

Overall, the picture that emerges from Wilson's work is of a determined man of integrity, who was able to maintain a missions policy in the face of immense political and sociological and theological challenges. To all those wanting to know more about Pentecostal missiology this is a useful addition to be read alongside David Martin's 'Tongues of Fire', Douglas Peterson's 'Not by Might Nor by Power' and Harvey Cox's 'Fire from Heaven'.

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**Testing Darwinism:
An Easy to Understand Guide**
P. E. Johnson

Leicester: IVP, 1997, 131 pp., £6.99, pb,
ISBN 0-85111-198-X

RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre part de l'idée fondamentale que le naturalisme scientifique est la cause première de l'athéisme contemporain. Johnson se donne donc pour but d'établir une nouvelle vision du monde dans laquelle la théorie évolutionniste athée est remplacée par un modèle qui suppose un dessein intelligent. L'auteur plaide pour ce qu'il appelle une approche du «coin»: il cherche à enfoncer un coin entre la pensée évolutionniste courante et toute observation scientifique qui apparaît comme contraire au paradigme darwiniste.

La logique de Johnson est fallacieuse, car la science n'est pas nécessairement athée et le lien entre l'athéisme moderne et le naturalisme scientifique est bien moins direct qu'il ne le suppose. Les observations scientifiques qui vont en sens contraire de la théorie darwiniste doivent être considérées avec soin. Johnson traite la paléontologie d'une manière plutôt cavalière, alors qu'il accorde le plus grand respect à la biologie moléculaire. Son approche relève d'une compréhension inadéquate de la méthode scientifique.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die dem Band zugrundeliegende Voraussetzung ist, dass der zeitgenössische Atheismus auf den modernen wissenschaftlichen Naturalismus zurückzuführen sei. Phillip Johnsons ambitioniertes Vorhaben besteht nun darin, ein neues Weltbild zu etablieren, in dem die atheistische Entwicklungstheorie von einem Modell ersetzt wird, das mit einem auf eine Intelligenz

zurückgehenden Plan rechnet. Der Autor ist darum bemüht, einen Keil zwischen das gegenwärtige evolutionistische Denken und die dem darwinistischen Paradigma zu widersprechen scheinenden wissenschaftlichen Beobachtungen zu treiben. In der vorliegenden Rezension wird jedoch darauf hingewiesen, dass eine solche Logik fragwürdig ist, da Wissenschaft an sich nicht atheistisch ist und zudem die Verbindung zwischen dem modernen Atheismus und dem wissenschaftlichen Naturalismus als viel geringer zu bewerten ist, als der Autor annimmt. Auf wissenschaftlicher Arbeit beruhende Evidenz, die dem darwinistischen Ansatz widerspricht, gilt es, mit großer Sorgfalt zu untersuchen. Der Autor des vorliegenden Buches behandelt aber z.B. die Paläontologie auf recht nachlässige Art und Weise, während er der Molekularbiologie großen Respekt zollt. Der gesamte Ansatz verrät ein unzulängliches Verständnis wissenschaftlicher Methodik.

Is there anything left to say on the subject of the evolution versus faith debate? Phillip Johnson obviously believes that there is. Author of two technical books on this subject his latest volume is written for a wider audience—teenagers at high-school and at the start of their university courses and for pastors, teachers, parents and youth-workers, those who have to deal with the questioning minds of the young adult.

This a bold book, for unlike many previous Christian books on the subject of evolution, the author goes for the big picture. There is little here of the traditional approach in which a blow by blow account seeks to demolish a traditional scientific argument. Instead Phillip Johnson takes on the entire atheistic scientific establishment. His prize is the naturalistic philosophy which underpins the entire edifice of western science. His goal is to establish a new world-view, for, he argues, the debate over evolution is better seen within the conflict between a naturalistic world-view and a Christian supernaturalistic world-view.

Testing Darwinism: an easy to understand guide is also published in the United States under the title *Defeating Darwinism—by opening minds*. An explicit aim of the book is 'to give a good high-school education in how to think about evolution'. This is emphasised in the book's frontispiece which states that 'in some ways this book has less to do with Darwinism than with how to think'. A laudable aim, which is well developed in two of the early chapters of the book. Slightly less guarded is the brief descriptor of the book on Phillip Johnson's

web pages which state that the aim of the book is to 'explain the tricks of logic and loaded definitions which Darwinists use to protect their theory from critical examination and exposes the materialist philosophy that lies concealed underneath the so-called "fact" of evolution'.

In the second chapter of the book Phillip Johnson describes at some length the play *Inherit the Wind*—the dramatic retelling of the 1925 Scopes Trial in Tennessee, in which a school teacher was prosecuted for teaching the theory of evolution. This is an unusual angle on the evolution versus Christianity debate which draws uniquely upon the author's north American roots and his academic legal background—for the author is a criminal law specialist at the University of California, Berkeley. Phillip Johnson uses the play *Inherit the Wind* to illustrate the way in which the media and the scientific establishment have closed ranks against any view other than Darwinism. This no doubt reflects the author's difficulty in putting into the press or the scientific literature any view which is contrary to evolutionary orthodoxy.

The reader quickly becomes aware that this book is deeply critical of much contemporary scientific writing about the theory of evolution. What then does the author seek to put in its place? Firstly, Phillip Johnson develops an argument for intelligent design. This draws on evidence from cell biology which appears to show that the assumptions of Darwinian natural selection do not work at the molecular level. On the basis of this observation he develops his main point, a strategy called 'the wedge'. Rather than seeking to find a reconciliation between evolution and faith, Phillip Johnson argues that we should seek to drive a wedge between scientific observations and the atheistic philosophy of scientific naturalism. Thus observations that have no obvious explanation within the current Darwinian paradigm should be highlighted as evidence for an alternative view, that of intelligent design.

In the opinion of this reviewer Phillip Johnson's book is deeply flawed, and whilst there is much here that is true and with which I agree, there are many arguments and assumptions which are wrong.

In his attack on the contemporary scientific atheistic mindset, the focus of much of Phillip Johnson's criticism is on the writings of the Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins. Few Christians would disagree with this criticism, for Dawkins has set himself up as a spokesman for atheistic scientific materialism. It is important to remember however that not all scientists

would identify with the logical necessity of Dawkins' atheistic position—this reviewer for one. Crucial here is the issue of scientific humility. Johnson quotes with approval the physicist Richard Feynmann who said that 'scientists need... an extra type of integrity... bending over backwards to show how you're maybe wrong'. It is true that many scientists go beyond the limits of their discipline and make 'grand pronouncements' on issues which are far beyond their remit. Richard Dawkins is a good example. But isn't this saying more about scientists than science itself?

What then, is the connection between contemporary atheism and modern science? For Phillip Johnson 'science starts with the basic assumption that God is out of the picture' and from this scientific root atheism has spread into all realms of modern thought. Whilst I accept that all of modern thought is pervaded by atheistic assumptions I remain unconvinced that scientific naturalism is the only cause. Furthermore, I reject a definition of science which regards science as inherently atheistic. It is well known that western science grew out of the Christian belief that the natural world was ordered and amenable to investigation. I would argue that the logical connection between scientific thought and atheism is much less direct than Phillip Johnson would permit. In fact it may have as much to do with the failures of modern Christendom as with the achievements of science. Two examples will suffice. Firstly it is important to recall that a scientist is trained to doubt, trained to question the accepted authority. Could it be that the failure of contemporary Christianity to answer the penetrating questions has had a bearing on the rise of scientific atheism? Secondly, for scientists, the apparent logical consequence of many of their investigations is awesome—mankind is alone in this vast, purposeless universe. Could it be that the failure of the modern church to proclaim a good news which extends beyond the limits of the scientific method has a bearing on contemporary atheism.

The argument I am seeking to develop here is that Phillip Johnson's criticisms of contemporary atheistic scientific naturalism are misdirected. Instead of seeking to bring down the scientific establishment by discrediting the theory of evolution it would be better to concentrate the energy on discrediting the atheism. If we disentangle the science from the atheism then the 'wedge' approach is unnecessary and a mutual appreciation of the limitations of the scientific and religious ways of

knowing is possible. This approach allows the possibility for the complementarity of science and faith.

The approach adopted in this book betrays a misunderstanding of the scientific methodology. It is true that some scientists are so wedded to their views that their science has become for them a 'faith commitment'. These are the scientists who have lost their scientific humility and have overstepped the mark. The scientific method, however, does allow for scientific ideas to change. At its best a scientific theory is a working model—a model which is currently the best explanation of the data. As new data come along the theory has to be refined to accommodate them. If the theory begins to break down under the weight of contrary evidence then it must be replaced by a theory which can explain both old and new data—a painful process for all scientists whose careers were embedded in the redundant paradigm.

It is because of this misunderstanding of the nature of scientific thinking that I find the argument for design presented in this book so unconvincing. If, as is stated by Johnson, there is a body of evidence which cannot be explained by the current Darwinian paradigm, then this is a scientific problem. To the scientist, the inadequate model needs to be replaced by a better model, a model which is more able to explain all the data. Data which do not fit an accepted theory do not automatically require a philosophical revolution and a new world view. To argue that such a model will never be found is a presumptuous statement of faith. Furthermore, statements such as 'The scientific evidence is strongly *against* the blind watchmaker thesis' (i.e. atheistic evolution, p. 21) and 'Darwinism is sustained not by an impartial interpretation of the evidence but a dogmatic adherence to a philosophy, even in the teeth of evidence' (p. 83), I believe to be untrue. Of the evidence discussed from my own scientific discipline, the Earth Sciences, I am deeply dissatisfied. In two places the author plays down the palaeontological evidence for evolution. This in my view is dangerously naive. There are two certainties in this area of science. One is the great age of the earth—4.55 billion years—an observation which has been verified from a number of independent methods of radioactive dating. The second certainty is that there is a palaeontological record; this record which when taken to include geochemical signatures for photosynthesis can be traced back in time for 3.8 billion years. Over this huge sweep of time there is a progressive in-

crease in biological complexity. That this complexity did not increase in a linear manner says something about the mechanisms of evolution, rather than to nullify the process. Furthermore, to pour scorn on the absence of evidence from single celled organisms (p. 95) is to display an ignorance of the nature of the fossilisation process.

A further element of the argument for design is embodied in statements such as 'a God who acted openly and left his fingerprints all over the evidence' (p. 23). Surely, this is a re-run of the classical argument from design, many centuries old but illustrated with modern scientific examples. Personally, I find this argument unpersuasive. As a Christian believer I can see the evidence, but I cannot expect my agnostic or atheistic colleague to be convinced.

Taken as a whole the most significant weakness of this book is that it seeks to destroy the theory of evolution without replacing it with an adequate alternative. The author seems to want to replace the theory of evolution with a model of 'intelligent design'. If this is the case then he must articulate his alternative much more clearly. Much of the art of modern science is in communicating the results of a scientific investigation. So here. If the author wants to convince the scientific world that their current paradigm is wrong, then he must seek not only to present an alternative, but he must demonstrate how this better paradigm explains our observations of life on earth and life in the past more successfully than the currently accepted scientific view. If he can do this then he will have achieved his goal. In my view he has not yet done this successfully and for this reason I shall not be recommending this book to my high-school children.

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Streams of Renewal **P. Hocken**

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RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur étudie les divers courants qui ont alimenté les débuts du renouveau charismatique dans les Îles britanniques au milieu des années soixante et au début des années soixante-dix. Il