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Did Darwin Kill God

By Unknown

I'm a huge admirer of Charles Darwin.
His theory of evolution is one of
the greatest contributions to science
perception of life on earth forever.
I believe religious alternatives
like creationism
and intelligent design are nonsense.
You may think that that would make
me an atheist, but I am a Christian.
I believe in God.

As a philosopher and theologian, I write
and lecture on Darwinism and Religion,
and I am disturbed how the debate
has been hijacked by extremists.
On one side stands Richard Dawkins,
crusader against the belief in God.
Not only is it unscientific,
it doesn't do justice
to the grandeur of the universe.
Dawkins is the flag bearer of a strand
of Darwinism called ultra-Darwinism,
which believes the theory
of evolution implies atheism.

There's no role
to play by a creative God,
an intelligent God,
a benign God of any sort.
And facing them
are the fundamentalist believers
who tell us evolution is wrong.
The Bible tells us...
the age of the earth. The universe
is only about 6000 years.
I believe that Christ was God incarnate
and that he was resurrected from the dead.
But I also believe creationists
are wrong to read Genesis literally.
The war has gone on long enough,
so I'm on a journey
to the heart of this conflict
to show that it is possible to believe
in both Darwin's theory and God.
I'll be discovering what traditional Christianity
really thought about the creation of life,

unravelling the true impact of Darwin's theory in Victorian Britain, and seeing whether modern Darwinism does indeed destroy my Christian faith.

In November 1859, one upstanding Victorian would publish a theory that would challenge everything we understood about the world.

He was Charles Darwin.

Science was about to launch its most deadly weapon in its war against religion.

The arrival of Darwin's theory of evolution is seen by many as the death of divine creation, and the birth of modern atheism.

Darwin's theory has been called a universal acid.

It has eaten away through every traditional understanding of the world, including belief in God.

It contradicted the Biblical view that God created the world - and plants and animals - in just six days, 6000 years ago.

If this account was central to Christianity, then it was in grave danger.

But to think this is to misunderstand the very essence of my faith.

I've come to Israel, the land of the Bible, to uncover what the founders of Christianity thought about the creation of life.

There is an assumption that for thousands of years, people thought that it was a factual account of the actual creation of life on earth.

But to assume this is to make a huge mistake about the meaning of the Bible.

And to see why, we need to look closely at what it actually tells us.

"Genesis, chapter one.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

"God created the light and darkness

and the first day was formed. "

Genesis 1 continues to tell us what God created on each day. On the third day, the land produces vegetation - trees and plants are made. And on the sixth day, God makes all the creatures, including humans - who are made in his image. But something confusing happens when we get to chapter two. We are told a different story. We are told that Adam was made before any plants appeared. In chapter one, man and woman are made together after all the plants and animals. In chapter two, they are made separately, and Adam is made before any plant appears. The two accounts contradict each other. I'm in Jerusalem to see what early biblical scholars made of this. What I find will be a surprise to many - even some Christians. Ah, this is the man I'm looking for, Philo of Alexandria, a first-century Jewish philosopher. Philo noticed that in the Bible there were several passages which contradicted each other. Rather than this being a problem, Philo saw this as a clue to how the Bible should be read. For Philo, there were always two meanings - a literal one, which told us what happened, and an allegorical one, which communicated a deeper meaning. For him, sometimes the allegorical was more important than the literal. If in scripture we came across a contradiction, that told us not to take it at face value, to look for a deeper meaning. That is what Philo did with the first two chapters of Genesis.

For him, chapter one was an attempt to make sense of the creation of the world. It was about the meaning of existence itself. The message was that creation was a gift - God had created something from nothing. Chapter two had a different message. It focused on what it meant to be human. The story of Adam and Eve eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, of good and evil, and being banished from the Garden of Eden was describing the fallibility of human nature. For Philo, the two accounts were myths in the true sense of the term, stories that reveal deeper truths about these fundamental aspects of life. 'I've come to the Ecole Biblique to meet Father Gregory Tatum, 'to see if these views were typical of early Christians. ' The Church approaches the Bible in recognising that truth takes many forms - by its nature, it's complex. So it's not traditional to interpret Genesis literally? It is not. The Fathers of the Church would not have asked, "Is the Bible true or false?" That would not have occurred to them. They'd have asked, "What is the truth that God wants to communicate to us in this text or that text?" So we need myth on occasion to communicate complex truths? Mythological speech is often the only kind we can use to talk about important things in life. So this approach to truth, this approach to scriptures is not a modern anomaly, or invention, it's what the church

has always been about?
That's the position of the Church.
Reading Genesis as myth and metaphor
is not a modern trend.
This has always been the
mainstream view, this is orthodoxy.
And we see it clearly in one of the most influential
thinkers in all of Christian history, Saint Augustine.
Writing in the fifth century,
Saint Augustine wrote a text
helpfully entitled
The Literal Meaning Of Genesis.
For Augustine, the authors of Genesis were
trying to communicate unfathomable events.
How do you communicate the beginning
of existence or time itself?
This meant we had to use
different modes of communication.
Augustine even warns Christians
against treating Genesis,
or the Bible, as science or literal,
saying they'd be ridiculed
for talking nonsense.
If we take the Bible only literally,
we will have an impoverished
account, not a richer one,
and there will be no room
for theological reflection.
Saint Augustine has another and almost prescient
point to make about the creation of life.
He wrote that God is not temporal,
and it is only for us, being a part
of the process, that time exists.
He says that life involves a process of
realisation through the course of time.
He tells us that,
over time, life evolves.
And many of the Church Fathers
echoed his views.
This is not to say that Augustine
knew about natural selection,
but if we were to tell him
about this today,
he would be wholly unperturbed.

When we read what the early Fathers of the Church wrote about the Bible, it's clear it stands at the heart of Christianity, not as a science textbook, but as a communication of God's nature, and the reason for existence. For them, God was not an armchair God who sat outside of his creation watching it unfold, but nor was it a deity who intervenes arbitrarily. Rather, God was seen as ever-present in all creation. This was, and remains, the view of orthodox Christianity, a view that would be completely compatible with Darwin's theory. But, of course, Christians have not always remembered this, and over the centuries, there have been some who read Genesis literally. The most significant took place in the I've returned to England, for in Westminster Abbey lies someone who was central to this development. The Reformation saw some Christians reject the authority of the Catholic Church in Rome, embracing instead the Bible as the ultimate source of authority. Scripture, not the Pope, was now their master. The decision of Luther and Calvin to question Papal authority opened the floodgates for anyone to read the Bible as they wished. Hundreds of years before the Reformation, Saint Augustine had warned against using the Bible to deduce the exact way in which the earth was formed, but in 1650, one Irish archbishop did just that,

Archbishop James Ussher.

Ussher believed the Bible held the information as to how the world began.

He worked like a detective...

unravelling all the clues that were hidden in the Bible.

He noted down

every date that was mentioned, and he calculated all the periods of time covered in the numerous genealogies.

Taking this information into account,

Ussher was able to determine the exact moment God created the earth.

It was on the evening of the 22nd of October, 4004 BC.

Ussher's calculation would have remained, at best, an interesting, if eccentric, speculation were it not for the fact that it made it into every page of the King James Bible, the most widely read edition of the Bible for the next 300 years.

But, despite this, traditional Christianity prevailed.

The book of Genesis was not to be read literally.

And by the time we get to the 19th century, Victorian Christians were unearthing evidence which would stop them from making the same mistake as Ussher.

In the first half of the 19th century, every fashionable member of society would have had a souvenir that directly contradicted the biblical age of earth - a fossil.

Advances in the understanding of fossils and the formation of rocks led geologists to propose that the earth was formed over a series of millions of years.

It was unquestionably much older than the age suggested by Ussher.

And there was another discovery which flew

in the face of a literal reading of Genesis.
It destroyed the idea that God had
made all the creatures on the same day.
Victorian scientists were
unearthing the fossils of dinosaurs,
millions of years older
than the oldest-known human remains.
And what did the Church
think of this?
It could hardly oppose it,
as the geologists who were proposing these ideas
were Anglican clergymen. They were men of God.
For most of the 19th century,
science was almost
a branch of religion, with Anglican clerics
holding the top jobs at Oxford and Cambridge.
I've arranged to meet historian
Pietro Corsi to understand
the relationship between religion
and science in the 19th century.
By the time of Darwin's
Origin of Species,
only a minority
of Anglican ministers believed
the earth was
as the Bible described it.
Those who were interested in geology
accepted geology as a science and
were not worried about the question,
"How old was the earth?" They simply
accepted that it must have been pretty old.
So people who believe
that the Bible
had a precise description of the earth, by
that time, belong almost to the lunatic fringe.
In November of 1859,
Victorian Britain was confronted
with the Origin of Species,
Charles Darwin's masterpiece.
All life on earth had evolved
over billions of years,
through variation and selection,
from a common ancestor.
And that included mankind.

WOLF HOWLS:

The story we have been told
is that this shattered Christianity,
wrecking the belief
that God created life in six days.
History tells us that this is
the moment that Darwin killed God.
But I find this strange, because,
as we have already discovered,
traditional Christianity had no reason
to be threatened by Darwin's ideas,
and Victorian Christians already had a
sophisticated understanding of the earth's formation.
So where did it all go wrong?
Something had happened to
Christianity in Victorian England.
Some Christians had broken away
from the traditional view
of God and creation.
It was a very English development,
confined to these islands,
and peculiar to Anglicanism.
Britain was in the midst
of the Industrial Revolution,
forging a brave new world
of design and engineering.
Into this society, a completely
new idea of God gained popularity,
presenting God as the great
mechanic, the ultimate designer.
Its leading proponent
was William Paley,
a theologian who compared the intricate nature
of life to the inner workings of a watch.
He argued that life was so complex, each
creature must have been individually designed.

TRAIN WHISTLES:

Darwin's evidence
blew this idea out of the water,
and caused outrage amongst those
who embraced this view.
How dare they be compared to apes?

It was these Christians who were shocked and disgusted by the implications of Darwin's idea. His theory did kill God - but only Paley's God, which was at odds with the teachings of the founding Fathers of the Church. As for Europe, Darwin's theory made no theological fuss. It was very much a storm in an English teacup. But even in Britain, there were plenty of Christians who welcomed the idea of evolution. Nine years after Darwin published, the Roman-Catholic Cardinal John Henry Newman said, "Darwinism, true or not, is not necessarily atheistic. "On the contrary, it may be suggesting a larger idea of divine providence and skill. " Even the Anglican hierarchy agreed. The Reverend Charles Kingsley affirmed that evolution revealed, "A noble conception of the Deity. " What of Darwin? For many, he's the father of atheism - born a Christian, has a theory of evolution, loses his faith - proof, surely, that evolution destroys belief in God? No. Darwin was born a Christian, and lost his faith, but not because of evolution. In 1851, Darwin was hit by personal tragedy. His ten-year-old daughter Annie was struck with what is now thought to have been cholera, and shortly before she passed away, was brought here, to the Spa Town of Malvern. Nick Spencer has been finding out about how her death affected Darwin. She died of a fever, which lasted for about two weeks or so. Darwin was with her for the second week. He rushed from Downe, where he was with Emma, his wife, who was pregnant.

He wrote to her, saying, "You wouldn't recognise our daughter. "

"She's wasting away, couldn't take food, pinched features - she's not the girl we knew. "

What impact did her death have on Darwin's faith? It's the thing that wields the knife. It's fair to say, by the time of her death, he's definitely a believer in God, a theist - that has a Christian flavour.

But the suffering he sees in Annie's death and the sense of injustice and futility is the thing that really finishes his Christian faith. Her death shows that, whilst we must remember Darwin the scientist, we must remember Darwin the father. Suffering in the world is a constant challenge to people of faith. The arrival of the evolution made this no harder, or easier, to bear. The Origin of Species is not the great atheistic treatise it is often claimed to be. When it was published, eight years after Annie's death, Darwin talked about the impossibility of this wonderful universe being conceived by blind chance, believing that there must be an intelligent mind behind it all. He presented his work as beginning and ending with God. Near the end of his life, he declared, "It seems to me absurd "to doubt that a man may be an ardent theist and an evolutionist. "

In this light, it's unfair to proclaim Darwin as the father of modern atheism. Britain was actually more religious at the end of the 19th century than it was in the 1830s. Within 20 years of Darwin publishing his theory, it was generally accepted in England. Darwin had not killed God, so why today, do we think

they are at loggerheads?

Well, the war had not yet begun,
and would not start
for another 60 years.

The first big battle in the war
between evolution and Christianity
took place where
the front line remains today,
the American Bible Belt.

AMERICAN COUNTRY STYLE MUSIC

What's surprising is it had little
to do with science and religion,
and everything to do
with politics and morality.

Until the early 1920s, the common view
in America was the same as in Britain.

The theory of evolution had
been accepted - in the media,
and in educated society at least.

So when, 60 years
after Darwin published his theory,
America was hit by a huge
anti-evolutionary crusade,
everyone was somewhat taken aback.

And it all started here,
in Dayton, Tennessee.

On a hot day in July 1925,
this courthouse became a
battleground between liberals
fighting for the freedom of ideas, and
Christians defending their sacred Bible.

Touching the country's psyche, the Scopes
trial was a defining moment in American history.

Fundamentalist Christianity was
on the rise in the American South,
and a group in Tennessee
had passed a law banning the teaching
of the theory of evolution in schools.

'A young instructor, John Scopes,
disobeyed the law and stood trial.

'The whole world looked
on in amazement as the Bible
'went into court against
the theories of Darwin. '

Leading the prosecution against Darwin
- William Jennings Bryan. GAVEL BANGS
'William Jennings Bryan cried,
"I am more interested in the rock
of ages than in the age of rocks. "
Bryan was part of the growing right-wing
fundamentalist Christian movement,
but what is less well-known, is that
he was also a devoted socialist.
He hated social Darwinism, a new
ideology used by right-wing politicians
to justify the stronger members
in society crowding out the weak.
He saw the embracing of the survival
of the fittest everywhere
and he also thought that Americans were losing
their Christian morality because of Darwinism.
Bryan was a left-wing politician
with right-wing religious views.
These elements came together
in his condemnation of Darwinism.
Opposing the fundamentalists
stood Clarence Darrow,
the defender of Scopes,
and the theory of evolution.
'Clarence Darrow,
'battling as always for freedom said,
"If today you can make it a crime
to teach evolution in schools,
"tomorrow,
you may ban books and newspapers. "
Darrow despised the power that religious
figures wielded in American law and education,
and branded religion as the cause of
much of what was wrong in the world.
Darrow did not stop there.
He thought that rational science
and a theory of evolution
was a better basis for morality
than Christianity.
That's a morality based on survival of the fittest
- the strong triumph over the weak.
If that's how evolution was to be taught, no
wonder the Christians of Dayton were nervous!

Neither side made any attempt
to see whether or not
evolution was at odds with Christianity,
both assuming the two were incompatible.
And that would set an adversarial tone which
would cloud the debate in the years to come.
John Scopes was found guilty of teaching
evolution and lost the court case.
But the real conclusion of the day
was that Darwinism and God
were now, indeed, at war.
The trial made the conflict between
evolution and Christianity nationwide,
and spread the idea evolution and freedom
of expression were locked in a battle
against the restrictive dogma of religion, creating
the impression if you believed in evolution,
you had to give up your
Christian faith and moral code.
It left no room for a Christian
to believe in evolution.
Looking back at the trial today,
it's intriguing to find
the creationism of the time
was not the creationism of today.
It was actually
rather more sophisticated.
Prosecutor William Jennings Bryan
did not take the Genesis account
of the world's creation
in six days at face value.
On the contrary. For him, each of the six days
in the Bible were vast geological periods of time.
The staunch opponent of evolution did not
believe the world was created in six literal days.
What Bryan practised was Old Earth
creationism,
which accepted that
the earth was millions of years old.
The creationism that is at odds with
evolution today did not exist in the 1920s.
It would not arrive
for another 40 years.
God said to Abraham kill me a son

Abe said, man,
you must be puttin' me on
God said no... #
For 2000 years, Christianity had looked
beyond a literal reading of the Bible,
but the biggest break from
this tradition took place in 1961.
Well, Abe said where do
you want this killing done?
God said out on highway 61... #
By the 1960s,
America had changed radically -
and for fundamentalist Christians,
for the worse.
Sex outside of marriage,
experimentation with drugs,
openness towards abortion and divorce
- these were seen as symptoms
of a wider malaise, a breakdown in
morality not seen since the 1920s.
But the fundamentalist churches
fought back in the way they knew best.
The moral order could only be restored by
return to the literal word of the Bible.
Well, God told Noah to build an ark
He said it's gonna rain... #
As if on cue, in 1961, a book was
published called The Genesis Flood.
Written by Henry Morris,
a hydraulics engineer,
and John Whitcomb, a Grace Brethren
elder, the book became a bestseller.
The reason for the success
of The Genesis Flood was that
it claimed to provide a scientific
explanation to back up the Biblical account.
#.. on earth was dead
But Noah's faith was like a rock
God laid his ark
on a mountain top. #
I'm curious to find out more,
so I've come to the Creation Museum in Cincinnati,
which promotes the teachings of The Genesis Flood.
'The Lord God drove

out the man from the Garden of Eden.
'Adam was forced to grow food
by the sweat of his brow... '
It's one of the strangest museums
I've ever been to,
with a take on science and history
that I do not recognise.
Since when did being a Christian mean
believing that dinosaurs lived with humans?
I was hoping
Dr Terry Mortenson could tell me.
The basic premise
is the Biblical account
of Noah's flood in Genesis 6:8
is a historically accurate account
of a global catastrophic flood.
We believe that the Bible
is the word of the creator
and he was the eyewitness. Noah
was also an eyewitness to the flood.
The Bible tells us
Adam was created on the sixth day,
and we believe that there are good Biblical reasons
for taking those as literal days, just like our days.
And then the Bible,
in Genesis 5 and Genesis 11
gives us the genealogies
from Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham,
and if there are no gaps
in those genealogies,
the age of the earth and universe
is about 6000 years.
So how does the book
explain fossils?
OK, well,
fossils are the lithofied remains
of former living creatures.
You can't produce a fossil
unless you bury the creature rapidly,
because - take, for example, the dinosaur -
if it falls over, dies of old age
and lays on the ground,
it won't be fossilised because...
scavengers and decay processes

- the sun beating on the bones, and the rain and...
is gonna just destroy
all the evidence.
So the flood gives us
an explanation for
why we have these massive sedimentary
layers with billions of fossils in them.
Do you think dinosaurs and humans
shared the earth at the same time?
Yes, because dinosaurs are
land animals and Genesis says that
on day six God made the land animals,
so he would have made the dinosaurs.
He had to make 'em sometime, unless
we accept evolution, which we don't.
The Genesis Flood flew in the face
of all scientific evidence.
It undid 100 years of scientific discovery,
and 2000 years of Christian theology.
I'm Christian, but I don't recognise
the creationist view.
They've abandoned a Christian tradition
of seeking deeper truth in the Bible.
By turning Genesis into a science textbook,
they're calling us to worship science,
and in so doing,
we no longer worship God.
They've generated a clash between evolution and
God which wasn't there in the time of Darwin.
But the latest Christian attack
on Darwinism has gone even further.
It claims to be a scientific theory,
and not religion.
It is intelligent design.
Although it appeared in 1987,
it was, in fact,
no more than a resurrection of Paley's
discredited notion of God as a designer.
Scientists the world over reject it,
but for me, it's biggest problem
is what it says about God.
Intelligent design describes a God who
intervenes in the development of life,
making improvements along the way.

But if that's the case,
why does God not intervene
and stop child abuse, stop famine -
indeed, stop genocide?
The God of intelligent design is a supernatural
mechanic who is extremely good at making things,
but appears to be lacking
in morals altogether.
I cannot worship
that idea of a God -
a God who is simply a bigger,
cleverer version of you or me.
For me, God is the source
of the gift of life, of all life.
God is He in whom we live,
move and have our very existence.
And this is what
traditional Christianity tells us.
God is existence itself.
He is the creator of time itself.
So I can see no philosophical conflict
between belief in God as creator,
and our understanding of evolution
as the process through which God
enables all life to unfold.
It is my contention that Darwin's theory of
evolution did not challenge God in the 19th century,
nor did it challenge God in the 20th century
- despite claims made by creationism.
The only reason people thought
it did, was because of the noise,
furore and cacophony
caused by creationists.
But I don't think that creationism is
the true heir to the Christian tradition -
rather they are a modern anomaly, an
aberration, a product of 20th-century anxiety.
And that brings us
into the 21st century.
Today it is not just creationists who
tell us that evolution and God are at war.
Another group of fundamentalists
have entered the debate...
Darwinian fundamentalists.

I'm heading to Boston
to meet someone who believes
that Darwin's theory has killed
the need for God altogether.
He's part of a school of thought which is
referred to as universal - or ultra - Darwinism.
It uses the theory of evolution
to target every notion of God,
especially the Christian God.
Daniel Dennett is one of the world's
most famous atheist philosophers.
He has spent his career
using Darwinism to justify atheism.
I think anybody who understands the
theory of evolution by natural selection
recognises that there's...
no role to play... by a creative God,
an intelligent God,
a benign God of any sort.
According to you,
how do you think evolution works?
It takes no intelligence. It takes no purpose.
It just happens, you might say, automatically.
This is Darwin's great...
inversion.
One of his early critics called it a strange
inversion of reasoning, and it is exactly that.
Until Darwin came along,
everywhere we saw a purpose.
And Darwin showed us that we can
turn that right upside down,
we can have a process... which isn't
smart, isn't intelligent,
isn't trying to do anything.
It's just the unrolling of
the mechanical laws of nature.
Unlike Charles Darwin, ultra-Darwinists
like Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins
claim that evolution
means there cannot be a God.
The basis for this new-found confidence
in atheism is the idea of the selfish gene.
If we recognise
that everything that lives,

whether it's a redwood tree,
or a whale, or a human being...
.. has genes that have been in competition with
other genes for three billion years and counting,
this sheds a lot of light on why
organisms are the way they are.
Think of genes as if they were selfish, as if they
were trying to make more copies of themselves -
trying to have lots of offspring,
in effect.
Then you will see...
that they do this by competing with
other genes to make survival vehicles
that will help them
in their effort to reproduce.
So would you describe yourself
as a Darwinian fundamentalist?
The theory of natural selection -
it's all or nothing.
There are no exceptions.
There is not
a single magnificent feature
of anything alive in the universe
that it doesn't apply to.
For ultra-Darwinists,
evolution explains all of existence,
and all of reality.
If this view was unanimous, if everyone
agreed, then there would be no place for God.
But not everyone does agree.
And some of those who disagree are
the best scientists in the world.
Good evening. It's taken ten years,
it's cost billions of pounds,
and the result is a giant leap forward
in our understanding of the human body.
For 15 years, Francis Collins was the
leader of the Human Genome Project.
At the start of the project, there
was an expectation that humans,
as the most advanced creatures on earth,
would have the greatest number of genes.
But that was not how
things turned out...

as Francis Collins explained over a glass of wine at his home in Washington DC. First came the shock we didn't have as many genes as we thought we did. Mmm. People had been saying 100,000 for a long time, you know? It's probably only about 20,000, now that the dust has really settled here.

'In fact, the genome of the pinot noir grape contains more genes than a human being. 'And rice contained even more. ' .. more than twice our gene count.

So, at dinner, invariably there's stuff on your plate that has more genes than you do.

'In fact, scientists agree that our current understanding of the gene 'is fast becoming as out of date as the idea that the atom 'is the smallest particle.

'This is an exciting evolutionary development, 'but it does means that ultra-Darwinism can no longer use 'the selfish gene to try and explain everything. '

According to some, evolution is all about the survival of the genes. What do you think of that?

Well, I think that's much too narrow a view. I mean, a gene is just a packet of DNA. We don't even quite know what the boundary of that packet is any more.

The definition of the gene has gotten blurry, but say it's a gene that codes for a protein, that protein doesn't operate in a vacuum, it interacts with others, and so evolution actually acts on the organism, or even on a group of organisms. And so, I don't think one can understand natural selection in anything like its real force

by reducing it to something
as simple as the selfish gene,
and that's the only unit
that's at work there.

'Francis Collins believes that
ultra-Darwinists are wrong to say
'evolution is all about the survival
of the gene and nothing else,
'but what about their claim
that evolution entails atheism?'

Well, I think that's going well
outside the evidence. COLLINS SIGHS
Atheism - the statement that there is
no God - is not a scientific statement.

Let's unwrap that.

Science is limited

to making statements about nature.

It's very good at that, by the way,
figuring out how things work,

but science is committing a category error
to claim dominion over the question of God.

You're a Christian. How do you reconcile
your faith with the theory of evolution?

Yes, evolution is true,

but yes, God is the author of our universe,
and of our planet, and of you and me,

and God simply used that process of evolution to carry
out that creation in a way that is incredibly elegant.

I think evolution

is the answer to how...

God is the answer to why.

This doesn't mean that Collins

has opened up a gap

for a creationist God to come in

and help explain evolution.

The God of the gaps

was never part of Christianity.

Still, you may think Collins is

putting his faith before his science,

but it's not only believers

in God who share his views.

Michael Ruse is a staunch Darwinist,

a philosopher and also an atheist.

Ultra-Darwinists argue that the theory of

evolution entails, or necessitates, atheism.
Have you come to the same conclusion
yourself? Absolutely not.
I just don't think that is
something which follows at all.
I think that it is
just simply false to say
that Darwinism implies atheism.
And I think that those people
like Richard Dawkins,
like Dan Dennett, who say otherwise,
I think they're just wrong.
I think that people make commitments about
religion, or non-religion, for other reasons,
and then what's going to happen is
you're going to try to make sense of
science within the context of your belief,
or your non-belief.
I mean, if one goes into the lab,
or one goes out into the field
to do science, one is,
as a scientist, not looking for God.
And therefore one should
not be surprised, disappointed,
or pleased
when one does not find God.
I mean, I think it's a question
of what you're after.
I don't think science
proves the existence of God,
I don't think science proves
the non-existence of God.
I think science
is science is science.
Along with many atheists, I believe that God's
existence lies beyond the reach of Darwin's theory.
But ultra-Darwinists
haven't given up.
They have built
on the idea of the selfish gene
to try and show the theory of
evolution does after all imply atheism.
A theory has emerged that thinks
it can explain everything -

love, morality,
even my belief in a divine creator.
So has the time come to accept
that Darwinism has killed God?
It's a theory
which was born in Britain.
It's called the theory of memes.
Richard Dawkins first used the word
in his book *The Selfish Gene*
to describe how it was not just
biology that was governed by evolution.
Memes are to culture
as genes are to nature.
A meme describes a unit of information which
survives through being selected by someone,
and then being passed
on to another.
I just can't get you out of my head
Boy, your lovin'
is all I think about
I just can't get you... #
It applies to everything.
For example, songs are memes.
We hear them,
play them and sing them,
and transfer them to others, and
in doing so, we aid their survival.
The theory of memes attempts
to explain all human activity
in evolutionary terms, including
culture, religion and morality.
It goes much further than saying there's no God
- it concludes that there's no you or me.
I've come to meet
Dr Susan Blackmore,
who believes that memes are the key to understanding
everything about what we say and do and think.
Memes are any kind of information that's copied from
person to person, so when I am speaking to you now,
I might be telling you a story,
or a joke,
or I could sing you a song, and if
you then pass that on, it's a meme,
and it can go on

to infect loads of other people.
So how are memes
part of evolutionary theory?
The idea of memes comes straight
out of universal Darwinism.
It applies to anything where information
is copied with variation and selection.
Memes are competing to use
our brains to get themselves copied.
Invert the normal way
you think about the world.
We, as humans,
feel we are doing the selecting,
but from the meme's point of view,
they're getting us to copy them.
So do you mean
we are colonised by our memes?
Yeah, that's exactly the right word.
They colonise us.
I mean, you could say that they're
parasites and parasitizing us,
but in a way that gives the wrong impression
- there's a whole range of memes,
from the valuable and wonderful memes that
make up our culture, our science and arts,
to the other end where
you have all the viral memes -
internet viruses, chain letters and religions,
things that exploit our brains and aren't true.
The memes that have colonised us through our life
have given rise to this great story that I'm in here,
I'm in control of my life, and
I would say the me that I think I am
is to that extent an illusion.
If true,
the theory of memes is devastating.
Ultra-Darwinists
say that everything is an illusion -
and this includes our sense of self,
and all our beliefs.
If our entire mental world is a product
of a lifetime of meme colonisation,
that means I believe in God because I have
been colonised by the Christianity meme.

In other words, I'm deluded,
and therefore God is not real.
But I can't see how
the theory of memes can be true.
There's a fundamental flaw
at the heart of the theory.
Consider this -
I also believe in evolution.
Doesn't that mean that I have also been
colonised by the theory of evolution meme?
How can I trust this meme to be
any more true than any other meme?
This may sound like clever wordplay,
but this is a philosophical problem that confronts
anyone who believes in the theory of memes.
You see, science requires truth
to be objective.
It requires benchmarks
to decide between what is true,
and what is not true.
But with ultra-Darwinism,
there can be no benchmark,
because all that matters
is which memes survive.
And their survival
has nothing to do with their truth.
As one atheist philosopher put it,
"Evolution does not care
"whether most
of our beliefs are true.
"Like Rhett Butler in the movie,
it just doesn't give a damn. "
In undermining
the objectivity of truth,
ultra-Darwinism
not only threatens the truth of God,
it inadvertently also destroys the
truth of the theory of evolution itself.
Although the theory of memes
has been around for some time,
ultra-Darwinists have been unable to
answer this philosophical problem.
The irony being that having
fatally undermined itself,

ultra-Darwinism
cannot destroy our sense of self,
threaten ethics,
and it cannot kill the idea of God.
Let's be clear, I remain an ardent supporter
of Darwin and his theory of evolution.
My issue is only against ultra-Darwinism, the
attempt to use the theory to explain everything.
And you don't have to believe in God to
see the dangers of such an enterprise.
The latest research into evolution
is a reminder that all science,
even the theory of evolution,
is provisional.
Darwin's theory
may not be the whole story.
And, indeed, being but a chapter,
it cannot expect to explain away God.
'I'm in London Zoo to meet
one of the world's most respected
'evolutionary paleobiologists,
Simon Conway Morris.
'His research explores how
life forms with wholly independent
'evolutionary paths can produce
such remarkably similar results. '
We humans are cultural,
and we have music, but it so turns
out that many animals have music.
Not only that -
the sort of music they have is
similar, in many respects, to ours.
Some birds even do drumming,
for example.
But more specifically, they have
harmony and melody, they have invention,
they even have cultures
in music where,
for example,
in the oceans, whales can swap songs.
Now, supposing that there
is a universal music out there,
then think of evolution
as more like a search engine,

and the reason why
the music sounds the same
is because it is actually discovering
something which, arguably,
is even pre-existing,
and that suggests, yes, evolution,
the algorithm is Darwinian,
but there are other realities,
and the fact that music
is discovered in this way
suggests that
there is more to play for,
that we've hardly begun to understand
who we are and why we're here.
do you think that
evolution is still true?
Evolution is true,
the question is not that, it's, "Is
evolution, as a theory, complete?"
Now, if you think of other sciences, go back
to the time of physics and the time of Newton,
they thought
they'd solved everything.
But, of course, in physics
along came general relativity,
along came quantum mechanics, and I strongly suspect
that, yes, evolution is true, so far as it goes,
but we are very much dealing with unfinished business,
and that means that it's like any other science.
If science is inherently
open-ended and provisional,
how can a scientific theory
like evolution possibly kill God?
The mainstream Christian view of God
was never at odds with Darwin.
The conflict was contrived by
an unorthodox strand of my faith -
creationism.
It was aggravated by
an unorthodox strand of Darwinism -
ultra-Darwinism.
So, for me, there is no conflict
between Darwin's theory
and belief in God.

Indeed, the theory of evolution even helps to stop my understanding of God from becoming too domestic, too cosy, too small.

Darwin hated religious controversy, and he would have been dismayed at the events that have transpired in his name.

His contribution to science remains one of the greatest ever.

Let's just accept it, and stop using it to attack religion.

It's time to let

Darwin rest in peace.

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