism).

Both sides are equally defensible. Hugh Ross points out that accepting a Young-Earth Creationism position ironically requires accepting evolution that “...exceeds by many orders of magnitude the most optimistic Darwinist estimate ever proposed.”<sup>32</sup> Ross’ point is based on Young-Earth Creationism’s insistence upon the Genesis account of the flood eliminating many of the species who were preserved on Noah’s ark. Consequently, the remaining thousands of species would have necessarily had to micro-evolve into the millions of species identifiable in less than 10,000 years.

So a distinction should be drawn between the positions held by Ross and other

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<sup>32</sup> Hugh Ross, *A Matter of Days: Resolving a Creation Controversy* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 123.

Old-Earth Creationists and the Theistic Evolution championed by Collins and others. Rhetoric describing Darwin's Old-Earth Evolution and its impending ethical and political responses as evil are clearly in line. Using this same type of venom for either Ross or Collins is unnecessary and vitriolic. Young-Earth Creationists are understandably passionate about defending a literal translation of the Genesis account and consequently being able to maintain the claim for biblical inerrancy. However, they cannot be linked with any form of ugliness if they intend to maintain a lifestyle that is consistent with biblical precepts concerning love for other Christians.<sup>33</sup>

Both sides are equally defensible, but their chief proponents frequently engage in friendly fire. Ross points out that accepting a Young-Earth Creationism position ironically requires accepting evolution that "...exceeds by many orders of magnitude the most optimistic Darwinist estimate ever proposed."<sup>34</sup> Morris attacks progressive creationism and theistic evolution by saying, "That these systems are actually dangerous compromises rather than legitimate interpretations of Scripture should be obvious for anyone committed to the proposition that the Bible really is the inerrant Word of God..."<sup>35</sup> In disagreeing with Collins, it is this paper's intent not to show as disagreeable attitudes as did Ross and Morris.

The passion to defend scriptural inerrancy is understandable and laudable. However, we will never, in this life, see the end of interpretational differences. Ross is convinced his hermeneutics are preferable to those employed by Morris and vice versa.

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<sup>33</sup> *John 13:35.*

<sup>34</sup> Ross, 123.

<sup>35</sup> Morris, 110.

The stalemate should underscore a simple difference, but should not be worth breaking fellowship. Proponents of neither side should be attempting to nail her version of “95 Theses” on the other’s door.

Ted Cabal, a professor of Christian Philosophy at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY thinks that the Young Earth Creationists’ insistence that only their position allows for biblical faithfulness is unfounded. Cabal also argues that bringing the age of the earth controversy into public domain was a mistake. He notes, “Exportation (of the age of the earth controversy) is a bad idea because the issue does not clearly involve doctrinal danger. The debate, however, fuels division between Bible believers of otherwise like mind, with one of the most notable examples being among the Presbyterian Church in America.”<sup>36</sup>

Hunter critiques a comment in a *Time* article by anthropologist Owen Lovejoy comparing the 3.5 billion years of evolution required to make a man from an organism to a Mozart adagio. Hunter draws a clever synopsis as he states, “What evolutionists really need is a cause for their effect... Having to explain repeatedly that blind luck has produced yet another engineering marvel doesn't sound good. So evolutionists tend to explain biology's designs as having been caused by selection...Using selection as the cause sounds much better.”<sup>37</sup> Again, the conclusions represented by evolutionists much more closely align with intellectuals looking for a systematic “atheology” than

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<sup>36</sup> Ted Cabal, "Why Exporting the Age of the earth Controversy is a Bad Idea," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 4, no. 20 (Winter 2003): 122.

<sup>37</sup> Cornelius Hunter, "The Hits Just Keep On Coming," , October 16, 2006, [http://www.idthefuture.com/2006/10/the\\_hits\\_just\\_keep\\_on\\_coming.html](http://www.idthefuture.com/2006/10/the_hits_just_keep_on_coming.html). (accessed November 25, 2006).

objectively and logically examining the available evidence and developing a hypothesis.

#### AFTER DOVER AND BEYOND

On Dec. 20, 2005, U. S. District Judge John E. Jones III ruled against the Dover (PA) school board and declared that teaching Intelligent Design as opposed to Darwinian Evolution was unconstitutional. In his ruling, he specifically noted that teaching Intelligent Design violates the Establishment Clause of the Constitution which prohibits government establishment of religion. On the surface, many evolutionists considered this to have been a death blow to the ID movement. However, leaders of the ID movement are not capitulating. In fact, evolutionist Michael Ruse, who is a professor of philosophy and zoology at Florida State, predicted that the Dover case “would not represent the final word on the subject.”<sup>38</sup>

However, it becomes evident that the winner of the public education system will clearly have an advantage in the ability and availability to impact malleable young minds. Clearly, this struggle will never be completely over, much in the same fashion that (primarily) Christian opponents continue to seek alternative routes around the Roe v. Wade decision of 1973 that made abortion legal and supportable by tax dollars in the United States. John Bloom, a Physics professor at Biola University writes concerning ID being taught in public schools, “ID currently is too politicized to require in public school curricula. The biological community would need to grant it a ...measure of respect, like

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<sup>38</sup> Marilyn Stewart, "Faith Factors Don't Negate Intelligent Design, Prof Says," *Baptist Press*, February 13, 2006, <http://www.bpnews.net.asp?ID=22645/> (accessed October 1, 2006).

the anthropic principle has gained in astrophysics, before it could go in.”<sup>39</sup>

Dembski has refused to accept Dover as defeat for the intelligent design movement. He admits, “Certainly it will put a damper on school boards interested in promoting intelligent design. But this is not a Supreme Court decision.”<sup>40</sup> Jones’ ruling was definitely a roadblock against the rapidly-growing phenomenon of intelligent design, but not the end of the road. Dembski adds, “It is therefore naïve to think that this case spells the end of ID, which is rapidly going international and crossing metaphysical and theological boundaries.”<sup>41</sup>

When conventional methods fail or are thwarted, alternative strategies may be employed to better ultimate results. Dembski notes, “Even if ID is stifled among high school students (and with the Internet this is impossible), ID is of growing interest to college and graduate students.”<sup>42</sup> Internet novices can quickly employ search engines to discover innumerable avenues to access information, interact with those of similar or dissimilar opinions and convictions electronically. Through these centers and through various websites and blogs, the future generations can be exposed to teachings about the concept of intelligent design despite being bombarded about evolution through their classrooms and textbooks, if not their parents.

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<sup>39</sup> John A. Bloom, "Should Intelligent Design Be Taught in Public Schools?," speech delivered to annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 15, 2006, Washington, DC.

<sup>40</sup> William A. Dembski, "Life after Dover," *Science and Theology News*, January 2, 2006, <http://www.stnews.org/News-2539.htm>. (accessed November 22, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Bloom sees ulterior motives behind decisions such as Dover, and tracks it back to the zealous manner in which secular universities protect public funding as he states, “Whenever and wherever public funds support the teaching of a particular religious viewpoint, the members of a free society need to be concerned... (as) there are many effective viewpoint filters in place to insure that the next generation of university scholars will have the same religious perspective as their current mentors.”<sup>43</sup>

David Klinghoffer concludes, “The dogmatism and dishonesty of some orthodox Darwinists is simply breathtaking... So it seems increasingly likely that students will be kept in the dark... about an issue with not only scientific ramifications, but critically important moral ones too.”<sup>44</sup>

It is difficult to envision how things will look within this critical debate in the years to come, and much of that vision is clouded by personal eschatological positions. However, assuming for the moment that there will be no divine culmination of life on earth as we currently know it, and that current trends continue, the church per se will continue to be as ignorant and uninformed of the mission of intelligent design as she is today. It may not be obvious that the work of addressing of the ethical implications of intelligent design should be advanced, but several questions appear to confront ID at the moment: How familiar is the church with ID? Could ID benefit from educating millions of Christians about the scientific, philosophical, theological, and ethical trappings of evolution-even a theistic version? Is ID limited to the intellectual community? Can

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<sup>43</sup> Bloom, 7.

<sup>44</sup> David Klinghoffer, "What's The Matter With Kansas?: Dishonest Darwinists-coming To A State Near You," *National Review*

progress continue in finding authors who can appeal to the general public as well as the academy?

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

At first glance, theistic evolution, and even Collins' "BioLogos" appear palatable until a closer look is involved. Intelligent Design backs up its claim as being a bridge between science and theology. Theistic Evolution is the "Twilight Zone" instead of a safe haven.

We have seen the anemia behind Collins' "BioLogos," and have warned of its alluring-yet-inadequate symbiosis. We have glanced at the dangers of Darwinism and seen that Intelligent Design is to be much preferred for the Christian as well as an objective, non-Christian alike. The apologetic approach for the believer today should be equally seasoned with the love of the Lord, however inconspicuous it must be at times. One of the questions that arise in skimming through the monumental amount of resources available on the evolution/creation debate is how polemic should Christians be in this debate? We have only glanced at the passion with which Collins eschewed both young-earth creationism and intelligent design. Clashing swords in love is a difficult tightrope to manipulate.

In lamenting much of the vigor with which Christian apologists have debated over inerrancy, science, politics, and eschatology over the past century, Jerry White notes, "Heated arguments over such issues...have diminished the loving communication of the gospel to a lost world...Discussion and debate are important and healthy. But love

and respect must permeate the discussion.”<sup>45</sup>

As Ross notes, “Both evolutionists and creationists are quick to point out that theistic evolution offers no discernible advantage over nontheistic (naturalistic) evolution. Its explanations of life’s history and predictions of future discoveries are nearly identical to those of naturalism. Thus, theistic evolution appears largely superfluous.”<sup>46</sup>

If ID decides it cannot afford to be linked with the church in the future, even though Judge Jones cited the movement’s inability to divorce itself from creationism, then its leaders should take the cause into the church in order to develop grassroots support. Further, ID should put its faith to practice and actively employ the fervent advocacy of prayer warriors who could bombard heaven with appeals to have the minds of activist judges opened to the truth. If the movement wants to take up the cause for the glory of God, there could be no better strategy than educating and enlisting the voices and minds of hundreds of millions of supporters who could also act in a practical manner by funding the work of Christian scholars and scientists who are devoted to this mission.

Given the way the American church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has completely swallowed the error of prosperity gospel and the signs of doctrinal re-writing evident in the emerging church, it is frightening to envision how the church that has allowed the culture to influence it with (financial) materialism and relativism could be impacted by ingesting the smooth-sounding and sweet-tasting theistic evolution instead of digesting and growing from pure biblical teaching.

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<sup>45</sup> White, Jerry E., foreword to *A Matter of Days*, by Hugh Ross (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 9.

<sup>46</sup> Ross, 33-4.

Theistic evolution poses a danger for unsuspecting believers. Benjamin Wiker, who is a senior fellow at ID's parental organization, The Discovery Institute, marveled more at the fascinating story of Collins' conversion and the fact that he prayed over the decision to accept the offer to head the Human Genome Project than he was upset over the trappings of theistic evolution. Wiker describes Collins' book "...as an act of courage, one that will no doubt empower many other believing scientists to brave the glowering ideologues, and declare their faith as well."<sup>47</sup> The normally astute Wiker misses the schizophrenia of Collins' faith, which is anything but true courage. Collins' profession of Christian faith is indeed noble among his atheistic peers, but his profession of faith in evolution should not be seen as courageous among Christians.

Theistic evolution remains a wolf in sheep's clothing. By its definition, it must be considered an oxymoron. Koukl says, "...evolution offered an explanation for how things got to be the way they are without God...This is why it made such a splash. Do you think that if God could be worked into the evolutionary picture, then evolution would have taken off the way it did? Of course not."<sup>48</sup> This is a call for Christians today to lay aside the differences over the age of the earth and unite in the intelligent design movement, and continue the battle over the origin of life with one clear voice.

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<sup>47</sup> Benjamin Wiker, "The Language Of God," *To The Source*, July 12, 2006, [http://www.tothesource.org/7\\_12\\_2006.htm](http://www.tothesource.org/7_12_2006.htm). (accessed July 12, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Gregory Koukl, "Evolution-philosophy, Not Science," *Stand To Reason*, 1996, <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5494/> (accessed October 29, 2006).



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