

**BOOK REVIEW**  
of  
Cornelius G. Hunter,  
*Darwin's God: Evolution and the Problem of Evil*,  
Brazos Press, 2001.

This book is in the Evangel Library,  
and this review is presented by Larry D. Paarmann.

Ideas have consequences. This book is about evolutionary ideas and theological ideas, and how they are related. But first, a little background material.

Cornelius Hunter was senior vice president of Seagull Technology, Inc., a high-tech firm in Silicon Valley. He is currently, at least at the time of the writing of this book, a Ph.D. student in biophysics at the University of Illinois. One wonders how he found the time to write this book, but with it joins the ranks of a growing number of scholars who find Darwinian evolution without much, if any, scientific merit, and based more on aberrant philosophy and theology than on science. Phillip Johnson approvingly quotes Hunter in his observation that “at its core, evolution is about God, not science.” Michael Behe notes that in “lucid and engaging prose, Hunter shines a light on Darwinian theology, making plain what is too often obscured by technical jargon.” And William Dembski says that “Hunter unmasks [the] theological mode of argumentation and argues convincingly that it is not merely incidental but indeed essential to how Darwinists justify evolution.”

But not all Hunter says is reassuring. It is also his contention that the theology of Darwin's England, that Darwin absorbed in his youth, played an important part in motivating Darwin to develop his theory of evolution. In a sense, wrong theology resulted in wrong science. One thing comes through very clearly in this book: the notion that evolution is science, and therefore is appropriate for study in public school classrooms, but religion is not, seems strangely out of touch and even ignorant. Hunter claims that evolution cannot be properly understood without taking into consideration philosophy and theology, and he is not just referring to Darwin. He demonstrates that the same can be said for Darwin's followers, right down to the present day.

This book is a refreshing look at an old controversy, and gives the distinct sense while reading it that this is not just a rehash of old ideas, but something significantly new. In a strange way, I am much more sympathetic towards Darwin himself after having read this book. He was, as Hunter presents him, a very sensitive man, who agonized over evil in the physical world and how he could possibly reconcile that evil with his concept of God. Unfortunately Darwin's concept of God was formed by the then prevailing idealistic theology of the Church that everything was perfect, having been created by an all-powerful and benevolent God. This idealism was possibly influenced in part by the power and influence of the British Empire, upon which the sun never set. The corrupt nature of man, and the Biblical teachings of how this adversely affected the natural world itself, was not in vogue. Darwin thought he saw things in the natural world that God just would not have done that way. Evolution puts distance between God and the physical world, and in Darwin's mind could then insulate God from evil. Darwin's notions as to the nature of God were no more Biblical, however, than were those of the Gnostics.

Hunter, throughout the book, considers various evidence that has been put forward in favor of evolution by Darwinists. He considers comparative anatomy, vestigial organs, molecular comparisons, embryology, DNA, adaptation, the fossil record, etc. However, Hunter thinks that negative theology was not just something that Darwin considered, but rather that it was the primary argument against creation, and that it still is today: “God would not have done it that way.” For example, Hunter quotes Steven Jay Gould: “If God had designed a beautiful machine to reflect his wisdom and power, surely he would not have used a collection of parts generally fashioned for other purposes. . . . Odd arrangements and funny solutions are the proof of evolution - paths that a sensible God would never tread but that a natural process, constrained by history, follows perforce.”

Unfortunately, many in the Christian community have bought into evolutionary naturalism, or at least allowed it to have undue influence. But not all. Hunter refers to Charles Hodges' *What is Darwinism?*, where Hodge considers Darwinism nothing less than atheism. And, of course, many more recent writers would agree.

Hunter concludes at the end of the book that the “only possible conclusion is that evolution should not be taught in science classes, for Darwin's theory goes far beyond ‘scientific observation, interpretation, and experimentation.’ It includes religious presuppositions outside of science. . . . Ultimately, evolution is about God.”