

How Darwin and his disciples utilize 'God'

A review of
Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion Over Science
 by **Cornelius G. Hunter**
 Brazos Press (a division of Baker Book House), Grand Rapids, 2003

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Biophysicist Cornelius Hunter's previous book, 'Darwin's God', the forerunner to this one, was beautifully written. It threw a sharply focused spotlight on a much-neglected aspect of the creation/evolution controversy—namely, the way in which evolutionists have, ever since Darwin, consistently advanced their cause much more with theological arguments rather than scientific ones. The book was well received among participants in the IDM (Intelligent Design Movement). The author clearly approves of the ID approach, although he points out some of its shortcomings as well.

Instead of demonstrating with scientific rigour how evolution could have designed a particular biological entity, they argue that 'God wouldn't have made it to be that way'. In so doing, of course, evolutionists are defining God on their own terms, confining Him into a convenient philosophical straitjacket of their own making. This is true for examples of so-called 'bad' design (by whose criteria?) and also 'natural evil' (the existence of structures seemingly designed to cause suffering in others).

Hunter made his point remarkably well in that book. But, even though it was not intended to be about ID or cast as an 'ID book', it joined the bulk of ID writings in

- a) leaving the question of the Designer unanswered;
- b) ignoring the subject of the actual history of life;
- c) mostly evading the crucial matter

of giving an answer to the challenge of 'natural evil'.

Such an answer is, of course, not really possible to give with any coherence while a) and b) remain untouched; the nature of God¹ is crucial, as is the Fall of man and the creation. The occasional vague allusion to creation 'groaning' was about as far as it went.

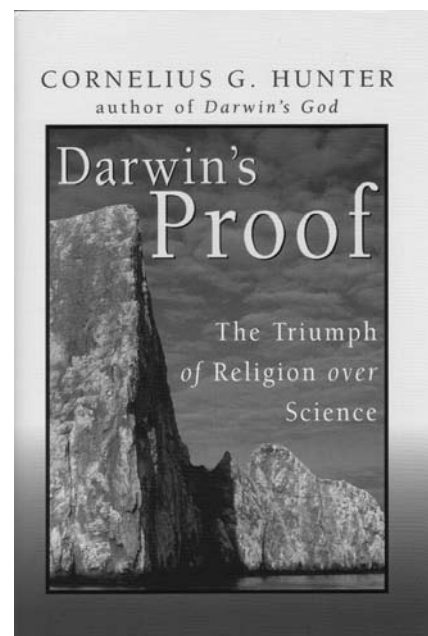
IDM tactics

As is clear from my comments in AiG's position paper on the IDM,² I acknowledge that such omissions (where they emanate from Bible-believers, as Hunter is) may have a well-intentioned tactical purpose; to allow ID to keep its 'broad church' alliance with agnostics, vague theists, Moonies, etc.³ (One could lightheartedly call this the Little Red Riding Hood strategy—as in, 'Grandma, what strange bedfellows you have!' 'All the better to fight naturalism with, my dear.') But I may be reading too much into an omission, since no book can cover every angle, and *Darwin's God* was narrowly (and effectively) focused.

After AiG's aforementioned IDM paper appeared on the web,² Dr Hunter engaged me in a friendly email discussion which involved, among other things, the matter of natural evil and the Fall. Whether or not that exchange had any effect on this latest book, it was a pleasure to see that this time, he flies his colours as a Bible-believing Christian from the mast. Furthermore, he repeatedly makes direct and relevant reference to the fact of a groaning creation which is fallen, and to the nature of God (i.e. His sovereignty).

Darwinian theology

The book's main point is the same as that of its predecessor. The 'religion' of the subtitle would seem to refer to the way in which Darwinian theology (defining God in a way that insists He would not design things



a certain way, and then arguing that evolution is the only alternative) is what has constituted the main 'proof' for Darwin and his successors. In the process, it has trumped real science. And the Darwinists did not conjure this approach up *de novo*—it was handed down to them on a platter by earlier naturalists and philosophers, many of whom wore Christian hats of some sort.

Within that overall framework, Hunter undertakes a compact review of the main Darwinian arguments. I suspect that evolutionists will be particularly irritated at the way he dismisses, with gentle authority (and a touch of disdain) their arguments without a great deal of detail. I found this approach both valuable and legitimate for its purpose; this author is looking at the philosophical 'big picture'. Stooping to their playing field would tend to distract from his thesis. And readers of this review should not get the impression that he is going easy on the science; a lack of detail does not invalidate the force of the arguments. I liked the description of one reviewer on the back cover who called his approach 'nuanced'.

Design and the origins battle

Hunter unhesitatingly uses the Bible in discussing the nature of the true God, and in so doing shows the

weakness of the watered-down notions of a 'creator-god' rampant in the Victorian England of Darwin's time.

Especially interesting to me was his documentation of how such ID forerunners as William Paley had paved the way for 'Darwinian theology' through their romanticized notions of God. These involved the belief that all nature was designed for the maximum happiness of its occupants, and idealized optimality was expected to be everywhere. But why should that be so? Particularly when the Bible does not claim this for the presently-observed creation. Whether intentional or not, this section of the book is an implicit critique of the notion that all it takes to win the origins battle is to demonstrate 'design'.⁴

So the reader can well appreciate that when I had reached the end of the book I was quite excited about it, and thinking that we should stock and promote it. OK, he didn't exactly spell out or defend the biblical sequence of events, i.e. the true history of the world. And he didn't even mention the issue of the age of things; but that might be good, in a way, I thought—at least his fellow-travellers in ID might start to get the picture when they see the significance of a fallen creation. One can't have a fallen creation as the explanation for violence and suffering, and still cling to millions of years for the age of the fossil-bearing rock layers. (It would be blatantly inconsistent to blame the Fall for 'bad things' in the living world, and not do the same for those same things when seen in the fossils. But if the fossils were formed over millions of years, the suffering and disease they evidence could not have been the consequence of Adam's sin; not even the most adventurous 'progressive creationist' interpretation could stretch the biblical genealogies to hundreds of millions of years.)

Could God have used evolution

But alas, that was before I read the Appendix wherein there was what seemed to be a frustrating inconsistency. Hunter says (p. 142) that God 'could have used evolution'. The rest of

the book makes it fairly clear that he doesn't *favour* this notion. In context, he *permits* it, he says, because 'the Scriptures do not describe precisely how God created the species'. Although this is arguable (e.g. I think they make it clear that man was created directly from the literal dust—to which he will literally return—and not via an animal intermediary), the question of the mechanism of creation is in one sense a red herring. The issue is less *mechanism* than it is *history*. If God had created by evolution (in the sense of an ever-increasing amount of genetic information coming from a handful of living things via common descent over millions of years), the sequence of events in Genesis would be a lie, for one thing. To name just one contradiction: Genesis says fish came after fruit trees, evolutionary belief has it the other way around. Hence, because God cannot lie, the real (biblical) God could not have used evolution (in the way the word is normally understood). That does not mean of course that the biblical kinds cannot radiate/speciate as they adapt to new environments, for which I would resist the use of the term 'evolution' so as not to confuse via equivocal definitions.

Also, 'creation by evolution' (again, as generally understood) means that God would have been not only permitting, but utilizing as his means of creation, a process involving torture, suffering, the death of the unfit, and trillions of gallons of bloodshed—and then calling all of that 'very good'.

In personal correspondence, the author has indicated to me that, taken together with statements he made elsewhere in the book, he did not intend his comments to allow for grand-scale evolution. However, in addition to the textual ambiguity which permits this in most readers' eyes, there is the matter of how it tends to undermine his previous references to the Fall as an explanatory device for natural evil. Whether we are talking classic theistic evolution, progressive creation, or limited evolution with spurts of interference along the way, there is a bottom line with all 'millions of years'

concepts. Namely, there is absolutely no logical room for any creation-wide Adam-caused Fall triggering the onset of suffering and death in the animal kingdom. The Bible's clear teaching of the Fall is the mortal enemy of any 'millions of years of biological history' viewpoint.⁵

Conclusion

Nevertheless, despite that hiccup, empowering others to identify the theology of Darwinism makes for a powerful tool in the creation/evolution battle. So for those who are well grounded in creation apologetics (and thus not likely to be 'thrown' by this inconsistency), *Darwin's Proof* is a fascinating and important book that will make a valuable addition to their armamentarium.

Who knows—perhaps a trilogy is on the cards. This one was a substantial advance on the author's last (and already very worthy) book, at least for me. So maybe the next one can be recommended without any caveat—I certainly hope so.

References

1. This is only comprehensively obtainable through special revelation, I would maintain.
2. <www.answeringgenesis.org/docs2002/0803_idm.asp>.
3. The question of whether that approach is likely to be successful in overthrowing the citadels of Darwin is outside the scope of this review. See ref. 2 for a discussion.
4. Here and elsewhere one gets the distinct impression that the author is not an unthinking follower of some ID 'party line'. My comments here should not be taken to imply, however, that he is in any way unsupportive of the main strategies of the IDM.
5. The author states that it was not his purpose to explain the history of life or take a stand on the age of the earth, which he apparently sees as an 'inhouse debate' among Christians. But this is precisely where AiG deliberately differs, without any rancour or disrespect intended, from the 'broad church' school of the IDM. This issue of the impossibility of coherence in answering the issue of 'natural evil' by pointing to the Fall/Curse is one of the many reasons for our stance.