

## Strange Bedfellows: Darwinism and the Reformed Theological Tradition

By Mark Jones

*Trinculo: Leggd like a man! and his fins like arms! Warm, o' my troth! I do now let loose my opinion, hold it no longer: this is no fish, but an islander; that hath lately suffer'd by a thunder-bolt. [Thunder.] Alas, the storm is come again! My best way is to creep under his gaberdine; there is no other shelter here-about: misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. I will here shroud till the dregs of the storm be past—The Tempest, Act 2, scene 2, 33–41.*

### INTRODUCTION

Contrary to popular opinion, Charles Darwin did not invent the theory of biological evolution. But his famous work, *The Origin of Species*, certainly gave impetus to an idea that would quickly become orthodoxy in the scientific establishment. In his work he made several significant points that have had profound consequences for how scientists understand the natural world. When his propositions are considered together there is no question that they represent an assault upon the Christian religion. Darwin did not merely suggest that change takes place over time, which, technically speaking, may be called evolution. Rather, he questioned the idea that species are immutable (cannot change). Again, on the surface, a Bible-believing Christian can affirm that species change. But Darwin went much further than that. He suggested that new species have evolved over the course of history by a process termed “descent with modification.” On this model, all life forms descend from a common ancestor. Somewhere, at some time, the inorganic (non-living) became organic (living), and from that microscopic ancestor we now have fish, land animals, and human beings. For this to happen, Darwin popularized the idea that this took place through natural selection, or what has commonly been termed “survival of the fittest.” Darwin’s most significant contribution to the theory of evolution was formulating the

mechanism that explained the process whereby a single cell produced the variety of life found in the world today. This understanding of evolution is best described as “fully naturalistic evolution,” which is how the scientific community understands biological evolution. The prominent American biologist, Douglas Futuyma provides a helpful explanation of the significance of Darwin’s theory:

By coupling undirected, purposeless variation to the blind, uncaring process of natural selection, Darwin made theological or spiritual explanations of the life processes superfluous. Together with Marx’s materialistic theory of history and society and Freud’s attribution of human behavior to influences over which we have little control, Darwin’s theory of evolution was a crucial plank in the platform of mechanism and materialism—of much of science, in short—that has since been the stage of most Western thought.<sup>1</sup>

Futuyma draws attention to an important implication of Darwinian evolution, namely, that theological explanations for origins of life, which includes special creation, are superfluous because this model does not simply content itself with changes within a species, but instead explains how all species came into being in the first place.

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1. *Evolutionary Biology* (Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates Inc., 1986), 2.

## MICRO- &amp; MACROEVOLUTION

A Christian can and should affirm that in the beginning God created basic kinds of animals, which over the years subsequently diversified. The term microevolution has been used to describe this process. So, in the example that Darwin used, a group of finches happened to migrate to an island. On the island a combination of mutation, inbreeding, and natural selection caused these finches to develop different characteristics from the ancestral population on the mainland. This is microevolution. Even among humans, microevolution occurs. God created Adam and Eve, but from this ancestral pair we see a fair amount of diversity today. Understood in this way, evolution is not controversial. As Jonathan Wells has argued, Darwinists respond to their critics by claiming that “evolution” means change over time. “But,” says Wells, “this is clearly an evasion. No rational person denies the reality of change, and we did not need Charles Darwin to convince us of it. If ‘evolution’ meant only this, it would be utterly uncontroversial.”<sup>2</sup> Christians would be foolish to deny microevolution. However, a more important question needs to be asked: does microevolution provide an explanation for the processes responsible for creating life in the world as we see it today? Darwinists answer that the creative force that produced complex animals, for example, from a single-celled predecessor over billions of years is, in general, the same mechanism that produces variation among animals that we witness today.

Critics of Darwinism, as well as Darwinists themselves, typically distinguish between microevolution and macroevolution, though both sides understand the magnitude of the distinction differently. Simply put, microevolution explains change within a species, but macroevolution explains the changes that occur above the level of species. Macroevolution explains how a species splits into two (i.e., speciation).<sup>3</sup> One of the most well

known Darwinists, Ernst Mayr, remarked that macroevolution (i.e., transspecific evolution) is an extrapolation of the events that take place within populations and species at the microevolutionary level.<sup>4</sup> Thus, according to Darwinists, the difference between micro- and macroevolution ought not to be exaggerated. The same processes that cause within-species evolution (microevolution) are responsible for above-species evolution (macroevolution). When the idea of speciation is added to Darwin’s view of natural selection, the resulting theory is seen as a sufficient explanation for the rise and diversity of life.

## NATURAL SELECTION &amp; GRADUALISM

Natural selection occurs in order to maintain the genetic fitness of a population. Animals with genetic defects generally do not survive to produce offspring. Darwinists use this fact to build their theory that natural selection not only maintains the genetic fitness of a population, but also provides an explanation for how a single cell—or many different cells?—produced over the course of billions of years the variety of living organisms that we see today. The mutations that sometimes take place among species are almost always harmful. However, according to Darwinists, in rare cases a mutation will prove to be an advantage and thus improve the organism’s ability to survive and reproduce. If the favorable mutation spreads throughout the species it may possibly provide the basis for further improvements in succeeding generations. Speciation, via favorable mutations, can be broken down into small steps over millions of years. These steps were purposeless natural processes that did not require the belief in special creation. In Stephen Jay Gould’s much-acclaimed book, *Wonderful Life* (New York: Norton, 1990), he suggests that evolution could not be expected to produce the same outcome again. Humans may not necessarily result a second time because evolution is a purposeless/directionless force that relies on random mutations. Richard Dawkins refers to this process of natural selection as “the blind watchmaker.”

The transitional or intermediate forms of life needed to accomplish the process of natural selection required, in Darwin’s own words, the “accumulation of infinitesimally small inherited modifications, each profitable to the preserved being.”<sup>5</sup> The fossil record did not, however, provide the empirical support that Darwin wished for. He attributed the paucity of evidence to the incompleteness of the fossil record, but hoped that later discoveries would vindicate his theory.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately for

2. *Icons of Evolution: Science of Myth?* (New York: Regnery, 1990), 5.

3. Speciation (*cladogenesis*) comes from the Greek meaning the “origin of a branch.”

4. *Populations, Species, and Evolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 351.

5. *The Origin of Species* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 74.

6. Richard Dawkins likewise attributes this problem to the incompleteness of the fossil record: “It is as though they [fossils] were just planted there, without any evolutionary history. Needless to say this appearance of sudden planting has delighted creationists...Both schools of thought (Punctuationalists and Gradualists) despise so-called scientific creationists equally, and both agree that the major gaps are real, that they are true imperfections in the fossil record. The only alternative explanation of the sudden appearance of so many complex

Darwin, the fossil record did not provide the evidence to support his theory, which led Stephen Jay Gould to admit that “All paleontologists know that the fossil record contains precious little in the way of intermediate forms; transitions between major groups are characteristically abrupt. Gradualists usually extract themselves from this dilemma by invoking the extreme imperfection of the fossil record.”<sup>7</sup> Gradualism, while not supported by the fossil record, nevertheless remains the best explanation for the majority of evolutionists because they cannot think of a more plausible alternative. However, not entirely satisfied with the fossil record, Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge proposed a new theory for explaining both the fossil record and the present diversity of life called “punctuated equilibria/equilibrium.” This theory provided paleontologists with an explanation for the patterns found in the fossil record.

#### PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIA

Darwin’s gradualist model led him to confess, “if it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down” (*The Origin of Species*, 142). Darwin was absolutely correct, and that explains why various prominent evolutionists have received a great deal of criticism, and at times ridicule, for suggesting that Darwin’s theory of phyletic gradualism cannot explain complex structures and organisms (such as mammalian hair). The Berkeley geneticist, Richard Goldschmidt, argued that Darwin’s gradualist model could only explain variation within the species boundary. Far from abandoning evolution altogether, Goldschmidt claimed speciation must have occurred through large-scale jumps called macromutations, otherwise known as “quantum evolution.” This idea provided the answer to the bridgeless gap separating micro- and macroevolution. In his book, *The Material Basis for Evolution*, he argued for a type of “hopeful monster,” a new species with the capacity to survive and propagate.<sup>8</sup> Goldschmidt’s theory was initially greeted with ridicule, but Gould and Eldredge took up his cause with their own theory of punctuated equilibria. Eldredge describes the problem that Goldschmidt tried to address:

No wonder paleontologists shied away from evolution for so long. It never seemed to happen. Assiduous collecting up cliff faces yields zigzags, minor oscillations, and the very occasional slight accumulation of change — over millions of years, at a rate too slow to account

for all the prodigious change that has occurred in evolutionary history. When we do see the introduction of evolutionary novelty, it usually shows up with a bang, and often with no firm evidence that the fossils did not evolve elsewhere! Evolution cannot forever be going on somewhere else. Yet that’s how the fossil record has struck many a forlorn paleontologist looking to learn something about evolution.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, Eldredge and Gould noticed two features in the fossil record that were inconsistent with the fossil record. First, most species show no directional change; and, second, new species abruptly appear in the fossil record. Natural selection cannot account for these peculiarities, argued Eldredge and Gould. As in the case of Goldschmidt, this proposal was met with a good deal of criticism.<sup>10</sup> Gradualists responded that adaptive macromutations are impossible and have nothing to do with evolution. Thus, gradualists like Dawkins, who are not persuaded by the theory of punctuated equilibria, retained their belief that evolution by micromutation is the only viable alternative.<sup>11</sup> Slow, gradual evolution by a combination of mutations (not “macromutations”) acting concurrently with natural selection provides the best explanation for the natural world according to the majority of Darwinists. That prominent evolutionists like Goldschmidt, Eldredge, and Gould have proposed a radical alternative to the gradualist model testifies to the fact that Darwin’s theory has not adequately dealt with the problems concerning paleontology.

#### DARWINIAN RELIGION

Darwinists assume the fact of evolution. They are not content to admit that it is a theory. Richard Dawkins claims: “no serious biologist doubts the fact that evolution happened, nor that all living creatures are cousins

animal types in the Cambrian era is divine creation and (we) both reject this alternative.” *The Blind Watchmaker* (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1996), 229–230.

7. *The Panda’s Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Norton, 1980), 189.

8. *The Material Basis for Evolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982. Reprint 1940 edition).

9. *Reinventing Darwin* (Phoenix: Giant, 1995), 95.

10. See Jeffrey S. Levinton & Chris M. Simon, “A Critique of the Punctuated Equilibria Model and Implications for the Detection of Speciation in the Fossil Record,” *Systematic Zoology*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Jun., 1980): 130–142.

11. Dawkins refers to punctuated equilibria as “a minor variety of Darwinism.” *The Blind Watchmaker*, 287. On the debate between Dawkins and Gould see Kim Sterelny, *Dawkins vs. Gould: Survival of the Fittest* (Cambridge, UK: Icon Books, 2001).

of one another” (*The Blind Watchmaker*, 287). Not only are all living creatures cousins of one another, but the Darwinian synthesis also argues that we can extrapolate how single-celled organisms came to produce human beings. Like religion, science is not neutral, despite its claims. An inherent philosophical presupposition guides evolutionary thinking. And though disagreement exists among a number of leading evolutionists concerning the mechanisms of evolution, they are all in agreement that a supernatural being (i.e. God) must not be invoked to help out with the difficulties. For this reason, Darwinian evolution is fundamentally atheistic. Professor of biology at Cornell University, William Provine, candidly admits that embracing evolution makes atheists of people: “One can have a religious view that is compatible with evolution only if the religious view is indistinguishable from atheism.”<sup>12</sup> The famous Harvard geneticist, Richard Lewontin, provides further evidence that fully naturalistic evolution is atheistic:

We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism.

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.<sup>13</sup>

Lewontin makes these comments because of his a priori commitment to naturalism. Naturalists operate on the assumption that science would not be science if a non-material cause were invoked to explain any part of the theory. The influential American paleontologist

George Gaylord Simpson insists that the phenomena of life “can be explained by purely naturalistic [...] factors [...]. Therefore, man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.”<sup>14</sup> Fully naturalistic evolution and God can only co-exist if God acted as a first cause who retired from activity after establishing the laws of nature and setting the natural mechanism in motion. Of course, on this model, even “God” would have been surprised by how things were turning out; after all, creatures developed randomly from purely material forces without any purpose or goal. Douglas Futuyma recognizes that many find the idea that the human species was not designed somewhat hard to fathom, “but this seems to be the message of evolution.”<sup>15</sup> Evolution assumes naturalism. Indeed, as Philip Johnson notes:

Naturalism is not something about which Darwinists can afford to be tentative, because their science is based upon it [...]. Darwinists know that the mutation-selection mechanism can produce wings, eyes, and brains not because the mechanism can be observed to do anything of the kind, but because their guiding philosophy assures them that no other power is available to do the job. The absence from the cosmos of any Creator is therefore the essential starting point for Darwinism.<sup>16</sup>

If God is denied consideration from the outset, and if arguments against evolution are labeled unscientific, then the rules of the debate will always be decidedly in favor of the Darwinists. And this is precisely what has happened in the scientific establishment, which explains why it is academic suicide to jettison naturalism as a philosophical commitment.

No problem is insurmountable for the theory (theories?) of evolution. For example, both the fossil record and the question about the origin of life are massive holes in the theory of evolution. However, Darwinists believe in the mutation-selection mechanism, and its ability to achieve creative wonders, not because these wonders can be empirically demonstrated, but because no other explanation exists that does not involve God. Philosophical naturalism remains so deeply ingrained in the thinking of scientists that they cannot possibly imagine another way of explaining the diversity of life on Earth. A number of evolutionists have developed doubts about whether natural selection can account for large-scale change; yet, despite these doubts, their commitment to naturalism remains unchanged. Moreover, natural selection, despite its obvious problems, retains its place as the only possible alternative,

12. “No Free Will,” *Isis*, Vol. 90, Supplement, Catching up with the Vision: Essays on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the History of Science Society (1999): S123.

13. Review of *The Demon-Haunted World*, by Carl Sagan, *New York Review of Books* (January 9, 1997): 31.

14. *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1967), 345.

15. *Science on Trial: The Case for Evolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 13.

16. *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 117.

unless, of course, you add the Eldredge-Gould model (punctuated equilibria) to compliment, or as an alternative to, phyletic gradualism (the system of Darwin and Dawkins). In the scientific establishment no respectable alternative can be tested against Darwinism. Consequently, many scientists conclude that Darwinism must be true. In the end, fully naturalistic evolution is not compatible with Christian theism. But that should not bother Christians too much. Darwinism really is specious, both philosophically and scientifically; and it can only be true if the question is asked: "How must creation have occurred if we assume that God had nothing to do with it?" Even then the answer provided by Darwinists is far from convincing. Yet, to some, even Reformed/Calvinistic Christians, the force of evolution has not altogether persuaded them to give up religion, but instead they have sought a middle-way commonly known as theistic evolution, which has a lot more in common with fully naturalistic evolution than it does with Christianity.

#### THEISTIC EVOLUTION

Arriving at an understanding of fully naturalistic evolution is actually a great deal easier than classifying what is meant by "theistic evolution." What theistic evolution means depends entirely upon how much or how little influence "God", not necessarily the triune God of the Bible, has in the affairs of this world. A Darwinian commitment to naturalism, and hence metaphysical naturalism, leaves no place for theism. Darwinian evolution is atheism. And, from one perspective, the honesty of this perspective is far more desirable than many forms of theistic evolution. Theistic evolutionists typically want to have their cake and eat it too, but the truth is that their position cannot be held with any sort of consistency if they take both Darwinian evolution and Christianity seriously. They suggest that they can accept the supposed scientific argument that mutation and natural selection provided the variety of life we see today, but they reject the philosophical conclusion that the universe, and more specifically life on earth, is without purpose. This view, while inconsistent, nevertheless has influenced a large number of evangelical Christians, including some prominent Old Testament scholars, in the United States.

These scholars have accepted, more or less, the "science" of evolution, but they have not embraced the consequent philosophy of Darwinism. This view represents a far cry from the idea that change takes place within species (i.e. microevolution). Theistic evolution

goes much farther than that; otherwise it would not be controversial in Christian circles. In fact, theistic evolution not only fails to satisfy Christians, but it also causes a great deal of consternation among scientists. Delvin Lee Ratzsch correctly notes that creationists and evolutionists agree on very little. They do, however, agree, "theistic evolution is woefully—even perniciously—confused."<sup>17</sup> For that reason, some scientists who claim to be Christians have rejected the term "theistic evolution," despite holding to the idea.

#### FRANCIS COLLINS & BIOLOGOS

Because of his impressive scientific credentials—he is the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute—and his claim to be a Christian, Francis Collins (b. 1950) has had a significant impact upon Christian scholars. His recent work, *The Language of God*, puts forward a highly sophisticated defense of theistic evolution, though his sophistication clearly falls within the realm of science and not theology. Bruce Waltke, who openly affirms the concept of "theistic evolution," admits his indebtedness to Collins' work.<sup>18</sup> Waltke believes in "natural selection," but he fails to adequately explain just what he means by this; though, given his endorsement of Collins' work it may be fair to say that Waltke has in mind Darwin's view of natural selection. In Collins' book, which puts forth a lucid defense of theistic evolution, he prefers his self-coined term "BioLogos" (God speaking life into being). That an eminent Reformed Old Testament scholar has received Collins' work with such enthusiasm proves that the danger of theistic evolution is more real than imaginary. Collins fiercely resists the "God of the Gaps" thinking that ends up reducing God's role in the affairs of this world the more science is able to explain.<sup>19</sup> But his model suffers from the same basic problem.

Very little distinguishes Collins' view of evolution from Darwin's. His study of genomes provides for him the requisite molecular evidence for the theory of evolution, so much so that "virtually all working biologists"

17. *The Battle of Beginnings: Why Neither Side Is Winning the Creation-Evolution Debate* (InterVarsity Press, 1996), 180.

18. Bruce K. Waltke & Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007), 202, fn. 81. In footnote 80 Waltke claims that B.B. Warfield supported the concept of theistic evolution.

19. Thus, he argues: "Faith that places God in the gaps of current understanding about the natural world may be headed for crisis if advances in science subsequently fill those gaps." Francis Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 93.

are persuaded that “Darwin’s framework of variation and natural selection is unquestionably correct” (*The Language of God*, 141). Collins puts forward the following premises to explain his synthesis (i.e., theistic evolution):

1. The Universe came into being out of nothingness, approximately 14 billion years ago.
2. Despite massive improbabilities, the properties of the universe appear to have been precisely tuned for life.
3. While the precise mechanism of the origin of life on earth remains unknown, once life arose, the process of evolution and natural selection permitted the development of biological diversity and complexity over very long periods of time.
4. Once evolution got under way, no special supernatural intervention was required.
5. Humans are part of this process, sharing a common ancestor with the great apes.
6. But humans are also unique in ways that defy evolutionary explanation and point to our spiritual nature. This includes the existence of the Moral Law (the knowledge of right and wrong) and the search for God that characterizes all human cultures throughout history.<sup>20</sup>

According to Collins, accepting these premises enables individuals to adhere to an “entirely plausible, intellectually satisfying, and logically consistent synthesis,” namely, that God created the universe (13.7 billion years ago) and established natural laws to govern the universe. The mechanism that gave rise to living creatures is the same mechanism that gave rise to human beings (Collins, 200–201). Such a view, according to Collins, satisfies both science and the great monotheistic religions of the world.

His argument posits that God used DNA as an information molecule (hence, DNA is the “language of God”). Yet he argues that the so-called “junk DNA” actually proves Darwinian evolution, and not special creation. After all, why would God work in such a way? Collins thus uses a theological argument to support Darwinian evolution, which, is of course rather ironic. A further example of this type of reasoning comes to the surface when Collins rejects not only the stories of Job and Jonah, but also the view that Adam and Eve were created by “a special act of miraculous creation” in favor of the idea that Genesis 1–2 functions instead as a “poetic and powerful allegory of God’s plan for

the entrance of the spiritual nature (the soul) and the Moral Law into humanity” (Collins, 207). Collins then reasons that he does “not believe that the God who created all the universe, and who communes with His people through prayer and spiritual insight, would expect us to deny the obvious truths of the natural world that science has revealed to us, in order to prove our love for him” by adhering to a literalist interpretation of Genesis 1–2 (Collins, 210). He derides Young Earth Creationism (YEC) as “intellectually bankrupt” and one of the “great tragedies of our time,” a view that ultimately damages one’s faith (Collins, 177). In fact, so strong is his commitment to Darwinian evolution that he and the BioLogos Foundation consistently manifest a strong antipathy not only for YEC, but also for the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, not because the ID movement is not explicitly Christian, but because ID is not consistent with Darwinian evolution. In his own words, “ID’s proposal of the intervention of supernatural forces to account for complex multicomponent biological entities is a scientific dead end” (Collins, 187).

Collins’ pluralism—actually, he prefers monotheism to polytheism—amounts to old-fashioned liberalism.<sup>21</sup> If the Scriptures are true, they must be explained in a way that does not conflict with empirical science. But, here lies the major problem with Collins’ synthesis: for all of his criticisms of the “God of the Gaps” argument, his own position basically amounts to the same thing in a different form. Science, for him, cannot explain altruistic behavior or an objective moral law. So, whatever science cannot explain he attributes to God. When science contradicts the Bible there can only be one winner, particularly if the Bible is read with any degree of concern for the intention of the author (i.e. God). Collins’ synthesis has also found support from Peter Enns, author of *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, who is a Senior fellow of Biblical Studies for the BioLogos foundation. Writing for the foundation, Enns has recently looked at the parallels between Israel’s history and Adam’s drama in Genesis. He suggests the following:

There are two ways of looking at this parallel. You could say that the Adam story came first and then the Israelites just followed that pattern. But there is another way. Maybe Israel’s history happened first, and the Adam story was written to reflect that history. In other words, the Adam story is really an Israel story placed in primeval time. *It is not a story of human origins but of Israel’s origins.*

20. *The Language of God*, 200.

21. See Collins, *The Language of God*, 225–227.

Everyone has to decide for themselves which of these readings of Genesis has more “explanatory power.” I (and other biblical scholars) come down on the second option for a number of reasons, some having to do with Genesis itself while others concern other issues in the Bible.

What does this have to do with the debate between evolution and the Bible? Enns explains:

And you have to admit there is one distinct advantage of this reading that readers of BioLogos will recognize immediately: if the Adam story is not about absolute human origins, then the conflict between the Bible and evolution cannot be found there.<sup>22</sup>

Enns has provided scientists like Collins with a so-called biblical argument that keeps Darwinian science friendly with the Bible. And perhaps Enns has the creative power to end all conflicts between the Bible and evolution? Ultimately, however, no man can serve two masters; one will end up being hated. The baptizing (theologizing) of naturalistic philosophy has yielded one significant observation, namely, the Bible explains only what Darwinism cannot—which, for those acquainted with the vast amount of literature on evolution, is very little.

#### EVALUATING THEISTIC EVOLUTION

The Biologos model promulgated by Collins begins with the premise that God does not interfere in the natural world. The development of the present diversity of life can be explained by natural selection and random, purposeless mutations (sometimes great, sometimes small, depending on one’s view of evolution). God finds his place in the metaphysical realm, which “science” cannot address. Whatever problems remain for explaining Darwinian evolution, the “God of the Gaps” mentality must be firmly resisted for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the inherent intellectual laziness of the position. So, while scientists are sounding a less triumphal note about explaining the origin of life, they are far from plugging God into that rather large gap. Robert Shapiro, professor of chemistry at New York University, addresses this problem from the perspective of naturalists:

Some future day may yet arrive when all reasonable chemical experiments run to discover a probable origin for life have failed unequivocally. Further, new geological evidence may indicate a sudden appearance of life

on the earth. Finally, we may have explored the universe and found no trace of life, or processes leading to life, elsewhere. In such a case, some scientists might choose to turn to religion for an answer. Others, myself included, would attempt to sort out the surviving less probable scientific explanations in the hope of selecting one that was still more likely than the remainder.<sup>23</sup>

This is a candid admission and shows just how relentless the pursuit of naturalism is among scientists. Indeed, like Shapiro, Collins admits the precise mechanism of the origin of life is unknown; but his commitment to Darwinian evolution (i.e., naturalism) keeps him from affirming that God brought life into being by his omnipotent creative power. And this position—the one that Collins’ likewise affirms—seems to Bruce Waltke the most convincing of all the respective ways of harmonizing science and the Bible?

With naturalistic presuppositions the outcome of the debate is actually won at the beginning for the Darwinists. Naturalists do not simply define evolution as that which explains how organisms vary, but also how natural selection and mutation account for the present diversity of life. Therefore, when asked whether one admits or denies the “fact” of evolution, Christians are put in a situation designed from the outset to make them look obtuse. As Phillip Johnson has noted, “deny [evolution] and you seem to be denying that island species vary from mainland ancestors, or that dog breeders have produced St. Bernards and dachshunds from an ancestral breed” (*Darwin on Trial*, 167). However, on the other hand, if one admits to “evolution” they have, without viewing the requisite evidence, admitted that “an ancestral bacterium changed by a vast series of purposeless adaptive steps to produce today’s whales, humans, insects, and flowers. If ‘evolution’ is assumed to be a single process, then to admit any aspect is to admit the entire story” (*Darwin on Trial*, 167). Francis Collins admits the entire story. But he believes in a “god” who finely tunes the universe to allow for the possibility of evolution. Collins’ “god” is nothing but a First Cause who begins the process, without necessarily having anything to do with producing organic life, and retreats for roughly fourteen billion years only to “interfere” again by sending his Son Jesus Christ to die and be raised again.<sup>24</sup> Collins explains away a literal

22. <http://biologos.org/blog/adam-is-israel>.

23. *Origins: A Skeptic’s Guide to the Creation of Life in the Universe* (London: Penguin, 1988), 130.

24. Collins distances himself from Dawkins’ views on the theological implications of Darwinism, but his position is very similar

reading of Genesis, but he also ends up having to explain away anything that does not fit his scientific paradigm. He, like most theistic evolutionists, fails to admit that God and naturalism are not friends, but enemies. The God of the Bible providentially rules everything. He does not simply “interfere” by sending his Son to die on a cross, but his power and will determine all that comes to pass (Eph. 1:11; Isa. 14:27; Ps. 33:10; Dan. 4:35).

The Bible cannot be harmonized with fortune and chance. For these reasons, and others, Collins’ position may more properly be termed “deistic evolution.” John Calvin recognized that the common opinion in all ages has been that all things happen by chance. However, he calls this a “depraved opinion,” for even concerning inanimate objects, “we ought to hold that, although each one has by nature been endowed with its own property, yet it does not exercise its own power except in so far as it is directed by God’s ever-present hand.”<sup>25</sup> God’s omnipotence is not, as Collins position demands, “unconscious,” but it extends to all his works:

It is a childish cavil to enclose it within the stream of nature. Indeed, those as much defraud God of his glory as themselves of a most profitable doctrine who will confine God’s providence to such narrow limits as though he allowed all things by a free course to be borne along according to a universal law of nature [...] in this way God’s particular goodness toward each one would be too unworthily reduced (*Institutes*, I.xvi.3).

Calvin recognized that Christian theism asserts that God providentially rules everything. Naturalism, however, asserts the very opposite, namely, that nature does in fact proceed on its own, in its own purposeless direction without any divine influence. Theism could be reconciled with fully naturalistic evolution only if we reasoned (theologically, of course) that God set everything in motion from the beginning and then intervened by sending his Son to die on a cross. Such a view limits God, but perhaps Collins believes that God would have done such a thing in order to keep harmony between science and theology? It does seem strange that Collins looks at DNA and says “why would God do that”

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to that of Dawkins (i.e., the blind watchmaker thesis). He argues, for example, “Once evolution got under way, no special supernatural intervention was required.” *The Language of God*, 200. His comments on page 205 are ambiguous, and a lot depends on what he means by “entirely specified,” which seems to have more to do with God’s initial act of creation than his providential control over all things.

25. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.xvi.2.

without asking the same questions about his theology? For example, he places some weight on the historical evidence for the existence of Jesus Christ by appealing to the four gospels. These gospels provide enough evidence for Collins that he felt compelled to surrender to Jesus Christ (*The Language of God*, 223–25). He accepts the claims of Christ, but he nowhere indicates whether he views the four gospels as the inspired (breathed-out) word of God or just reliable historical records. Whatever the case—and the latter seems more likely—he seems willing to believe that a Jewish man called himself God, died on a cross, and was raised again on the third day, but everything else in the Bible that contradicts Darwinian evolution simply cannot be true.

Those who refer to themselves as theistic evolutionists, like Collins and Waltke, need to be pressed on “the blind watchmaker thesis” that is so crucial to Darwinism. Richard Dawkins has explained the idea of the “blind watchmaker” and its implications for how we view the theory of evolution: “Natural selection is the blind watchmaker, blind because it does not see ahead, does not plan consequences, has no purpose in view” (*The Blind Watchmaker*, 21). The blind watchmaker thesis explains the philosophical implications of evolution, which cannot in any way be squared with what the Bible says about creation and providence. Phillip Johnson claims that he has found it “very difficult to get theistic evolutionists to discuss the blind watchmaker thesis” (*Darwin on Trial*, 168). No wonder. How can a Christian, in any meaningful sense of the word, admit that life, generally speaking, has no purpose? Plus, to insist that God would choose natural selection as his undirected creative method seems to require more faith than the idea that God created animals after their kind (Gen. 1:24) who subsequently diversified according to their species. Darwinian evolution cannot guarantee that humans would have come into existence. Of course, a theistic evolutionist could maintain that God intervened from time to time to provide the required mutations to ensure that humans would eventually evolve, but this becomes mere philosophical speculation, and technically not Darwinism. Collins assumes the truth of Darwinism and then he constructs his own form of Christianity that will not contradict his understanding of evolution.

Collins admits that modern science still cannot explain the origin of life, but “this is not the place for a thoughtful person to wager his faith” (*The Language of God*, 93). Coming from a supposed theist this comment is interesting. Collins argues for God’s existence based on moral life (i.e. altruistic behavior among humans),

but he urges extreme caution for God having anything to do with creating biological life. Moreover, Collins finds the Darwinian explanation for the moral law unsatisfying and therefore bases his belief in God in part on the argument for moral law. Nonetheless, his reasoning about the origin of life problem should be equally applied to his reasoning for the moral law. Perhaps Darwinists will one day provide a satisfactory explanation for a moral law? Indeed, a number of scientists have done their best to explain altruistic behavior among animals (which, for them, includes humans).<sup>26</sup>

In the end I expect that Darwinists will not find Collins' synthesis sufficiently convincing; nor do I expect Christians to be overly enamored with his various proposals. Theistic evolution is basically a contradictory worldview, and Collins' own synthesis should be rejected with fervor. Surprisingly, he seems to have caught the attention of certain Old Testament scholars, which is regrettable given the weakness of his synthesis.

#### CHARLES HODGE'S RESPONSE TO DARWINISM

During the nineteenth century in America Charles Hodge distinguished himself as the most implacable foe of Darwinian evolution.<sup>27</sup> Between the years 1872–1874 Hodge published three writings that provided the substance of his critique against Darwinism: Volume two of his *Systematic Theology* (1872); a debate at the New York Conference of the Evangelical Alliance (1873); and a work devoted exclusively to the question, *What Is Darwinism?* (1874). His last work reflected his mature position on the subject and most of what can be found in volume two of his *Systematic Theology* is expressed in more detail in *What is Darwinism?* For that reason his last work provides the best general picture of how he viewed and critiqued Darwinian evolution.

There is no question that Hodge has read Darwin carefully. Before critiquing Darwin, he provides a useful summary of Darwin's theory and quotes copiously from his major publications. Hodge understands just how important the word "natural" is to Darwin's theory (Hodge, *What is Darwinism?*, 40). Importantly, Darwin uses the word "natural" in opposition to the word "supernatural." Natural selection is just that, selection among animals according to natural laws without purpose, intention, and design. Darwin's theory is therefore opposed to any idea of supernatural selection, "which means either a selection originally intended by a power higher than nature; or which is carried out by such power" (Hodge, 41). The present diversity of life, according to Darwin's theory, has arrived by purely unintelligent physical causes.

The animal world does, however, offer evidence of what Hodge calls "contrivance"; and he speaks of three ways that men in all ages have accounted for the appearance of design. In the first place he speaks of his own position, namely, the Scriptural doctrine that the God of the Bible, who is a Spirit, a personal, intelligent Being, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable (WSC, Q.4), is present in this world according to his knowledge and power. Thus in the external world there is evidence of two kinds of force: physical and mental. Hodge affirms, in a similar manner to Calvin's comments above concerning the providence of God, that the "physical belongs to matter, and is due to the properties with which it has been endowed; the other is the everywhere present and ever acting mind of God" (Hodge, 43). Hodge clearly is working within the biblical framework found in chapter five of the Westminster Confession of Faith on the providence of God, which reads: "Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently (WCF 5.2)." Because of its pervasiveness in Scripture, God's providence can only be denied if the Bible loses its authority as the revealed word of God.

In the next place, Hodge provides a description of what Francis Collins and Bruce Waltke would eventually put forth as their synthesis, which shows, of course, that what Collins has argued in his book, *The Language of God*, is not a new synthesis, but in fact deism dressed up as Christianity. This position, explained by Hodge, posits that the present diversity of life was foreseen and purposed by God, "and that He endowed matter with forces which He foresaw and intended should produce such results. But here his agency stops. He never interferes to guide the operation of physical causes" (Hodge, *What is Darwinism?*, 44). Importantly, Hodge explains that this theory fails to be in any meaningful sense of the term Christian on three accounts: 1) it is inconsistent

26. See Ruse, *Can a Darwinian be a Christian?*, 190–210; Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). In response to Dawkins, see Colin Grant, "The Gregarious Metaphor of the Selfish Gene," *Religious Studies* 27.4 (Dec. 1991): 431–450. On how altruism poses a significant problem for Darwinian evolution see idem, *Altruism and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

27. On Charles Hodge's critique of evolution see Jonathan Wells, *Charles Hodge's Critique of Darwinism: An Historical-Critical Analysis of Concepts Basic to the 19th Century Debate* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988); W. Brian Aucker, "Hodge and Warfield on Evolution," *Presbyterian* 20/2 (1994): 131–42.

with what the Scriptures say about God's relation to the world; 2) prayer is rendered vain, for, how can one ask God for help in an emergency if his hand of providence has been suspended while the world functions according to purely natural principles?; and 3) it is inconsistent with the obvious facts insofar as this position banishes God from the world, but still admits certain phenomena that require a great deal of belief. "An absent God who does nothing is, to us, no God" (Hodge, 46). In actual fact, this position represents only a tiny step from the third, more consistent, yet untenable, view of Darwin. This third view states that the diversity of life in the world has nothing to do with a providential Creator, nor does it have anything to do with a God who, to use Collins' words, "precisely tuned" the Universe; rather, this view is purely materialistic and reflects the view of the most prominent Darwinians in the scientific establishment today. The second view and, most especially, the third view suffer from a significant problem from a Christian perspective, and Hodge rightly stresses this point in his examination of the subject.

The peculiar character of Darwinism is not necessarily evolution or natural selection, according to Hodge, but that Darwinian evolution rejects teleology (purpose). Not surprisingly, as noted in the previous chapters, Richard Dawkins, a gradualist, affirms this very point. He, like Darwin, understands that his view of evolution demands that life ultimately has no purpose, regardless of how much squirming emanates from theistic evolutionists. Interestingly, Hodge notes that this point is "often overlooked [...]. The point to be proved is that it is the distinctive doctrine of Mr. Darwin, that species owe their origin, not to the original intention of the divine mind [...] not to the constant and everywhere operative efficiency of God, guiding physical causes in the production of intended effects; but to the gradual accumulation of unintended variations of structure and instinct" (Hodge, 52–53). One of Phillip Johnson's chief criticisms of Darwinism has been to press this point, particularly with those who wish to affirm Darwinian natural selection while at the same time claiming to be Christian theists.<sup>28</sup> Those who insist on this route either abandon classical Christianity or they abandon Darwinism. There is no question that, of the two options, the

former lacks (pardon the pun) survival power. For that reason, Hodge provides a brief discussion concerning the relation of Darwinism to religion in an attempt to show their incompatibility.

Like today, back in the nineteenth century a great deal of antagonism existed between "scientific men" and "religious men," with some exceptions. Today most scientists are committed to naturalism; in fact, some theologians seem to share that commitment. However, Reformed theologians have different presuppositions than Darwinian scientists. Because of these different presuppositions there is no self-consistent way for these groups to avoid arriving at the same conclusions. In general Hodge notes that if "science be the knowledge of the facts perceived by the senses, and scientific evidence, evidence addressed to the senses, then the senses are the only sources of knowledge."<sup>29</sup> Consequently, convictions that cannot be measured according to those grounds become matters of faith. In other words, nature may show evidence of design, which may point to God, but that, according to the rules of science, would not be science. What a theologian is prepared to accept based upon the declarations of the Bible, a scientist cannot due to his/her naturalistic (materialistic) presuppositions. Hodge also draws attention to the philosophy of Darwinism, which causes further alienation between theologians and scientists. Theologians do not deny facts; but Darwinists take certain facts such as microevolution and, along with their insistence on naturalism, build an explanation that goes well beyond the facts. As Phillip Johnson has noted in connection with this point: "in dispute is not whether microevolution happens, but whether it tells us anything important about the processes responsible for creating birds, insects, and trees in the first place" (*Darwin on Trial*, 68). Hodge remains insistent that when a fact is clearly established, such as the earth orbiting around the sun, "no man sets up his interpretation of the Bible in opposition to it" (*What is Darwinism?*, 132). But, Hodge asks, "Must we also admit their explanations and inferences? If we admit that a human embryo passes through various phases, must we admit that man was once a fish, then a bird, then a dog, then an ape, and finally what he now is?" (*Ibid.*, 132). To put this another way, the Darwinian commitment to philosophical naturalism and empiricism means that natural selection and mutation-selection produces diversity of life not because we can observe the mechanism, but because their philosophical commitment leaves no other mechanism or power available to provide an adequate explanation that meets their criteria of what constitutes

28. Johnson's book, *Reason in the Balance: The Case Against Naturalism in Science, Law & Education* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), highlights in more detail (see pp. 71–110) what Hodge addresses in his own work concerning the implications of the so-called "Blind Watchmaker thesis."

29. *What is Darwinism?*, 128. See also Johnson's discussion of scientific rules in *Darwin on Trial* (pp. 113–124).

“science.” As Hodge has shown, empirical facts are not in question; and if Darwinism was limited to empirical facts then no debate would exist between orthodox theologians and scientists since Darwinism would be limited to microevolution. For these reasons, “a man in order to be entitled to be heard on the evolution theory must be willing to renounce his faith not only in the Bible, but in God, in the soul, in a future life, and become a monistic materialist” (*What is Darwinism?*, 137–38). This is another, more poignant, way of saying that Darwinism is atheism.

Prominent evolutionists such as Stephen Jay Gould, Michael Ruse, and Francis Collins have argued that religion and science are not incompatible since they address different spheres of thought. However, as Hodge notes (somewhat prophetically), “this is often said by men who do not admit that there is any thought at all in religion” (Hodge, 142). Ruse and Collins try a little harder than Gould to make Darwinism and Christianity work together, but in the end their religion makes the old-fashioned liberals look like conservatives. The Bible shows us that certain truths, such as the origin of life, anthropology, and the destiny of man, also belong to the domain of science. As such, Christianity “has to fight for its life against a large class of scientific men” (Hodge, *Ibid.*). If that was true in Hodge’s day, how much more today when supposedly Reformed professors seem ever-willing to grant unproven facts to the scientific establishment in order to maintain a modicum of intellectual respectability?

Hodge’s critique of evolution is balanced and fair-minded. He’s a theologian and not a scientist, yet his analysis of Darwinism and its proponents shows that he is not unfamiliar with the primary sources. The strength of his critique clearly lies in the philosophical and theological implications for Christianity if Darwinism is true. Hodge does not waver on monogenism, the idea that all human beings have descended from one man, namely, Adam (Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, II.42–122). Moreover, his unwavering commitment to the teachings of the Westminster Confession of Faith, particularly the section on God’s providence, meant that any theory that purported to explain the complexity of organisms in the world apart from God’s absolute undiminished sovereignty would be rejected on the grounds that Scripture makes clear who is in control of all events in the world. As Jonathan Wells noted in his study on Hodge, “any theory which attributes the origin of species solely to the operation of blind, unintelligent physical causes,— even if it acknowledges that those physical causes were set in motion by God,—denies the doctrine of providence,

which Hodge considered central to Christian belief” (*Charles Hodge’s Critique of Darwinism*, 217). That did not mean, of course, that Hodge resisted scientific advancements; but he was only prepared to believe that which could be proven, such as microevolution. The Darwinian synthesis, in Hodge’s view, had more to do with naturalistic presuppositions and philosophical atheism than empirical science. Notwithstanding Hodge’s vigorous opposition to Darwinism, Wells nevertheless contends that Hodge “might eventually have converted, like his successors at Princeton Seminary, to some form of theistic evolution” (Wells, *ibid.*). This statement may in fact reveal more about Wells than Hodge; but assuming that Wells had Warfield in mind, the claim that Hodge’s successors held to theistic evolution needs to be explored.

#### B.B. WARFIELD’S RESPONSE TO DARWINISM

In the May, 2009 issue of *The Banner of Truth*, Peter Barnes wrote an article entitled “Commemorating Darwin” that stated very matter-of-factly, “Even the great B. B. Warfield declared that he was a ‘Darwinian of the purest water.’” Regrettably, this distorted picture of the great Princetonian has gained popular currency. The remark about Warfield calling himself a “Darwinian of the purest water” needs to be placed in its proper context: he made that statement about himself as a boy! Besides Barnes, a number of evangelicals have sought to enlist Warfield in defense of theistic evolution broadly conceived. Mark Noll and David Livingstone have been at the forefront in promoting this understanding of the great Princetonian, declaring confidently, “One of the best-kept secrets in American intellectual history is that B. B. Warfield, the foremost defender of the theological conservative doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible, was also an evolutionist.”<sup>30</sup> As this essay has shown, the truth or falsity of such a statement depends entirely on how evolution is defined. Warfield’s view of “evolution” must be distinguished from his view of Darwinian evolution. The important question, particularly in light of recent debates, is whether Warfield embraced fully naturalistic evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense as Francis Collins does? The evidence nowhere suggests that during his public career he ever held to such a position. In fact, he clearly opposed Darwin’s view that

30. Mark Noll & David Livingstone, “B. B. Warfield (1851–1921): A Biblical Inerrantist as Evolutionist,” *The Journal of Presbyterian History* 80:3 (fall 2002): 153–71. See also their *Evolution, Science, and Scripture: Selected Writings of B. B. Warfield* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 2000), 14. Hereafter, *ESS*.

time and chance could bring about the present diversity of life (ESS, 228).

As noted above, Collins views man's origin in terms of his descent from lower forms of life. Thus, Collins is not simply an evolutionist, but a Darwinist. Warfield's view of the origin of man paints a very different picture than that of Collins (See ESS, 212–17). In his unpublished notes on systematic theology (1898–1901) Warfield notes: "Man is not improved organic matter, but was created out of nothing. The intrusion of Divine Power for something entirely new. But intrinsically Creation and Evolution are mutually exclusive [...] Evolution process tends to exclude all supernaturalism [...] There is no proof of progressive stages in Man.' 'Man was created in the image of God in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.'"<sup>31</sup> Here Warfield affirms the creation of man *ex nihilo*; and in the latter part of his quote he echoes the Westminster Standards' teaching on man (WCF, 4.2; WSC, Q. 10). In his review of one of James Orr's books, he further elaborates his view of man's origins:

The old definition of 'creation' as the making of something *partim ex nihilo, partim ex material naturaliter inhabili—ex material inhabili supra naturæ vires aliquid producere*,—is certainly the sound one. Unless the thing produced is above what the powers intrinsic in the evolving stuff are capable of producing (under whatever divine guidance), the product is not a product of 'creation' but of 'providence.' And 'providence' can never do the work of 'creation.' Dr. Orr fully understands this and argues therefore that the apparition of man implies the intrusion of a new cause, that it is a creation, strictly so called: and this is what makes the remark on p. 87 inexplicable. Let man have arisen through the divine guidance of the evolutionary process, there is no creative act of God, but only a providential activity of God, concerned in his production, unless there has been intruded into the process the action of a cause not intrinsic in the evolving stuff, causing the complex product to be something more than can find its account in the intrinsic forces, however

divinely manipulated. Evolution can never, under any circumstances, issue in a product which is specifically new: 'modification' is the utmost that it can achieve—'origination' is beyond its tether."<sup>32</sup>

Warfield's contentions are simply not consistent with how Darwinists have understood the origin of man, which shows why referring to Warfield as an evolutionist only adds confusion to this much-vexed debate. Of course, referring to Warfield as an "evolutionist" acts as a powerful rhetorical tool for advocates of theistic evolution.

Importantly, Warfield repeatedly castigated Darwinism, calling it "highly speculative," "hyper-speculative," "a vast mass of speculation," and "pure speculation"; stating that in the end, "the formal completeness of the logical theory of Darwinism is fairly matched therefore, by its almost ludicrous actual incompetence for the work asked of it."<sup>33</sup> Having said that, Warfield's reputation for embracing "evolution" should not be explained away to the point of affirming that he entirely rejected the concept. And at this point a great deal of care is required in attempting to understand Warfield's view. In short, Warfield admits "there may be such a thing as descent with variations forming new species, and yet not such a thing as descent with variations forming new genera—or new classes—or new kingdoms."<sup>34</sup> So, for example, he suggests that "we might believe that the "horse is a modification of the Eohippus and is descended from him, and yet deny that the whole body of animated life came in like manner from the Eozoon" (ESS, 121). This example helps us put into perspective a number of issues. First, Warfield clearly distances himself from the classical Darwinian position. But he does leave open the possibility of "macroevolution" via microevolutionary steps, provided that by this form of evolution we affirm that "it is not proven to account for all or, if we see clearly, that it cannot account for all" (ESS, 121). Darwinists have used this example to explain how microevolution becomes macroevolution in accordance with the gradualist model. However, as noted above, Richard Goldschmidt claimed in the mid-twentieth century that the gradualist model could not provide the requisite evidence to prove that transitional species existed.<sup>35</sup> Later, in a fascinating and controversial essay that would rock the Darwinist establishment, Stephen Jay Gould continued to question Darwin's gradualist model, going so far to suggest that the synthetic theory (i.e., evolution by small genetic changes) could not withstand, among other things, the molecular assault. Consequently, and with some reluctance, Gould, in a moment that would win him both a lot of enemies and friends at the same

31. Warfield on Creation and Evolution From N. W. Harkness, "Systematic Theology Lectures 1898–1901" Box 49:5 Princeton Theological Seminary Archives.

32. Warfield, *Critical Reviews in Works* 10:139.

33. Warfield, *Critical Reviews in Works*, 10:183–186.

34. ESS, 121. W.G.T. Shedd provides a stronger critique on this point than Warfield. See *Dogmatic Theology*; Third Edition, ed. A. W. Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 387.

35. See Richard B. Goldschmidt, "Evolution, As Viewed By One Geneticist," *American Scientist* 40, no. 1 (1952): 84–94.

time, argued that the synthetic theory “is effectively dead, despite its persistence as text-book orthodoxy.”<sup>36</sup> We can only guess how Warfield would have responded to these interesting developments, but certainly the deficiencies in Darwin’s model have only been exacerbated over time, which leaves theologians today with less, not more, reasons to embrace, to use Michael Denton’s words, “a theory in crisis.”<sup>37</sup>

Fred Zaspel has argued that Warfield “never overtly acknowledges evolution as true. The picture we have of him on this subject is continuously one of non-committal. What he allowed as a possibility both theologically and theoretically—that the Christian as such has ‘no quarrel with evolution when confined to its own sphere as a suggested account of the method of the divine providence’—he never explicitly endorses. He was not opposed in principle to some kind of evolution, but neither did he explicitly embrace it. But at the same time what he says is that he is undecided.”<sup>38</sup> Zaspel is certainly correct.

#### CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to provide a brief overview of Darwinian evolution and its relationship to theologians from the Reformed tradition. As noted, Francis Collins espouses a view of evolution that goes far beyond anything Hodge or even Warfield were prepared to allow. The BioLogos Foundation is thoroughly committed to Darwinian evolution to the point that they are in fundamental disagreement, on scientific grounds, with the Intelligent Design movement. They therefore hold to the view that the present diversity of life can be explained more or less by the mechanism of natural selection without any divine intervention. Even the origin of life problem, according to Collins, should not be explained by an appeal to God’s intervention. Bruce Waltke has affirmed in his published work that he agrees in substance with the position of Collins. In so doing he has gone further than Warfield in his commitment to Darwinism. There are, no doubt, areas where Waltke would theologically differ from Collins. Whatever they are, the fact that Waltke has drawn attention to a book that is so theologically flawed, so committed to fully naturalistic evolution, and in places lacking adequate theological and scientific explanations, should not go unnoticed. Commending such a specious book is unwise, which is rather ironic since Waltke has taught us so much about wisdom.

Theologians from the Reformed tradition, who write for the BioLogos Foundation, or commend the work of Collins, need to be conversant with the literature on Darwinian evolution. Ideally, they should be familiar

with the philosophical work of Michael Ruse and Elliot Sober; they should also be familiar with the debates among evolutionists (e.g. Dawkins and Gould) regarding the mechanism that best explains the diversity of life in the world today. It would also be interesting to read what they think of the so-called “Blind Watchmaker thesis” that is so crucial to the Neo-Darwinian synthesis. How do they reconcile, theologically and philosophically, the purposelessness of Darwinian evolution with the Reformed understanding of teleology, eschatology, and God’s providence?<sup>39</sup> To suggest that embracing Darwinian evolution carries no important philosophical consequences is, at best, naïve, particularly since the theory rests upon important philosophical assumptions, such as methodological naturalism.<sup>40</sup>

The language of God is the Word of God; and its reliability constitutes the real issue in this debate. The appeal of the BioLogos Foundation may have less to do with its own intrinsic feasibility for reconciling Darwinism and Christianity and more to do with a lack of trust in the Bible and a desire to be academically respectable. Nonetheless, Calvin issues a timely reminder to all Christians who venture to speak and write on these issues: “It is in vain for any to reason as philosophers on the workmanship of the world, except those who, having been first humbled by the preaching of the Gospel, have learned to submit the whole of their intellectual wisdom (as Paul expresses it) to the foolishness of the cross, (1 Cor. i. 21).”<sup>41</sup> Amen. ■

36. “Is a New and General Theory of Evolution Emerging?” *Paleobiology* 6, no. 1 (Winter, 1980), 120.

37. See his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, Md: Adler & Adler, 1986).

38. Fred Zaspel, *The Theology of B. B. Warfield: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2010).

39. As Elliot Sober has noted, “Creationists hold that the evolutionary process is fundamentally incapable of producing the complex adaptations we observe; these features require God’s direct intervention. For theistic evolutionists, God produces complex adaptations indirectly, by way of the natural processes he put in place.” *Evidence and Evolution: The Logic Behind the Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 112. Can a Reformed theologian hold to the providence of God and affirm that he is only responsible for complex adaptations only indirectly?

40. For that reason several prominent Darwinists argue that belief in evolutionary theory leads to a denial of theism. See Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*; Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); William Provine, “Progress in Evolution and Meaning in Life,” in *Evolutionary Progress* ed. M. Nitecki (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 49–74.

41. *Commentary on Genesis, Argument. Calvin’s Commentaries*, 45 volumes (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844–1856; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983) 1.63.