

FOREWORD BY STEVE FULLER

# THEISTIC EVOLUTION

A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique



Edited by

J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer,  
Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger,  
and Wayne Grudem

*By*

***Mark McGee***



I have written many times during our ongoing series of Book Reviews that “you should buy this book.” I meant what I wrote about those previous books, but “you really should buy this book!” – *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (Crossway, 2017).

I was a strong Darwinian evolutionist in the 1960’s and saw no reason to believe in the existence of a “creator god” because science had “proven” one was not needed. So, it was scientific arguments for “creator/designer theism” that first caught my attention as a hard-core atheist. I followed the evidence from science to philosophy to historical to textual evidence and determined that the God of the Bible existed, that the Bible is a credible historical document, and that Jesus Christ came from Heaven to earth to offer us the gift of eternal life.

I benefited greatly from meeting Christians who presented me with scientific evidence for the designer God who created the Heavens and the earth. I have continued to read both sides of the argument since becoming a Christian and to stay up with relevant scientific discoveries and arguments.

However, there are Christians who believe the scientific evidence doesn't support theistic creation and that's what this new tome (1,008 pages!) addresses. Given the importance of this topic to my own conversion from atheism to Christianity, the conversion of many other former atheists, and the future conversion of non-believers, I view this new book of "vital" importance in the ongoing discussion about God and science.

One of the benefits of the book to many will be that the great number of arguments and evidence are located in one volume. The authors carefully reference quotes and materials, so conducting further investigation is made easier for Christian and non-Christian readers alike.

# The Authors

The lineup of authors for *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* is outstanding:

## Science

Stephen C. Meyer: former geophysicist and philosophy professor at Whitworth University, now directs Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture in Seattle

Douglas D. Axe: Director of Biologic Institute, a founding editor of BIO-Complexity, and the author of *Undeniable—How Biology Confirms Our Intuition that Life Is Designed*

Matti Leisola: professor emeritus of bioprocess engineering at Aalto University

James M. Tour: synthetic organic chemist, is presently the T. T. and W. F. Chao Professor of Chemistry, professor of computer science, and professor of materials science and nanoengineering at Rice University

Winston Ewert: intelligent design researcher and software engineer

Jonathan Wells: senior fellow at the Discovery Institute in Seattle, author of *Icons of Evolution*, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Darwinism and Intelligent Design*, and *The Myth of Junk DNA*, and coauthor (with William Dembski) of *The Design of Life*

Ann K. Gauger: Director of science communication at the Discovery Institute, and senior research scientist at Biologic Institute in Seattle

Paul A. Nelson: fellow of the Discovery Institute, and an adjunct professor for Biola University's MA program in Science and Religion

Sheena Tyler: research director of the John Ray Research Field Station, current research interests and publications include aspects of bioelectric fields in morphogenesis and wound healing, egg surface structure, avian development, solar-electric power, and the biology of cork

Günter Bechly: paleontologist and senior research scientist at Biologic Institute

Casey Luskin: PhD student in science and an attorney

Ola Hössjer: professor of mathematical statistics at Lund University in 2000, has held the same position at Stockholm University since 2002

Colin R. Reeves: professor emeritus of operational research at Coventry University in the UK

Christopher Shaw: has held the positions of lecturer, reader, and professor in Queen's University, Faculty of Medicine, and of professor of biotechnology in the University of Ulster, currently professor of drug discovery in the School of Pharmacy, Queen's University

## Philosophy

J. P. Moreland: distinguished professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University in La Mirada, California

Stephen C. Meyer: (see above)

Paul A. Nelson: (see above)

Stephen Dilley: associate professor of philosophy at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas

C. John Collins: professor of Old Testament at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri

Garrett J. DeWeese: professor at large, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University

Colin R. Reeves: (see above)



Tapio Puolimatka: professor of educational theory and tradition at the University of Jyväskylä and adjunct professor of practical philosophy at the University of Helsinki, Finland

John G. West: vice president of Discovery Institute and associate director of the Institute's Center for Science and Culture, which he cofounded with Stephen C. Meyer

## Theology

Wayne Grudem: research professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary

John D. Currid: Carl McMurray Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina

Guy Prentiss Waters: James M. Baird Jr. Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi

Gregg R. Allison: professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky

Fred G. Zaspel: pastor of Reformed Baptist Church of Franconia, Pennsylvania, executive editor at Books at a Glance and associate professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

## The Book

The book is a scientific, philosophical, and theological critique of “theistic evolution,” so it would be helpful to know the definition of what the book critiques.

“God created matter and after that did not guide or intervene or act directly to cause any empirically detectable change in the natural behavior of matter until all living things had evolved by purely natural processes.” Editors

“The model for divinely guided evolution that we are proposing here thus requires no ‘intrusions from outside’ for its account of God’s creative process, except for the origins of the natural laws guiding the process.” Theistic evolutionists – Karl Giberson and Francis Collins

What do theistic evolutionists mean when they speak about “evolution”?

“Some proponents of theistic evolution openly affirm that the evolutionary process is an unguided, undirected process. Kenneth Miller, a leading theistic evolutionist and author of *Finding Darwin’s God* has repeatedly stated in editions of his popular textbook that ‘evolution works without either plan or purpose. . . . Evolution is random and undirected.’ Nevertheless, most theistic evolutionists, including geneticist Francis Collins, perhaps the world’s best-known proponent of the position, have been reluctant to clarify what they think about this important issue. In his book *The Language of God*, Collins makes clear his support for universal common descent. He also seems to assume the adequacy of standard evolutionary mechanisms but does not clearly say whether he thinks those mechanisms.” *Scientific and Philosophical Introduction*, Stephen C. Meyer, p 42

I especially enjoyed how the authors summarize each chapter and section. That is most helpful in developing an understanding of the issues. Here's one example –

“In chapters 14 through 16 we have shown that,

- The fossil evidence shows an absence of intermediates between ape-like fossils and human ones, indicating that the story told by evolutionists of a well-documented continuous bridge between the two is false.
- The genetic evidence shows there are many more uniquely human elements in our genome than are commonly ascribed to it, significantly more than the oft-quoted 1 percent genetic difference between chimpanzees and us.
- Many of these elements come from what used to be called junk DNA, but are now thought to be functionally significant.
- There isn't enough time for all these differences to have been selected and fixed in the ancestral human population by purely natural means.

- Population genetics models that say we had to come from an original population of thousands rather than two are subject to question, and can be tested against an alternative model starting with just two first parents. Taken together, our argument leads to the conclusion that it is unwarranted to discard traditional interpretations of our origin.” Chapter 16

Another example –

“SUMMARY. People of faith should reject the call to affirm the Darwinian explanation of life and should instead affirm the traditional understanding of divine creative action, which defies reduction to natural causes. There are three good reasons for this. (1) Acceptance of Darwinism carries a substantial apologetic cost. Specifically, if Darwin was right that life can be explained by accidental physical causes, then we must forfeit the claim that all humans are confronted by God’s existence when we behold the wonders of the living world. (2) All accidental explanations of life, whether Darwinian or not, are demonstrably implausible. (3) The common justifications for

accommodating Darwin's theory within the framework of traditional faith are confused." Chapter 1, Three Good Reasons for People of Faith to Reject Darwin's Explanation of Life, Douglas D. Axe, p 83

As I wrote at the beginning of this review – “Buy this book!” It may be the best one-volume guide to understanding the scientific, philosophical, and theological reasons for rejecting theistic evolution.

## Endorsements

“This volume fills a wide and expanding gap for Christians who continue to struggle with the relationship of evangelical Christianity to the claims of science. Specifically, for those who have rightly rejected the claims of unguided evolution, this book takes on the similar challenge of the possibility of theistic evolution. Scholarly, informative, well-researched, and well-argued, this will be the best place to begin to ferret out reasons for conflict among Christians who take science seriously. I highly recommend this resource.” K. Scott Oliphint, Professor of Apologetics and Systematic Theology and Dean of Faculty, Westminster Theological Seminary

“Theistic evolution means different things to different people. This book carefully identifies, and thoroughly debunks, an insidious, all-too-commonly accepted sense of the phrase even among Christians: that there is no physical reason to suspect life was designed, and that evolution proceeded in the unguided, unplanned manner Darwin himself championed.” Michael J. Behe, Professor of



Biological Sciences, Lehigh University; author, *Darwin's Black Box* and *The Edge of Evolution*

“Evangelicals are experiencing unprecedented pressure to make peace with the Darwinian theory of evolution, and increasing numbers are waving the white flag. The tragic irony is that evolutionary theory is more beleaguered than ever in the face of multiplying scientific challenges and growing dissent. Until now there has been no consolidated scholarly response to theistic evolution that combines scientific, philosophical, and theological critiques. I was excited to hear about this ambitious project, but the final book has exceeded my expectations. The editors have assembled an impressive cast of experts and the content is top-notch. Theistic evolutionists, and those swayed by their arguments, owe it to themselves to read and digest this compendium of essays. This book is timely and necessary—quite literally a godsend.” James N. Anderson, Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte; author, *What's Your Worldview?*

“Repeating the error of medieval Christianity, theistic evolution absolutizes the words of finite, fallible humans and relativizes the Word of an infinite, infallible God. As this tremendous and timely collection thoroughly demonstrates, scientific stagnation, circular philosophy, and heterodox theology are the inevitable results. This is simply the best critique of theistic evolution available.” Angus Menuge, Chair of Philosophy, Concordia University Wisconsin; President, Evangelical Philosophical Society; author, *Agents Under Fire: Materialism and the Rationality of Science*; Editor, *Reading God’s World: The Scientific Vocation*

“This significant book persuasively argues that theistic evolution fails as a theory— scientifically, philosophically, and biblically. And with its broad-ranging collection of essays, it mounts a very impressive case. Strongly recommended, both for those who seek to defend Christianity intelligently and for those who find Christianity implausible because of the claims of neo-Darwinism.” Michael Reeves, President and Professor of Theology, Union School of Theology

“The theistic evolution solution to the creation-evolution controversy herein encounters a substantial, sustained, and trenchant critique. The team of scientific, philosophical, and theological scholars assembled by the editors have joined to confront the venerable theory with a stinging challenge that its adherents will have to answer if they value their scholarly integrity. This is necessary reading for those who wrestle with the great questions surrounding the origins of life.” Peter A. Lillback, President, Westminster Theological Seminary

“The theory of theistic evolution is certainly not new. But as a vigorous antagonist to evangelical Christianity, it has leaped to new life on the cultural stage. Most Christians have the sense to reject the evolutionary model of Darwin with its pronounced atheism, but they are sometimes intrigued by the possibility of theistic evolution. In this book, evangelical believers are treated to a serious assessment of the claims of theistic evolution at the hands of some of the greatest thinkers God has ever given to the church. These assessments are thorough, exciting, and support the biblical creation story in unique and new ways. If you intend

to read only one volume to bring you up to date on cultural challenges to Christianity, this book is the one you need to read.” Paige Patterson, President, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This landmark achievement contains an amazing collection of chapters by a powerful group of fully qualified experts in molecular biology, mathematics, philosophy, and theology. The chapters are clear, detailed in addressing all aspects of theistic evolution, and of a tone in keeping with 1 Peter 3:15: ‘with gentleness and respect.’ I consider this a must-have book for any Christian who wants to be able to give compelling answers to others who believe in theistic evolution.” Richard A. Carhart, Professor Emeritus of Physics, University of Illinois at Chicago

“This book offers a much-needed, comprehensive critique of evolutionary creationism (theistic evolution), covering its scientific, philosophical, theological, and biblical deficiencies. It devotes much space in particular to the scientific side. This focus is needed because of the common, unwarranted assumption that Darwinism is doing

well as measured by scientific evidence. Several articles, from different angles, show how much Darwinism depends on seeing all biological evidence through the lens of a prior commitment to faith in the philosophy of naturalism—particularly the ungrounded assumption that unguided natural forces must suffice as a complete account of origins.” Vern S. Poythress, Professor of New Testament Interpretation, Westminster Theological Seminary

“‘In wisdom you have made them all,’ says the psalmist of God’s activities in nature (Ps. 104:24). But believers today, often blinded by modern science, fail to see that divine wisdom. This valuable volume challenges the assumptions of much scientific endeavor and proposes a fresh paradigm that is open to God’s involvement in nature. It deserves a wide and thoughtful readership.” Gordon Wenham, Emeritus Professor of Old Testament, University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

“Few scholars even marginally knowledgeable regarding the nature of this debate could read objectively the lineup of scholars in this volume and not be impressed. Beyond the scholars’ academic credentials, the topics covered are both sophisticated and timely. For this reviewer, the experience caused me to respond time and again: ‘I want to start right there . . . or maybe there . . . wow—have to read that one first . . .’ The topic is not always an easy target, but after almost one thousand pages of critique across interdisciplinary lines, I do not think that it could be bettered. Kudos! Highly recommended.” Gary R. Habermas, Distinguished Research Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy, Liberty University

“As the debate over the origins of the universe, earth, and humans continues, and Christians grapple to understand the relationship between science and Scripture, evolution and creation, the voices in this book need to be heard. Scientific data need not be in opposition to what the Bible teaches about God and his world. The big questions about life are simply beyond the reach of ‘objective’ analysis. This volume critiques theologically and philosophically the flaws

of positions that marginalize God from the process.” James Hoffmeier, Professor of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern History and Archaeology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

“Theistic Evolution is a carefully crafted, academically sophisticated interdisciplinary challenge to the attempt to wed Christian theism to any version of the Darwinian project. I am awed by its scope and by the magnificent success of its intentions. Whether your interest is in the scientific deficiencies, the philosophical failings, or the theological dangers of Darwinism hitched to theism, look no further than this thorough analysis. Theistic Evolution is simply the most comprehensive and convincing critique of the topic I’ve ever read—a singular resource for careful thinkers—replacing a dozen books on my shelf.” Gregory Koukl, President, Stand to Reason; author, *Tactics* and *The Story of Reality*

“An increasing number of evangelicals are advocating theistic evolution as the best explanation of human origins, thereby denying the special creation of a historical Adam. Without taking any specific view as to the age to the earth, this important new book demonstrates that theistic evolution fails to take proper account of Genesis 1–3 as a historical narrative. Leading scholars from a variety of academic disciplines argue that theistic evolution is exegetically ill-founded, theologically damaging, scientifically implausible, and philosophically unjustifiable. Written with an irenic tone toward those it critiques, this book will help guard against false teaching in the church that undermines the gospel and will also provide apologetic help for confident evangelism in a secular world.” John Stevens, National Director, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, United Kingdom



“With the ‘death of God’ and the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ having captured the academy decades ago, the apologetic discussion moved decisively to the nature and origin of human beings. With this volume, the editors and contributors to *Theistic Evolution* have given us an important and much-needed resource for the conversation currently taking place within evangelicalism. Comprehensive in its breadth, specific in its critique, and confidently nuanced in its tone, each chapter contributes to a thorough rebuttal of the idea that theistic evolution is compatible with either historic Christian faith, sound reasoning, or rigorous science. But while written by specialists, *Theistic Evolution* is remarkably approachable to the average reader. I highly recommend this volume to students, pastors, educators, and anyone else who cares deeply about the discussion of human origins. This is a major contribution to one of the most important debates of our time.” Michael Lawrence, Senior Pastor, Hinson Baptist Church, Portland, Oregon; author, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*

“This volume is the most comprehensive study on the relation between evolution and Christian faith I have discovered so far. While opening up fascinating firsthand insights into cutting-edge scientific results, at the same time the book treats the reader to a bird’s-eye view, asking the fundamental philosophical and theological questions and delving into the underlying worldview assumptions. It provides a very substantial contribution to the ever-ongoing dispute between naturalism and Christian faith in the areas of philosophy, theology, and the sciences.” Alexander Fink, Director, Institute for Faith and Sciences, Marburg, Germany

“Essentially, theistic evolution says Charles Darwin and Richard Dawkins got the science right, but that God is still somehow involved. Putting this view into the crosshairs, this book argues convincingly that the science of evolution is in fact wrong, and that any theistic gloss one puts on it is thus doubly wrong.” William A. Dembski, Former Senior Fellow, Discovery Institute; author, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology*; *The Design Revolution*; and *Intelligent Design Uncensored*

“Theistic Evolution is a major contribution to the very lively debate of exactly how to understand the ‘data’ from God’s revelation of himself in his Word with the ‘data’ from his revelation of himself in his world. Previous contributions to this debate have generally focused on the data from either science or Scripture. Theistic Evolution benefits from its comprehensive analysis from theologians, philosophers, and scientists in the same book. Whatever are your current views, Theistic Evolution will provide analysis from some of the most prominent critics in this conversation that should be helpful to people on both sides of this debate.” Walter Bradley, Former Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Baylor University

“The question of origins rarely fails to attract interest, not least because it is overloaded with worldview implications. For too long the increasingly shaky modern ‘Darwinian’ synthesis has been accommodated into theological thinking. This remarkable book exposes how scientifically and philosophically preposterous the notion of theistic evolution really is. An authoritative and vital contribution to the topic!”

David J. Galloway, President, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow; Honorary Professor, College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, University of Glasgow

*Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* (Crossway, 2017, 1008 pages)

[We received an electronic review copy from Crossway]

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