

## Tacking Jesus onto a Belief System

(A Contemporary Illustration)

A Review of *The Language of God* . . . by Francis S. Collins

\* The Human Genome Project / Theistic Evolution \*

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### An End to the Culture Wars

I have often been accused of being optimistic. In the early days of the Human Genome Project, some very wise people predicted that this audacious project would end in failure. But as the leader of the effort from 1993 until its conclusion in 2003 (ahead of schedule and under budget, no less), I never doubted that the best and brightest minds that were recruited to work on this historic project would prevail. And they did.

So my faith in the ability of science to answer questions about nature paid off. But that is not the most important area where faith is a part of my life. After spending my young years as an atheist, I became convinced through reading the logical arguments of C. S. Lewis and the words of the Bible that belief in God was more plausible than atheism. After two years of struggle, I became a Christian at age twenty-seven. Since then, my faith in God has been the rock on which I stand, a means to answer critical questions on which science remains silent: What is the meaning of life? Is there a God? Do our concepts of right and wrong have any real foundation? What happens after we die?

As one of a large number of scientists who believe in God, I find it deeply troubling to watch the escalating culture wars between science and faith, especially in America. A spate of angry books by atheists, many of them using the compelling evidence of Darwin's theory of evolution as a rhetorical club over the heads of believers, argues that atheism is the only rational choice for a thinking person. Some go so far as to label religious faith as the root of all evil and insinuate that parents who teach their children about religion are committing child abuse.

Partially in response to these attacks, believers, especially evangelical Christians, have targeted evolution as godless and incompatible with the truths of the Bible. Many Americans see Earth as less than 10,000 years old, a "young Earth" belief that clashes with mountains of data from cosmology, physics, chemistry, geology, paleontology, anthropology, biology, and genetics. Intelligent Design, which proposes that evolution is insufficient to account for complexity, enjoys wide support in the church despite rejection in the scientific community.

What a sad situation. Are we not all seeking the truth? That is what God calls us to. It seems unlikely that God, the author of all creation, is threatened by what science is teaching us about the awesome complexity and grandeur of His creation. Can God be well served by lies about nature, no matter how noble the intentions of those who spread them?

The current circumstance is not tenable over the long run. Despite their claims to hard-nosed objectivity, atheists have gone wildly outside the evidence by declaring God imaginary. They are proposing an impoverished perspective that will not satisfy most of their intended converts. For their part, fundamentalists who demand acceptance of a unilateral interpretation of Genesis are making that a litmus test for true faith, which wise theologians over the centuries have not found necessary.

Could we not step back from the unloving rhetoric of these entrenched positions and seek a new path towards truth? If science is a way of uncovering the details of God's creation, then it may actually be a form of worship. Did not God, in giving us the intelligence to ask and answer questions about nature, expect us to use it? We should be able to learn about God in the laboratory as well as in the cathedral.

The shrill voices at the extremes of this debate have had the microphone for too long. Although they will no doubt continue to rail against each other, the rest of us should find ways to bring together scientists who are open to spiritual truths, theologians who are ready to embrace scientific findings about the universe, and pastors who know the real concerns and needs of their flocks. Together, in a loving and worshipful attitude, we could formulate a new and wondrous natural theology. This kind of theology celebrates God as the creator, embraces His majestic universe from the far-flung galaxies to the "fearfully and wonderfully made" nature of humanity, and accepts and incorporates the marvelous things that God has given us the chance to discover through science.

If we make a serious and prayerful attempt to do this together, perhaps in a few years this new "celebration theology" could eliminate the conflict between science and faith. God didn't start that conflict. We did. I may sound unrealistic, even a bit of a Pollyanna, by proposing that we could draw this unnecessary battle to a close. But, I remind you, I have often been accused of being optimistic.

- Francis S. Collins, "Faith and the Human Genome," *American Scientific Affiliation*, September 2003

Placing himself squarely in the center of the age-old controversy between Creation and Evolution, Dr. Francis S. Collins asserts a healer image in the oft-times bitter debate. As the former director of the Human Genome Project, as well as a self-proclaimed "believing Christian," he is in a unique position to harbor such a sentiment. As the above item illustrates, Dr. Collins is not shy in promoting his faith and his credentials.

In 2006, Collins wrote *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* in an effort to bridge the gap between the two perceived antagonistic positions, and perhaps in the process bring peace to the world. His solution to the dilemma is to embrace a version of Theistic Evolution and rename it *BioLogos*, thus showing that God (the “Logos”) created evolution (the “Bio”-ology) as the *fact* of Science accounting for the origin of life, and eventually human development and progress. As such, here is a claim to a unique truth – that the God of the Bible used the process of evolution to create and modify life forms over the course of billions of years.

Collins holds so tenaciously to the theistic evolutionary model that his views actually border at times on classical deism, noting that any creator who would need to enter the self-guiding process of evolution to make necessary corrections would be rightly considered a “clumsy Creator.” (p.193) Many high-minded Christian believers subscribe to theistic evolution notions as the means whereby a firm compromise between religion and science can be accommodated, so the only thing new in Collins’ thesis is his quest for a more appealing title to the assertion: *BioLogos*.

*BioLogos* actually has a rather nice ring to it; however, a full understanding of the *first chapter of John* militates against such a synthesis, if in fact the Creator is not allowed to enter His creation in order to “fix” any problems that may have developed along its natural and *unguided* evolutionary process. The very notion that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us in order to repair the greatest universal malady of all is anathema to any evolution model. Indeed, Collins seems to forget this fundamental teaching of the Christian faith when he, on the one hand places God outside of space and time (p.205), while at the same time acknowledging having surrendered his life to Jesus Christ, noting that “If God is real, He will assist.” (p.227) After all, it was God who came to Collins and encouraged him to accept the directorship of the Human Genome Project! (p.119)

Collins, following classical evolutionary thinking (and, in the unfortunate tradition of C. S. Lewis – p.34), sees the human being as a higher-order animal, albeit, one with a spiritual awareness and a quest for transcendence. He finds proof of this in the “Moral Law” which he feels the religion of Christianity offers. He follows this line of thinking throughout the book, leaving the impression that it is this higher standard, this “law of right behavior” that saves the human race from the brutal world of the lower species: “As best as I can tell, this law appears to apply peculiarly to human beings. . . [t]hough other animals may at times appear to show glimmerings of a moral sense...” (pp.22-23)

Collins’ Moral Law is that innate ability given to us as a human species through evolution, that we might achieve an advanced level of awareness beyond that of our animal ancestors. It is *not* necessarily the law of God given us through Moses. According to the evolutionary process, this Moral Law is designed to point us to the *good*. Collins simply modifies it to point to *God*.

This evolutionary Moral Law is, of course, devoid of the purpose of God’s law, which according to the book of Romans, is meant to reveal sin in us, that we might look to Christ to save us. Although he mentions the Moral Law on numerous occasions, and even though he offers a number of biblical references on other topics, nowhere does Collins discuss the teaching of Romans 4-8, Galatians 5, etc. in this regard.

Collins can show us the beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, but he doesn’t share what the Bible instructs of the process of salvation; that is, a perfect, *very good* Creation; the corruption of that creation at the Fall, with death the result; the catastrophe (judgment) at the Flood; the confusion of Babel; Christ on the cross as our Redeemer, and concluding with the consummation unto Himself.

Something is missing in Collins’ reasoning. He does not believe in a literal Creation (p.206), a literal Adam and Eve (p.172), nor a literal Fall from God’s grace which he doesn’t mention. Somehow, something must have occurred within the self-guiding evolutionary process that required a higher standard than that of the animals, and a moral law to codify right and wrong for the human species. To Collins, the act of Creation is a *process* that began some 10 billion years ago (p.206) and is still underway. He claims that Adam and Eve are mythical stories of the Bible (as are Job and Jonah, p.209). He sees no significance in the Fall of man with its inevitable consequences. Collins seeks a Moral Law, but what for; and based upon what model or standard? Trying to append Collins’ new-found Moral Law to his fundamental belief in the process of evolutionary biology does nothing more than to promote the morality of *amorality*, along with a great deal of confusion!

This is not meant to diminish Collins’ sincere quest for salvation in Christ Jesus. He realizes that the bridge to God is Christ . . .

. . . who not only claimed to *know* God. . . [but] claimed to *be* God. . . He also claimed to be able to forgive sins. . . He was put to death on the cross. . . He was a man, so He knew the human condition that I was finding so burdensome, and yet He promised to relieve that burden: “Come unto me all ye that are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). . . Christ

rose from the dead [and] for a scientific mind this was difficult stuff. But . . . if Christ really was the Son of God, as He explicitly claimed, then surely of all those who had ever walked the earth, He could suspend the laws of nature if He needed to do so to achieve a more important purpose. (p.221)

When it comes to matters of faith and Christian belief, C. S. Lewis is cited throughout the book as Collins' mentor. But Collins has taken a troubling passage of Lewis', plucked it from the broader context of the latter's chapter on "The Fall of Man," and fashioned his belief system around the resulting evolutionary notions. He quotes Lewis at length:

For long centuries, God perfected the animal form which was to become the vehicle of humanity and the image of Himself. He gave it hands whose thumb could be applied to each of the fingers, and jaws and teeth and throat capable of articulation, and a brain sufficiently complex to execute all of the material motions whereby rational thought is incarnated. The creature may have existed in this state for ages before it became man: it may even have been clever enough to make things which a modern archaeologist would accept as proof of its humanity. But it was only an animal because all its physical and psychical processes were directed to purely material and natural ends. Then, in the fullness of time, God caused to descend upon this organism, both on its psychology and physiology, a new kind of consciousness which could say "I" and "me," which could look upon itself as an object, which knew God, which could make judgments of truth, beauty and goodness, and which was so far above time that it could perceive time flowing past. . . . We do not know how many of these creatures God made, nor how long they continued in the Paradisal state. But sooner or later they fell. (*The Problem of Pain*, pp.77-80, 1962/71; cited in Collins, pp.208-209.)

Collins is able to see the fuller teaching of Lewis and cites *Mere Christianity* as significant on his pilgrimage towards personal salvation; yet, for some reason, he is unable to decouple his faith from evolutionary dogma. We can understand Lewis' dilemma due to the tenor of his time; however, in this age Collins has more options, with an abundance of good resources to help him out of the quagmire. The danger is that if Lewis could regrettably lead someone like Collins astray with his consent towards the notion of evolution, the influence that Collins has in the relatively young field of microbiology is sure to be a stumbling-block to many sincere believers as well.

What is tragic about Collins' entire scenario is that the battle he hopes to settle is essentially an academic fiction, meant to confound the whole issue of sin and the need for salvation. He sees a battle between faith and science, where there is none. True methodological science and faith have no conflict. Neither do so-called religion and science. The conflict is not here. Nor is it a battle over Creation vs. Evolution, for all should know that the teaching of evolution (as Darwin would have it) has no need for God, is most often atheistic in its premises and contemporary usage, and has no sympathy for a super-natural creative force of any type.

The real conflict is over a secular view of *history*, vs. the Bible as *HisStory* – what is more precisely referred to as a tension between *world-views*. The world-view promoted by Darwinian Evolution finds the human species to be the result of a natural process emanating from nothing and progressing to Man over the course of billions of years (a "From the Goo to You by way of the Zoo" process). On the other hand, the enlightened person who believes in the Bible as *HisStory* discovers early on that he can delight in God's Providence in this life, can stand in awe at His marvelous Creation, and can rest in His sustaining power. This world-view is succinctly given in Colossians 1, verses 15-17:

Christ is the exact likeness of the unseen God. He existed before God made anything at all, and, in fact, Christ himself is the Creator who made everything in heaven and earth, the things we can see and the things we cannot; the spirit world with its kings and kingdoms, its rulers and authorities; all were made by Christ for his own use and glory. . . . He was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together. (LB)

This thought (and this passage) is missing entirely from Collins' work. To see the One who actually created all things (including Man), Himself become Man and dwell among us (John 1), as the One who sustains all and enters the very fundamentals of His Creation on an intimate, moment-by-moment basis, is totally contrary to Darwinian teaching, and Collins should know this! Although he believes – by his written testimony – in Jesus as his resurrected Savior, he certainly doesn't give evidence of believing in Him as his providential and sustaining power. The notion of an evolutionary progression seems sufficient for him on that count.

The question then arises, “Just how do you come to know – and to grow in faith – this God who entered into His Creation, laid aside His mighty power, became a Man like us, died, and rose again that we might be saved, if, in fact, He is nothing more than a historical figure that is simply tacked on to a more fundamental belief system of the human condition, that of the *theory* of evolution?” Is it enough for one to believe in a Jesus Christ Super Star? Wasn’t He – Isn’t He – more than that?!

To simply add Jesus on to your belief system in an intellectual sense, is to create – and then follow – an insufficient doctrine of God’s omnipotent power. Christ Himself more than adequately articulated this when He declared that He is the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life*. (John 14:6) He certainly didn’t evolve to that status. Those three attributes cover the fundamentals of our earthly existence. They don’t come to us as a course of Nature, and Jesus never taught us to think that we come to Him naturally. We are created beings (not an evolved species!), that *fell* in the Garden, to be restored unto Him, super-naturally, and all recorded in His Word, the Bible – *HisStory*. Darwinian Evolution is an entirely different (and contrary) proposition. Trying to merge the two into a *BioLogos*, theistic-evolution understanding, is disingenuous, bordering on blasphemy!

In regards to the human genome, one major area of concern in Collins’ understanding of the evolutionary process itself is his apparent failure to comprehend the deleterious effect that mutations have on the genetic code. He recognizes this degenerative nature of mutational progression but seems oblivious as to its magnitude. Another medical authority with apparently greater insight says,

The human genome has three billion nucleotides, or base pairs, in the DNA. Since a random change of three nucleotides in a three-billion-part genome is fatal (0.0000001%), how is it remotely possible that a chimp could be the evolutionary cousin of a human? The lowest estimate of the genetic differences between our DNA and that of chimps is at least 50 million nucleotides (some estimates of the disparity are much *higher*). Quantitative information in genetics today is proving evolutionary theory as simply a man-made and irrational philosophical belief. [c.f., Collins’ Figure 1, p.128]

One top geneticist [Sanford, J. 2005, *Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome*. Elim Publishing, 26] recently conducted a computer analysis to quantitate the ratio of “beneficial mutations” to harmful mutations. Only 186 entries for beneficial mutations were discovered (and even they have a downside), versus 453,732 entries for harmful mutations. The ratio of “beneficial mutations” to harmful mutations is 0.00041! Thus, even if a very rare mutation is “beneficial,” the next 10,000 mutations in any evolutionary sequence would each be fatal or crippling, and each of the next 10,000 imaginary mutations would bring the evolution process to a halt. (Maddox, B., M.D., “Mutations: The Raw Material for Evolution?” *Impact*, ICR *Acts&Facts*, September 2007, p.12)

According to Collins, it is mutations that are responsible *for* progressive evolution: “In the mid-nineteenth century, Darwin had no way of knowing what the mechanism of evolution by natural selection might be. We can now see that the variation he postulated is supported by naturally occurring mutations in DNA.” (p.132) And consistent with his position, humans are the simple product of the mutational process: “If humans arose as a consequence of a supernatural act of special creation, why would God have gone to the trouble of inserting [deleterious mutations – pseudo genes – into their genome]?” (p.138)

There is nothing in Collins’ theology to support a Genesis “very good” scenario. Although to the true believer, evolution may be the perfect process for the good of the world as a whole since the fittest species always survive; but to *all* individuals it is the most pessimistic of notions – all must die! It is here that theistic evolution is most oxymoronic in an orthodox Christian sense.

The Bible clearly teaches that death was introduced to the world sometime *after* Creation, the result of the *willful* disobedience of Man. Evolution has death from the very *beginning* since the only means for the process to work is through a life/death/*new* life cycle. It is evolution’s contention that the fossil record reveals that creatures which existed prior to Man’s arrival were once alive and are now dead. There is no individual of any species that the evolutionary process created a million years ago that is alive today. That creature – and all like it (in an evolutionary scenario) – is now long dead.

Collins believes in a hominid species (pre-human) and that the “. . . first specimens we recognize of modern *Homo sapiens* date from about 195,000 years ago.” He places Neanderthal Man in Europe at around 30,000 years ago and “hobbits” in Indonesia as recently as 13,000 years ago. (p.96) Evolution places the first life form at around 3 billion years past; therefore, we have 2,805,000,000 years of suffering and death occurring before the arrival of

Man. There is clearly no way to reconcile the evolutionary account with that of the Bible since in that teaching, Adam and Eve were there during the six-day week of Creation.

In order to get to the synthesis Collins seeks between what he perceives as scientific truth and the account of Genesis, he has to begin with what is clearly a flawed understanding of the latter, and its rendering of Creation: “For the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the opening words of Genesis (‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth’) are entirely compatible with the Big Bang.” (pp.82-83) Actually, nothing could be further from the truth.

The Big Bang process postulates an explosion of energy that expanded from an infinitesimally compact *seed* into the continually expanding universe we experience today, some 14 billion years after the singular event. Deep space, stars, galaxies, and planets resulted from this explosion in some speculative orderly fashion, in such a manner that over the course of time the earth we inhabit was formed about 10 billion years later.

The picture of Creation that Genesis and the Bible give is of God forming the earth first, then stretching forth the heavens in the course of a brief moment of time. On the fourth day of Creation (after the earth was formed), God created the sun, moon and stars. The two accounts are not compatible at all, and there is no way to form a synthesis from them!

The fundamental reason Collins cannot acknowledge the Creator God of the Bible is because his whole philosophy of existence rests on the notion of Naturalism. Evolution is based on Naturalism; he thinks that science needs to be clothed in Naturalism as well: “If God exists, then He must be outside the natural world.” (p.30) By arrogantly limiting God in this fashion he places science in the position of only employing a narrow investigation of a naturally-perceived existence.

God has chosen not to shun the natural world, but instead decided to materially enter it, and in fact, to sustain it from the beginning. When Collins seeks to answer the “fundamental questions” in life, because of his self-imposed limitations, he fails to even ask the most basic question of all: *How does an infinite, transcendent Being, create, sustain, and enter His tangible and finite universe?* Collins’ idea of science will not allow him to explore this question. By subscribing to his form of theistic evolution, he places God simply at the Beginning of all things, and he is quite content to leave Him there, so far as science is concerned!

There is a universal Truth that governs our earthly existence as well as our eternal hope: Intellectual and professional pride hinders one from accepting Jesus as Savior, even as personal arrogance inevitably deters the believer from walking in faith with Him. Jesus knew this. It is precisely why He instructed His followers in this manner: “I tell you as seriously as I know how that anyone who refuses to come to God as a little child will never be allowed into his Kingdom.” In fact, within the context of this teaching, He told them that the Kingdom of God belongs to the child – the simple minded! (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17, *LB*) In other words, faith is not something that one *reasons* with. Faith is the *substance* of things *hoped for*, and the *evidence* of things *not seen* (Hebrews 11:1)!

Is there any four year-old child, when he is taught the story of Daniel and the Lions’ Den, who doesn’t see himself peering into that deadly chamber, witnessing first-hand God’s faithful servant standing among a pack of passive beasts? Or, the child taught about David and Goliath, watchful as the young lad flings the stone towards the face of the giant? There is the child, marveling at the size of the huge boat as Noah is preparing for his earth-shattering journey. And Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, pondering their circumstances, the result of iniquity.

Such a one with child-like faith has no difficulty comprehending the *seven C’s of history*, as she learns about the Creation of all things, the Corruption of the creation, the Catastrophe that befell that creation, the terrible Confusion that followed, the account of Christ’s coming and dying on the Cross that He might Consummate all unto Him, that we can have eternal life. This is *HisStory*, woven throughout the Bible from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22.

To believe this *HisStory* and to come to know it as *the* Truth is to experience God in a personal and intimate way. It is one thing to be doubtful of events as we see them, but when the Scripture reveals an account, we must know that it is true, for it is given to us that we might grow in our relationship with Him, the one who entered His Creation to walk with us through this life. The question ultimately becomes, “Will I trust in God, or in my own understanding?” (Proverbs 3:5)

It is a wise person who holds a healthy skepticism, and in Acts 17:11 we learn how this should work in relationship to our ideas about God. The people of Berea were of such a dubious mind that even when the Apostle Paul preached to them they always *sought the Scripture* to see if what he said was correct. That is healthy skepticism; and a wise practice.

On the other hand, there can be no healthy doubt as it regards what is recorded in the Bible. We are reminded of the college professor who was teaching his class about the events in the Old Testament as having been

merely religious myths. Of the crossing of the Red Sea, he noted that science had clearly shown that the weather patterns of the time indicated a severe drought in that region, and that the area where Moses and the Israelites crossed the sea was rather shallow to begin with; something on the order of six inches.

When he had finished, one student raised his hand, and when called upon said, “If that is actually true sir, then that event was a far greater miracle than I even imagined. To think that Pharaoh’s army, their horses and equipment were all drowned in less than a foot of water!”

When the Bible shares an account of God’s dramatic intervention into the “natural” realm, a clear and succinct picture is also given in order to help us in our understanding. The account of Job could not be clearer: the story of Jonah and the big fish could not be more dramatic! It is all there for us to consider; and to know that it happened exactly as rendered!

Since Collins is an avowed theistic evolutionist, it is instructive and necessary to do a brief analysis of his explanation as to how life formed through the evolutionary process. As an aid in this analysis, certain words and phrases are highlighted in order to reveal his logical progression.

All evidence currently available suggests that the earth was a very inhospitable place for its first 500 million years. The planet was under constant and devastating attack from giant asteroids and meteorites, one of which actually tore the moon loose from Earth. Not surprisingly, therefore, rocks dating back 4 billion years or more show absolutely no evidence of any life forms. Just 150 million years later, however, multiple different types of microbial life are found. Presumably, these single-celled organisms were capable of information storage, probably using DNA, and were self-replicating and capable of evolving into multiple different types.

Recently, Carl Woese has put forward the plausible hypothesis that at this particular time on earth, exchange of DNA between organisms was readily accomplished. Essentially, the biosphere consisted of a large number of miniscule independent cells, but they interacted extensively with one another. If a particular organism developed a protein or series of proteins that provided a certain advantage, those new features could quickly be acquired by its neighbors. Perhaps in that sense, early evolution was more a communal than an individual activity. This kind of “horizontal gene transfer” is well documented in the most ancient forms of bacteria that now exist on the planet (archaebacteria), and may have provided an opportunity for new properties to be rapidly spread.

If read carefully, and with the Scientific Method in mind, it is disturbing to read the “If” in the center of the second paragraph above. In fact, it is this “If” that is the critical link that holds together the improbable *Presumably’s – were capable’s – probably’s – capable of evolving’s – plausible hypothesis’s – could’s – Perhaps’s – and may have provided’s* – of the evolutionary chain (claimed as “theory” by most; *fact* by some!) that is always given when true believers attempt to explain this absurd notion. This, however, doesn’t even address the fundamental basis underlying this faulty logic. Here at least, Collins can contribute something:

But how did self-replicating organisms arise in the first place? It is fair to say that at the present time we simply do not know. No current hypothesis comes close to explaining how in the space of a mere 150 million years, the prebiotic environment that existed on planet Earth gave rise to life. That is not to say that reasonable hypotheses [!] have not been put forward, but their statistical probability of accounting for the development of life still seems remote. (pp.89-90)

It is certainly fair to question a “reasonable hypotheses” that Collins might find sufficient to explain first Cause, when he seriously considers as true what isn’t even a reasonably logical explanation for the notion of evolution to begin with. If one were to consider *faith* in this context, it would clearly be more reasonable to hold to the full Creation account given in Genesis than it would to believe in this contrived explanation of the creation and evolution of life.

As can be discerned by reading these works of Collins – designed to encourage Bible-believing Christians that they can trust Jesus, while at the same time hold to Darwinian Evolution as an explanation of natural things – we will be hearing more from him in the future. There are hardcore individuals who have dedicated themselves to convincing us that Jesus Christ was a “Super Star,” and not the Creator of the Universe; the very One who providentially – moment-by-moment – sustains us all. Collins, by virtue of his professional standing, is becoming one of the key

leaders in this movement. He rejects biblical history, despises Intelligent Design as a “scientific dead end,” (p.187), and considers Creationists to be “effectively committing intellectual suicide;” (p.178) while at the same time identifying himself as a part of the evangelical Christian community (and citing B. B. Warfield as his authority! – pp.178-179).

It is interesting to note, that in the list of publications posted on Dr. Collins’ page located at the National Human Genome Research Institute website – last updated in September 2008 – that *The Language of God*. . . is not listed as one of his book publications, nor is his 2003 article, “Faith and the Human Genome” listed under his other works. One wonders if that might be because the scientific community doesn’t see that even these works hold intellectual merit sufficient to be included in their former director’s bibliography! That should give Collins some pause!

Those who work towards a synthesis between the Bible and Naturalism are prone to condescend to *religion* as a temporary stage in the evolutionary process, destined to become expunged as the human species advances. To a degree, they can be tolerant-sounding and articulate in their efforts. Let us pause for a moment and eaves-drop on a *hypothetical* diatribe given by a evolution proponent:

### The March of Evolution

It is understandable if you continue to find a need to believe in a higher power. There are some folks who simply cannot advance beyond that simple stage in development, and we understand that. Just don’t expect to bring Him/Her/It into the realm of rational reality!

Science – as framed by Evolution – *is* Reality. Our species will eventually learn that we are nothing more than a higher form of animal, evolved from pre-biotic pond scum. There was nothing before the universe began, and there will be nothing after it ends. *You* did not exist before, and *you* will not live after. That is the Reality we celebrate – and you will too someday!

If you feel that you must have the support of religion in order to find some meaning in life, we can help, and will provide that for you. We understand that this so-called quest for a transcendent power is a step along the evolutionary chain, and although some of us have advanced beyond that remedial level, there are other brothers and sisters who have not. What we provide is an acceptable substitute for any belief in a higher power, and the sooner you can accommodate this into your own belief system, the better we all will be!

Our system is as comprehensive as any religion that can be found at present, and certainly surpasses the elaborate forms of worship that history records. We have a Creator (Chance over Time) that is clearly revealed in our Scriptures, in both the Old Testament (*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. . .) and our New Testament (*The Descent of Man*...). We hold to a strict Doctrine (the Origin and Evolution of species by means of Natural Selection), and we celebrate this through one of our more beloved Hymns, “I Did it My Way.”

We have several Prophets, Priests, Professors, and Disciples, most notably Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell, Stephen J. Gould, Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking, Richard Dawkins, and Eugenie Scott, to name a few. They have been trained and educated in the finest Seminaries in the world, our science classrooms.

Our Theory of Origins is based on the *Big Bang*. We offer a Plan of Salvation (Survival of the Fittest), and even acknowledge Miracles (Out of Nothing came Everything!). Our Holy Trinity is Mother Nature, Father Time, and Lady Luck. And the Mantra we spout incessantly is “Once Upon a Time,” known more colloquially as “Over Millions and Billions of Years.” Our calendar, made up of 165 billion *months*, provides plenty of time for Nature to run *Her* course!

The Icon that has been so lovingly bestowed upon us by an appreciative public is, of course, the Darwin Fish. Although you might find this symbol of adoration on the rear-ends of a number of cars in your community, our real Temples, where we can be found to bow and pay homage to our Mother Nature, are the world-wide network of Natural History Museums we maintain and support.

We have three Holy Days which we celebrate each year: February 12, which is the birthday of our beloved professor, Charles Darwin; April 1, when we pause to reflect on the goodness of Nature all around us; and October 31, which is our Holy Weenie Day. Earth Day is also gaining acceptance among our followers, although strictly speaking, Gaia, the goddess of the Earth, is a fiction like any other deity.

This is serious business, and if people don’t begin to take Evolution seriously, there is – and will increasingly become – an Inquisition, in the finest tradition of institutional religion. If you want to see a recent depiction showing our persecution of those who don’t find it in their hearts to agree with us, rent the Ben Stein movie, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*. And to help you remember just how determined we are, please realize that the World-view that we subscribe to was best

captured by Tennyson when he described Evolution as being “Red in Tooth and Claw.” (Note: This is not a treat; just a *friendly* reminder.)

In a nut-shell, our position is this: Evolution has a Theology (Man IS Good/*god*) with a Methodology (to indoctrinate the children) in proper Biology (from *Goo* to *You* by way of the *Zoo*), which culminates in a proper Eschatology (when you die, you’re *dead*!) providing our ultimate HOPE.

The sacred cow to which we are most committed is the billions of years we need in order to convince a naïve and gullible public that there has, indeed, been sufficient time for evolution to perform its magical power. That *Cow* is the *Mother’s Milk* of our movement, and Hell will freeze over before we’ll give it up!

There is a place for evolution and theism to co-exist, but only in a fashion – and for just a season longer. So long as it is assisting believers in the *god of the bible* to grow beyond their simple faith, and as long as we are making progress toward our goal of having science, evolution, and a rational reality as paramount in the hearts and minds of the people, then a limited form of theism will be tolerated.

However, we certainly don’t expect to allow another million years of evolutionary progress to pass before we achieve our goal of the deification of Man. Time is of the essence; and we *will* most assuredly prevail!

Professor Provine of Cornell University gave a good description of our perception of life:

Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us loud and clear—and these are basically Darwin’s views. There are no gods, no purposes, and no goal-directed forces of any kind. There is no life after death. When I die, I am absolutely certain that I am going to be dead. That’s the end of me. There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning in life, and no free will for humans, either. What an unintelligible idea. (Provine, W. B., 1994, *Origins Research*, 16-1:9)

When Collins seeks a higher Truth, he essentially refers to the Moral Law:

So here, in the final chapter [“The Truth Seekers”], we have come full circle, returning again to the existence of the Moral Law, where this story began. . . . After twenty-eight years as a believer, the Moral Law still stands out for me as the strongest signpost to God. More than that, it points to a God who cares about human beings, and a God who is infinitely good and holy. (p.218)

Even though Collins has accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, he cannot let go of his concept of the Moral Law. Is this what happens when we mix *theism* with evolution? Could this be the essential reason to reject the notion of theistic evolution and Collins’ subsequent *BioLogos*?

By working towards this synthesis, a fundamental and fatal compromise must be rendered. In the process, the message of the Word becomes increasingly ineffectual, first in considering evolution as *the* account of Creation, followed by juxtaposing Science and the Bible as dual revelations of God, finally finding Truth in Science (i.e., Evolution) and myth in the Scripture. Inevitably, the Gospel message of God’s grace and forgiveness is diminished, and the Moral Law is elevated. Particularly, as it pertains to the “higher standard” of the Moral Law, other faith traditions, according to Collins, have much to offer:

Far too much has been said by Christians about the exclusive club they inhabit. Tolerance is a virtue; intolerance is a vice. I find it deeply disturbing when believers in one faith tradition dismiss the spiritual experiences of others. Regrettably, Christians seem particularly prone to do this. Personally, I have found much to learn from and admire in other spiritual traditions, though I have found the special revelation of God’s nature in Jesus Christ to be an essential component of my own faith. (p.225)

It is the “special revelation of God’s nature in Jesus Christ” that suffers in Collins’ theology. Christ is God (as Collins acknowledges), but He is also Man (to which Collins can only pay lip-service). He finds the historical Christ in the ancient traditions, but fails to acknowledge (even understand) the given fact that Christ is the Second Adam – in human form.

The Bible provides the direct human genealogy of Jesus from the person Adam to Christ. Luke’s genealogy, along with the parallel lineage given in Matthew, provides the generations from the Beginning to Christ.



Adam was not a mythical representation of the human race, nor is Christ. Jesus is not a product of an evolutionary process, nor was Adam.

Beyond that, the genealogies given in the Bible – those in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, as well as those of Genesis, 1 Chronicles, and the Books of Kings – have appended to them key chronological information tags. This relevant information allows (and encourages) the reasonable observer not tainted by the multi-billion year scenarios of evolutionary timelines to clearly determine that the age of the world (and the universe) since Creation is on the order of 6,000 years.

The Bible as *HisStory* has no pre-history. There were no material events, processes, or physical substance that existed prior to the Creation as recorded in Genesis. The Fall of Man was not simply some moral lesson meant to help us determine right from wrong. The Fall was rebellion against God that separated us from Him, and brought evil, suffering, and death upon mankind and all of creation! Evolution has nothing to do with this picture, and serves only to lead us away from God's historical account of redemption, the Bible.

This review is not a treatise meant to reflect on whether or not Francis Collins is a born again believer in Christ, for his own written testimony indicates that he possibly is. There is no person who can – or should – judge another's personal salvation, especially when one is so willing to go public with this very intimate aspect of his life. So, in that regard, Collins is to be considered a brother in the Lord. However, the matter at hand is not about salvation, but rather regards *faith*, and how one grows in his faith after having been born of the Spirit into the family of God.

With this in mind, we need to review how Collins handles the book of Genesis, the foundation of the Word of God which is the giver of the Law, the provider of the Gospel, the sealer of the faith, and the very rendering of our hope.

In essence, Collins holds that the first two chapters of Genesis are not dealing with actual, time-specific events (i.e., the creation of the human species: "... the chain of events leading to man. . .," p.67), but rather are meant to introduce us to the character of God; and as applied to life, the process of evolution as His means to progressively develop life-forms through a survival-of-the-fittest scenario. Collins asserts that the language of these passages is poetic in character, and not to be taken literally (i.e., literal 24-hour days, p.152) in the tradition of Augustine (p.83).

The Old Testament is handled in like manner, as simply an expression of a moral drama rather than an eyewitness account:

The concern about not accepting liberal interpretations of biblical texts is understandable. After all, there are clearly parts of the Bible that are written as eyewitness accounts of historical events, including much of the New Testament. For a believer, the events recorded in these sections ought to be taken as the writer intended—as descriptions of observed facts. But other parts of the Bible, such as the first few chapters of Genesis, the book of Job, the Song of Solomon, and the Psalms [the stories of Jonah, of Adam and Eve – p.209 – and the Flood, p.172], have a more lyrical and allegorical flavor, and do not generally seem to carry the marks of pure historical narrative. (p.175)

Collins is surely guilty of elevating the discipline of science beyond what it is, and above what it could ever become. In his mind, the notion of evolution provides such a clear answer for how we got here in the first place, that all that remains is to tack Jesus onto this understanding in order to fill a void created by our individual transcendent quest. With that settled, he can turn his heart to where his passion really lies: "... In that context, science [evolution] can be a form of worship." (p.230)

There is another way to look at the issue of faith and science: An inquiry that both of these disciplines can grow and influence; a place where both the Bible and the laboratory would study the world together in helping to determine, piece by quantum piece, the most wondrous knowledge of all. And here we return to the question posed earlier: *How (and Why) does an infinite, transcendent Being, create, sustain, and enter His finite, tangible universe?* To answer this bountiful mystery is to finally realize the Theory of Everything, the ultimate quest of science.

There is a glimmer of hope in Collins' thesis, but it takes a bit of discernment to detect it. In recounting an incident he had while addressing a gathering of Christian physicians,

... explaining how I had found great joy in being both a scientist studying the genome and a follower of Christ, warm smiles abounded; there was even an occasional "Amen." But then I mentioned how overwhelming the scientific evidence for evolution is, and suggested that in my view evolution *might* have been God's elegant plan for creating humankind. The warmth left the

room. So did some of the attendees, literally walking out, shaking their heads in dismay. (p.146, *emphasis added*)

The glimmer of hope – a small window of rational *doubt* – comes not from the number of physicians who saw the fallacy in his position, but in the statement that Collins himself gave – his view that evolution *might* have been God's plan for creating mankind. That leaves us with some optimism that perhaps he is not quite as convinced (and dogmatic) as he asserts throughout his book. Time will tell. In the meantime, we'll eagerly (and prayerfully) watch for the next edition to find out!

#### Reference

Collins, F. S., *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, Free Press, 2006.