

Bettering Civilization

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I am a great fan of columnist Kathleen Parker and have long admired her ability to bring perspective and reason to important issues of our times. But her Op-Ed article in the Journal on May 27 (*Religion, Science Can Be Bridged*) featuring Human Genome Project leader Francis Collins, was a great disappointment.

The basic message of this article...inspired by Collins and endorsed by Parker...is that fundamentalist Christians, and specifically fundamentalist scientists, just need to accept evolution as a fact of life like everyone else does and give up on the non-scientific notions of creationism and intelligent design. Do these things and public education in the U.S. will be saved and "civilization bettered".

I'm all for saving public education and making civilization better but the belief that embracing Darwinism will contribute toward those ends requires that you ignore several "inconvenient truths".

First, neo-Darwinism says that our existence is the result of unguided material processes alone where we descended from a universal common ancestor just like every other species in the animal kingdom. This naturalistic account of our origins establishes the intellectual foundation for the central dogma of *materialism*, a belief system which holds that there are no causes other than material causes and transcendent creators are just superstitious notions left over from the pre-scientific age.

While Collins and Parker may find a place for both evolution and God in their thinking, the new breed of militant atheists, such as biologists Richard Dawkins at Oxford University and physicists Steven Weinberg at the University of Texas, do not. Their agenda is to rid the world of God whom they view as a plague on mankind...one that is proving difficult to eradicate. Darwinism plays a central role in their program of divine eradication.

If any thinking Christian is going to crawl in bed and snuggle up to neo-Darwinism, he or she better understand the true nature of this beast. They might start with an examination of the influence Darwinism had on the godless totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century that were responsible for the slaughter of 100,000,000 men, women and children, all in the name of *social cleansing*, a necessary step along the way to achievement of the long-awaited utopian dream, free from the rule of God.

This is the Darwinist's way of making civilization better?

Second, neo-Darwinism, as a scientific explanation for the history and diversity of life is...by any rational consideration of the evidence...dead. However, as a secular religion, it is alive and doing quite well.

There is without question a great body of circumstantial evidence that provides fuel for endless speculations and "just so" stories about how this or that species might have or could have evolved due

to this or that effect. However, the crucial evidence needed to establish the fact of any theory that claims to give a scientific account of the history of life must come from the fossil record because it is the fossils that provide the only direct physical evidence regarding that history.

After 150 years of searching through the rocks paleontologists openly admit that Darwin's "Tree of Life" is nowhere to be found in the fossil record.

Third, it is becoming increasingly evident that the unifying principle of all reality, the single idea that makes sense of everything we know about the cosmos and life is *design* and the central focus of that design is mankind. This inference from the physical and life sciences is inescapable and in perfect harmony with the Christian notion that mankind is God's special creation. Because evidence for design in nature threatens the intellectual foundation of materialistic belief systems, it must be suppressed at all cost...even at the cost of the integrity of science.

Fourth, many, if not most, so-called "fundamentalist" scientists might be willing to have a go at trying to reconcile their faith to evolutionary theory if it were not for the evidentiary weakness of the theory. It is offensive for Collins and Parker to presume that there can be no basis for rejecting neo-Darwinism other than on dogmatic Christian beliefs.

And fifth, there can be no conflict between *true* science and *true* religion if both are the result of the work of a Creator. Faith and reason led to an understanding of the true nature of the cosmos and of man. Science as an intellectual activity is possible because the cosmos is comprehensible to man. The cosmos is comprehensible to man because the rationality of the cosmos and the rationality of man are the same rationality and this extraordinary fact is so because the cosmos and mankind have the same Author...just like it says in Genesis.

It was from this understanding of the natural world that science emerged. Like it or not, modern science has its historical and philosophical roots in rational Christian theology.

Within the Christian worldview, faith and reason are given by God. In medieval Europe four hundred years ago, faith and reason led to science. Today, science and reason point us back to God, the Author of both. If this is a Created Order, then why should we expect it to be otherwise?

My gripe with Parker is that she, like many Catholic thinkers, so easily buys into the idea that in the controversy over the teaching of evolution in public schools, it is the fundamentalist Christians who are the villains...ignorant, closed-minded villains at that. My gripe with Collins...in spite of his prestige as a scientist...is his uncritical acceptance of neo-Darwinism even in the face of its severe evidentiary problems.

Belief in God may not preclude acceptance of evolution as Collins says, but a paucity of convincing evidence does. That is why I reject neo-Darwinism.