

# The Sanctity of Human Life: Harvesting Human Fetal Parts

The grisly effects of over twenty years of an abortion industry in this country are becoming easier to document all the time. In Pennsylvania, the “anatomy specialist” for The International Institute for the Advancement of Medicine has a task that would cause many of us to become physically ill. He travels to local abortion clinics seeking abortion remains. He searches for fetal parts and tissues that may be of use to medical doctors and researchers. The Institute is one of a half-dozen fetal tissue providers in the country. They will charge handling fees of \$50 to \$150. These companies distribute over 15,000 specimens to doctors and researchers annually. Some large medical centers at universities regularly supply fetal parts to their own doctors and researchers (*The Human Body Shop*, by Andrew Kimbrell, HarperCollins, 1993, pp. 45-66).

The growth and future prospects of the fetal tissue market are actually quite good. Despite controversy over their effectiveness, the use of fetal organs for transplants is expected to grow. Prime targets for recipients are the 1 million Parkinson’s disease victims, 3 million Alzheimer’s patients, 6 million diabetics, and 25,000 with Huntington’s disease.

The growth of this industry is assured for three reasons. First, fetal tissue comes from sources the Supreme Court in *Roe vs. Wade* does not consider persons. This gives developing babies virtually no legal status, and there is no recognized need for regulation of “non-descript tissue.” Second, fetal tissue exhibits tremendous developmental potential. The use of fetal tissue in transplants is desirable since these tissues are expected to grow and hopefully replace adult tissue that has ceased to function or functions improperly. In the case of

Parkinson's disease, fetal brain tissue is transplanted into the brains of Parkinson's victims in the hope that the fetal tissue will perform normally and lessen or eliminate the effects of the disease. Third, fetal tissue is available in an abundant and continuous supply. With over 1.5 million elective abortions performed in this country every year, the supply of fetal tissue is bountiful.

These prospects are complicated further by the fact that the best tissue for research and transplants is tissue obtained from fetuses that were still alive when the tissue was obtained. There is no way to offer protection under current law. France, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and Sweden all have guidelines but no laws. The U.S. had the Reagan moratorium on fetal tissue research involving federal funds. But this moratorium has been misunderstood. All it did was ban the use of federal funds for this research, not ban the research altogether. This ambiguous situation provides new pressures on pregnant women seeking abortion. Some are asked to allow their abortion to be performed by certain procedures to allow for the live acquisition of fetal parts. So not only is she asked to end the life that thrives within her, but she is sometimes asked to sign a permission waiver to allow for a particular procedure. The lack of legal status will lead to a commercial industry. President Clinton virtually assured this prospect when he lifted the ban on using government monies for research using fetal tissue from elective abortions.

This is no time to lose heart or grow faint in the pro-life movement. The fetal tissue industry will exert new monetary pressures to continue abortion on demand. This raises an additional rationalization that abortion is for the common good. "Just look what can be done for those suffering from these diseases" they will say. We must stiffen our resolve and understand what is happening in our culture.

# The Sanctity of Human Life and the Bible

As the pro-life movement encounters increasing pressures from inside and outside, it becomes more important than ever to have our thinking grounded in Scripture. We must not only know what we believe, but also why. Some of these passages are ones you are familiar with to some degree, but some of them may be new. In either event, they are important to have for quick reference.

Psalm 139:13-16 says, "For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well.... Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them." David clearly implies that God is intimately involved in the process of embryological development inside the womb. David also indicates that the days of every developing human have been numbered from before birth.

Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." David is not suggesting that he was born as the result of a sinful relationship. What he is saying is that from the time he left his mother's womb, even from the moment he was conceived, he was a sinner. David, therefore, was not some amorphous blob of tissue at conception, but a spiritual being with a sin nature. Some may object that I am using a modern day definition of conception and applying it to a 3,500-year-old text. However, conception was recognized as the beginning of life. They understood that the seed of the man needed to be combined with the seed of the woman and out of that union, a new life was brought forth. While our technical knowledge may be more precise, the idea is still the same.

Several individuals in Scripture tell us that they were called

to their respective ministries before birth or while still in the womb. The Lord tells Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Isaiah says in Isaiah 49:1, "The LORD called me from the womb; From the body of my mother He named me." Paul says in Galatians 1:15, "But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His son in me." Our days were not only numbered, but our ministries already planned from the time before we entered our mother's womb. Each and every life is indeed valuable in God's eyes.

Even more instructive is the miracle of the Incarnation. In Matthew 1: 18-20, we are told that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit. Jesus entered the world at the point of conception.

We celebrate the incarnation at Christmas, Jesus' birth, but the actual event took place at conception. This reality is brought home to us when Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth a short time later. John the Baptist, at six months gestation in Elizabeth's womb leaps for joy inside her as he comes into the presence of the Messiah in Mary's womb. At that point Jesus was not just a blob of cells or mere tissue. He was the Messiah, the Son of the Most Holy God. It is also important to note that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit and leaped for joy in the womb. Only beings made in God's image can be filled with the Holy Spirit and that is what John was.

## **The Other Side of Life**

Euthanasia has taken root in the culture and in our nation. Doctor-assisted suicide propositions failed in Washington State and California before passing in Oregon this last election. Dr. C. Everett Koop fears that for every Baby Doe that is allowed to die in a hospital due to physical or mental handicaps, there will be 10,000 Grandma Does. There is no

question that we are faced with many difficult decisions concerning the end of life today because of the immense technological ability to sustain life indefinitely. While we hold that every life is sacred in the eyes of God, does there come a time when the merciful and right thing to do is to end a life?

The Bible actually has something to say to us in this matter. Apart from the commandment against murder there is additional information concerning the sanctity of life in 1 and 2 Samuel. For example, 1 Samuel 31 tells of the death of Saul's sons, including Jonathan, in battle with the Philistines. When Saul witnesses these events and sees that defeat is unavoidable, he asks his armor bearer to kill him because he cannot stand the thought of capture by the Philistines. The armor bearer refuses out of fear, so Saul falls on his own sword to kill himself.

We learn, however, from an Amalekite who brings news about Saul to David in 2 Samuel 1, that like many other events during his reign, Saul did not get his own suicide quite right. We learn that this Amalekite had come upon Saul, whose life still lingered in him, at which point Saul requested that the Amalekite finish the job, which he did. Upon news of the King's death, David and his followers tear their clothes and mourn the death of the King of Israel. David next asks the Amalekite why he did not fear to slay God's anointed leader (Saul). Without waiting for a reply, David has the man struck down. It could be argued that David's drastic response could be because it was the King. But just as clearly, this man took Saul's life, and capital punishment was administered. God is a God of life and not death.

The New Testament constantly presents death as the enemy. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus not just because of the loss of a friend, but also because of the spoiling effects of death on His creation. Jesus continually healed the sick, even those who were close to death, not just to relieve suffering but

because death was the enemy. Jesus' message was clear: we are to seek to preserve life not find ways to terminate it.

But many in our society face difficult decisions concerning life and death. When are extra-ordinary measures justified and when should nature be allowed to take its course? Some would even say that the merciful thing to do is to take active measures to end a life that is wracked with incurable suffering. Christian Medical ethicist, John F. Kilner, presents a threefold imperative for making decisions in this area. Our decisions should be **God-centered, Reality-bounded, and Love-impelled**. *God-centered* in that we have studied what Scripture has to say about life and death. We have gained an understanding of God's perspective. *Reality-bounded* in that we have educated ourselves concerning the relevant medical technologies and capabilities as well as the status of the patient. *Love-impelled* in that we consider others as more important than ourselves and that we are seeking the comfort and treatment of the one who is ill and not what will be easier for us to handle. All too often today, society offers a caricature of godly love and offers it up as the only criterion to be considered.

## **Decisions of Life and Death in the Real World**

When asked about issues of death and dying, a book I always recommend is by Joni Eareckson Tada, *When Is It Right to Die?* Joni brings a unique blend of biblical interpretation, personal experience, and knowledge of modern medicine to the issues of suffering, mercy, suicide, and euthanasia. One of the more important points in the book is that there is a real difference between allowing nature to take its course in a person who is clearly dying and taking specific measures to end someone's life. Joni quotes former U.S. Surgeon General and co-author of the book, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, C. Everett Koop:

*If someone is dying and there is no doubt about that, and you believe as I do that there is a difference between giving a person all the life to which he is entitled as opposed to prolonging the act of dying, then you might come to a time when you say this person can take certain amounts of fluid by mouth and we're not going to continue this intravenous solution because he is on the way out.*

This is what death with dignity is supposed to be all about. There does come a time when a patient is dying and there is nothing to be done to heal or cure him. The next question then is how long and with what measures do you prolong the act of dying. As a person dies, various bodily functions begin to shut down. Some will completely lose the ability to eliminate fluids from the body. In these cases, if intravenous fluids are continued, the body will bloat and become extremely uncomfortable. Medical care becomes torture. Better to remove the intravenous solution, provide limited fluid by mouth, and allow the dying process to continue while making the patient as comfortable as possible.

Withholding fluids in this case is totally different than withholding fluids from a newborn Down's Syndrome child because the parents don't want the child. The latter is murder. What is important here is to realize that every case is different. There is no set of rules that will be able to govern every possible situation. That is why any law attempting to legalize doctor- assisted suicide is dangerous. It is simply impossible to cover all the bases. The law will be abused.

We have the clear testimony of the Netherlands to back that up. A 1991 article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, stated that rules were established governing euthanasia in the Netherlands by the courts in 1973. However, the article stated that only 41% of the doctors obey the rules, 27% admit to having performed involuntary euthanasia

(without consent of the patient), and 59% are willing to do so under various circumstances. In 1990, 5,941 deaths were the result of involuntary euthanasia.

But why is euthanasia gaining so much popular support? The reason is fear. People fear the power of modern medicine. They are worried that modern technology is out of control and that they may be left on life-support indefinitely and unnecessarily. People also fear the loneliness and pain of death. Today there is no reason to fear the pain. Surprisingly, the U.S. is a bit behind the rest of Western medicine in the treatment of pain in that there are many options available to treat pain and nearly eliminate it entirely for a dying patient. The loneliness is best dealt with in a hospice. A hospice is designed to take care of the emotional, mental, spiritual needs as well as the physical aspects of the terminally ill. In a hospital, a dying patient is often seen as a failure. A hospice can effectively provide care that is God-centered, reality-bounded, and love-impelled.

## **A Call to Action and A Warning**

In this discussion I have tried to lay out some of the clear biblical and medical issues that face us today in the pro-life movement. Often we can become confused as to what we can do that is effective in turning the culture around. Certainly using the ballot box effectively is important. Making use of our representative form of government by writing letters and calling the appropriate legislators to let them know our position on a particular issue is another. But I would like to conclude with a specific encouragement and a warning.

My encouragement is to become involved in whatever way possible with a crisis pregnancy center in your area. If there isn't one, get a group together to find out how to start one. The Christian Action Council out of Washington, D.C., has set up hundreds of them around the country. Assisting women in a



crisis pregnancy has a clear biblical parallel with how God treated Hagar when she left Abraham's household.

You will remember that when Sarah became frustrated with her inability to provide Abraham with a son to fulfill God's promise, she brought her servant, Hagar, to Abraham as a substitute. Abraham consented, of course, and soon found himself in trouble. When Hagar conceived there was immediate tension. Hagar was jealous because although she performed the duties of a wife for Abraham, she had gained none of the privileges. Sarah on the other hand was resentful because Hagar was successful where she had failed. Sarah complained to Abraham about Hagar's outward hostility and half- rightly blamed him for Hagar's mistreatment of her. Abraham gave Sarah permission to mistreat Hagar, and Hagar ultimately fled into the desert. This was indeed a crisis pregnancy. Hagar's child in her womb was the result of an adulterous relationship: she had been abused and mistreated, and she was now homeless and destitute.

But God met her in her time of need. He provided for her materially by telling her to return to Abraham and Sarah. He comforted her emotionally by assuring her that her child was important to Him by indicating that it was a son and He already had a name picked out for Him: Ishmael, meaning "God hears." God also promised that her son would be the father of many nations. Hagar chose life for herself and for her son. Today, women will choose the same path if provided with the truth surrounded by love and compassion.

My warning is to say simply that violence is never justified in our fight to save lives. First, we are commanded to submit and obey governmental authorities (Titus 3:1 and Rom. 13:1). Remember that Moses was banished for 40 years for taking matters into his own hands in Egypt when he killed an Egyptian soldier who was mistreating an Israelite worker (Exod. 2:11). Moses had one solution in mind, but God had another. Israel had every right by today's standards to rise up in armed

rebellion. God, however, had another plan. Civil disobedience is certainly allowed when God's laws are violated, but violent protest is nowhere recorded in Scripture (Exod. 1,12; Daniel 3; 1 Kings 18; Acts 4-5; Rev. 13). Daniel disobeyed the law of the land but submitted to the lion's den as did the martyrs of the early church when faced with terribly brutal and unjust persecution. Jesus rebuked Peter's use of the sword at His arrest (Matt. 26:52). Jesus submitted to Pilate's authority. He said, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above" (John 19:10-11).

Whether dealing with abortion, helping women victimized by the allure and power of a legal abortion industry, or comforting people afraid of pain, suffering, and death, our response should be God-centered, rooted in the sanctity of human life; reality-bounded, knowledgeable about the situation, and love-impelled, guided by the desire to extend the love of Christ to all.

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## **The Natural Limits to Biological Change**

*Summarizing his book by the same name, Probe's Dr. Ray Bohlin critiques both Neo-Darwinism and punctuated equilibrium and offers an alternative based on intelligent design.*

One of the most significant questions in the origins debate concerns the nature of biological change. Can organisms change into an infinite array of creatures? Or are there genetically imposed limits to the amount of change which can take place? There are two major theories of evolutionary change: neo-

Darwinism and punctuated equilibrium. As creationists, Lane Lester and I proposed in 1984 that indeed there are limits to change in our book, *The Natural Limits to Biological Change*. Theoretically, it may seem difficult to propose that immense variety may occur within a group of organisms yet this variety is constrained within certain genetically induced limits. It may seem contradictory even. But in the intervening ten years, my confidence in the proposal has only strengthened, and my confidence in any evolutionary mechanism to accomplish any significant adaptational change has waned considerably.

The arguments against neo-Darwinism center around four topics: mutation, natural selection, population genetics, and paleontology. Our major objection to the role of mutations in evolutionary change is the clear lack of data to indicate that mutations really accomplish anything new. While some weird-looking fruit flies have been created in the laboratory, they are still fruit flies. Bacteria are still bacteria. We quoted from Pierre-Paul Grasse', the great French evolutionist. When commenting on the mutations of bacteria he said:

What is the use of their unceasing mutations if they do not change? In sum, the mutations of bacteria and viruses are merely hereditary fluctuations around a median position; a swing to the right, a swing to the left, but no final evolutionary effect.

A mechanism for the creation of new genetic material is also sadly inadequate. Sometimes, an extra copy of a gene arises due to a DNA duplication error. Evolutionists suggest that this extra gene can accumulate mutations and eventually code for a new gene with a different function. In reality, however, this fails to explain how an old gene takes on a new function and new regulation pathways by the introduction of genetic mistakes into the gene and the regulatory apparatus.

Natural selection is a conservative process, not a creative one. The famous example of peppered moths teaches us how a

species survives in a changing environment by possessing two varieties adapted to different conditions. Antibiotic resistance in bacteria only instructed us in the ingenious mechanisms of different bacteria to share the already existing genes for antibiotic resistance among themselves.

Decades of research in the science of population genetics has not helped the neo-Darwinist position. The data from protein and gene variation shed only a dim light on the major problem of evolution—the appearance of novel adaptations. The major significance of population genetics has been helping to understand how an organism responds to minor environmental fluctuations. And even this can be clouded in fundamental differences in theory.

The data of paleontology have been elaborated at length elsewhere. Gradual, neo-Darwinian evolution is not observable in the fossil record. The rarity of transitional forms has been called the trade secret of paleontology. Mutations, natural selection, genetics, and paleontology have all proved to be dead ends for Darwinism.

## **Obstacles to the Theory of Punctuated Equilibrium**

The coelacanth is a fish that has existed for hundreds of millions of years according to evolutionists and was thought to resemble the ancestors of modern amphibians. However, research into their anatomy, physiology, and life history since their rediscovery off Madagascar in 1938 have revealed no clues to their possible preadaptation to a terrestrial existence. The coelacanth is an example of stasis—the long-term stability of new species—the first cornerstone of evolution. A second is the sudden appearance of new species. One doesn't have to look very far for statements by paleontologists pointing to the fact that transitional forms are traditionally absent.

Introduced in 1972 by Niles Eldredge and Stephen Gould as a description of the pattern in the fossil record, punctuated equilibrium centers on the claims of stasis and sudden appearance. The major vehicle of evolutionary change becomes speciation, a process which gives rise to new species. Eldredge and Gould suggested that where there is lots of speciation, there should be lots of morphological differences. Where there is little speciation, there will be few morphological differences.

## **Morphological Change Becomes Associated with Speciation**

If morphological change is supposed to be associated with speciation, then groups of organism that contain large numbers of species should also display large morphological differences within the group. But there are numerous examples of specific groups of related organisms that contain large numbers of species, like the minnows (*Notropis*), which show very little morphological divergence. This is exactly the opposite of their prediction. Sunfishes (*Lepomis*), however, a group with relatively few species, show just as much morphological divergence as the minnows. This is one more contradiction of punctuated equilibrium because here there is little speciation but a lot of differences.

Another tricky aspect of the claims of punctuated equilibrium is that a new species of fossil can only be recognized because of observable differences, usually in the skeletal structure. Biological species, however, are designated by many criteria (chromosome structure, etc.,) that cannot be detected in a fossil. Therefore, trying to extend a paleontological description of species and speciation will be very difficult.

What we see is that beyond punctuated equilibrium's ability to describe the fossil record, it is of little use to evolutionary biologists because they cannot imagine a way to

make it work with real organisms. Gould and Eldredge admitted as much in their review of punctuated equilibrium's progress in the journal, *Nature*, in 1993 when they lamented that:

But continuing unhappiness, justified this time, focuses upon claims that speciation causes significant morphological change, for no validation of such a position has emerged.

In addition, punctuationalists offer no new mechanisms for arriving at new genetic information. No new theory of evolutionary change is complete without some workable mechanism for generating new genetic information. There appears to be a general lack of appreciation as to what a mutation is and what its effects on the organism may be. Discussions of regulatory and developmental mutations are carried out with no regard as to the overwhelmingly destructive effect such mutations produce compared to mutations in structural genes. Developmental mutations can cripple an organism or even lead to death. Thus, punctuated equilibrium raises more questions than it answers.

## **Another Alternative**

As I have tried to point out, the two major competing models of evolutionary change are far from being considered accepted facts of nature. Both suffer from serious problems from which, some say, they may never be able to recover. However, if one sits back and views the evidence as a whole, a totally different perspective arises as a possibility.

First, virtually all taxonomic levels, even species appear abruptly in the fossil record. This, it will be remembered, is one of the sharper criticisms of neo-Darwinism, and one of the two cornerstones of punctuated equilibrium. It is relevant not only that the various levels of taxa appear abruptly but also that alongside the higher taxonomic levels there are unique adaptations. This is the key. Unique and highly specialized adaptations usually, if not always, appear fully formed in the

fossil record. The origin of the different types of invertebrate animals such as the sponges, mollusks, echinoderms like the starfish, arthropods like crustaceans, and others all appear suddenly, without ancestors, in the Cambrian period.

Second, there is the steady maintenance of the basic body plan of the organism through time. One need only think of the living fossils from paleontology and of bacteria and the *Drosophila* fruit flies from genetics. The basic body plan does not change whether analyzed through time in the fossil record or through mutations in the laboratory. This conclusion is reinforced by animal and plant breeders through artificial selection. There is much variation, but it can be manipulated only to a limit.

Third, we found that in the few cases where organisms have adapted to new environments, this is predominantly brought about through very ordinary processes utilizing genetic variation that was probably always present in the species. Mutations, when they do play a role, produce defective organisms that survive and thrive only in unusual and unique environments. At best the chances of mutants out-competing normal or wild-type organisms are minute.

Fourth, we see the apparent inability of mutations to truly contribute to the origin of new structures. The theory of gene duplication in its present form is unsuitable to account for the origin of new genetic information that is a must for any theory of evolutionary mechanism.

Fifth, we observed the amazing complexity and integration of the genetic machinery in every living cell. What we do know of the genetic machinery is impressive; what we have yet to learn staggers the imagination. One's curiosity is aroused as to how mutation, selection, and speciation could ever hope to improve or change the machinery in any substantial way. The cellular machinery poses an even bigger problem. The molecular workings

of cilia, electron transport, protein synthesis, cellular targeting, and so many others, are simply astounding.

The sixth and final element involves the big picture. Ecosystems themselves are a marvelous balance of complexity and integration. One can devise schemes of energy flow or biomass flow through an ecosystem as complicated as any biochemical pathway or genetic regulatory scheme. At the center of all this is the wondrous fit of an organism to its own peculiar environment. In the time before Darwin this wondrous fit was the chief evidence of a Supreme Designer.

So, while it is clear that organisms change, there may be a limit to biological change.

## **The Natural Limits to Biological Change**

Has Darwin's theory of natural selection really shown intelligent design in nature to be unreasonable? In view of the failure of evolutionary mechanisms to be convincing, might biological change be a limited affair? Could the limits of biological change arise from the very nature of the genetic code itself, the unique set of structural and regulatory genes present in various groups of organisms and the tight organization and coadapted nature of the entire genome? I believe there are limits to biological change and that these limits are set by the structure and function of the genetic machinery.

Intelligent design is not a new concept. Of course the concept itself, goes back into the previous centuries. Intelligent design, however, is taking on a more sophisticated form. As knowledge of informational codes and information theory grows, the possibility of making predictions of the intricacy of the DNA informational code grow more realistic. If DNA required intelligent pre-programming, the signs should be unmistakable.

The mark of intelligence is not exactly hard to discern. We



speak of the genetic code, DNA transcribed into RNA, RNA translated into protein. These are language terms. They are used not just because they are convenient, but because they accurately describe what is going on in the cell. There is a transfer of information. I believe that an application of information theory to the field of genetics will yield a comprehensible theory of limited biological change.

This is wholly reasonable because information theory concerns itself statistically with the essential characteristics of information and how that information is accurately transmitted or communicated. DNA is an informational code, so the connection is readily apparent. The overwhelming conclusion is that information does not and cannot arise spontaneously by mechanistic processes. Intelligence appears to be a necessity in the origin of any informational code, including the genetic code, no matter how much time is given.

More directly though, our concern was with what happens after the code is in place. Could intelligence be required for the first cell but not afterward? To answer that we must look at the informational content of DNA a little more closely. Similar to what happens in language, there are two fundamental principles involved in the expression of genetic information. First, there is a finite set of words that are essentials of content. In organisms, this is comparable to structural genes. Second, the rules of grammar provide for the richness of expression using the finite set of words. In organisms, these rules or programs consist of the regulatory and developmental mechanisms. In human languages, given a finite set of words and a set of rules, the variety of expression goes on and on. It is conceivable, therefore, that different groups of organisms, maybe bats and whales for example, are characterized by different regulatory mechanisms, i.e., different developmental programs.

There is growing interest in a biological theory of intelligent design around the world. While many still

vigorously oppose all such ideas, there is a much greater openness than ever before. Philosophers, mathematicians, chemists, engineers, and biologists are willing to suggest, even demand that a more rigorous study of intelligent design in relation to biological organisms be pursued. A renaissance may be around the corner.

## Confirming New Data

It was known ten years ago that much of the information for the early stages of development were contained in the cytoplasm or the cell membrane. This has since been rigorously confirmed. There is information, therefore, that is possibly not contained in the nucleus. So our emphasis on the genetic material was a little too strong. There is at least another source of information to consider. This seems to imply that in order to change the body plan changes are required to be coordinated in perhaps two unrelated sources of information in the embryo. This would make a change in the developmental pathway even more difficult to achieve.

Michael Denton's book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, revealed that development through the earliest embryonic stages is vastly different in amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Supposedly similar early structures arise from non-similar structures and pathways in the embryo. This bears witness to our contention that unique developmental pathways would separate the basic types, even when the structures are thought to be homologous.

The complexity of living things continue to astound the imagination. Michael Behe has introduced the term **irreducible complexity**. Irreducibly complex systems are systems which must have all molecular components present in order to be functional. He used the molecular machinery of cilia as an example. Cilia contain numerous molecular components such as the proteins nexin, dynein, and microtubules that all need to be present if a cilia is to perform at all. Cilia cannot arise

step by step.

But perhaps the most gratifying confirmation of our ideas came about recently in the publication of a book edited by J. P. Moreland, *The Creation Hypothesis*. The chapter on the origin of human language contained this passage on the complexities of the genetic language.

In order for any organism to be what it is, its genetic program, (DNA) must specify what sort of organism it will be and, within surprisingly narrow limits, what specific characteristics it will assume. Such limits, innately determined, apply as much to a human being or to a Rhesus monkey as to a special variety of fruit fly or yeast or bacterium (p. 252).

Later after discussing the cascade of information from DNA to protein they conclude:

The whole cascading network of relationships must be specified within rather narrowly defined limits in order for any organism whatever to be a viable possibility. Moreover, the problem of biogenesis and the origin of human language capacity are linked at their basis by more than just a remarkable analogy. It turns out that the human genome must include the essential characteristics of the entire conceptual system that we find manifested in the great variety of languages and their uses, but within rather narrow limits, by human beings throughout the world (p. 254).

The use of such phrases as “narrowly defined limits” and “great variety” applying to both human languages and the information content of DNA is promising. If languages require intelligent pre-programming, then so does the genetic code.

It is difficult for me to imagine that that honest men and women could study the immense complexities of even the “simplest” creatures and not marvel, or better yet worship, at

the feet of their Creator.

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# Human Fossils

## Australopithecines

A recent issue of *Time* magazine (14 March 1994) displayed a picture of *Homo erectus* on the cover with the title, "How Man Began: Fossil bones from the dawn of humanity are rewriting the story of evolution." The question of human origins fascinates us! Many people are intrigued by the possibility of descending from an ape-like ancestor only 7 million years ago. The field of paleoanthropology, the study of human fossils, embraces colorful personalities that compete for our allegiance to their particular evolutionary scheme. Mary and Louis Leakey, their son, Richard Leakey, and Donald Johanson are all recognizable names in this fascinating field of study.

Reading *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *National Geographic* convinces most people that humans evolved from ape-like ancestors. However, a now well-known poll indicates that 47% of adults in the United States, almost half, believe humans were created only 10,000 years ago and that only 9%, less than 1 in 10, believe humans are the result of an evolutionary process in which God played no part. So who's fooling whom? I want to take a brief look at the evidence for human evolution. This is an engrossing topic with some surprising answers.

The story begins about 3.5 million years ago with the appearance of a group of animals collectively known as australopithecines. *Australo* means "southern" and *pithecines*

meaning “apes.” These “southern apes,” initially discovered in South Africa, were small, apparently upright walking apes. Then around 2 million years ago, a new creature appears that is now put into the genus *Homo*, *Homo habilis*. *Homo habilis* possesses the same stature of the australopithecines but with a slightly larger brain. It is also suggested that he used a few primitive tools. Next appears the real star of human evolution, *Homo erectus*. *Homo erectus* possesses the skeletal frame of modern humans though he’s a little more robust, and his brain capacity is closer still to humans. *Homo erectus* uses more advanced tools. This “almost” human hangs around we’re told for over 1.5 million years when nearly modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) begin to appear. Soon the offshoot Neanderthals arise and about the same time thoroughly modern humans appear in the last 100,000 years.

While this is the standard story, and the one you will find in the recent issue of *Time* magazine, it is far from convincing when all the data are considered. Take the australopithecines, for example. While there is still some debate about whether these creatures walked upright at all, most anthropologists accept that they walked on two legs. But it is misleading if you don’t know the rest of the story. The fact is, that Lucy, the most well known australopithecine (*Australopithecus afarensis*), was also mildly adapted to life in the trees. The evolutionist William Howells said “there is general agreement that Lucy’s gait is **not** properly understood, and that it was **not** something simply transitional to ours” (*Getting Here: The Story of Human Evolution*, 1993, emphasis mine). If Lucy walked upright, it was distinct from apes and humans. Not exactly what you would expect from a transitional form. Lucy is simply an extinct ape with no clear connection to humans.

## The Uncertainties of *Homo Erectus*

We have all seen the series of extinct creatures that lead from ape to man. Evolutionists confidently declare that while

there may be a lot of details missing from the story, the basic outline is fairly complete. This all seems rather impressive. In his recent book, *Bones of Contention* (Baker, 1992, p. 21), creationist Marvin Lubenow, offers an important observation:

*What is not generally known is that this sequence, impressive as it seems, is a very artificial and arbitrary arrangement because 1) some fossils are selectively excluded if they do not fit well into the evolutionary scheme; 2) some human fossils are arbitrarily downgraded to make them appear to be evolutionary ancestors when they are in fact true humans; and 3) some non-human fossils are upgraded to make them appear to be human ancestors.*

The australopithecines are a good example of Lubenow's third point. These extinct apes are trumpeted as human ancestors because of their crude bipedal walking ability. But nearly everything else about them is ape-like. The origin of their bipedality would be no small evolutionary task. Even Richard Leakey admits as much in his book with Roger Lewin, *Origins Reconsidered* (pp. 83-84), when he says that the change from walking on four legs to walking on two legs

*...would have required an extensive remodeling of the ape's bone and muscle architecture and of the overall proportion in the lower half of the body. Mechanisms of gait are different, mechanics of balance are different, functions of major muscles are different—an entire functional complex had to be transformed for efficient bipedalism to be possible.*

Yet these immense changes are not documented from the fossil record.

A good example of Lubenow's second point, the arbitrary downgrading of human fossils to make them appear to be our ancestors, is *Homo erectus*. *Homo erectus* is said to span the

time from around 1.7 million years ago to nearly 400,000 years ago. From its first appearance, *erectus* is admitted to have a fully human post-cranial skeleton (that means everything but the head). But the brain size is given an evolutionary twist by saying that it only approaches the average for modern humans. In reality, *Homo erectus* brain size is within the range of modern humans.

Throughout the course of their book, *Origins Reconsidered*, Leakey and Lewin document an impressive array of characteristics that distinguish the ape-like qualities of australopithecines from the human qualities of *Homo erectus*. Australopithecines are small in stature, only 3-4 feet tall, and the males are twice the size of females. In humans and *Homo erectus*, the males are only 15-20% larger than females, and a juvenile *erectus* fossil is estimated to have grown to a height of six feet if he had lived.

In *Homo erectus*, all of the following characteristics display the human pattern, while in australopithecines, the ape pattern is evident: growth pattern, dental structure and development, facial structure and development, brain morphology, height to weight ratio, probable position of larynx based on the contours of the base of the skull making speech possible, and the size of the birth canal relative to the size of the adult brain.

Where some *Homo erectus* fossils differ from humans can be explained by the effects of inbreeding, dietary restrictions, and a harsh environment. But evolutionists need an intermediate, and *Homo erectus* is the only option available.

## **Neanderthals and the Paleontologists**

In the field of paleoanthropology, the study of human fossils, one must approach the data and interpretations of the scientists involved with a careful and skeptical eye. There are a number of obvious reasons for this healthy skepticism.

The most important reason being that they are looking for man's evolutionary ancestors. If that is what you are looking for, then that is likely what you will report to have found. That is just human nature.

A second reason, is that there is a great deal of competitiveness among anthropologists. They are involved in a race to be the one to discover **the** missing link which will mean immense notoriety and financial gain. The temptation to exaggerate the importance of their findings at the expense of others is very great.

Another reason for skepticism is that all anthropologists compare only plaster casts of the fossils or measurements available in the literature and not the fossils themselves. The actual fossils are understandably considered too delicate, fragile, and valuable to be handled directly all the time. However, plaster casts are sadly unable to accurately reproduce many of the details needed for proper study. In 1984, the largest collection of actual fossils was gathered from around the world at the American Museum of Natural History for the opening of the "Ancestors" exhibit. It was a unique opportunity for side by side comparisons that took much persuasion to pull off. The mounts for each skull or fragment were individually prepared using a cast of the original fossil. Unfortunately, when the real fossils showed up, most of them did not fit! It is a myth to think that those who teach and write on human origins have actually held in their hands even a fraction of the original material.

Evolutionists have been embarrassed on more than one occasion when their evolutionary bias, competitiveness, and lack of familiarity with the original fossils were not considered. A good example is the misinterpretation of neanderthals. Though there is still much dispute whether neanderthals are a subspecies of humans or a completely different species, in the early part of this century, there was unanimity in the belief that neanderthals were brutish, stooped creatures who were



more closely related to apes than to humans. This impression stood for over forty years. One of the first complete neanderthal skeletons was found in a cave in France in 1908. It was given to the French paleontologist, Marcellin Boule to reconstruct.

From other fragmentary fossils, Boule had already formed an evolutionary bias that neanderthals were not related to humans. Boule saw only the “primitive” traits of neanderthals and ignored clear evidence of arthritis and rickets in the skeleton. Boule reconstructed the skeleton without the curves in the spine that allow humans to walk upright. He also placed the skull far forward so that it would have been difficult to even look up as we do. Other miscues produced an individual who was little more than a shuffling hunchback. Because of his reputation, this reconstruction stood until 1957, when two scientists re-examined the reconstruction and found Boule’s prejudicial mistakes. Their study concluded that neanderthals, when healthy, stood erect, and walked normally. Neanderthals were simply stronger, stockier members of the human family.

## **Allowing the Facts to Speak**

It is interesting to observe certain pieces of the fossil evidence for human evolution either ignored or stretched in order to not upset the accepted picture of human evolution. Creationist Marvin Lubenow, in his recent book, *Bones of Contention*, gives numerous examples of this kind of manipulation, and I’d like to discuss three of the most glaring incidents.

First is a bone fragment of the lower end of the upper arm, near the elbow, that was found near Kanapoi, Kenya, in 1965 and is given the designation, KP 271. What is unusual about this discovery is the date of around 4.5 million years—unusual because it appears for all intents and purposes to be human. Humans are not supposed to have been around 4.5 million years ago. Consequently, this small piece of humerus is usually

designated as *Australopithecus* because that is the only hominid species known to be available at that time. Lubenow quotes Harvard anthropologist William Howells in a stunning admission,

*The humeral fragment from Kanapoi, with a date of about 4.4 million, could not be distinguished from Homo sapiens morphologically or by multivariate analysis by Patterson and myself in 1967. . . . We suggested that it might represent Australopithecus because at that time allocation to Homo seemed preposterous, although it would be the correct one without the time element. (pp. 56-57).*

The only reason KP 271 is not listed as human is because it can't be, according to evolution.

Second, many have heard of a series of footprints found by Mary Leakey near Laetoli, Tanzania. Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin, however, just gloss over them by calling them hominid footprints (*Origins Reconsidered*, p. 103). But Lubenow documents that these footprints are identical to those made today by humans that always walk barefoot. Yet these footprints are routinely classified as *Australopithecine*. William Howells refers to the conclusions of Russell Tuttle from the University of Chicago and a leading expert on hominoid gait and limbs as saying that the footprints are nearly identical to modern humans and that *australopithecine* feet are significantly different. Tuttle suggests an undiscovered species made these prints. But he can't say that a human made them because humans aren't supposed to exist yet. In the words of evolutionist William Howells, "Here is something of an enigma" (*Getting Here: The Story of Human Evolution*, p. 79). Indeed!

Finally, Lubenow documents the incredible saga of determining the date for Skull 1470. Skull 1470 was very modern in its appearance but was found in rock previously dated at 2.9

million years—much too old for a modern skull. So some scientists set out to determine a much younger date. Lubenow recounts the back and forth wrangling over the issue. Several radioactive methods and paleomagnetism mainly pointed to 2.9 million years, but a few were found contradictory. Ultimately the radioactive dates were tossed aside in favor of a date of 1.9 million years, a date that fit the human evolution better, based on the certainty of the dates of pig evolution. Yes, pig evolution. To quote Lubenow, “The pigs won. . . . The pigs took it all. But in reality, it wasn’t the pigs that won. It was evolution that won. In the dating game, evolution always wins” (p. 266).

## **A Creationist Perspective on Ancient Humans**

Thus far we have been discussing some of the significant problems with evolutionary explanations of ancient human remains. But questions still remain. Many of these individuals do look very different from modern humans. Who are they? Where did they come from? Does any of this make sense from a creationist perspective? While we need to be careful not to over interpret the data as we have accused evolutionists of doing, there are a few suggestions that make some sense.

The most obvious first step is to recognize that *Homo erectus*, archaic *Homo sapiens*, neanderthals, and *Homo sapiens* form a continuum of the human family. The different forms represent genetic variation within a species and not distinct species. Many evolutionists themselves have difficulty drawing the line between these four different labels.

A group of human fossils from Kow Swamp, Australia, are no more than 13,000 years old yet contain many of the skull characteristics of *Homo erectus*. Some of the explanations for this involve cultural modifications and not genetic differences. In other words, many of the characteristics of

*Homo erectus* can be achieved in modern humans by lifestyle changes. These could include deliberate forehead compression, deformation due to inbreeding, modifications due to dietary deficiencies and peculiarities. The late Arthur Custance documents differences in the modern skulls of Eskimos due to the massive jaw muscles that are developed because of their diet (*Genesis and Early Man*, 1975). Many of these changes would be labeled as primitive if dug up in some ancient river bed, yet they exist in fully modern humans today.

Marvin Lubenow offers the interesting suggestion that many of these ancient humans are the remains of individuals within the first millennia after the flood of Noah (*Bones of Contention*, pp. 144-156). Effects of the ice age, constant cloud cover (preventing Vitamin D formation leading to rickets), largely vegetarian and uncooked diet, and expression of local genetic variation could readily account for the many different, yet anatomically related human forms. Are these ancient humans former ape-like creatures that are evolving towards humans, or are they humans caught in a unique and harsh world that brought about numerous interspecies variants? Evolutionists never bother to ask the latter question. A creationist perspective, in this case, may lead to questions that evolutionists may never ask. That is the value, in science, of a different perspective.

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## Human Cloning

*Note: Please read [The Little Lamb That Made a Monkey of Us All](#) for the author's comments on the news of a successful lamb cloning (March 7, 1997). Also, please read the author's subsequent article [Can Humans Be Cloned like Sheep?](#) for an*

*updated, expanded discussion.*

Human cloning: Is *Brave New World* just around the corner? Well, no, not even close. Reports of human cloning in early October 1993, by researchers Robert Stillman and Jerry Hall from George Washington University sparked a firestorm of controversy. While a real-life version of Aldous Huxley's science-fiction prediction is nowhere near being fulfilled, there are serious questions about the ethical legitimacy and potential abuses that could result from the recently announced research.

In one respect, I sympathize with the scientists involved who naively felt their work was nothing unusual and who suddenly found themselves the subjects of *New York Times* and *Time* magazine cover stories as well as the special guests on "Good Morning America," "Nightline," and "Larry King Live." The spotlight did not suit them very well. Some aspects of the media hoopla were drastically overplayed, but other concerns are very real. What did the research actually accomplish?

Stillman and Hall, rather than cloning humans, actually just performed the first artificial twinning using human embryos. A similar procedure has been performed in mice successfully for twenty years and in cattle for ten years. Identical twins are produced when a fertilized egg divides for the first time and instead of remaining as one organism, actually splits into two independent cells. Stillman and Hall were able to achieve this same effect by removing the protective layer around the developing embryo (zona pellucida), splitting the cells apart, and replacing the outer coating with an artificial shell.

Essentially, this raises the possibility of creating as many as eight identical embryos where there was once only a single embryo consisting of eight cells. The procedure was pursued in order to assist couples seeking in vitro fertilization. Many women are unable to produce multiple eggs. Once fertilized, the resulting embryos only implant 10-20% of the time.

Therefore, if you have 2 to 8 identical embryos, all formed from one original embryo, you can implant one and freeze the rest. If the first implant is unsuccessful, you can thaw one of the frozen twins and try again.

To call this cloning, as the media have done, is a bit misleading. The more usual meaning of cloning an individual would be to take a cell from an adult individual, remove the nucleus, implant it in a fertilized egg that has had its nucleus removed. Strictly speaking, this is not possible today. The feat was accomplished in frogs back in 1952 by taking the nuclei of cells from the intestinal lining of tadpoles and implanting them into fertilized eggs that had the nuclei destroyed by irradiation. However, only about one in a thousand implants are successful. Many of the frogs die early but others grow into rather grotesque monsters. No, true cloning is a long way away indeed.

So if true cloning has not actually been achieved, then is there any real cause for concern? Indeed, there is!

## **The Ethical Dilemmas of Artificial Twinning**

The initial outcry concerning the work of researchers Stillman and Hall at George Washington University has come from the public and the media. But many of their own colleagues are upset.

Many within the field have recognized for quite some time that artificial twinning would be possible with human embryos. But they knew that such experiments would raise a host of ethical concerns that they were unwilling to deal with. It is unfortunate that Stillman and Hall were so unprepared for the controversy because it just reinforces the idea many of us have that all scientists are blind to the ethical ramifications of their work. It is clear from interviews that Stillman and Hall care deeply, but just didn't think ahead.

Jerry Hall was asked in the *Time* magazine article (8 November 1993, p. 67) if he feared that his work would create a public backlash towards this kind of research. He said: "I respect people's concerns and feelings. But we have not created human life or destroyed human life in this experiment." What this statement implies is that Hall and Stillman do not consider the embryos they were working with as human life. The embryos used in this research project were doomed from the start because they were fertilized with more than one sperm. The extra genetic material precludes the possibility of normal embryonic development. But does this mean that these embryos are not human?

Many individuals carry a death sentence because of congenital conditions or genetic disease, but they are certainly human. We will all die eventually. The timetable is not important. I believe that these embryos were human beings and further experimentation was performed on them which added an additional risk to their already imperiled condition. If I had been a member of the ethical review board of George Washington University, I would have denied permission to pursue these experiments. Human experimentation was performed without informed consent.

Hall and Stillman have defended their work by saying they consider it only a logical extension of in vitro fertilization. These efforts are driven by a desire to relieve human suffering—in this case the suffering of infertile couples. I know of many couples who have battled infertility, and I know that their pain is real and deeply rooted. But I also believe that this is a case where our desire to live in a painless world is clouding our ability to make moral decisions. One woman who had undergone eight unsuccessful in vitro attempts was asked if she would be willing to try artificial twinning. She said: "It's pretty scary, but I would probably consider it as a desperate last attempt." She is clearly frightened by the moral and ethical implications, yet

if nothing else worked, she'd do it! Our decisions are based more on the tug of our hearts and pocketbooks than with our minds. We are losing our moral will! The whole subject is rife with potential abuses by people on all sides of the issue.

## **What Are the Potential Abuses of Artificial Twinning?**

While artificial twinning itself raises some serious ethical questions, other possible scenarios that this research can lead to are just as troubling.

The two researchers involved have remarked that they felt their research was just the next logical step after in vitro fertilization. One of the warnings of Kerby Anderson, a familiar voice on the Probe radio program, in his book *Genetic Engineering* over ten years ago, was the argument of the slippery slope. Once a new technology is perfected, it opens up other technologies which are more troublesome than the original. Once started down the slope, it is hard to reverse directions. Hall and Stillman, by their own admission, have taken the next step down the slippery slope after in vitro fertilization. It is now important to assess the next step.

There are several scenarios which have received attention. One concerns couples who are known to be at risk for a hereditary disease such as cystic fibrosis. If from a single fertilized egg, two to four identical embryos could be created by the artificial twinning process, then one could be tested for the genetic marker, and the others held in frozen storage. The genetic testing may require the destruction of the initial embryo. If the test is negative, then one of the reserve embryos could be thawed, implanted, and brought to term. This process is hardly respectful of human life. If the test confirms the presence of the genetic disease, all embryos could be destroyed.

Another suggestion is that the artificial twins could be kept



frozen as an insurance policy even after the original child is born. If the original child dies at an early age, a frozen twin could be thawed, and the parent would have the identical child to raise again. Another suggestion has been to keep the frozen twins available in case the original twin needs a bone marrow transplant or some other organ. The tissues would match perfectly. A couple in California has already set a precedent by electing to have another child to provide bone marrow for their older daughter that had contracted leukemia. Fortunately for them, the tissues matched and both children are doing fine.

A final scenario suggests that frozen twins can be kept in reserve as the saleable stock for children catalogs. A catalog could be set up offering pictures and descriptions of the original twin and offering prospective parents the opportunity to have the very same child. This may sound foolish to you, but there are many in our society who would be willing to pay for just such a service. If you truly respect human life, then none of these possibilities should make sense. In light of what we have discussed, the subject of placing limits on scientific research also needs to be addressed.

## **What Can Constrain Scientific Research?**

One of the questions that inevitably comes up is whether such research should be allowed to be done at all. Some of the scenarios I mentioned earlier are chilling. We wonder if such things can be stopped by restricting the kinds of research that is done.

I have to admit that as a scientist myself, I am wary of giving the public a free voice to approve or disapprove what kinds of research are pursued by qualified scientists. Scientists themselves are usually the best judges of whether a particular project is worth doing on its scientific merits. Only other scientists can judge the worthiness of a research proposal based solely on its ability to contribute

significantly to our body of scientific knowledge. In a society deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian heritage, scientists could generally be trusted to make the correct moral decisions about their research as well. But this is not the case in our society today. We are a culture which is without a moral rudder. There is indeed a culture war going on. One of the consequences of this lack of direction is that many scientists and ethicists believe that scientists should be free to pursue their research goals regardless of what the long-term consequences might be.

John Robertson is a professor of law at the University of Texas. In a recent editorial, he said:

*As long as the research is for a valid scientific purpose, embryos that would otherwise be discarded can, with the informed consent of the couple whose eggs and sperm produced the embryos, be ethically used in research. Neither the lack of guidelines, the moral objections of some people to any embryo research, nor the fears about where cloning research might lead justify denying researchers the ability to take the next step. (Chronicle of Higher Education, 24 November 1993, p. A40)*

Essentially Professor Robertson has insulated himself from any criticism from outside the scientific community. As long as informed consent can be obtained from the parents, the sole criteria is a valid scientific purpose. Questions concerning the sanctity of human life are not allowed. Questions concerning the potential abuses are not allowed. In other words, scientists exist in some kind of a moral vacuum.

I am afraid that this kind of research is going to continue simply because there is not a large enough moral consensus present in society to prevent it. We have become too powerfully driven by the personal end in mind to repudiate the means to get there. Do we raise our voices in protest?

Certainly. Do we continue to point out the moral and logical fallacies in the prevailing arguments? Certainly. But until the culture at large turns its attention from the immediate gain and considers what is right, the ethical slide will continue.

Moreover, there is the even more questionable and fear-provoking question of whether true human cloning is feasible.

## **Is Human Cloning Really Possible?**

True cloning, as opposed to artificial twinning, is much more involved. Cloning is a technique that is partly successful in frogs. Frogs can be cloned by collecting eggs from a female frog. The nucleus in the eggs is destroyed by irradiation. Next, cells are isolated from the intestinal lining of a tadpole. The nucleus is removed from the intestinal cell and placed within a previously enucleated egg. The egg now has the opportunity to begin cell division and development.

Most of these embryos do not survive. Of those that do survive, the majority grow into rather grotesque monsters. Only about one in a thousand develop into a normal looking adult frog. One small catch is that all of these normal looking frogs turn out to be sterile. Even so, this is a remarkable achievement. But is this possible in humans, and if so, what are the barriers.

The first item to note is that the frog experiments utilized nuclei from a developing tadpole. Embryonic tissue is still actively dividing. Using a nucleus from a dividing cell is crucial to the success of these experiments. Non-dividing cells such as adult bone and neural cells have had the cell division portions of their genes turned off by a variety of molecular mechanisms. That is why the use of most adult cells would be impossible in these experiments. They wouldn't work. It also explains why DNA from long dead cells such as from a mummy, or even a dinosaur as in Jurassic Park is totally

impractical.

Some cells in the adult body are actively dividing, such as skin fibroblasts. These cells continually supply new skin cells to replace those which sluff off. In fact it was skin fibroblasts that were purportedly used for cloning a man in David Rorvik's fictional book, *In His Image: The Cloning of a Man*, back in the late seventies. But there are difficulties here too. Skin cells have had many genes switched off. These are skin cells, not liver cells, or eye cells, or bone cells. All of the genes needed to produce the unique proteins required by all these specialized cells have been switched off by a variety of molecular mechanisms. Many of these mechanisms are unknown; consequently, we do not know how to unlock them. Nor do we know how to get them expressed in the correct sequence necessary for embryological development.

There are so many roadblocks to the successful cloning of an adult human that I don't expect it any time soon. However, I am afraid our current culture will pursue this possibility as long as there is potential profit and a perceived scientific benefit.

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## **The Grand Canyon and the Age of the Earth – A Christian Scientist's View**

*As a Christian scientist, Dr. Bohlin is open to examining the theories of both young-earth and old-earth scientists to explain what we can observe today. The Grand Canyon provides*

*an excellent venue to consider the theories of both groups on how the geological layers were formed and when this occurred.*

## **The Age of the Earth and Genesis 1**

How old is the earth? How long has this planet been here? Ask most Christians this question and you will likely receive a quick, self-assured answer. All would be well if you could count on receiving the same answer! However, some will very quickly tell you that the earth was created during creation week and can be no more than six to ten thousand years old. Other Christians will tell you, with just as much confidence, that the earth is 4.5 billion years old. This is no minor discrepancy! What adds even more to the confusion is the fact that you can find both opinions within conservative evangelical circles. You can even find both opinions within the ranks of the few Christian geologists with Ph.D.s! Let me assure you that this is just as confusing for me as it is for you.

The age of the earth is a question both of biblical interpretation and scientific investigation. Unfortunately, neither Christian conservative Old Testament scholars nor Christian scientists are in universal agreement. This topic covers a broad spectrum of issues so I am going to try and narrow the focus of the discussion. I will first briefly discuss the biblical aspects of the question, then move on to geology, the flood, and the Grand Canyon.

First, how do the “young-earth” and “old-earth” positions view the Scriptures? Let me emphasize right at the start that both young- earth and old-earth creationists bring a reverent and submissive attitude to Genesis. The difference is a matter of interpretation. Well-known young-earth creationists Henry Morris, Duane Gish, and Steve Austin, from the Institute for Creation Research, interpret the days of Genesis 1 as literal 24-hours days, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 as consecutive or nearly consecutive generations, and the flood

as a universal, catastrophic event. This leaves little room for much more than ten to thirty thousand years as the true age of the earth.

Old earth creationists such as astronomer Hugh Ross of Reasons to Believe see the days of Genesis as long periods of time, perhaps even millions of years. Genesis 1, then, describes the unfolding of God's creation through vast periods of time. God still does the work, it is still a miracle, but it takes a lot longer than seven days. The flood of Noah necessarily becomes a local event with little impact on world-wide geology. Other old-earth creationists simply suggest that what is communicated in Genesis 1 is a literary form of the ancient Near East describing a perfect creation. Genesis 1 was never intended to communicate history, at least in their view. Personally, my sympathies lie with a Genesis interpretation that is historical, literal, and with 24-hour days in the recent past. But the testimony of science, God's natural revelation, is often difficult to correlate with this view. The earth has many layers of sediments thousands of feet thick. How could one year-long catastrophe account for all this sediment? The answers may surprise you!

## **The Grand Canyon**

The Grand Canyon is almost three hundred miles long, a mile deep, and four to twelve miles across. One's first view of the Grand Canyon is a humbling experience. You truly have to see it to believe it. I was mesmerized and could hardly contain my excitement when I caught my first glimpse of the canyon. I was there to partake in a six-day geology hike into the canyon with the Institute for Creation Research, a young-earth creationist organization. ICR believes that the strata, the layers of rock in the Grand Canyon, were primarily formed during Noah's flood perhaps only five thousand years ago. Most geologists, including Christian old-earth creationists, believe that the strata were laid down over hundreds of

millions of years. What better way, then, to equip myself for the study of the earth's age, than to spend nine days around the Grand Canyon (six of them in it) with ICR geologists, physicists, and biologists. ICR has been conducting these tours for over ten years, so everything runs extremely well. Though I was a member of a hiking group, they also sponsored a group going down the Colorado River in rafts and a group touring the whole area by bus. All were accompanied by ICR scientists. Each day we received mini-lectures from the leaders as we broke for lunch or at points of interest along the trail. Topics included the sudden appearance of fossils, the complexity of the earliest canyon fossils such as the trilobites, the age of the earth's magnetic fields, the role of continental drift in the onset of the flood, where does the ice age fit into a young-earth model, water- canopy theories, carbon-14 dating, and the dating of the Grand Canyon basalts (rock layers derived from ancient lava flows).

We examined many evidences for rapid formation of rock layers, which is essential to the young-earth model. We spent nearly two hours at the Great Unconformity between the Tapeats Sandstone, which is dated at about 500 million years old, and the Hakatai Shale, which is dated at about 1.5 billion years old. These two formations were formed nearly one billion years apart in time, yet one lies right on top of the other. Nearly a billion years is missing between them! The night before entering the canyon for the hike, I wrote these words in my journal:

*If these strata are the result of Noah's flood and the canyon carved soon afterward, the canyon stands as a mighty testament to God's power, judgment, and grace. Even if not, what a wonderful world our Lord has sculpted for us to inhabit. His love is bigger than I can grasp, bigger-infininitely bigger-than even the Grand Canyon!*

# Evidence of Noah's Flood in the Grand Canyon

One of the more obvious formations in the Grand Canyon is the Coconino Sandstone. This prominent formation is found only a few hundred feet below the rim of the canyon and forms one of the many cliffs in the canyon. Its distinctive yellow cream color makes it look like a thick layer of icing between two cake layers.

Evolutionary geologists have described this sandstone as originating from an ancient desert. Remnants of sand dunes can be seen in many outcrops of the formation in a phenomenon called cross-bedding. There are many footprints found in this sandstone that have been interpreted as lizards scurrying across the desert.

These footprints would seem to pose a major challenge to young-earth geologists who need to explain this formation in the context of Noah's flood. Since there are many flood-associated layers both above and below this sandstone, there is no time for a desert to form in the middle of Noah's flood. Recent investigations, however, have revealed that the cross-bedding can be due to underwater sand dunes and that some footprints are actually better explained by amphibians moving across sandy-bottomed shallow water. Perhaps this formation can be explained by sand deposited under water.

This explanation does not entirely solve the young-earth geologists' problem, because it is still difficult to determine where the amphibians came from and how they could be crawling around in shallow waters on top of sediments that would have to be deposited halfway through a world-wide catastrophic flood. But let's go on to another flood evidence. Earlier, I mentioned the Great Unconformity. This can be observed throughout the Grand Canyon where the Tapeats Sandstone, a Cambrian formation estimated to be 570 million



years old, rests on top of any one of a number of Precambrian strata ranging from one to two billion years old.

Our group observed a location in the Unconformity where the time gap between the two layers is estimated to be one billion years. It is very unusual, even for evolutionary geology, for two layers from periods so far apart, in this case one billion years, to be right on top of one another. It is hard to imagine that no sediments were deposited in this region for over a billion years! Evolutionary geologists believe that the upper sandstone was deposited over hundreds of thousands of years in a marine environment. However, we observed large rocks and boulders from a neighboring formation mixed into the bottom few feet of the Tapeats Sandstone. This indicates tremendous wave violence capable of tearing off these large rocks and transporting them over a mile before being buried. This surely fits the description of a flood rather than slow deposition. We spent nearly two hours at this location and we were all quite impressed with the clear evidence of catastrophic origin of the Tapeats Sandstone.

That the Coconino Sandstone likely had a water-deposited origin and that the Tapeats Sandstone was laid down in a great cataclysm are necessary elements for a young-earth flood geology scenario for the Grand Canyon.

## **The Erosion and Formation of the Grand Canyon**

Perhaps one of the most interesting questions about the Grand Canyon is how it was cut out of rock in the first place. The answer to this question has a lot to do with how old the canyon is supposed to be. The puzzling factor about the Grand Canyon is that the Colorado River cuts directly through an uplifted region called the Kaibab Upwarp. Normally a river would be expected to flow towards lower elevation, but the Colorado has cut right through an elevated region rather than

going around it.

The explanation you will still find in the National Park literature is that the Colorado began to cut the Grand Canyon as much as 70 million years ago, before the region was lifted up. As the uplift occurred, the Colorado maintained its level by cutting through the rock layers as they were lifted up. Thus the Grand Canyon was cut slowly over 70 million years! In recent years, however, evolutionary geologists as well as old-earth creationists have abandoned this scenario because it just isn't supported by the evidence. A major reason is that even at the present rate of erosion in the Grand Canyon, it would take as little as 71,000 years to erode the amount of rock currently missing from the Grand Canyon. Also, all of the sediment that would have to be eroded away during 70 million years has not been located. And lastly, evolutionists' own radiometric dates of some of the surrounding formations indicate that the Colorado River has been in its present location for less than five million years.

Some old-earth geologists have tentatively adopted a new theory that requires a few rather strange twists. This theory suggests that the Colorado River flowed through the area of the Grand Canyon only recently. The Colorado originally was forced in the opposite direction of its current flow by the Kaibab Upwarp and actually flowed southeast toward the Gulf of Mexico. This ancestral Colorado River may have occupied the course of what is now the Little Colorado River, only in the opposite direction of its current course.

This theory further suggests that about five million years ago a westward-flowing stream began to erode, upstream or towards the east, over what is today the Grand Canyon, through the Upwarp and capturing the ancestral Colorado River! If this sounds a little fantastic to you, you're probably right. In a recent volume on the Grand Canyon, a geologist, while maintaining this theory to be solid, admits a lack of hard data and that what evidence there is, is circumstantial. Into

this controversy step the young-earth creationists, who need to explain how the Grand Canyon was formed, strata and all, in less than 5,000 years. They suggest, quite reasonably I think, that the canyon was formed when the Kaibab Upwarp acted as a dam for three lakes occupying much of Utah, Colorado, and northern Arizona. These lakes catastrophically broke through the Upwarp, and the Grand Canyon was cut out of solid rock by the drainage of these lakes through this breach in the dam. A small canyon was formed this way recently as a result of the eruption of Mount St. Helens. Grand Coulee in Washington state was formed when an ice dam broke at the end of the Ice Age. This breached-dam theory answers a lot of questions the old-earth theories do not, and it needs to be considered.

## **Uncertainties of Dating the Grand Canyon**

I have noted that old-earth creationists believe that the Grand Canyon strata were formed over hundreds of millions of years and that the canyon itself was carved out in less than five million years. Young-earth creationists, on the other hand, believe that the strata of the canyon were formed as a result of Noah's flood and that the canyon was carved out catastrophically less than five thousand years ago. A critical question to ask is, how can we know how old the rocks in the Grand Canyon really are? The usual solution is to date the rocks by radiometric dating methods, which are supposed to be capable of dating rocks billions of years old. Rocks of volcanic origin are the best ones to use in dating rocks this way, since radiometric elements are plentiful in them. The Grand Canyon has volcanic rocks near the bottom and at the top. ICR has been involved in a project over the last several years to date these volcanic rocks. Their results not only call into question the age of the Grand Canyon but also the reliability of radiometric dating.

The youngest rocks in the Grand Canyon are recognized by all to be volcanic rocks in western Grand Canyon that flowed from

the top of and into the canyon. The oldest rocks that have been dated are volcanic rocks called the Cardenas Basalt, a Precambrian formation near the bottom of the canyon. The rubidium- strontium method, however, has dated the Cardenas basalt at one billion years and the lava flow on top of the canyon at 1.3 billion years. This is clearly impossible! Rocks on the bottom of the canyon are 300 million years younger than very recent rocks on the very top of the canyon! These dates were obtained by ICR from samples they sent to several independent dating labs. Something is amiss, either in the interpretation of the rocks, the dating methods, or both.

As we have seen, ICR scientists have come a long way in showing that many of the Grand Canyon strata could have formed rapidly, that erosion of the canyon by the Colorado River has not been going on for tens of millions of years, and that there are significant problems with the dating of the canyon.

However, there are still significant questions that remain to be answered if the young-earth model is to be taken seriously by old- earth geologists. For example, why are there no vertebrates among the fossils of the ocean floor communities of the Grand Canyon strata when vertebrates inhabit today's ocean floors? How did the many different kinds of sediments in the Grand Canyon (limestones, sandstones, shales, mudstones, siltstones, etc.) find their way to Northern Arizona as a result of one catastrophe and become so neatly stratified with little mixing? I raise these questions only to indicate that there is much work to be done. I also want you to realize that when someone asks me whether the flood of Noah created the Grand Canyon, I have to say that I don't know. And that's okay! The creation was a real historical event, Adam and Eve were real people, and the flood of Noah was real history as well. But finding the physical signs of these events can be tricky business. We need to encourage scientific investigation from both a young-and old-earth perspective because the testimony of God's word and His revelation from nature will

ultimately be in harmony. It may just be hard to discern what that harmony is right now.

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# Sociobiology: Evolution, Genes and Morality – A Christian Perspective

*Dr. Bohlin looks at the basic tenets of sociobiology from a biblical worldview perspective. Looking at them as a scientist and a Christian, he finds a lack of consistency and obvious paradoxes in this way of looking at our world.*



*This article is also available in [Spanish](#).*

In 1981 I wrote an article for *Christianity Today*, which they titled “Sociobiology: Cloned from the Gene Cult.”(1) At the time I was fresh from a graduate program in population genetics and had participated in two graduate seminars on the subject of sociobiology. You might be thinking, “What in the world is sociobiology, and why should I care?”

That’s a good question. Sociobiology explores the biological basis of all social behavior, including morality. You should care because sociobiologists are claiming that all moral and religious systems, including Christianity, exist simply because they help promote the survival and reproduction of the group. These sociobiologists, otherwise known as *evolutionary ethicists*, claim to be able to explain the existence of every major world religion or belief system, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and even Marxism and secular humanism, in

terms of natural selection and evolution. E. O. Wilson, a Harvard biologist and major advocate of sociobiology, claims that scientific materialism (a fully evolutionary worldview) will eventually overcome both traditional religion and any other secular ideology. While Wilson does admit that religion in some form will always exist, he suggests that theology as an explanatory discipline will cease to exist.

## The First Paradox

While the arrogance of sociobiology is readily apparent, it contains a number of paradoxes. The first paradox is simply that the worldview of sociobiology offers nothing but despair when taken to its logical conclusion, yet it continues to gain acceptance in the academic community.

## Four Foundational Principles of Sociobiology

The despair of the sociobiological worldview and the ultimate lack of meaning it presents are derived from what I consider the four foundational principles of sociobiology. The first principle is the assertion that human social systems have been shaped by evolutionary processes. Human societies exist in their present form because they work, or at least have worked in the past, not because they are based on any kind of revelation.

Second, there is what sociobiologist Robert Wallace called the **reproductive imperative**.<sup>(2)</sup> The ultimate goal of any organism is to survive and reproduce. Species survival is the ultimate goal. Moral systems exist because they ultimately promote human survival and reproduction.

Third, the individual—at least in respect to evolutionary time—is meaningless. Species, not individuals, evolve and persist through time. E.O. Wilson stated that the organism, your body, is simply DNA's way of making more DNA.<sup>(3)</sup>

Fourth, all behavior is therefore selfish, or at least

pragmatic, at its most basic level. We love our children because love is an effective means of raising effective reproducers. Wilson spells out the combined result of these principles quite clearly in his book *On Human Nature* when he says that

*...no species, ours included, possesses a purpose beyond the imperatives created by its own genetic history (i.e., evolution)...we have no particular place to go. The species lacks any goal external to its own biological nature.(4)*

Wilson is saying that since humans have been shaped by evolution alone, they have no purpose beyond survival and reproduction. Even Wilson admits that this is an unappealing proposition.

## **Hope and Meaning**

Since sociobiologists claim that all behavior is ultimately selfish, that an organism's only goal or purpose is to survive and reproduce, and that it is species survival, not individual survival, that is ultimately required, personal worth and dignity quickly disappear. The responses of sociobiologists when they are confronted with this conclusion have always been curious to me. I distinctly remember posing a question about hope and purpose to a graduate seminar composed of biology students and faculty. I asked, "Let's suppose that I am dead and in the ground, and the decomposers are doing their thing. What difference does it make to me now whether I have reproduced or not?" My point was that if death is the end with a capital "E", who cares whether or not I have reproduced? After an awkward silence, one of the faculty answered, "Well, I guess that it doesn't matter at all." In response, I asked, "Don't you see, we were just discussing how the only purpose in life is to survive and reproduce, but now you admit that this purpose is really an illusion. How do you go on with your life when you realize that it really doesn't matter what you

do? That there is no point to any of it?" After an even longer silence, the same faculty member said, "Well, I suppose that those who will be selected for in the future will be those who know there is no purpose in life, but will live as if there is."

To say the least, I was stunned by the frankness of his response. He was basically saying that the human race will be forced to live with a lie—the illusion of hope and meaning. What was even more unsettling, however, was the fact that no one disagreed or offered even the most remote protest. Apart from myself, everyone there accepted evolution as a fact, so they were forced to accept this conclusion. (I would find out later that at least a couple of them didn't like it.)

A professor of philosophy at a university in Minnesota recently answered my challenge by saying that maybe there are two different kinds of hope and meaning: hope and meaning in small letters (meaning survival and reproduction) and Hope and Meaning in capital letters (meaning ultimate worth and significance). We all have hope and meaning in small letters, and maybe there just isn't any in capital letters. So what? But that was precisely my point. Hope and meaning in small letters is without significance unless Hope and Meaning in capital letters really exists.

## **Three Responses**

Over the years I have noted three responses of evolutionists to the stark realization that their worldview offers no hope or meaning in their lives. The first is strong disagreement with the conclusions of sociobiology without strong reasons for disagreeing. They don't like the result, but they find it difficult to argue with the basic principles. As evolutionists, they agree with evolution, but they don't want to believe that a meaningless existence is the end result.

The second response is simple acceptance. These evolutionists



agree that there is no purpose or meaning in life. They just have to accept it, as the professor in the story did. Their commitment to an evolutionary worldview is total. I find this attitude most prevalent among faculty and graduate students at secular institutions. There is an almost eerie fatalism that stoutly embraces the notion that one's dislike of a theory is not sufficient cause to raise questions about it, especially when it is based on "sound" evolutionary principles.

The third response is an existential leap for meaning and significance when both have been stripped away. This leap is aptly illustrated by evolutionist Robert Wallace at the end of his book, *The Genesis Factor*. He writes:

*I do not believe that man is simply a clever egotist, genetically driven to look after his own reproduction. He is that. But he is at least that. He is obviously much more. The evidence for this is simple and abundant. One need only hear the Canon in D Major by Johann Pachelbel to know that there are immeasurable depths to the human spirit...I am sorry for the person who has never broken into a silly dance of sheer exuberance under a starry sky: perhaps such a person will be more likely to interpret the message of this book more narrowly. The ones who will find it difficult to accept the narrow view are those who know more about the joy of being us. My biological training is at odds with something that I know and something that science will not be able to probe, perhaps because the time is now too short, perhaps because it is not measurable. I think our demise, if it occurs, will be a loss, a great loss, a great shame in some unknown equation.(5)*

What Wallace is saying in this passage is that something is missing, and it can't be found within the confines of the evolutionary worldview. So look wherever you can!

Some may argue that those who have trouble with the loss of

hope and meaning are taking all this too seriously. I don't agree. On the contrary, I believe that they are being very consistent within their worldview. If everything has evolved, and there is nothing outside of mere biology to give meaning and significance to life, then we must live in despair, denial, or irrational hope.

Sociobiology is gaining in popularity because of the scientific community's strong commitment to evolution. If something follows logically from evolutionary theory, which I believe sociobiology does, then eventually all who consider themselves evolutionists will embrace it, whether it makes them comfortable or not. They will have no other rational choice.

## **The Second Paradox**

In reflecting on the notion that all human societies and moral systems should have characteristics that seem to have evolved, I am led to a second paradox for sociobiology. The first paradox was that, despite the loss of hope and meaning in the context of a completely naturalistic worldview, sociobiology has continued to grow in influence. The second paradox involves Christianity. Since Christianity is based on revelation, it should be antithetical to or unexplainable by sociobiology, at least in some crucial areas.

It is not unreasonable to expect that some aspects of Christian morality would be consistent with a sociobiological perspective, since Christians in small and large groups do work for the betterment of the group as a whole, and the argument could be made that the survival of individuals is thus increased. However, if Christianity's claim to be based on revelation from a transcendent God is true, I would be surprised, indeed extremely disappointed and confused, if everything in Christianity's moral standards also made sense from a sociobiological perspective. What little I have seen in the way of an evaluation of Christianity from E.O. Wilson and

other sociobiologists is a poor caricature of true Christianity.

I would like to offer a few suggestions for consideration. William Irons, in a discussion of theories of the evolution of moral systems, comments that nepotism is a very basic prediction of evolutionary theory.(6) Humans should be expected to be less competitive and more helpful towards relatives than towards non- relatives. He cites numerous studies to back up his claim that this prediction, more than any other sociobiological prediction, has been extensively confirmed.

To be sure, the New Testament holds to very high standards concerning the importance of the family. Church leaders are to be judged first by how they conduct and relate themselves to their families (1 Tim. 3:12; Tit 1:6). Yet Jesus makes it quite clear that if there is any conflict between devotion to Him and devotion to our family, the family comes second. He said,

*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it. (Matt. 10:34-39).*

In other passages Jesus gives promises that if we give up our families and possessions for His sake, then we will receive abundantly more in this life and the next, along with persecutions (Mark 10:29,30). Jesus Himself preferred the company of those who do the will of God to His own mother and

brothers (Matt. 12:46-50). The clear message is that, while our families are important, our relationship with the living God comes first, even if members of our family force us to choose between God and them. Sociobiology may respond by saying that perhaps the benefit to be gained by inclusion in the group will compensate for the family loss, but how can the loss of an individual's entire genetic contribution to the next generation be explained away by any evolutionary mechanism?

## **Common Ground**

So far I have concentrated my remarks in areas where a Christian worldview is in sharp contrast with the evolutionary worldview of the sociobiologists. Now I would like to explore an area of curious similarity.

While Christianity should not be completely explainable by sociobiology, there are certain aspects of Christian truth that are quite compatible with it. I have always been amazed by the curious similarity between the biblical description of the natural man or the desires of the flesh, and the nature of man according to evolutionary principles. Both perceive man as a selfish creature at heart, looking out for his own interests. It is not "natural" for a man to be concerned for the welfare of others unless there is something in it for him.

Sociobiology seems to be quite capable of predicting many of the characteristics of human behavior. Scripture, on the other hand, informs us that the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit, that they are foolishness to him (1 Cor. 2:14). I have wondered if our sin nature is somehow enveloped by biology, or, to be more specific, genetics. Could it be that some genetic connection to our sin nature at least partially explains why "there is none righteous, there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God" (Rom. 3:10,11)? Does a genetic transmission of a sin nature help explain why "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

God" (Rom. 3:23)? Is this why salvation can only be through faith, that it is not of ourselves but is a gift of God, not a result of works (Eph. 2:8, 9)? Is this why the flesh continues to war in our bodies so that we do the thing which we do not want to do, why nothing good dwells in me, and why the members of my body wage war against the law of my mind (Rom. 7:14-25)?

If there is a genetic component to our sin nature, it seems reasonable to assume that only the Spirit of God can overcome the desires of the flesh and that this struggle will continue in the believer until he or she is changed, until we see God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; 15:50-58).

I ask these questions not thinking that I have come upon some great truth or the answer to a long-standing mystery, but simply looking for some common ground between the truth of Scripture and the truth about human nature we may be discovering from the perspective of sociobiology. All truth is ultimately God's truth. While I certainly do not embrace the worldview of the sociobiologist, I realize that there may be some truth that can be discovered by sociobiologists that can be truly captured to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

When I wrote that article for *Christianity Today* in 1981, I closed with this paragraph:

*To know what to support and what to oppose, Christians involved in the social and biological sciences must be effective students of sociobiology. The popularity of sociobiology has gone unnoticed for too long already. We need precise and careful study as well as a watchful eye if we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."*(7)

## Notes

1. Raymond G. Bohlin, "Sociobiology: Cloned from the Gene Cult," *Christianity Today*, 23 January (1981): 16-19.

2. Robert Wallace, *The Genesis Factor* (New York: Morrow and Co., 1979).
3. E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 3.
4. E.O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) 2-3.
5. Ibid., 217-218. Emphasis mine.
6. William Irons, "How Did Morality Evolve?" *Zygon* 26 (1991): 49-89.
7. Bohlin, "Sociobiology," 19.

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# **Darwin on Trial: A Lawyer Finds Evolution Lacking Evidence**

*Darwin on Trial* is the title of a book on evolution that has ruffled the feathers of the secular scientific community. Though a Christian, author Philip Johnson critiques evolutionary theory from a secular standpoint as he examines the philosophical games many scientists play to protect their evolutionary ideology.

## **Evolution as Fact and Theory**

Johnson, a law professor at the University of California at Berkeley, attacks head-on the often-heard statement that evolution is both a fact and a theory, an evolutionary dogma

that has been a major source of confusion for a long time. Evolution is a fact, Darwinists say, in that they know that evolution has occurred. It is a theory in that they are far from understanding the mechanisms by which evolution has occurred. In the eloquent words of evolutionist Stephen J. Gould,

*Evolution **is** a theory. It is also a fact. And facts and theories are different things, not rungs in a hierarchy of increasing certainty. Facts are the world's data. Theories are structures of ideas which explain and interpret facts. Facts do not go away while scientists debate rival theories for explaining them. Einstein's theory of gravitation replaced Newton's, but apples did not suspend themselves in mid-air pending the outcome. And human beings evolved from apelike ancestors whether they did so by Darwin's proposed mechanism or by some other, yet to be discovered. (Evolution as Fact and Theory)*

There are numerous problems with this explanation. First, if evolution is a fact, then evolution is equivalent to data. This hardly seems appropriate. Second, the comparison of evolution to gravity is misleading. We can go into any apple orchard and observe apples falling from trees. But where do we go to observe humans evolving from apelike ancestors? Apples falling from trees fits into the category of science we can term **operations science** which utilizes data that are repeatable and observable at any time. Humans evolving from apelike ancestors, however, would fall under the category of **origins science**. Origins science involves the study of historical events that occur just once and are not repeatable. We can only assemble what evidence we have and construct a plausible scenario, much like the forensic scientist Quincy did in the old television show. The so-called facts of human evolution, by Gould's own definition, are the fossils and the rock layers they are found in. That humans evolved from apelike ancestors is a theory that attempts to

explain and interpret these facts.

Later in the same article Gould states the real definition of fact under which evolution fits. He begins by saying that fact does not necessarily mean absolute certainty. Then he says, "In science, fact' can only mean confirmed to such a degree that it would be perverse to withhold provisional assent.'" In other words, evolution is a fact because a majority of scientists say so, and you are "perverse" if you do not agree. We quickly begin to see that evolution holds a privileged place in the scientific community, which will go to extraordinary lengths to preserve that status.

## **A Theory in Crisis**

Johnson's book, although the most recent, is not the first to question evolution's status as fact. Michael Denton, an agnostic medical researcher from Australia, caused quite a storm with his 1985 book, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Denton's point is that orthodox Darwinism has such a stranglehold on the biological sciences that contradictory evidences from fields such as paleontology, developmental biology, molecular biology, and taxonomy are passed off as intramural squabbles about the process of evolution. The "fact" of evolution is never really in question. Like Johnson, Denton points out that Darwinism is not a fact. It is a mechanistic theory that is still without a mechanism. While moths and fruit flies do respond to environmental stimuli, our observations of this process have been unable to shed any light on the means by which we have come to have horses and woodpeckers and wasps. The origin of complex adaptations has remained a mystery. The fossil record is pockmarked with gaps in the most embarrassing places. Darwin predicted innumerable transitional forms between major groups of organisms, yet the few transitions that are suggested are surrounded in controversy. Another "fact" that fails to withstand Denton's scrutiny is the assumption that similar biological structures



owe their similarity to a common ancestry. Homology, which studies these similarities, assumes for example that the forelimbs of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals are similar in structure because they evolved from the same source. Denton reveals, however, that these same classes of vertebrates go through remarkably different stages of early embryological development. This was certainly not a prediction of Darwinian evolution. Even more importantly, Denton reports that comparison of the sequences of proteins from different organisms actually supports the pre-Darwin system of classification, which was based on creationist principles.

Also, the many chemical evolution scenarios are caught in numerous intractable dilemmas that offer little hope of resolution (see *Scientific American*, Feb. 1991).

## Rules of Science and Evolution

Another issue that Philip Johnson treats in his book is the fact that the rules of science tend to be stated and followed differently depending on whether you are talking about evolution or creation. Professor Johnson refers specifically to Judge William Overton's decision striking down the Arkansas Creation/Evolution Balanced Treatment law. In his written decision, which was reprinted in its entirety in the prestigious journal *Science*, Judge Overton reiterated five essential characteristics of science that were given by opponents of the bill during the trial. Science, in the judge's opinion, must be:

- *Guided by natural law*
- *Explanatory by reference to natural law*
- *Testable against the empirical world*
- *Tentative in its conclusions—that is, not necessarily the final word*
- *Falsifiable*

Judge Overton decided that creation-science does not meet these criteria since it appeals to the supernatural and is therefore not testable, falsifiable, or explanatory by reference to natural law. Johnson points out that philosophers of science have been very critical of the definitions of science given in the decision and have suggested that the expert witnesses provided by the ACLU attorneys got away with a philosophical snow job. Critics have pointed out that scientists are not the least bit tentative about their basic commitments, especially about their commitment to evolution. From my own experience, all one has to do is attend any scientific meeting to see that some scientists are anything but tentative about their ideas. Also, scientists study the effects of phenomena (such as gravity) that they cannot explain by natural law. Finally, critics have noted that creation-science, as proposed by the Arkansas law, does make empirical claims (such as a young earth, worldwide flood, special creation). Mainstream science has said these claims are demonstrably false, which raises the interesting question, How can creation-science be both unfalsifiable **and** demonstrably false at the same time? Johnson clearly reveals that what is really being protected by these rules of science is not necessarily evolution, but the philosophical doctrine known as *naturalism*. According to Johnson, "Naturalism assumes the entire realm of nature to be a closed system of material causes and effects, which cannot be influenced by anything from the outside." While this doctrine does not deny the existence of God, it certainly makes Him irrelevant. Science, therefore, becomes our only reliable path to knowledge. The issue as Johnson states it, is

*...Whether this philosophical viewpoint is merely an understandable professional prejudice or whether it is the objectively valid way of understanding the world. That is the real issue behind the push to make naturalistic evolution a fundamental tenet of society, to which everyone must be converted.*

The consequence of this kind of thinking is that evolution is made the basis of ethical and religious statements, which is precisely what most evolutionists find repulsive about creation.

## **Darwinist Religion**

A frequent refrain from evolutionists is that the evolution/creation debate is actually a collision between science and religion. If creationists would just realize their view is inherently religious and that evolution is the scientific view, then there would be little to disagree about. Evolution belongs in the science classrooms and creation belongs only in the philosophy and religion classrooms. What gets left behind in this discussion, either intentionally or unintentionally, are the very firm religious implications of atheistic naturalism with evolution as its foundation. We only need to look at a few sources to see the religious nature of evolution. The first source is the blatantly religious statements of certain evolutionists themselves. Philip Johnson quotes the evolutionist William Provine as stating quite categorically that:

- *Modern science, i.e., evolution, implies that there is no purpose, gods, or design in nature.*
- *There are no absolute moral or ethical laws.*
- *Heredity and environment determine all that man is.*
- *When we die, we die, and that is all there is.*
- *Evolution cannot produce a being that is truly free to make choices.*

Statements such as these make it quite clear: the belief that science and religion are different spheres of knowledge is complete nonsense.

A second source that establishes the religious nature of evolution is the attacks of evolutionists on the God of the

Bible using evolutionary principles. In his chapter on natural selection, professor Johnson provides an example from evolutionist Douglas Futuyma. Futuyma states that a Creator would never create a bird such as the peacock, whose six feet of bulky feathers make it easy prey for leopards. (Johnson turns the tables, however, by asking why natural selection would favor a peahen that lusts after males with life-threatening decorations.) It has always amazed me that people who claim that there is no God sure seem to have an intimate knowledge of what He would be like if He did exist. At any rate, if evolution can be used to discredit certain notions about the character of God, then evolution is indeed making religious statements. A third indication of the religious nature of evolution is the knee-jerk reaction of the evolutionary establishment against any statement that even hints that evolution is a tentative theory. In 1984, a group of scientists who are Christians but who do not identify themselves with creation scientists published a booklet entitled *Teaching Science in a Climate of Controversy* and mailed it to thousands of school teachers. The general idea of the booklet was to encourage open-mindedness on certain issues and controversies regarding evolution. Evolutionists quickly chided the publication as a clever disguise of creationism. To quote Johnson, "The pervasive message was that the ASA [American Scientific Affiliation] is a deceitful creationist front which disguises its Biblical literalist agenda under a pretense of scientific objectivity." In other words, anything that smells of God must be creationist and must be stamped out.

## **Darwinist Education**

In the later chapters of Johnson's book, he analyzes the reaction of evolutionists to the challenges that have been leveled against them. It is here that he perhaps makes his greatest contribution. One of these reactions has been to wage what is essentially an evolutionary filibuster in educating

the public about evolution. Johnson cites the experience of the British Museum of Natural History when it opened an exhibit on evolution in 1981. The exhibit presented Darwinian evolution as **one** idea and **one** possible explanation. Creation was cited as another view. This tentativeness was too much for some scientists to bear. A firestorm of criticism appeared in the British science journal *Nature*. Many were furious that the museum would actually go public with doubts about evolution, doubts that had previously been reserved for discussion among evolutionary scientists alone. The criticism was so severe that the museum eventually removed the exhibit and replaced it with a more “traditional” evolution exhibit. One of the Museum’s top scientists, Colin Patterson, made a similar reversal concerning his view that he required faith in order to accept evolution. The criticism eventually convinced him to discontinue making these statements public.

In the United States, the Science Framework adopted by the state of California in 1989, which has a significant effect on the content of science textbooks, contained this statement concerning evolution: “[Evolution] is an accepted scientific explanation and therefore no more controversial in scientific circles than the theories of gravitation and electron flow.” This assertion is nothing more than an appeal to authority and has nothing to do with legitimate scientific evidence. As a result of this statement, evolution is being included in science textbooks at increasingly lower grade levels. The purpose is clear: if students can be indoctrinated in evolution early enough and often enough, perhaps all this controversy can be avoided.

## Conclusion

In summary, I have pointed out that many critical predictions of Darwinian evolution have not been fulfilled. As a result, naturalistic atheism, the underlying philosophy of much of the evolutionary establishment, has been threatened. The response

of many evolutionists has been to issue increasingly dogmatic statements that appeal to authority, not to evidence, play semantic word games where evolution is called both a fact and a theory, and wage an educational filibuster aimed at squelching all dissent. The evolutionists are not likely to abandon these tactics anytime soon, but until they do, they can expect even more criticism from scholars such as Professor Philip Johnson.

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