

Ending the “Warfare” of Science and Faith


Keith B. Miller

Department of Geology

Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS



What is evolution?

- Summarized as descent with modification of all living things from a common ancestor
 - Does not imply any particular mechanism
 - Does not address whether or how God might act to uphold or guide the process
- 

What is creation?

- Everything to which God has given being
- The past and continuing action of God to bring into existence all that is and has been



Scientific and theological understandings of the origin and evolution of the universe, earth, and life are widely seen as being in tension if not opposition.



“The two worldviews are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive. There is another group that tries to meld the two views together, they are the theistic evolutionists.

They usually take the tact [sic] that God created something and then left it to evolution to work it all out. If these people are talking about the God of the Bible, then they do not understand what is written in the Bible, or they do not understand the philosophy of evolutionary theory.”

(Steve Abrams, letter in Southwestern College Collegian, April 13, 2000)

“At the state board meeting, no evolution proponent acknowledged the inescapably atheistic thrust of Darwinism and neo-Darwinism, the presumed ‘blindness’ in man’s programming. This was the most prominent of the many deceits.”


Jack Cashill (editorial “Scopes redux all over again” Aug, 1999)

A decorative graphic consisting of several sets of concentric circles in a lighter shade of blue, arranged in a pattern that suggests ripples on water. The circles are of varying sizes and are positioned in the lower half of the slide.

“Finally, educators must be a lot more candid about the religious implications of a materialist theory of macroevolution. Chancellor Hemenway wrote that ‘[t]he most disturbing part of the board’s debate was the clear suggestion from the majority of the board that one could not believe in both God and evolution.’ What disturbs me is that educators are relying upon banalities to explain away the religious implications of Darwinism. Of course, there is a tension between God and Darwin.”

(Phillip Johnson, “The religious implications of teaching evolution,” in Chronicle of Higher Education, Nov. 1999)

Science is non-theistic, not atheistic

- Science does not affirm or deny the existence of a Creator. It is simply silent on the existence or action of God.
 - Science is a multi-cultural enterprise in which individuals from a wide range of cultural and religious perspectives can productively communicate.
- 

A simple conflict or “warfare” view of science and faith is historically invalid.

- **Founded on widely influential but discredited readings of the history of science.**
- **Perpetuated by simplistic and grossly inaccurate historical summaries.**

**There is a long Christian
theological tradition in which
God is understood to act
through natural processes.**



“I am free to say for myself, that I do not think that there is any general statement in the Bible or any part of the account of creation, either as given in Gen. I & II or elsewhere alluded to, that need be opposed to evolution.”

(Benjamin B. Warfield, Lectures on Anthropology, 1888)

A decorative graphic consisting of several sets of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

"Assume God -- as many devout evolutionists do -- to be immanent in the evolutionary process, and His intelligence and purpose to be expressed in it; then evolution, so far from conflicting with theism, may become a new and heightened form of the theistic argument."

(James Orr, God's Image in Man, 1905)

"Since the biblical narrative is non-scientific, we draw the double conclusion that it cannot be a satisfying scientific account of the origins of things and that it can be supplemented by scientific theories. The Bible and a scientific theory of origins clash only when the latter is set forth as the complete explanation of origins and the former is interpreted as a scientific treatise."

(Bruce K. Waltke, 1991, "The literary genre of Genesis, Ch. 1": Crux, vol. 27, no. 4, p. 2-10.)

“I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, and maintain it in print, but I cannot see that anything Scripture says, in the first chapters of Genesis or elsewhere, bears on the biological theory of evolution one way or the other.”

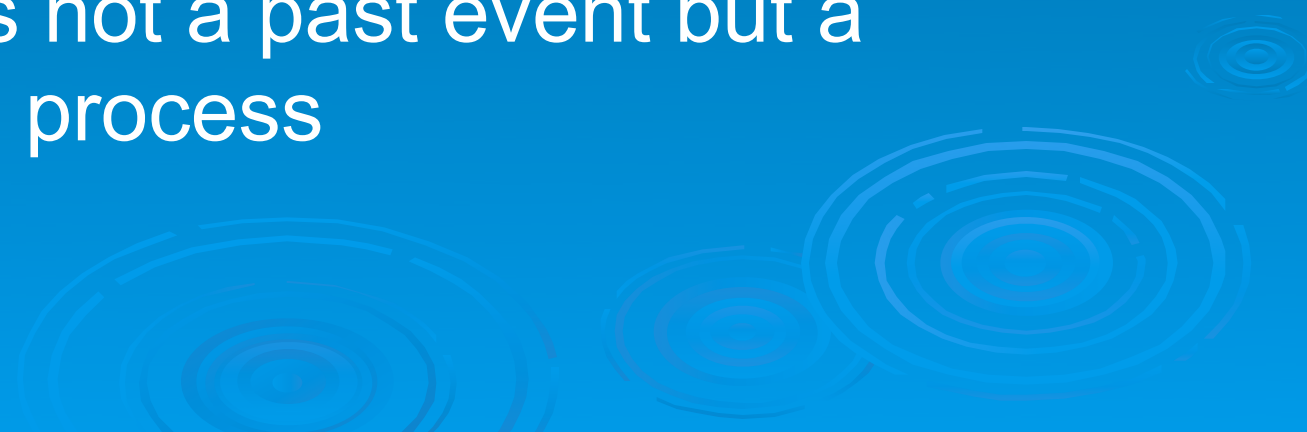
(J. I. Packer, 1978, The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem, p. 5)

Continuous Creation

- Divine creation does not imply any necessary breaks in the continuity of cause-and-effect processes.
- An internally complete scientific description of a natural event or process is not in conflict with the action of a divine agent.



Continuous Creation

- God is creator of all things
 - Nothing would exist without God willing it to be (divine sustenance of creation)
 - God is actively involved in natural processes (divine cooperation and governance)
 - Creation is not a past event but a continuing process
- 

ID is essentially “God of the Gaps”

- Meaningful divine action is seen only, or primarily, in the gaps of human knowledge where scientific description fails (based on an interventionist view of God’s action).
- Each advance in scientific understanding results in a corresponding reduction in the realm of divine action.
- Ironically, God’s action is made subject to scientific test.

ID Proponents require God's action to be scientifically detectable

“God-guided evolution would be genuinely theistic, but the doctrine of methodological naturalism rules out the possibility that God did the guiding in any way that is testable. ... The theism is in the mind (or faith) of the believer.”

(Phillip Johnson, Darwinism Defeated?, p. 50)

“The current theological fashion prefers an evolutionary God inaccessible to scientific scrutiny over a designer God whose actions in nature are clearly detectable.”

(William Dembski, “Introduction: Mere Creation,” Mere Creation: Science, Faith & Intelligent Design, p. 20)

God is a God of process

- God acts through process in nature as well as in human history
- Divine creation does not imply any necessary breaks in the continuity of cause-and-effect processes
- Evolution is simply a scientific description of God's creative activity

**The methodological
naturalism of science is seen
as implying support for
philosophical materialism.**



“The word ‘natural’ is a code word for the non-consideration of any teleological or purposeful explanation of the universe. ...This notion of exclusion of teleological data from consideration has become an unwritten law within the scientific community. It has become the major tenet of a faith that everything, including our lives, can be explained only by material things without resort to an intelligent agent.”

John Calvert (Testimony at KSBOE public forum, June 13, 1999)

“By contrast, the National Standards would limit teaching to only ‘natural explanations,’ so that a teacher could teach only one side of the controversy about the cause of life and its diversity. The evidence supporting design would be ignored, not because it doesn’t exist, but because of an *a priori* philosophical assumption that natural causes are all there is.”

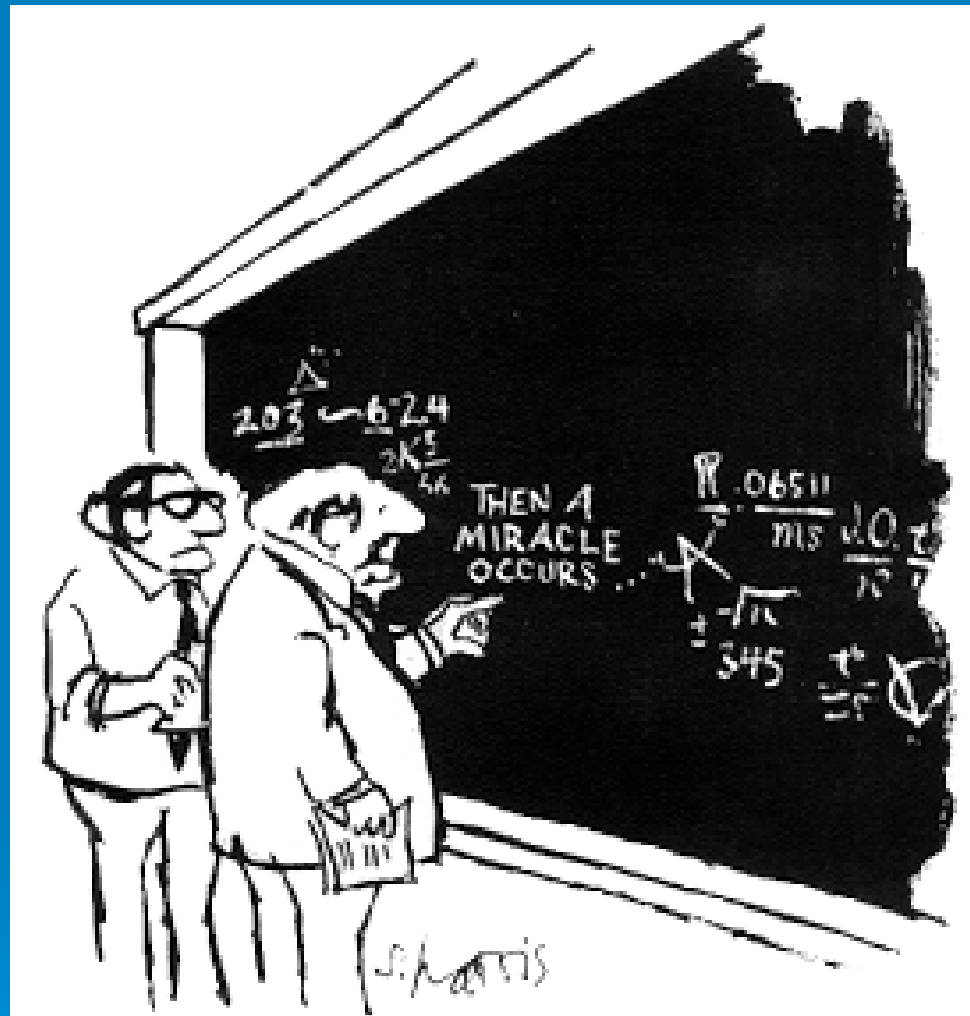
(Jody Sjogren, Idnet press release, June 8, 2000)

Methodological Naturalism

- Science is a search for chains of natural cause-and-effect processes.
- Science is NOT a statement about the nature of ultimate reality. It is NOT based on a metaphysical naturalism.

Methodological Naturalism

- The methodology of science is incapable of investigating “supernatural action.”
- A supernatural agent is effectively a black box, and appeals to supernatural action are equivalent to appeals to ignorance.




"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Does Science Exclude Design?




What is meant by “design” in the popular debate ?

- The existence of purpose and meaning in the universe.
 - Scientific evidence for supernatural action in the form of probability arguments (elimination of chance and necessity).
 - Evidence of breaks or gaps in our cause-and-effect descriptions.
 - The existence of incredibly complex natural systems.
- 


Scientific Meaning of Design

- “Design” is used to refer to the function of biological structures, organisms, and systems.
- Design is NOT used to imply that nature is internally goal-directed.

Theological Meanings of Design

- God's thoughtful conceptualization of creation.
 - God's purpose and goal for the created universe.
 - God's supernatural assembly of particular elements of the creation.
- 
- A decorative graphic consisting of several sets of concentric circles, resembling ripples in water, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Divine design and evolution are compatible

- A divine purpose for creation does not imply an internal vitalism within nature.
 - Divine conceptualization does not imply supernatural assembly.
 - Design should not be equated with current ignorance of natural mechanisms.
- 

Why should the religious community be concerned?

- “Intelligent design” (ID) proponents seek scientific verification for the existence and action of God. God is reduced to a testable scientific hypothesis.
- ID as commonly argued is a “God of the gaps” view.

More Reasons for concern

- The Creationist and ID advocates are perpetuating the false conflict of faith and science. “Darwinism” is cast as the enemy of Biblical faith and morality.
- The debate is divisive and polarizing. Acceptance of evolution becomes grounds for questioning the legitimacy of another’s faith.

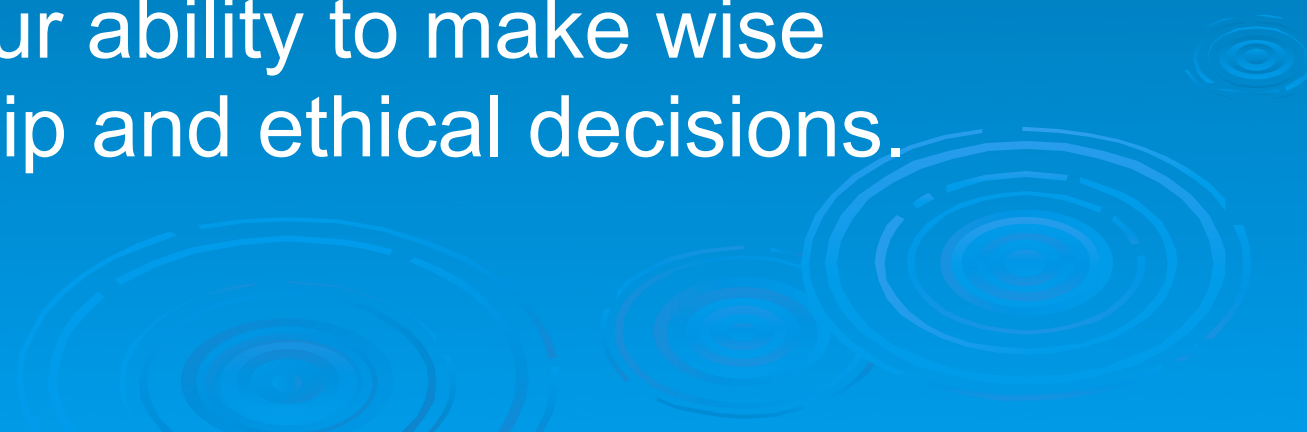
“You often find the greatest enemies of Christ in the church, even in high positions. There is a kind of person who may be sincere in a way, but is doubleminded - who goes into the church in order to save it from itself, by bringing it into concert with evolutionary naturalism, for example. These are dangerous people - they are more dangerous than an outside atheist like Richard Dawkins, who at least flies his own flag. ...



So I am not impressed that somebody says that he is a Christian of a traditional sort and believes that evolution is our creator. This is, at the very least, a person whose mind is going in two directions. Such people often do a great deal of damage within the church.”

(Phillip Johnson interviewed by Hank Hanegraaf, *Bible Answer Man* radio show, Pt. 2, February 21, 2003)

More Reasons for Concern

- The popular debate inhibits thoughtful reflection on both science and scripture.
 - Folk theology has replaced serious biblical study and respect for theological scholarship and tradition.
 - Rejection of the conclusions of science reduces our ability to make wise stewardship and ethical decisions.
- 

What can we do?

- The current situation is in part a failure of the theological community and religious leadership to effectively communicate to the public. This needs to change.
- People of faith need to speak out against the divisiveness and polarization being spread in the name of the church.
- Religious communities need to affirm scientific vocations.