

Casting down imagination

A Home Educating Mom's Response to Theistic Evolution

by *Shannon Tederoff*

A friend recently invited me to a public lecture at a respected Christian university-seminary in Edmonton, entitled, "Darwin's Religious Evolution: A Christian Perspective." The presenter is a well-known professor at the University of Alberta, and a self-described theistic evolutionist. The term refers to the belief that God creates through evolution and thus we all have, including humans, a common ancestor.

Now, I am not a "scientific expert," but over the past few years, after my introduction to Young Earth Creation ideas (really just biblical ideas), I attempted to wade into the debate. With my heart thumping and hands sweating I quickly stuck up my hand for "question period" after the lecture. The entire purpose of his lecture - and I can say this with confidence because I summed it up for him at the end (and he emphatically responded to me in front of the audience by saying, "Yes, that is the heart of my lecture, the central point...") - was as follows: That while Darwin definitely could not be called an evangelical Christian, the popular view of Darwin as purely secularist, or even atheist, is based on a highly selective reading of the sources, with no thanks in part to well-known atheist Richard Dawkins. Dawkins wrote in his book, "The Blind Watchmaker" (1986), that Darwin made it possible to be an "intellectually fulfilled atheist." Some of Dawkins' arguments were recently addressed in the movie "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed" by Ben Stein. This movie was great at exposing some of the dangers of following an evolutionary interpretation of the data as well as the dangers of speaking out against the "status quo" in the world of science.

During the lecture I attended, the professor cited some references to a "creator" in Darwin's works (seven times in "Origin of Species"), and thought that Darwin could have perhaps become a Christian if the dominant scientific (and Christian) idea of the day was not William Paley's watchmaker theory, which he described as designed, conflated, and static. Who is William Paley, you ask? He lived back in the 1700's and is the one who originally came up with the idea that if you go into a field and find a watch, how do you know how it originated? His answer: A watchmaker or creator, of course, carefully crafted the pieces to be both functional and aesthetically-pleasing. Charles Darwin was conflicted and wrestled with the natural processes he saw around him, and through these observations, they definitely didn't match up to the dynamic evolutionary process he was developing.

Well, according to the professor, the logical deduction from this thought is that the Young Earth Creationists of today are hindering people, especially educated people, from coming to Christ, because their belief does not match the prominent evolutionary theories of today. This professor once again emphatically responded to my analysis by saying, "Yes, this is now my pastor's heart coming through." He sees his mission to inform those doubters that, yes, you can believe in evolution and be a Christian! This, in fact, is the good news according to theist evolutionists!

Now, that probably doesn't come as a surprise to most of you who have been following this debate. The fact that it is being said at a Christian university-seminary is also not surprising, given the direction Christian higher education has been going for years. I understand that one of the purposes of higher education is to help us wrestle with ideas and hopefully come somewhat closer to truth and a public lecture certainly is a good platform for this. However, in speaking to several alumni from the college, although it's not written in its statement of faith, the majority of professors at this particular institution would not be known as "Young Earth Creationists." So, this public lecture was not just to present an alternate theory to be debated, but it is a theory that is likely promoted in the classrooms of this institution that is training the Christian leaders of tomorrow.

So, if all this is not surprising, then what's my point? Well, as I looked over the audience, it was a definite mix of college-age students (some sitting with their parents), and others, perhaps like myself, a mother, busy on most days home-educating her five children. The sad thing was that in the short question period afterwards, there were very few students who voiced any opposition to his position. Even if they did have questions, they may have felt inadequate and unprepared to give a logical rebuttal.

The professor went on to say that because Darwin didn't understand Genesis as we can today - that it was not meant as a literal account but a poetic genre - he couldn't see the truth in it. God, he went on to say, revealed only information that the ancient people would understand, at their level of understanding. That, of course, didn't include our "scientific" literary analysis of the ancient texts or the amazing breakthroughs in biology, chemistry and physics that man has accomplished in our modern world. As I heard this, I thought, if this is true, too bad God didn't get even his simple explanations right, mixing up the 'days' of creation, which don't even match the popular evolutionary thought of today!

Don't be brainwashed by the thought that these ideas are too lofty and scientific for us or for our home-educated children. Darwin's problem wasn't that he couldn't see the truth of Christianity due to an inept, "unscientific" Christian thought of the day, but that he didn't fear the Lord. Remember: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov.1:7). The main problem with Darwin's theory is that it didn't start with the fear of the Lord and so, at best, it is limited in understanding and truth. Frequently, we have seen that seemingly unbiased science is influenced by one's worldview. Darwin's worldview and disillusionment with God obviously led him to develop a theory far from the truth of God's Word. The question that arises for all Christians is, Do we interpret the Bible by the rock layers or the rock layers by the Bible?

People sometimes ask us when we will be putting our children back into "mainstream" education, whether it be junior high, high school or university. The most important question for home educators is when will our children be prepared to live up to 2 Corinthians 10:5? When will they be able to "[Cast] down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and [bring] into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" - things such as evolution and now theistic evolution? Does that mean our children need to know how to debate theistic evolutionists? Maybe. At minimum they need to know, in their own minds, what they believe and why, so that when they are confronted with contrary views, they can evaluate them in the light of God's truth.

This year, resolve to teach your children the fear of God first before math, grammar or any other curriculum you use. Don't fall into the lie that your children are getting a substandard education by being at home with you, perhaps a seemingly "unqualified" teacher. The excellent material supplied by organizations such as Answers in Genesis and Institute for Creation Research will help us as parents begin to learn how real science supports the Bible. The Creation Science Association of Alberta (www.create.ab.ca) is a local organization that brings in highly qualified speakers to the province and publishes a newsletter called Dialogue, which keeps people abreast on the newest developments in the field of Creation Science. May God bless and give you wisdom as you prepare your children to enter a world hostile to God's truth!

Shannon Tederoff (B.A., B.Ed.) is a homeeducating mom with five children, ranging between 8 months and 9 years old. She lives in Edmonton and serves alongside her husband, Ted, on the AHEA Board.