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Beyond complexity to simplicity.?

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March 8, 2005

Dr. John Engstrom
c/o John P. Douglass
3100 West River Parkway
Minneapolis, MN 55406

Subject: Theistic Evolution

Dear Dr. Engstrom and Mr. Douglass,

Thank you for your recent letter.

ORIGINS

I taught "1st year confirmation" at Faith Covenant Church, Burnsville. The denomination's confirmation textbook used wording similar to Minnehaha Academy's wording in your statement's third paragraph:

the Bible and our faith helps us to answer ... questions of "Why?" Whereas, science helps us to answer the detail questions such as "How?"

The question of "why?" is a metaphysical question.

Even if God is relegated to being the "first cause," or "the uncaused cause," the answer to "How?" becomes metaphysical. Science ("physics") CANNOT explain what or how God (metaphysics) does or acts. Therefore, science CANNOT answer the "How?" of "Origins." By using the phrasing I've quoted from your statement, you have yielded the high ground to the atheists.

Beyond the realm of creation and origins, if Minnehaha Academy teaches God's Providence and Sovereignty, metaphysics must be said to have an impact in the ongoing operation of the universe. Therefore, a truly Christian worldview must believe that the physical sciences cannot explain the "how" of everything.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN

I have heard good things about Dr. Crafton and am thankful for people who plow their life's work into our youth. Minnehaha has many good teachers and I appreciate their work. My only church memberships have been with Covenant churches. I married a fellow Covenanter (who attended North Park). My wife taught at Minnehaha's south campus.

Given that Dr. Crafton is working with our future (our youth) and is a teacher, I am trying to help him and the school. James admonishes that "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (James 3:1)

Dr. Crafton did not seem to know the fundamentals of Intelligent Design. Also, he pointed to "mutation and natural selection" as tools powerfully sufficient to account for life on earth as we now see it. This ignorance requires a call to the entire staff of Minnehaha Academy, challenging them to become familiar with such works as "Darwin's Black Box" by Michael Behe or the numerous works of Phillip Johnson.

Atheistic Evolution

Dr. Crafton's (sole) reliance on "mutation and natural selection" as the "creative tools" to account for the current life forms we see is a reliance on the tools of Atheistic Evolution.

To quote William Dembski (a leader in the Intelligent Design movement):

As far as design theorists are concerned, theistic evolution is American evangelicalism's ill-conceived accommodation to Darwinism. What theistic evolution does is take the Darwinian picture of the biological world and baptize it, identifying this picture with the way God created life. When boiled down to its scientific content, theistic evolution is no different from atheistic evolution, accepting as it does only purposeless, naturalistic, material processes for the origin and development of life.

As far as design theorists are concerned, theistic evolution is an oxymoron, something like "purposeful purposelessness." ... No, the heavens do not declare the glory of God, and no, God's invisible attributes are not clearly seen from God's creation. This is the upshot of theistic evolution as the design theorists construe it.

Design theorists find the "theism" in theistic evolution superfluous. Theistic evolution at best includes God as an unnecessary rider in an otherwise purely naturalistic account of life.¹

¹ Quoted from "What every theologian should know about creation, evolution and design" by William A. Dembski, found at his virtual office:
<http://www.leaderu.com/offices/dembski/docs/bd-theologn.html>

The written works of Doctors Phillip Johnson, Michael Behe and William Dembski compose some of the seminal works of the Intelligent Design movement. Dembski's works are more technical and Johnson's are the least "taxing." (These individuals do not address the age of the earth.)

Refuting Compromise by Jonathan Sarfati, Ph.D. deals both with science and Biblical hermeneutics, advocating the young earth perspective.

The importance of the “How”

I enclosed a newsletter from Coral Ridge Ministries in my prior letter. The highlighted article discussed the negative impact of not adequately addressing Darwinian Evolution.

As an institution with Evangelical roots, I would hope that the “Bible Department” would be required to have a more orthodox position. Dr. Crafton said that he “teaches all the options.” As I stated in my first letter, he obviously makes his position known and I think most evangelical parents of students would be surprised that the de facto Biblical teaching at Minnehaha is evolutionary.

Most science textbooks teach Darwinian Evolution, which needs to be taught to students (as the reigning scientific paradigm), equipping them for college. However, I would hope the science faculty is not only conversant with the Intelligent Design literature but that they also are teaching it. Equipping the student with 1) the truth and 2) apologetics.

Your last paragraph commends me for searching for truth. What I am hoping is that this series of letters begins an initiative by Minnehaha Academy to search more diligently for the truth. Helping the “youth meet truth.”

Sincerely

Evan Shadduck

Cc: Steve O’Neil, Principal, Minehaha Academy Upper School
Dr. Jeffrey Crafton, Teacher, Sacred Studies
Pastors Dan Thompson and Tom Noble, First Covenant Church