

BOOK REVIEW
of
Phillip E. Johnson,
The Wedge of Truth: Splitting the Foundations of Naturalism,
InterVarsity Press, 2000.

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

Phillip E. Johnson is a graduate of Harvard and the University of Chicago. He was a law clerk for Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court and has taught law for thirty years at the University of California at Berkeley. Johnson was an agnostic for much of his life, and was not called to faith in Christ until after he was a law professor at Berkeley. In recent years he has been speaking and writing against the prevailing naturalism in our society. He has spoken on many college campuses, including Princeton and Stanford. His writings include *Darwin on Trial*, 1991 (2nd edition, 1993), *Reason in the Balance*, 1995, and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, 1997. This book, *The Wedge of Truth*, although not stated as such, is a sequel to *Reason in the Balance*. If you have read *Reason* and liked it, you will like this one as well. If you haven't read *Reason*, you may want to consider reading it before reading *The Wedge of Truth*.

There are a number of scientists who are now openly challenging Darwinian evolution on scientific grounds. Some of these are molecular biologists, who, if anyone, should be able to see convincing evidence for evolution in their research, but do not. These include Jonathan Wells (*Icons of Evolution*, 2000), Michael Denton (*Nature's Destiny*, 1998), and Michael Behe (*Darwin's Black Box*, 1996). These men, as well as others, by presenting scientific evidence that is contrary to the prevailing evolutionary beliefs of many in scientific communities, are thereby bringing long-neglected questions to the surface and introducing them into public debate. They are driving a *wedge* between impartial, objective and unprejudiced weighing of evidence, and accepted beliefs of the scientific world. Phillip Johnson is not a scientist, but as a lawyer, he is trained in critical thinking and in the weighing of evidence. He views himself, by speaking at universities, engaging in public debates, and writing, all the while concentrating on the prevailing naturalism in our society, as at the cutting edge of the *wedge*, separating the crack between objective science and naturalistic philosophy, while scientists, such as those mentioned above, widen the crack with their mounting evidence against evolution. This is truly an exciting time, and it does appear that Phillip Johnson is leading the charge with the *Wedge of Truth*.

Of perhaps special interest to those in Kansas, is chapter 3, *The Kansas Controversy*. We should perhaps make special note that Phillip Johnson, with his undergraduate degree from Harvard, his law degree from the University of Chicago, and currently being a law professor at the University of California at Berkeley (not that these credentials mean a great deal in themselves), he is not a wild-eyed fanatic bent on destroying the quality of science education in the State of Kansas and making Kansas the "laughing stock of the nation." This, in itself, is a good exercise in critical thinking in light of the fact that at least some of the Presidents of the Regents Universities in Kansas, as well as others, made public statements condemning the adopted science standards for public education in Kansas. Phillip Johnson says, on pages 69 and 70, "the widespread reports about the decision ... were incorrect in stating that the board had virtually eliminated evolution and natural selection from the curriculum. On the contrary, the board greatly improved the intellectual content of the standards on these subjects".

Johnson is particularly hard on theologians who have compromised by, at least in part, accepting naturalism into their thinking. He says, "If theologians are unwilling or unable to challenge the materialist definition of 'knowledge' implicit in evolutionary science, then they deserve no more cognitive status than Gould and Dawkins are willing to give them."

Much farther in the book, Johnson says, "the true test of the Darwinian theory will come when we are finally able to force a public debate on even terms. I have no doubt as to what the outcome of that debate will be. Despite their immense cultural power, the Darwinists cannot prevail unless they can control the rules of reasoning ... If God has not spoken, then we have no alternative to despair. If God has spoken, then we need to build on that foundation rather than try to fit what God has done into some framework that comes from human philosophy." To that, we should all give a hearty *Amen!*