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Darwin, God, & Design - Evolution & the Battle for America's Soul

Evidence supporting the theory of evolution is pervasive in all fields of biology, and enables us to place the origin of our species in its proper scientific context. Nonetheless, evolution itself remains controversial, and is widely seen as embracing a philosophical worldview that many Americans find objectionable. As a result, political forces continue to pressure public officials to endorse alternatives to evolution, including “creation science” and “intelligent design.” By first creating doubts about the adequacy of evolution to account for the complexity of life, these movements have invoked the values of “fairness” and “openness” to argue for inclusion in classroom and curriculum. In this way, they have attempted to lay claim to the very principles of critical analysis and open discussion that are at the heart of the scientific enterprise, leaving many researchers in doubt as to how to respond to these challenges.

I will examine the scientific claims of the ID movement, and show how they can be countered effectively in the public arena. Specific case studies, including the bacterial flagellum and the blood-clotting cascade, show how scientists can play a leading role in deconstructing the arguments advanced in favor of ID. The key to this strategy is remarkably simple. It is for researchers to take the claims made by ID proponents seriously, and follow them to their logical scientific conclusions.

I will also address the philosophical aspects of evolution that seem to provoke such responses, and will suggest that the science of Darwinian evolution can be understood in a way that should lead to a reduction in the conflicts between science and religion in society.