



# Creation Matters

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## Debating Dawkins

by Paul G. Humber, M.S.

The title of this article is somewhat of a double-entendre. It describes e-mail correspondence I had recently with Dr. Richard Dawkins, one of the world's leading evolutionists. A primary topic of this correspondence was the February 1986 Oxford Union Debate between evolutionists and creationists. Dr. Dawkins, who now refuses to debate creationists, was himself a participant.

The recent exchanges, involving eight e-mail messages, reveal at least one deception in an account of the debate, affirmed even by Dr. Dawkins himself. Dr. Dawkins, currently a professor at Oxford and the author of many articles and books, and Professor John Maynard Smith debated Professors A.E. Wilder-Smith and Edgar Andrews at Oxford University on February 14th, 1986.

As there seems to be little actual record of this event, suggesting a possible cover-up, I sent an e-mail to Dr. Dawkins on May 28, 2003 asking if he had memory of it. He responded that he did, adding: "And the date (which of course I do not remember) is attested by the following article by

the well-known historian of science Professor John Durant."<sup>1</sup> In his reply, Dr. Dawkins added, "Durant also records (which I had forgotten) that Maynard Smith and I won the debate by 198 votes to 15."

Questioning this tally, I wrote back:

Arthur Ernest Wilder-Smith mentions in his 1993 book, *The Time Dimension*, that the Creationists' side received 114 votes out of approximately 300 cast." I asked, "Is it possible that Durant's figure cited above ('15') should be '115'?" The total (313) would then be much closer to 300 than Durant's 213 total. In other words, do you think there may be a typo in Durant's figures?

Dr. Dawkins responded:

I have no idea. It is obviously possible. I do recall, however, that there was something fishy about Wilder-Smith's credentials. The 'About the Author' notes on the back of his books claims that

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## Witnessing to Evolutionists

by David H. Stone, Ph.D.

Occasionally, when witnessing on the street, I run into atheists, who usually admit to basing their worldview on evolution. Of this set, I particularly enjoy meeting the rare Ph.D. chemist or biologist who is polite enough to chat for a few minutes. When this happens I tell him that I'd love to ask a question about evolution which I've been trying to get answered.

Now there are many variations on this theme, but I prefer the scenario of a courtroom with an honest and skeptical judge. The evolutionist's job is to present evidence to support his case. I ask what piece of evidence he would offer first.

### The evolutionists' short list

It is fascinating how evolutionists struggle with this scenario. Sometimes the pause is so great that I suggest a couple of possibilities. I don't mind doing this because the fellow would likely excuse himself later if he merely failed to re-

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## Intelligent Design and Evaluating SETI Data

by Jerry Bergman, Ph.D.

*Editor's note: Opponents of recognizing intelligent design as a valid scientific theory of origins offer various arguments to support their position. The following hypothetical debate illustrates the absurdity of these arguments by applying them to discoveries in the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) research program.*

Suppose that SETI research confirmed that a large number of mathematical constants, such as pi, Euler's constant, the natural

logarithm, and others, were found in the cosmic microwave signals received from the direction of the XYZ galaxy. The following hypothetical dialogue illustrates the problems that would result if *only* a purely naturalistic interpretation of the data were allowed. This "debate" is between a spokesperson for intelligent design (ID) who has concluded that this in-

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he studied 'natural sciences' at Oxford. This aroused my suspicions because 'Natural Sciences' is not a recognized degree course at Oxford (though it is at Cambridge). So I made inquiries and the university offices could find no record that anybody of his name had ever been registered at Oxford. If you are interested (I believe he is now dead) you might do well to investigate the authenticity of the three doctorates that he claimed to possess.

On May 30, I wrote back:

Thanks for responding, but I seek additional clarification. Previously, you had written, "Durant also records (which I had forgotten) that Maynard Smith and I won the debate by 198 votes to 15," but this does not seem to be quite accurate. First, there is no space between '1' and '5' in your quotation of Durant, but there is a blank space in Durant's account — suggesting all the more the possibility of a typo.

Dr. Dawkins responded to this point with, "Yes, except that Durant does mention 15 twice in his account."

I also wrote in my May 30 note, "The original numbers might have been 198 to 1(1)5, as I had previously suggested as a possibility. Second, do you have any memory of a landslide victory (numerically speaking) — even if you did not remember the exact numbers?"

The Oxford professor responded, "No, now that I think about it carefully, I do not have a clear memory of a landslide victory. And you are right that I probably would have, if it had been a landslide."

Near the end of my May 30 communication, I wrote, "It's hard to believe that there would be such a minimal accounting of such an interesting event."

To this comment, Dr. Dawkins responded:

Well, I don't actually think it was an interesting event. I think it was rather an absurd event, and I would not now agree to take part in one like it, for the reasons given

in my published correspondence with Stephen Jay Gould. I was younger and less experienced when I agreed to do that Oxford Union debate. Even then, I remember, I agreed to do it only to support a young student of mine who was one of the other speakers in the debate.

Dr. Dawkins continued:

Wilder-Smith I remember as a genial old buffoon, who had no understanding that Maynard Smith was running rings round him. Edgar Andrews cut an altogether less jovial figure. In his speech he tried to come across as a sophisticated scientist and philosopher, NOT as a bible-bashing fundamentalist creationist. But I had a copy of one of his books, and during my speech I started to read passages aloud in order to demonstrate that, in spite of his speech, he was really an old-style, 6-day Genesis, Adam-and-Eve creationist. Naturally that would not appeal to an educated Oxford audience. And Edgar Andrews tried **DESPERATELY** hard to stop me reading. He stood up to interrupt me repeatedly, probably four or five times, and tried to persuade the President to stop me reading. She repeatedly refused to stop me and I proceeded to read, whereupon Andrews finally gave up and sat with his head in his hands, looking for all the world like a broken man. Bizarre, when you think that all I was doing was reading whole paragraphs (not out of context, therefore) from his own book.

I followed up with additional inquiries to Dr. Dawkins on May 31. My persistence apparently upset him. He started to doubt that he was "dealing with somebody sane." He asked:

Are you some kind of obsessive compulsive? I mean, what IS this obsessive interest in an utterly trivial event which happened 15 years ago or whenever it was? Just look at what you have written below. Anyone would think you

were Sherlock Holmes on the track of a murder! I am not going to waste any more time. This correspondence is at an end. I replied to you originally out of courtesy, but enough is enough. And no, I am not interested in following up Wilder-Smith's history. The man is too unimportant to waste time over."

Exactly what was it that I wrote that upset this Oxford professor? My letter is as follows:

Thanks again for responding. In your most recent note, you wrote (regarding the numbers in Durant's report), "Yes, except that Durant does mention 15 twice in his account." There is a problem with this, also. Neither time in Durant's report, when fifteen is represented numerically, does it look like your representation for "15." Not only is there a space between the two digits both times, but the numeral used for one does not look like your "1" or other numerals for one in Durant's article. You mention (below) having your suspicions aroused about another matter, but I am suspicious that numbers in Durant's report have been tampered with — especially in view of your not

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## A “Theory” of the Roman Empire?

**O**n June 18, 2003, I sent another e-mail message to Dr. Dawkins:

There apparently was an audio taping of the 1986 debate, and it is possible that I will be able to get a transcription of it in a month or so. I also have become aware of an article in *Origins* (May 1987, pp.10-11) that reports the outcome as 198 to 115. I have copied some of the *Origins* article below [*editor’s note: Origins quote is in italics below*]. Feel free to comment, but I remember that you said you were busy, etc.

*On Friday 14th February 1986 the Oxford Union Society (the debating society at Oxford University) held a Debate on the motion: “That the doctrine of creation is more valid than the theory of evolution.” One of the speakers opposing the motion was Dr Richard Dawkins. David C. C. Watson was present and now comments on some of his arguments. RD: “The logical status of the evidence for the Theory of Evolution is just the same as the logical status of the evidence that the Roman Empire existed...”*

*Comment. a) There is no ‘theory’ that the Roman Empire existed. What has never been disputed as a fact does not require a theory to undergird it, mainly because it depends on human testimony, which is also the basis of true science. If a man is found murdered, there may be twenty different theories based on circumstantial evidence; but if twenty people saw him murdered, and their testimony agrees, it is absurd to speak of the ‘theory’ of how he died. There were millions of eyewitnesses of the Roman Empire; thousands of them wrote about it, and hundreds of these writings have survived — books, letters, decrees and monuments. In broad outline, their testimonies agree. They could not possibly have been faked; the evidence is indisputable. By contrast, Darwin’s theory was hotly disputed from the day of its birth. Why? because nobody has ever observed macro-evolution in any country in any century in any shape or form — no fish becoming frogs, nor any of the fossils of the necessarily numerous transitional species.*

I have received no response from Dr. Dawkins.

— PGH

remembering such a landslide.

In this communication, I also offered Dr. Dawkins a fellow scholar’s opinion of Dr. Wilder-Smith:

One of the most remarkable things I discovered was the testimony of Dr. Dean Kenyon, Professor of Biology, San Francisco State University: “Dr. A.E. Wilder-Smith was one of the two or three most important scientists in my life. He very powerfully influenced my intellectual development and my change of opinion on the origin of man. His writings, in particular *The Creation of Life* and *The Scientific Alternative to Neo-Darwinian Evolutionary Theory*, and the discussions I had with him were outstanding and had a great impact on my views and thoughts on origins. He was a courageous, supportive and gracious man, and he is greatly missed.” It’s difficult to know how to put this together with your representation: “Wilder-Smith I remember as a genial old buffoon....”

The matter of his having studied “natural sciences” at Oxford raised your suspicions, but there does not seem to be a claim that he was working for a degree in Natural Sciences. Surely Oxford teaches “natural sciences,” even if there is no specific degree track for it.

I also pursued the matter of Dr. Dawkins’ reducing Professor Andrews to “a broken man”:

Finally, referring to Professor Edgar Andrews, you wrote, “But I had a copy of one of his books, and during my speech I started to read passages aloud in order to demonstrate that, in spite of his speech, he was really an old-style, 6-day Genesis, Adam-and-Eve creationist.” This raises three related questions: Had there been a prior agreement not to bring religion into the debate? Was what you were reading religious? Might Professor Andrews’s protestations have been along the line that you were doing what you had agreed before the debate not to

do?

To Dr. Dawkins’ credit, he subsequently wrote two apologies. In the first (May 31), he said, “I apologise. My last letter was not polite. There is no reason why you shouldn’t be interested in Wilder-Smith et al, if that is how you want to spend your time.” He added, nevertheless, that he thought some of what I was doing was “trivial.”

His second apology was revealing. He wrote:

I should apologise again. You are right that the Durant article looks tampered with. There really is a gap in the middle of the 15, on BOTH occasions where 15 is mentioned. You can verify this by copying it into a word processor such as MS Word. There is definitely a space in the middle. And the 1 is not a 1 at all but an l [*editor: lower case L*], as you can verify by telling the word processor to render it in All Caps. 15 becomes L 5!

In the very next paragraph, he added:

I am persuaded that somebody has tampered with Durant's article, and I find it extremely bizarre. It cannot be Durant himself of course, for if he had wanted to give a false figure he would obviously just have typed a false figure. But whoever it was, it is weird to do it so INEPTLY. I mean, why use an L when you could use a proper 1! And why not eliminate the space? It almost looks like a double bluff. Somebody wanted it to LOOK as though it had been tampered with! If I can find John Durant's address (it's a while since I heard from him and I know he has moved) I'll tell him. He'll be intrigued.

Concerning Professor Andrews, Dr. Dawkins wrote, "No, there DEFINITELY were no prior agreements about what not to bring in, neither religion nor anything else." And, secondly he added:

Yes of course Andrews's book was about religion. That was my whole POINT! He had been trying, in his speech, to disguise the fact that his real grounds for being a creationist were not scientific at all, but religious. That was why I was reading from his book, and that was why he was trying to stop me. But there were no prior agreements to violate.

On June 1, I wrote:

Since reading these words, I was sent an account which I had not seen before, written by Dr. Wilder-Smith. In his book, *The Time Dimension* (pp. 19-23), he reports on THE OXFORD UNION DEBATE: "Before the debate commenced **it was agreed in committee** in the Oxford Union's President's office that no religious or non-scientific, non-repeatable material should be introduced into the debate. Only repeatable, falsifiable scientific fact would be acceptable. To this point of policy the **representatives of both sides of the House readily and specifically agreed**" (emphasis added). He later continued, "A possible reason for the total cover-up of

the Oxford Union debate is, maybe, illuminated by Richard Dawkins' impassioned plea to the audience before the voting took place and after the debate itself was over. Dawkins implored (the word he himself used) the voting public not to give a single vote for the creationist position, for every vote in favor of creationism would, he maintained, be a blot on the escutcheon of the ancient University of Oxford. . . . Since it had been agreed not to let religious factors play any role in the proceedings, Professor Andrews brought up the point of order, that no religious considerations should play any role. The president supported Professor Andrews and Richard Dawkins sat down."

Regarding Professor Maynard Smith, Wilder-Smith said that he "then stood up and said he was glad that I had stuck to pure science in the debate, science which was impeccable, but said that I believed in a small tribal God, which was not acceptable today. He and his friends believed that the whole, big universe was God which was a superior belief to mine. Again, I was attacked not on scientific but on purely religious grounds, which was entirely out of order."

Wilder-Smith added: "Subsequent efforts on the part of a librarian employed by the University of Oxford to obtain from the Oxford Union my address and a report on the debate were answered to the effect that it knew of no such debate ever having taken place and could give no information as to my person or even my present address. Thus I was obliged to send to the librarian concerned a photocopy of the invitation which the Oxford Union had sent to my correct address in Switzerland and which has in the meantime never changed, together with their formulation of the title of the motion before the House. The librarian obtained my address from friends in Australia as it was not forth-

coming from Oxford."

Perhaps now I can better understand why you are reluctant to debate those who believe that life in all of its brilliance could not have come about by non-intelligent chance. If there is some truth to what Wilder-Smith wrote, you had a challenging experience in 1986 and do not want it repeated. Should you ever change your mind, please let me know. I also would like to know why the debate numbers were changed from 198-115 to 198-15. Do you have John Durant's email address?

On June 2, Dr. Dawkins wrote regarding the idea that there was some agreement in committee:

That is pure fantasy. A lie. It never happened. In any case, it would have been absurd to reach such an agreement, since the creationist position IS a religious position. How could one POSSIBLY debate it, for or against, without mentioning it? I would never have agreed to such a thing. It would be like agreeing to a debate on pigs and then agreeing not to mention pigs.

Further down in Dawkins' letter, he wrote, "Wilder-Smith's account lies somewhere between fantasy, lies, and paranoid delusion." Regarding Dr. Wilder-Smith's statement that there was a cover-up of the debate having actually occurred, Dr. Dawkins wrote:

Cover-up? WHAT cover-up? I have agreed that John Durant's figures have been tampered with. But that is nothing to do with the Oxford Union or with Oxford University. That is not a cover-up, that is a dishonest individual, some kind of hacker perhaps, with access to a particular non-official web-site.

Regarding the matter of an impassioned plea to the audience, Dawkins wrote:

I may well have said something of the kind, in the course of my speech. It is the sort of thing one

does say when asking people to vote in a debate. I do think every single vote in favour of creationism would be a disgrace to Oxford, or indeed to any university. I say so frequently and I shall continue to do so.

As to Dr. Wilder-Smith's statement that "Professor Andrews brought up the point of order, that no religious considerations should play any role" Dawkins responded:

If this is a reference to Andrews's pathetic and undignified attempts to stop me reading from his own book, it was ME the president supported, and ANDREWS who sat down (eventually, after several attempts to stop me speaking). I told you that before. My memory is extremely clear on the matter. I do not remember what he actually said when trying to get the President to stop me, but I remember very clearly that it was he who eventually sat down (with his head in his hands).

I would like to interject an editorial comment here. Dr. Wilder-Smith's book was written about six years after the event. Dr. Dawkins, who initially reported the debate result as 198 to 15, eventually affirmed that he did not remember such a landslide. If his memory was so fuzzy about the debate outcome, how can one be sure of his "extremely clear" memory of a lesser aspect? In our email exchange he is writing, not six years after, but seventeen years after the event!

In response to Dr. Wilder-Smith's recollection of Professor Maynard Smith's words ("Regarding Professor Maynard Smith, Wilder-Smith said that he 'then stood up and said he was glad that I had stuck to pure science in the debate, science which was impeccable, but said that I believed in a small tribal God, which was not acceptable today'"), Dawkins wrote:

I don't remember, but it is plausible that Maynard Smith might have said something like this in passing, before getting on to the main part of his speech. It is not an 'attack' but a highly justified point. I would gladly make it myself, any time.

In response to Wilder-Smith's statement, "He and his friends believed that the whole, big universe was God which was a superior belief to mine. Again, I was attacked not on scientific but on purely religious grounds, which was entirely out of order," Dawkins wrote:

I do not remember in detail what Maynard Smith said but, as one of the world's leading scientists, it is inconceivable that he would have devoted more than a small proportion of his speech to such matters, if any. If he did, it certainly would not have been out of order."

In answer to the words of Wilder-Smith, "Subsequent efforts on the part of a librarian employed by the University of Oxford to obtain from the Oxford Union my address and a report on the debate were answered to the effect that it knew of no such debate ever having taken place and could give no information as to my person or even my present address," Dawkins wrote:

That is utterly ridiculous. Such debates are a matter of record, and this debate was nothing out of the ordinary. The very idea that records were deliberately suppressed suggests a kind of paranoid vanity on Wilder-Smith's part. Why would anyone WANT to suppress anything so trivial as his name? Why would anyone be so naïve as to think you COULD suppress an event which was attended by hundreds of people, and very probably reported in the university newspaper. If the library was unable to find some record or other, Wilder-Smith should simply have asked them to look again. Librarians do sometimes file things in the wrong place. Things go missing. When that happens, you look somewhere else. To conclude from the fact that somebody couldn't FIND something that there has been a conspiracy to SUPPRESS it is classic paranoia.

Again, I would like to interject some comments. One is hard-pressed to find any reference to this event except in Durant's

faulty website and in Dr. Wilder-Smith's book. (See sidebar, A "Theory" of the Roman Empire.) I have contacted the Oxford Union and received the following response:

Your e-mail to the Union regarding the debate in 1986 has been forwarded on to me and I have been asked to get in touch. Unfortunately we won't have any of the information you require on the debate, indeed it sounds like you have more than we do. The only records kept of debates are the title, speakers' names and result. We don't hold any other information such as reports or fliers (there wouldn't have been any, only the title of the debate published in the term card). Unfortunately I can't even give you the result for this debate. The results are noted in a large minute book which spans several years. I'm sorry to say that the minute book in question was either lost or stolen many years ago, which is a great pity. I'm sorry the Union can't be of any help to you. If there is anything else though you feel I might be able to help with then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

As to Dr. Dawkins' comment about paranoia, why did he himself feel compelled impassionedly to plea for a zero vote on the creation side? He used the notion of *suppression* four times and asked why would people be motivated to do this. The Apostle Paul offers an answer (Romans 1:18). The facts seem to be that the record book is missing and the numbers in Durant's report are false. I am not in a position to judge who did what or when, but much of the information that should be available to the public is misleading.

In my June 1 e-mail to Dr. Dawkins I also wrote, "Perhaps now I can better understand why you are reluctant to debate those who believe that life in all of its brilliance could not have come about by non-intelligent chance." He responded:

If you seriously think that evolution is equivalent to 'non-intelligent chance' you have a lot of learning to do. May I recommend that you read something about

evolution before making such ill-informed statements. I have devoted three of my books (*The Blind Watchmaker*, *River Out of Eden*, and *Climbing Mount Improbable*) to explaining that evolution by natural selection is the very OPPOSITE of a chance process.

Professor Dawkins also, apparently, does not allow that there are any sound scientific arguments on the creation side. I wrote him again offering to send him “more than 20,”<sup>3</sup> but he did not respond.

In summary, an Oxford Union Debate occurred on February 14, 1986. The Oxford Union has little if any institutional record of it. Despite Dr. Dawkins’ plea, there were apparently 115 votes for the creation position (more than 37%). This was done near Darwin’s turf. Imagine flat-earthers going to NASA and convincing over 37% of the scientists there that the earth is flat. Maybe creation science is not as closely akin to flat-earthism as Dr. Dawkins supposes (see his *Free Inquiry*

article<sup>4</sup>). If unwilling to receive what I offered him in support of creation science, perhaps he should listen more closely to what knowledgeable creation scientists are saying.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> On June 10, 2003, I inquired of Dr. Dawkins if he objected to my quoting him in an article. He wrote back on the same day, “I do not object.”
- <sup>2</sup> Durant, J. n.d. A critical-historical perspective on the argument about evolution and creation. *Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion*, AAAS, [www.aaas.org/spp/dser/evolution/perspectives/durant.shtml](http://www.aaas.org/spp/dser/evolution/perspectives/durant.shtml).
- <sup>3</sup> Humber, P. 2003. Comparing creation and evolution. *Creation Matters* 8(2):5-8. Reprints are available at [www.creationresearch.org/creation\\_matters/reprints.htm](http://www.creationresearch.org/creation_matters/reprints.htm)
- <sup>4</sup> Dawkins, R. 2003. Why I won’t debate creationists. *Free Inquiry* 23(1)

*Paul G. Humber is Executive Director of Skilton House Ministries, Inc. and a faculty member of the University of Phoenix (Philadelphia Campus).*

## Witnessing

...continued from page 1

member while “under pressure.” When I do get answers, they are usually from a short list that includes peppered moths, the generic fossil record, the Miller-Urey experiments, and selective breeding of dogs. All of these are easily dispensed with and, usually, the evolutionist will admit that such evidence is pitiful, and actually works against his case!

I have attempted some correspondence with evolutionists “in the news” when some discovery or insight is announced. I have been careful in these cases to avoid identifying myself as a creationist (initially), but rather have straightforwardly asked how they would answer questions about evidence posed by creationists. After all, as a mere professor of engineering, I am eager to gain the more learned insights from my biologist and chemist peers. When I do get responses, they typically exude impatience with such questions, and point out that I should spend 20 years in the

## What Are Creationists Thinking about ...?

*As new scientific discoveries make the headlines, have you ever wondered how your fellow creationists are reacting? Have you ever thought of a “crazy” new idea about origins and wanted to bounce it off another creationist?*



Now you can keep in contact daily with creationists from all around the world. The Creation Research Society sponsors **CRSnet**, an online community of CRS members who have e-mail access to the Internet. Not only do participants discuss the latest scientific findings related to origins, but they also receive news about the CRS — its research, publications, and activities — and other creation-related news.

For more information, send an e-mail message to Glen Wolfrom at [contact@creationresearch.org](mailto:contact@creationresearch.org).  
*Participation is limited to CRS members in good standing.*

## Creation Calendar

**Note:** Items in “Creation Calendar” are for information only; the listing of an event does not necessarily imply endorsement by the Creation Research Society.

September 27

*Old Earthism* by Brand Adams  
7:00 pm, Evangelical Formosan Church, Torrence, CA  
Sponsored by South Bay Creation Science Association  
Contact: Garth Guessman 310-952-0424

October 25

*The Flood Evidence from the Great Basin* by Mark Wannamaker  
7:00 pm, Evangelical Formosan Church, Torrence, CA  
Sponsored by South Bay Creation Science Association  
Contact: Garth Guessman 310-952-0424

Oct. 31 - Nov. 1

*Cosmology Conference*  
The Fawcett Center, The Ohio State Univ., Columbus, OH  
Sponsored by Creation Research Science Education Foundation,  
P.O. Box 292, Columbus, OH 43216  
Contact: 614-837-3097, [www.WorldByDesign.org](http://www.WorldByDesign.org)

November 22

*Touring the Solar System: Clues to Its Age, Part B* by David Coppedge  
7:00 pm, Evangelical Formosan Church, Torrence, CA  
Sponsored by South Bay Creation Science Association  
Contact: Garth Guessman 310-952-0424

field like they have, or that it's all "obvious" from the fossil record or from the latest findings of molecular biology. The respondents absolutely refuse to cite any specific evidence.

Interestingly, the younger graduate or undergraduate students will make a more serious attempt to defend their faith than do their elders. One polite, yet arrogant grad student persisted in spinning the evolutionary story, while avoiding specifics. When pinned, he suggested the schoolbook version of horse evolution. I explained how that story was 50 years out of date, and then turned the subject to the overall fossil record.

### Tree of life

I reminded him of Darwin's tree-of-life diagram in *The Origin of Species* and how Darwin was hopeful that the fossil record would fill in the story, as at that time paleontology worked against evolutionary yarns. Specifically, I sketched for him a sample of one of the nine "trees" to be found in Benton's text, *Vertebrate Palaeontology* (1). Benton, an ardent evolutionist, has separate and fairly detailed trees offering the evolution of fish, amniotes, birds, tetrapods, and so on. In each tree, the ends of the limbs are emboldened, depicting fossil finds. The trunk and branching structures leading to the limb ends are consistently dashed lines, admitting that any evolution is strictly in the mind of the paleontologist. In short, the fossil record, as described by a renowned evolutionary paleontologist, is perfectly consistent with the Biblical record of the creation of separate kinds.

### Probability

Another argument that can be used with the mathematically inclined, if polite enough to listen for a few minutes, is that of amino acid ordering in proteins. It's fascinating that even a chemist will resort to "given enough time" as an argument. In half a sheet of paper, you can quickly lay out the ordering probability for a solitary protein, given 20 amino acids in any abundance one likes, and the requirement to get perhaps 400 (or pick a number) in a row. Point out that you're neglecting the thermodynamic impossi-

bilities, and the chirality issue, and the other 500 proteins coded in a "simple" bacterium, plus the myriads of remaining structures and their spatial distribution, not least of which is the DNA, which cannot be formed chemically under the same conditions as proteins.

Most educated people are quickly dumbfounded when confronted with the improbabilities, especially when contrasted with the "relatively modest" number of atoms in the universe ( $10^{80}$ ), the number of seconds in its supposed evolutionary history (less than  $10^{18}$ ), and the limits on chemical reaction rates (perhaps  $10^{12}$  per second). There are more sophisticated treatments of this subject that are cited in the creationist literature, of course, but even an amateur can quickly bound the problem with an effectively infinite margin to spare.

The goal, of course, is not to win an argument. What I hope to do in such conversations is to first generate doubt in their evolutionary faith, to open them up to the Gospel. Whether or not I see thoughtfulness at this point, I press on to the Biblical message of salvation. First the creation, and if still necessary, a few words on the incredible design and information content of life. Then the fall and subsequent deterioration of the world.

### Getting personal

Then the law and sin. One must get personal here. Let God skewer the conscience. We've all lied and so we are all liars. We have all coveted and so are idolaters (Eph 5:5, KJV). We have all lusted and hated and so are all adulterers and murderers (Matthew 5). Therefore, we have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. We must plead guilty before Jesus Christ, the Judge of the universe. Only then may we beg for mercy, repent, and trust Him, who died for us and rose again, conquering death. Scientists and engineers should be eager to seek the One who has the exclusive technology to overcome death!

Be careful in presenting the Gospel. The law is "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal 3:24, KJV) The good news is meaningless until the bad news is understood and personalized. "For the Son of

man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt 18:11, KJV)

I carry a variety of tracts with me each day, including some specialties for the atheist. All the tracts I cite below close with a solid presentation of the Gospel. Jack Chick's (2) tract *Big Daddy* covers a fair amount of ground in an entertaining way. The Chick tracts *It's the Law* and *This Was Your Life* plainly reveal the law and the consequences of sin. Ray Comfort (3) has several thought-provoking tracts, as well. *The Atheist Test* is a clever treatment of intelligent design. *Evolution . . . The Evidence: For and Against* has a multi-pronged attack on evolution. However, it includes an apparently erroneous statement on Neanderthals, which I've advised them to check out. Finally, *The Bible is Full of Mistakes . . . Evidence for the Rational Thinker* belies its title, while making a strong case for the verity of the Bible.

As a final thought, personal evangelism is uncomfortable because it is spiritual warfare. We are tempted to neglect witnessing, even with the freedom we enjoy in America. May God have mercy on us if we neglect this freedom. With regard to atheists, there is no reason under the sun to shy away from a direct and compassionate presentation of the truth of the Gospel. Most so-called "intellectuals" have not thought through the implications of their unbelief. Why? Because Satan has blinded them (2 Cor 4:3-4). Let the truth of creation and the Gospel provide them the opportunity to choose salvation.

### References:

- (1) Benton, M.J. 2000. *Vertebrate Palaeontology*. Blackwell Science Ltd., Oxford.
- (2) Chick Publications, P.O. Box 3500, Ontario, Calif. 91761-1019; 909-987-0771; [www.chick.com](http://www.chick.com)
- (3) Living Waters Publications, P.O. Box 1172, Bellflower, CA 90706; 800-437-1893; [www.livingwaters.com](http://www.livingwaters.com)

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formation proves the signal was produced by intelligence, and an opponent of this idea (Naturalist). The ID conclusion opposes the view of the majority in the scientific community who have concluded these signals *must* be explained by natural means.

**ID spokesperson.** The team read this information by using a short space to indicate a new symbol, two spaces to indicate a decimal point, and the number of dots to represent the number, such as (... . .... and so on equals 3.14). Furthermore, the information is sent so that pi is decoded 3 times, then Euler’s constant once, and the natural logarithm 4 times. Next, the same pattern is repeated for Euler’s constant. It has been verified that this transmission is coded information, and we have calculated that the probability that this information was produced naturally is essentially zero — well beyond  $10^{80}$ , which is the current estimate of the number of particles in the entire universe.

We can analyze information (to determine if its source is intelligent) using a technique known as *specified complexity*. This method uses logic to determine if a complex pattern is likely to be the result of random processes (such as snowflakes), or if the pattern can only be produced by intelligence (such as language or math formulas). The same technique is used to determine if an artifact is natural or manmade, or if a death is accidental or a homicide.

**Naturalist.** Science does not accept your probability arguments. First of all, improbable events happen every day. For example, what is the probability that you and I and the members of the audience would be in the same room at this moment in time? Obviously, it is close to zero, yet here we all are.

**ID.** How do you propose, then, that this information can be explained?

**Naturalist.** We have several theories that can explain it very well. Although we admit we have not yet conclusively proved any one of these theories, we do know that to resort to the conclusion that intelligence created it is essentially giving up. There

are many good potential scientific explanations, and the conclusion that intelligence produced the pattern is a non-explanation. Actually, it is more than that — it is an information stopper.

**ID.** Specifically, then, how do you propose to explain this event from a naturalistic position, given the extremely small probability of the information received being produced by chance?

**Naturalist.** Our problem is that we have many good, scientific explanations. One viable scientific explanation is the multi-world hypothesis. Signals are constantly given off by billions of stars in our Universe, and from billions of both parallel universes existing now, and the many billions of universes theorized to have existed in the past. It is highly probable then, that in one of those universes, one of those stars would produce the set of data received.

**There is a logical scientific explanation for everything, even if we don’t currently know what it is.**

Given enough time, as was so aptly stated by a leading evolutionary theorist, anything is possible. Improbable events happen every day. Remember, we’re all here together, aren’t we?

**ID.** But there is no scientific evidence of any universe aside from our own.

**Naturalist.** This is exactly why I am concerned. Your ID explanation is a non-explanation. It prevents us from looking for these other universes, which many well-respected leading theorists now believe exist.

**ID.** We have carefully evaluated the information and the possible explanations for the data we are discussing. It is inconceivable to me that any other explanation, aside from intelligent design, is feasible.

**Naturalist.** The answer to your challenge is well stated by Richard Dawkins (1986, p. 38) in his *Fallacy of the “Argument from Personal Incredulity,”* which translates to “just because something seems incredible, does *not* mean that it cannot occur.” This argument concludes that because the an-

swer does not occur to you, proves only *your* shortcoming. To reject an idea because it seems inconceivable to you is an argument from ignorance.

Only researchers who expend the necessary effort and research will solve the problem. Rejecting an answer because, to you, such an answer is impossible (or is incredible), is a cop-out. You’re giving up. You need to figure out how the pattern that SETI picked up could have been produced by natural means, instead of resorting to non-naturalistic, God-of-the-gaps theories.

**ID.** It is true that “just because something seems incredible, does not prove that it is.” On the other hand, this assertion is *not* evidence. Nor does it provide support for the conclusion that something which seems incredible is true just because it seems incredible. The fact is, in harmony with the wise consumer conclusion “if it seems too good to be true it probably is,” ideas that seem incredible often are. The final determinant is empirical evidence, not word games such as Dawkins uses here.

The ID researchers who have evaluated these data have concluded that the *only* reasonable explanation for them, especially in view of the principle known as Occam’s Razor, is that the pattern was produced by intelligence.

**Naturalist.** Your so-called explanation, though, *is not* science, but metaphysics. As philosopher Michael Ruse has shown, only naturalist explanations are permissible in science. Furthermore, the ID explanation is not falsifiable, clearly proving that it is not science. Can you think of a single experiment that would *falsify* this conclusion?

We cannot reproduce or replicate the signals sent from outer space; all we can do is study them. Science can accept *only* a naturalistic explanation; trying to foist the ID explanation upon the public, especially innocent school children, is unacceptable. As Dr. Eugenie Scott (2003) states: “the first cardinal rule of science” is “the rule of methodological naturalism.”

**ID.** But who says that science must be naturalistic? Shouldn’t we take the *most likely* explanation of those available? I



have studied the data, and have concluded that an intelligent source of the information is the only feasible explanation in this situation. Actually, Michael Ruse (whose definition of science was cited in many court rulings) has now revised his position and no longer concludes that naturalism is a requirement of science (Witham, 2002, p. 85).

**Naturalist.** What science is, is determined by scientists. The scientific consensus is that a naturalistic explanation is the *only* acceptable explanation in science. Being unable to locate a naturalistic explanation, you resort to the classic God-of-the-gaps explanation, which is not science. The only acceptable explanations evoke *purely* natural means, and any attempt to do otherwise sets science back 300 years to when demons, goblins, and gods were used to explain all kinds of phenomena.

**ID.** I disagree. ID does not block explanations, but instead opens another avenue of exploration. I believe that you should be able to look at *both* naturalistic and non-naturalistic explanations to determine if an event is due to intelligence or natural causes.

**Naturalist.** But this is not science! And, therefore, this approach cannot be explored. To do so would make you the laughing stock of the scientific community. Are the ID people arguing that the laws of nature no longer apply when one discusses these signals?

The assumption that all events can be explained by natural processes is based on the enormous success of naturalism — a technique developed after hundreds of years of experimental study. This theory has led us to a broadly successful understanding of the Universe, and successfully explains a huge variety of phenomena. Arguing that it applies in all circumstances *except this one* contradicts the entire body of scientific evidence.

It may be that there is no good, well-documented explanation for the origin of these signals, but we cannot just dump the wisdom of the past several hundred years of scientific progress. We must require their explanation to be consistent with the known physical laws of the Universe.

There is a logical scientific explanation for everything, even if we don't currently know what it is. Even if we do not know

how these signals were produced, we definitely know how they were *not* produced: they were not created by intelligence. ID proponents point out what they claim are flaws or gaps in our knowledge, and then they try to argue that belief in some unknown intelligence should be a valid alternative explanation.

**ID.** What if the justice system could entertain *only* natural causes for death, and causes due to intelligence, such as suicide or homicide could not, *a priori*, even be considered. If that were the case, no matter what the proof, no murderers could be prosecuted.

**Naturalist.** We are not talking about criminology, but science. As Esensten (2003) noted, this dalliance with irrationality must stop. He adds that ID:

cannot even be considered among possible alternatives because it fails the basic tests of any scientific hypothesis. First, it cannot be proven false. Second, it explains nothing about the actual mechanism ..., and can make no predictions about the natural world. These problems should exclude it from scientific debate.

**ID.** But forensics *is* a science! Check any forensics or criminalistics book. Forensics is not just science but an excellent example of science. The goal is scientific certainty, insofar as that is possible. Philosophy (such as insisting that only naturalism is science) is not a concern in forensics, but intelligent design is very much a concern.

Did a death occur as a result of intelligent design (i.e., purposefully, such as premeditated murder), or was it accidental due to natural causes (not intelligent design, but chance factors, such as a blood clot forming in a leg vein, causing a pulmonary embolism)? Here, the focus is on determining if the cause of death was due to natural causes, but one does not allow that *only* natural causes can be considered (rather, *both* are evaluated to determine if the cause is natural or due to intelligence).

**Naturalist.** Now, you claim that ID and naturalism are both possible inferences that one might deduce from the SETI data. There is absolutely no evidence that there is intelligence behind the data found. We must look for naturalistic explanations only. To get around this requires trying to claim

that a nonscientific explanation constitutes a scientific theory when it does not. The fact is, as Professor Scott Todd (1999, p. 423) noted:

Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such an hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic.

All your evidence and arguments are irrelevant: only naturalistic hypothesis can be considered.

## Acknowledgments

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# Review of “Darwin’s Proof: The Triumph of Religion Over Science”

by Dan Schobert

## ***Darwin’s Proof: The Triumph of Religion Over Science***

by Cornelius G. Hunter

Brazos Press, Wheaton, IL

2003. 176 pages, \$17.99 (hard cover)

The campaign against the nonsense of evolutionary thinking continues with a new book, *Darwin’s Proof* by Cornelius G. Hunter, which has recently been released by Brazos Press, a division of Baker Book House of Grand Rapids. This work is subtitled: *The Triumph of Religion over Science*. Hunter is also the author of *Darwin’s God* which was published several years ago.

Hunter points out that the evidence so often cited in support of evolution is not evidence at all. In a way, perhaps the book should be “Darwin’s *Proof*”! It isn’t that evidence for evolution isn’t presented, but when the evidence is viewed closely, these evidences don’t stand up.

The main thrust of this work is to review the historical context into which Charles Darwin appeared. Hunter helps his readers appreciate the various popular ideas of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries — ideas which made the thoughts of Darwin acceptable. One of these ideas is what Hunter calls the paradigm of perfection. It is the thought that God created all things “very good.” Since we can see less than perfect things in nature, it follows that God must not have created. This amounts to creating God in our own image and, when that image doesn’t fit what is found in nature, this god can be rejected.

The problem, of course, is that those holding this view neglect to understand the effects of the Fall. As a consequence, God is blamed for imperfections in nature, and, since creationists claim that God would not make anything which is less than perfect, He must not be much of a God.

It is interesting, according to Hunter, to realize that the idea of evolution, though said to be nonreligious, actually rests on religion.

Darwinists claim religion plays no role in their theory, but religion lies at its very foundation. It is

the constant thread running throughout Darwinism. Evolutionists reject a particular religious explanation, but in doing so they proclaim their own religion. Declaring what or how God may not create is just as religious as declaring what or how he does create.

Creating their own god is nothing new among those who would reject the Gospel’s message. Hunter takes his readers back to a cross outside Jerusalem. There men taunted Jesus by demanding that “if He is really the savior, He should get down from the cross.” These men had made up their own minds as to what a savior would look like. They hadn’t taken the time to read the scriptures and to understand that the savior would not be one to rescue them from Roman rule, but he would be one who would lead the way back to God. They could not envision themselves in need of such a savior, so they missed the point of what was taking place on that hill.

Much the same thing can be seen occurring in the evolutionary camp. Instead of reading what God has said about things, people have used their tainted imaginations to make up stories about the past and stories about God. In general, these stories have pushed God farther and farther away from any involvement in creation. “Darwinism is really all about God,” says Hunter. “God wouldn’t have created this world, say the evolutionists. But Darwinists have a false god in mind.”

Hunter concludes by reminding readers that evolution is a religious idea.

Darwin’s theory of evolution has had a profound impact on society. Its claim that God is not needed to explain the origin of species has influenced many, and it certainly seems reasonable to say that evolution is antireligious or atheistic. For example, evolution always opts for naturalistic explanations, no matter how unlikely, rather than admit any possibility of God. . . . The problem with this argument is that it misses

the historical roots and underlying motivation of Darwinism. The motivation behind Darwinism is religious, not antireligious, and this makes a tremendous difference in how one understands the theory. Darwinism is the product of a long tradition of religious doctrine. Though not biblical, this doctrine has always been popular in the church. This non-Christian thought can be found in many influential figures leading up to Darwin and it remains popular today. It involves a non-biblical version of God, who is distanced from the world. The divine attributes of wisdom and goodness are emphasized over those of providence, immanence and judgment.

When this is understood, a reader can appreciate how the religion of Darwin has been such a powerful tool to lead men and women away from science into a dark world of myth and imaginations.

The book has several pages of end notes, providing a good resource for those wishing to do additional study. This work should be read by anyone involved in the origins issue.

*Editor’s note: This book is not available from CRS Books.*

# Speaking of Science

Commentaries on recent news from science

## Brushing-off Intelligent Design

Robert Pennock<sup>1</sup> has reviewed Michael Ruse's latest book *Darwin and Design*<sup>2</sup>, comparing it with the 19th-century Bridgewater Treatises. These were a set of 19th-century monographs by scientists explaining evidence for God in the sciences. Now, the Templeton Foundation has funded a set of seven books on science and religion, of which Ruse's book is the first. Pennock likes it a lot and thinks it has set a high standard that will be tough to match. It covers everything from the history of natural theology and design arguments to the modern Darwinian synthesis, which leaves no more place for a Designer. According to Pennock (emphasis added):

He also has a helpful way of organizing the conceptual analysis of the design argument, separating the argument to adaptive complexity from the move to a designing mind. Ruse clearly explains **how Darwinian evolution blocked that second move**, by providing **the answer** to the question of biological purpose: "Natural selection produces artifact-like features, not by chance but because if they were not artifact-like they would not work and serve their possessors' needs." The language of intentional design now serves only as a **handy metaphor**.

Both Pennock and Ruse think it is possible to be awestruck at the appearance of design in nature without being religious:

We have learned much in the two centuries since Bridgewater, and Ruse shows that natural theology is no longer viable. However, he does not disparage the impulse that led to it. There is indeed awe to be found in biological adaptations, which might be expressed in a new "theology of nature" that "appreciates the complex, adaptive glory of the living world, rejoices in it, and trembles before

it." He quotes Mayr, who once told him, "People forget that it is possible to be intensely religious in the entire absence of theological belief."

But both Pennock and Ruse only have time for a dismissive sweep of the modern Intelligent Design movement (emphasis added):

Ruse **quickly dismisses** the recent attempt to resurrect Paley's argument by Intelligent Design creationists such as Phillip Johnson, Michael Behe, and William Dembski; **they warrant only a brief discussion** in the final chapter. Ruse reviews and extends some of the many arguments that have been given against Behe's "irreducible complexity," Dembski's explanatory filter, and appeals to the purported problems of "complex specified information" and the no-free-lunch theorem. Behe's view, he concludes, is "pure and simple fantasy"; Dembski is "just plain wrong"; and their Intelligent Design movement is already regarded, even by theologians, as an "embarrassment."

The comebacks are never heard in *Science*, because the microphones point only one direction. Johnson, Dembski, and Behe have a *lot* to say in rebuttal (read their books), but the Darwin Party's tactic, as evidenced here, is to brush them off quickly, as if to say, "Don't read their works; you don't need to, because our Goliath already did it for you." It's the argument from authority in a journal that is supposed to be about open-minded investigation of the facts.

Pennock should have been highly suspect at Ruse for stooping to ridicule like calling Behe's work "pure and simple fantasy," or sidestepping issues and using glittering generalities such as summing up Dembski's long and detailed arguments as "just plain wrong," or appealing to people's herd instinct by saying that their work is "already regarded, *even by theologians* as an embarrassment" (emphasis added). Is

such blather to be respected as the honorable and recondite analysis by Darwinism's greatest living philosopher?

Suppose Dembski did that, and instead of writing two detailed, mathematical tomes, sent *Science* a short postcard saying, "Y'know, Ruse is just plain wrong. His ideas are pure and simple fantasy. Everybody thinks they are an embarrassment." And suppose *Science* printed it? That's about how fair these Darwin Party journals are when it comes to seriously analyzing the important issues in philosophy of science today. Ruse and Pennock don't want readers of *Science* to think. They just want them to swallow the opinions of The Authorities. Ruse said ID is fantasy. End of story.

You have to know their opinions are weak when a schoolboy could see right through them. Take a look at the monumental conclusion about the argument from design to which Pennock feels Ruse has deftly dealt a death blow:

"Natural selection produces artifact-like features, not by chance but because if they were not artifact-like they would not work and serve their possessors' needs."

Are you impressed? So this is the best Ruse can come up with (assuming Pennock, an admirer, has accurately encapsulated the argument). This is no answer at all. It's the same cop-out the Anthropic Principle argument uses to *fail* to explain design: "Well, silly, if it weren't that way, we wouldn't be here worrying about the question." Good grief. Ruse and his disciples have not explained the design of an eye, an ear, a wing, or anything else. They just say *if it were not well adapted, it wouldn't be there*. Newton and Maxwell would be embarrassed by such shallow reasoning.

Whenever evolutionists really attempt to explain design in detail, they give up in utter frustration. Natural selection is impotent to explain the origin of *any* complex structure except without copious additions of imagination and faith. Science is supposed to rest on *evidence*. OK, evolutionists, put up or shut up. And if you have

## Brushing-off ID

...continued from page 11

your own mind, read Behe's and Johnson's and Dembski's books, instead of leaning on the one-sided opinions of the Darwin Party. And here's another challenge: *name one instance of complex specified information*, anywhere, that is the product of unintelligent, unguided, undirected natural law or chance, or combination of the two, including natural selection (The Rule: it must be supported by observational evidence, not just-so storytelling).

Another example of the shallowness

of their thinking is this idea that you can be in awe of nature's designs without being religious. To be consistent, they would have to believe that "awe" evolved like everything else. What survival value does "awe" have? Why are we moved by the good, the true, and the beautiful? Natural selection cannot provide answers to these questions: they point to a *conscience*, and an innate knowledge of purpose and morality and order that no naturalistic philosophy can expunge. When a man's awe becomes detached from the Creator, it attaches instead to the creation, fulfilling the Apostle Paul's prediction, "professing

themselves to be wise, they became fools.... they worshipped and served the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed forever" (Romans 1:20-25).

- (1) Pennock, R.T. 2003. A bridgewater treatise for the 21st century. *Science* 301:1051.
- (2) Ruse, M. 2003. *Darwin and Design: Does Evolution Have a Purpose?* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

*Editor's note: This S.O.S. (Speaking of Science) item is kindly provided by David Coppedge. Additional commentaries and reviews of news items by David can be seen at: [www.creationsafaris.com/crevnews.htm](http://www.creationsafaris.com/crevnews.htm).*

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