

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Readers are invited to submit reviews of current literature relating to origins. Mailing address: ORIGINS, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, California 92350 USA. The Institute does not distribute the publications reviewed; please contact the publisher directly.

THE GODFATHER OF INTELLIGENT DESIGN

Darwin's Nemesis: Phillip Johnson and the Intelligent Design Movement. William A. Dembski, editor. 2006. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. 357 p. Paper, \$25.00.

*Nicholas Miller, Director
International Religious Liberty Institute
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan*

It was Clarence Darrow, the silver-tongued court-room lawyer, who guided the evolutionary forces during the Scopes “Monkey” trial early in the 20th century. Although technically he lost the case, many believe that he scored a victory in the court of public opinion for freedom of inquiry and scientific thought. At the end of the 20th century another lawyer, Phillip Johnson, sought to do for the anti-evolutionary theory of intelligent design what Darrow did for evolution — to give it a hearing in public discussion. To this end, he not only wrote extensively, but collaborated with a group of like-minded scientific thinkers to launch the Intelligent Design (ID) movement. This project has provided arguably the most intellectually credible challenges to anti-materialist scientific thought in over a century.

Just how did a Berkeley criminal law professor become the intellectual godfather of a late 20th century scientific revolution? It says a great deal about the philosophical and rhetorical basis of evolutionary theory that it took someone trained in logical reasoning and rhetoric, rather than in the sciences, to spearhead such a high profile assault. *Darwin's Nemesis* explores Johnson's story and examines the impact he has had on scientists and educators.

Original pagination was p 44-47.

The book is a festschrift, or celebration volume of essays, presented to Johnson by friends. The authors are scientists and philosophers of science who knew and benefited from Johnson's work and analysis. Not all essays are by those who agree with him. Such was his credibility and magnanimity that even a number of his ideological foes became friends, desirous of honoring him. The essays range from personal remembrances and anecdotes of Johnson, to descriptions of the influence of his thought on scientific careers, to at least one full length scientific research paper on intelligent design theory.

The book is at its liveliest when personal stories are told. Such is Steve Meyer's recollection of his first meeting with Johnson at a Greek restaurant, where Johnson details his pilgrimage from materialism to evolutionary skeptic. It began with a trip to the British Natural History Museum, where a controversy over an evolutionary exhibit launched him into an examination of the creation/evolution literature in the late 1980s. His skeptical legal antennae were aroused by the often heated rhetoric employed by evolutionary apologists. He began to suspect that argument and rhetoric were being used to fill basic evidentiary gaps. By 1988, Johnson fleshed out these suspicions into a manuscript that served as the basis for *Darwin on Trial*.

Michael Behe then picks up the story. A microbiologist and committed Catholic, Behe had encountered meaningful scientific critiques of evolution early in his career, but did not know what to do with them. He was, as he describes it, reduced to "muttering rude things about evolution to innocent passersby." But then he encountered *Darwin on Trial*. Suddenly Behe had a larger framework in which to place the various scientific critiques and evidentiary shortcomings of evolution. Formerly he was haphazardly picking at genetic loose ends and fingering disparate evolutionary gaps. But now he had an affirmative, coherent critique of the materialistic philosophy of evolution which unified his criticisms.

But perhaps more impressive than Johnson's unifying influence on previously isolated anti-evolutionist thought was his ability to persuade evolutionary fundamentalists of the errors of their dogma — or perhaps more accurately, of the fact of their dogma. The typical conversion story consists of theistic evolutionists realizing, with Johnson's help, that materialist evolution was based far more on philosophical presuppositions — dogma — rather than observed facts. Such is the story described by Jay Richards who, despite being a seminary student, was a theistic evolutionist until he read Johnson's work.

The stories of personal inspiration and change are fascinating. But the feature that makes Johnson's work so spectacular, or notorious, depending on one's view, is its implications for science education and funding. If evolution and intelligent design are basically equal mixtures of "facts" and "philosophy," why should the full force of our tax dollars be used to champion one — materialistic evolution — and be forbidden from investigating the other? William Dembski and Francis Beckwith explore the increasingly heated public debate over intelligent design and education. Timothy Standish contributes a provocative chapter on the implications of Johnson's work for Christian schools. Standish argues that believers in creation should also give students the tools and ability to discriminate among a wide range of ideas, and avoid merely indoctrinating them into received orthodoxies.

There is much more, including chapters on scientific analysis and critiques of intelligent design, a delightful duo of short stories by David Berlinski that tweak both evolution and intelligent design, discussions of intelligent design and natural law, and a comparison of young-earth creationism with intelligent design. (The short description of this latter issue would seem to be that intelligent design is a large umbrella which neither mandates nor excludes a wide range of creationist positions, including young-earth creation.)

The kind and elegant short forward by U. S. Senator Rick Santorum is important for the reminder of the political implications of Johnson's work. One must be exceedingly cautious when dealing with the line between church and state. But the enforced orthodoxy of materialistic evolution for the last several decades is arguably the most widespread, ongoing, violation of the Establishment Clause in our country today. Rather than violating the United States Constitution, allowing the intelligent design critique of evolution to be discussed in public schools would actually reduce the existing constitutional problems inherent in enforcing a philosophical, materialistic orthodoxy.

Clarence Darrow, if he were alive, might not like this result. But if he were honest about it, he would have to admit that the freedom of inquiry he sought for evolution logically includes critiques of that theory. In that sense, he might find himself joining Johnson as a nemesis of Darwin — or at least of the current establishment of Darwinian orthodoxy.