

# The Religion of Science: The Largest Remaining Frontier Where Darwin Scores Higher than Intelligent Design

by *Ralph D. Winter*

According to Deborah Cadbury's book entitled *The Terrible Lizard*, which tells us about early dinosaur hunters, the tumble of new bones being dug up right in England soon became a significant factor in a vast and widespread shift away from what came to be called a "bondage to Moses," that is, bondage to the Bible.

Cornelius Hunter's book, *Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*, demonstrates conclusively that even Darwin, only a little later, was still concerned about the Christian faith in that he was pained until the day he died by the intellectual task of explaining how a good and all-powerful God could have authored the cruelty which he saw so pervasively in nature, and which many of the discoveries of dinosaur bones dramatically highlighted.

Both Hunter and Cadbury show that in the 1820s Biblical perspectives were major factors filtering interpretations of the bones being discovered of earlier life forms. This was true at Oxford University, for example, which was in that era a citadel of defense of the literal text of the Bible, somewhat of a Moody Bible Institute.

Today we have the wonderful and effective work of the Evangelical pioneers in the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, a perspective portrayed magnificently in the Illustra Media video, *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*. But neither the writings of these pioneer ID people nor this magnificent video reflect any stated concern whatsoever for the perplexing presence of pervasive evil, suffering and cruelty throughout all of nature. Strange, because the lurid presence of evil ("Nature red in tooth and claw") was a major factor in Darwin's thinking and the thinking of quite a few other key people who in his day were confused about how the existence of violent forms of life could be congruent with the concept of a benevolent Creator.

Thus, it would appear that some of our present-day creationists are so eager to give God all the credit for all of creation that the virtually unavoidable presence of evil to be seen there has become strangely less important than it was in Darwin's day and even to Darwin himself. Would it not be very ironic if the man we usually accuse of destroying faith in a Creator God were

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to turn out to be more interested in preserving the good reputation of that God than are we?

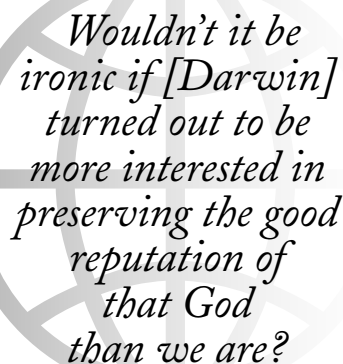
In saying that some of our creationists are glossing over the surprisingly prominent reality of intelligent evil in nature, I don't mean that any of these ID people really deep down are unwilling to confront the enigmatic reality of evil. I just mean that, from the current discussion as seen in their written materials that would appear to be the case.

As a matter of fact, I myself have all my life believed in what C. S. Lewis called "that hideous strength." Yet only recently have I begun to reflect on the possibility that this hideous and intelligent evil must not reasonably be dealt with among us any longer merely by superficial references to the philosophical concept of *sin* and to a *fall of man*. Why? Because the mere *idea of sin* is not personifiable. Sin as an abstraction is defined by some as the departure from what is right. In that case the concept itself does not necessarily imply the potent and powerful existence of a diabolical personality any more than would a wrong score on a third-grade arithmetic test. The key question is, "Does it make any practical difference if we conceive of ourselves, on the one hand, as tempted by the freedom to sin or, on the other hand, fighting against an evil one who tempts us intelligently?"

Note, for example, the huge difference, back in the days of the Second World War, between, on the one hand, the often nearly invisible icebergs that sent many ships to the bottom of the ocean and, on the other hand, the stealthy, intelligent submarines which caused far greater damage. What if the sinking of thousands of ships had been conceived of as merely the result of inanimate forces? What if scientists had not figured out a way to bounce underwater sound off steel-hulled submarines in such a way as to distinguish the difference between an iceberg and a submarine? This technique, to be called *sonar*, came late in the war, and implementing it took even longer. By that time not a thousand ships had been sunk, not two thousand, but six

thousand ships crossing the Atlantic, loaded with food and war materiel, had gone to the bottom. It may be hard to believe but the outcome of that enormous war turned on the subsequent success in fighting these *intelligent* submarines.

It could be alleged that I am missing a main point. A conversation I had with Philip Johnson several years ago brought this forcibly to my attention. I began by congratulating him (and Michael Behe) on the potent logic of the ID movement, but I said, "When you look at your computer screen and if it says suddenly, 'Ha, I just wiped



*Wouldn't it be ironic if [Darwin] turned out to be more interested in preserving the good reputation of that God than we are?*

out your hard disk,' you have not the slightest difficulty in concluding that you have suffered the onslaught of a computer virus concocted by an *intelligent, real person*. Curiously, then, when we contemplate a real biological virus which, though only a tiny assemblage, assails the health of an enormously larger human being, why do we have trouble concluding that we are dealing with an intelligent EVIL design?"

His answer, essentially, was, "Ralph, in my writings and public appearances I can't even mention God much less Satan. I have a very specific battle to fight, namely, to take apart the logic of unaided evolution. That is all I am trying to do." Okay, I have respected that response. I have not pestered him further. In fact, I am not even now endeavoring to fault the ID movement and its objectives.

Rather, I would ask a larger question. There are very many people, even Bible-believing Christians (not just non-Christians), who are to this day profoundly puzzled, perplexed,

and certainly confused by the extensive presence in the created world of outrageous evil, created apparently by what we believe to be a God who is both all-powerful and benevolent. In coping with this, they may frequently attribute to God what is actually the work of an evil intelligence, and thus fatalistically give not the slightest thought to fighting back.

- When my wife died in 2001 more than one person tried to console me by observing that, and I quote, "God knows what He is doing."
- When Chuck Colson's daughter concluded that her brain-damaged son was, and I quote, "exactly the way God wanted him to be," the impressively intelligent and influential Colson actually applauded her conclusion.
- When Jonathan Edwards fatally contracted smallpox in his effort to try out a vaccine that might protect the Indians in Western Massachusetts, the vast majority of the hyper-calvinistically trained pastors of Massachusetts concluded that God killed him because, to quote them, "he was interfering with Divine Providence." These pastors went on to organize an anti-vaccination society.
- Going further back in time, a Mother Superior in Spain woke up one morning and detected a small lump in her forehead. She concluded that it must be God who was doing something to her presumably to deepen her devotion and nourish her character. When it finally turned out that a worm was burrowing there, and had broken the surface so you could see exactly what it was, she concluded that it was God's worm. When she would stoop over to pick something up, and it would occasionally fall out, she would replace it so as not to obstruct the will of God.

These are, however, only a few examples compared to the thousands of times a day among even modern Evangelicals that some blatant evil goes unattacked because it is resignedly if not fatalistically assumed to be the initiative of God. I am not so much interested in the philosophical or

theological aspects of this situation as I am in the resulting passivity before eradicable evil, the practical fatalism.

I will go one step further. If we are dealing with an intelligent evil, even our thinking about that fact may likely be opposed and confused by that same evil force, that evil power, that evil personality. Is there any evidence of this additional complexity? In what form would it appear? How could we identify it?

The human period of history is paper thin when compared to the vast expanse of the previous story of the development of life on earth. But even in the few thousands of years of the existence of *homo sapiens*, it would seem clear that the growth of human population is directly related to the degree of acquired human knowledge of, and intentional resistance to, *microbiological pathogens*. A whole flood of books have appeared in recent years commenting on the plagues of history and on the general conquest of disease through medicine. Both war and pestilence have long been noted to be an impediment to population growth. But pestilence appears to be the greater problem.

The Second World War, we understand, was the the first war in history during which more people died from military action than from war-introduced disease. Progress has been slow and even today, as antibiotics seem to be running their course, it has been a story of reverses and plateaus, not just triumphs. But the calibration of our conquest simply and crassly by population growth (or non-growth) is roughly workable. The phenomenon of population growth, however, is not widely understood or easily measured.

If the estimated 27 million world population in Abraham's day 4,000 years ago had grown at the present rate of the world population, there would have been six billion people only 321 years later. Had it grown at the rate of Egypt's current rate the six billion would have been reached in only 123 years. What actually happened was a growth so slow that 2,000 years later, at the time of Christ, world population was not six billion but only one thirtieth of that.

Again after three centuries of literacy during Roman occupation of southern England, the Roman legions were withdrawn to protect the city of Rome itself. Soon Britain lapsed back into illiteracy and into horrendous war and pestilence to the extent that its population did not increase in the slightest for the next 600 years (from 440 AD to 1066 AD).

At that point the tribal backwater that was Europe began gradually to crawl into conquest of both war and disease. The rest of the story of cascading increase in Western populations, as well as colonially affected global populations, is common knowledge. This increase, as already noted, is a rough and ready measure of the conquest of disease, a story which, as I say, is documented very clearly in a recent flood of books on plagues and the history of medicine.

Curiously, what is perhaps the most enduring characteristic in this conquest is the removal of false ideas about the nature of disease. The very discovery of unbelievably small pathogens was long in coming. Our major western theologians, whether Thomas Aquinas or John Calvin, knew absolutely nothing about the vast world of microbiology. They, in turn had been influenced by Augustine, who is credited with giving God the credit for much of what Satan does.

Thus, even our current theological literature, to my knowledge, does not seriously consider disease pathogens from a theological point of view—that is, are they the work of God or Satan? Much less does this literature ask the question, “Does God mandate us to eliminate pathogens?”

The recurrent pattern of attempts at discovery is disturbingly often a matter of looking for the wrong solution. A parallel would be looking for icebergs not intelligent submarines. Again and again medical authorities have confidently defined the causes of certain diseases as passive conditions rather than intelligently devised (and constantly revised) pathogens. For example, again and again it was “discovered” that stomach ulcers were caused by an infection, not stress. This happened in the 1880s, again

in 1945, again in 1981 (in Australia) but the wrong solutions held sway unquestioned in this country for ten more years until the New York tabloid, the *National Enquirer*, ran a cover story on ulcers and infection describing the Australian breakthrough. Even so, after ten more years a survey of medical doctors in the state of Colorado revealed that less than 50% had yielded to the right solution.

A similar history is displayed in the case of tuberculosis, a major global killer. It was long thought that chilly and damp conditions were the cause. Eventually it became clear that the cause is a very clever pathogen that has recently been modified to become even more difficult to defeat.

But this pervasive and curious confusion about causes is not just a matter of past history. In February of 1999, *Atlantic Monthly* published a lengthy cover story confidently presenting the theory that heart disease, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimers, and even schizophrenia are the result of infections, not the usual “passive” factors such as diets high in fat or salt or whatever. Evidently in Europe such perspectives have been more widely pursued.

Now, you would think that so prominent an exposure of an idea so enormously significant would have reverberated back in 1999 in newspapers and other periodicals. But there was nothing in the *LA Times* for another month, and then only about three inches that did not recognize even remotely the import of the theory. Three months later a fairly long article on the subject appeared in the *LA Times*, although it did not mention the *Atlantic Monthly* article nor any of the researchers to which it referred.

Then there was mainly silence—for three years. Finally, in May of 2002, *Scientific American* sported a cover story that calmly and boldly declared that the passive factors in heart disease and the normal explanation of the progressive build up of plaque in arteries is little related to our nation's biggest killer. There is a totally different mechanism, which, it says, has been known for 20 years. It points out that gradual reduction of arterial channels would presumably produce gradual

weakening in the person afflicted, and that heart attacks are characteristically most often sudden, and 50% of the time occur in people whose bodies do not display the usual symptoms. For the record, heart disease is not only the biggest killer but the most costly. At \$1 billion per day the cost of dealing with people afflicted with heart disease could rebuild the New York towers every three days.

Note that this new perspective is a total upset of long-standing assumptions (similar to the idea that stress causes ulcers), namely that *passive conditions of life, diet, exercise, salt intake, etc. produce heart attacks*. Now we hear that the actual explanation is not within the arteries *but from within the walls* of the arteries, namely, inflammations producing sudden and unpredictable eruptions that instantly block an artery totally. These inflammations are, furthermore, now feared to be the

result not of inanimate, passive conditions, but of intelligent pathogens. Not icebergs but intelligent submarines.

The same general story, but far more complicated, could be described for the sphere of cancer. Very gradually, with uphill opposition again, the recognition of viral causes has gained steam.

We can ask why is it so hard for intelligent evil to be recognized. We can also ask why it is that almost all attention to cancer is focused on treatments of the results of cancer and less than one tenth of one percent of the billions ploughed into cancer goes toward understanding the nature of cancer, and even there the theory of intelligent pathogens is slighted and even resisted.

Everything I have said sums up as the problem of the failure to recognize intelligent evil. It is by no means simply a philosophical or theological issue. By

far the largest human effort in America today relates directly or indirectly to the presence of disease and of the distortion of Creative Intent in the area of human life. It is a major error to look in the wrong direction for the cause of a disease. It would seem to me to be an even more serious error not to notice the existence of intelligent evil at all, which the published materials of the Intelligent Design group uniformly ignore. Darwin did not do that. Instead, he invented the wacky theory of *unaided* evolution. But Darwin at least recognized the presence of evil if not intelligent evil, and even the need to protect the reputation of a benevolent God. In that sense he scored higher than what we see in the written materials of Intelligent Design. □□□□

#### Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil

By Cornelius Hunter, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press (Baker Book House). 2002, 192 pp., ISBN 1587430533

#### Darwin's Proof: The Triumph of Religion over Science

By Cornelius Hunter, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press (Baker Book House). 2003, 168 pp., ISBN 1587430568

—Reviewed by Ralph D. Winter

**T**hese two small books pack a terrific wallop. They are a cogent, clear statement that is bold and impelling. The first of them deals exclusively with the religious assumptions underlying and required by evolutionary theory. The second deals exclusively with the theory of evolution itself, and its many drawbacks.

An essay in this issue of IJFM, "Where Darwin Scores Higher than ID," picks only one point out of the first book, making reference to Hunter's quotes from Darwin that indicate very clearly his concern for the conflict between a concept of a good, all-powerful and benevolent God, and the reality of a violence-ridden nature. Darwin's wacky theory, unaided evolution, was, in that sense, clearly an attempt to absolve God from being considered the author of evil, making nature what it is by a completely unguided process. Meanwhile, ID (intelligent design) theory apparently wants to give a "designer" credit for all of creativity in creation, violent and not. Thus, the essay is not so much a clarification of Darwin's intent as it is that of me as an Evangelical raising eyebrows over an ID which gives us no explanation for why God would have created a nature which is absolutely shot through and through with pain, cruelty, suffering and constant fear of violent death. Indeed, in proving a "designer" did this, we are, I would think, in an even more difficult position to declare and defend our faith to the thinking non-believer!

The second book first summarizes briefly the first book (omitting any reference to Darwin's concern about the incongruity of evil in nature and a benevolent God) and then goes on absolutely to trash the theory of evolution. Nothing I have seen presents a more concise, lucid, case against evolutionary theory. It ends with a ringing defense of the ID approach.

These are small very readable books of less than 200 pages. You really must get both of them.

