

CAUSES OF UNBELIEF [PART I]

Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

Most rational, reasonable people would agree that actions have consequences. If a man commits a crime, is pursued and apprehended by law enforcement officers, tried by a jury of his peers, and sentenced to life in the penitentiary or death in the electric chair, who is responsible? When an individual decides to act, is it not true that ultimately the consequences of those actions fall squarely on his or her shoulders? Indeed, actions **do** have consequences.

But so do beliefs and ideas. Is that not one reason why the spoken word is so powerful. The ability to elucidate an idea via a speech, lecture, or other oral presentation can produce astonishing consequences. Think, for example, of the late president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, who inspired Americans with his “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” inaugural speech. On the heels of his idea—presented so eloquently by a dashing, young, newly elected, and extremely popular president—volunteerism in American grew at an unprecedented rate. Or, reflect upon another presentation in our nation’s capital by the late, slain civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. The moving oratory in his “I have a dream” speech captured the attention of an entire nation, and culminated in legislation aimed at protecting the rights of **all** citizens, regardless of their ethnic background, skin color, or religious beliefs.

Beliefs and ideas presented via the written word are no less powerful. Ponder such documents as the hallowed United States *Constitution* that serves as the basis for the freedoms every citizen enjoys. Or contemplate the beloved *Declaration of Independence* that guarantees every American certain “unalienable rights.” Throughout the history of mankind, the written word has expressed ideas that manifested the ability to free men and women (e.g., the English *Magna Carta*) or enslave them (e.g., Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*).

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Indeed, beliefs and ideas—like actions—have consequences. Prominent humanist, Martin Gardner, devoted an entire chapter in one of his books to “The Relevance of Belief Systems,” in an attempt to explain that **what a person believes** profoundly influences **how a person acts** (1988, pp. 57-64). In his book, *Does It Matter What I Believe?*, Millard J. Erickson, wrote that there are numerous reasons

...why having correct beliefs is important. Our whole lives are inevitably affected by the real world around us, so what we believe about it is of the utmost importance.... What we believe about reality does not change the truth, nor its effect upon us. Correct belief, however, enables us to know the truth as it is, and then to take appropriate action, so that it

will have the best possible effect upon our lives. Having correct beliefs is also necessary because of the large amount and variety of incorrect beliefs which are about (1992, pp. 12,13).

Consider then, in this context, belief in the existence of God. Surely it is safe to say that practically no single belief in the thousands of years of recorded human history has produced as many, or as varied a set of, consequences as this one idea. It has been studied and debated from time immemorial. It has been responsible for some of the most impassioned speeches of which the human spirit is capable. It has engendered multiplied millions of pages of text upon which billions of words—both pro and con—have been written. And, ultimately, it has produced as a consequence either belief or unbelief—both of which have serious implications. Erickson was correct when he suggested that “having correct beliefs is important.” In past issues of *Reason and Revelation*, we have examined reasons for **belief** in the God of the Bible (e.g., Thompson and Jackson, 1982; Thompson, 1995a, 1995b; Jackson, 1995). I now would like to examine causes of **unbelief**.

Bias Against God

There is little doubt that in many instances of unbelief nonrational factors are a primary influence. H.H. Farmer put it like this: “There can be no question that many people find belief in God difficult because

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Editor:
Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

Associate Editor:
Trevor Major, M.Sc., M.A.

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Mailing Address:
Apologetics Press, Inc.
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General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:
Phone: (334) 272-8558
Fax: (334) 270-2002
E-mail: mail@ApologeticsPress.org

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there is in their mind a bias which predisposes them against it" (1942, p. 129). This built-in bias is what Stanley Sayers has referred to as "the prejudice of unbelief." Writing under that title in his book, *Optimism in an Age of Peril*, he said: "One of the significant and obvious reasons the unbeliever remains an unbeliever is that **he likes it that way**. In fact, any evidence of any source or to any degree fails to move him from his position if his heart is strongly bent **against** evidence and **toward** unbelief" (1973, p. 43, emp. in orig.).

Consider the well-documented case of Charles Darwin. James Bales wrote concerning the now-famous popularizer of organic evolution: "For some reason or another, Darwin was determined not to believe in God. Although he admitted more than once that it is reasonable to believe in God, and unreasonable to reject God, yet so determined was he not to believe that he slew reason when reason led him to God" (1976, p. 17). Bales' assessment is correct, as is evident from Darwin's own comments. He wrote, for example:

This follows from the extreme difficulty or rather impossibility of conceiving this immense and wonderful universe, including man with his capacity for looking far backwards and far into futurity, as the result of blind chance or necessity. When thus reflecting I feel compelled to look to a First Cause having an intelligent mind in some degree analogous to that of man; and I deserve to be called a Theist. This conclusion was strong in my mind about the time, as far as I can remember, when I wrote the *Origin of Species*; and it is since that time that it has very gradually, with many fluctuations, become weaker. But then arises the doubt, can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions? (as quoted in Francis Darwin, 1898, 1:282).

Apparently, a singular event in Darwin's life set him irreversibly on the road to unbelief. In 1850, Charles and Emma Darwin's oldest daughter, Annie, fell ill. On April 23, 1851, she died at the tender age of ten. Darwin was devastated. Although Emma was a devout believer in God and

Christianity, with Annie's death her husband no longer could stomach such concepts. In their massive, scholarly biography, *Darwin*, Desmond and Moore wrote:

This was the end of the road, the crucifixion of his hopes. He could not believe the way Emma believed—nor **what** she believed. There was no straw to clutch, no promised resurrection. Christian faith was futile.... For him the death marked an impasse and a new beginning. It put an end to three years' deliberation about the Christian meaning of mortality; it opened up a fresh vision of the tragic contingency of nature.... Annie's cruel death destroyed Charles's tatters of belief in a moral, just universe. Later he would say that this period chimed the final death-knell for his Christianity, even if it had been a long, drawn-out process of decay.... Charles now took his stand as an unbeliever (1991, pp. 384,386,387, emp. in orig.).

In speaking of his now-abandoned belief in the God of the Bible, Darwin eventually admitted: "But I found it more and more difficult, with free scope given to my imagination, to invent evidence which would suffice to convince me. Thus disbelief crept over me at such a slow rate, but at last was complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress" (as quoted in Francis Darwin, 1898, 1:277-278; cf. also Greene, 1963, pp. 16-17). Bales therefore concluded:

Darwin, so far as my research shows, never used doubt as to the reliability of human reason to discredit other positions. He did not say that since Darwinism was the product of his mind, therefore it could not be trusted. It was only when reason led him to God that he destroyed reason. What a strong bias against God he must have had. Is it not strange? Darwin said that the animal origin of man's mind keeps man from being fully able to trust his reasoning, and yet he said that **he fully believed** that man originated that way. Darwin should either have doubted all reasoning, including Darwinism, or have admitted that the human mind is not wholly an untrustworthy instrument. There are other things which could be said about these quotations from Darwin, but our purpose here is to show that he had a powerful bias against God.... [R]eason

led him to God. So he got rid of reason (1976, pp. 17-18, emp. in orig.; cf. also R.E.D. Clark's, *Darwin: Before and After*, 1948, for other aspects of Darwin's flight from God).

Darwin's personal bias against God—brought to fruition when his ten-year-old daughter, Annie, died—ultimately allowed disbelief to root out belief. As Bales went on to observe, a person “cannot be coerced into accepting truth on any subject.... With reference to faith...as with reference to other things, man is still free to choose” (1976, pp. 94,95). Simply put, some people today carry within them a stubborn determination **not** to believe in God. It can have **little** to do with a lack of credible evidence and **much** to do with a built-in bias against belief in God in the first place. In the chapter, “Flight from an Indignant God,” in his book *If There's a God, Why Are There Atheists?*, R.C. Sproul commented on this very point when he wrote:

...unbelief is generated not so much by intellectual causes as by moral and psychological ones... Though people are not persuaded by the evidence, this does not indicate an insufficiency in the evidence, but rather an insufficiency in man. **This insufficiency is not a natural inability that provides man with an excuse.** Man's failure to see this general and universal revelation of God is not because he lacks eyes or ears or a brain with which to think. The problem is not a lack of knowledge or a lack of natural cognitive equipment but a moral deficiency.... The problem is not that there is insufficient evidence to convince rational human beings that there is a God, but that rational human beings have a **natural hostility to the being of God**.... Man's desire is not that the omnipotent, personal Judeo-Christian God **exist**, but that He **not exist** (1978, pp. 57,58, emp. added).

In 1736, in Northampton, Massachusetts, the famed preacher, Jonathan Edwards, presented a sermon titled, “Men are Naturally God's Enemies,” in which he gave a lengthy exposition of Romans 5:10—“For if when we were enemies....” The point of the lesson was that men, by their behavior, have documented in an incontrovertible manner their inner hostility toward God. Edwards said:

They are enemies in the natural relish of their souls. They have an inbred distaste and disrelish of God's perfections. God is not such a sort of being as they would have. Though they are ignorant of God, yet from what they hear of Him, and from what is manifest by the light of nature of God, they do not like Him. By His being endowed with such attributes as He is, they have an aversion to Him. They hear God is an infinitely holy, pure, and righteous Being, and they do not like Him upon

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this account; they have no relish of such kind of qualifications; they take no delight in contemplating them. It would be a mere task, a bondage to a natural man, to be obliged to set himself to contemplate these attributes of God. They see no manner of beauty or loveliness nor taste any sweetness in them. And upon the account of their distaste of these perfections, they dislike all the other of His attributes. They have greater aversion to Him because He is omniscient and knows all things; because His omniscience is a holy omniscience. They are not pleased that He is omnipotent, and can do whatever He pleases; because it is a holy omnipotence. They are enemies even to His mercy, because it is a holy mercy. They do not like His immutability, because by this He never will be otherwise than He is, an infinitely holy God (1879, 4:38).

In his book, *If There's a God, Why Are There Atheists?*, R.C. Sproul included a chapter called “The Never-Ending Bias,” in which he wrote:

The theme [of his book—BT] is that natural man suffers from prejudice. He operates within a framework of insufferable bias against the God of Christianity. The Christian God is utterly repugnant to him because He represents the threat of threats to man's own desires and ambitions. The will of man is on a collision course with the will of God. Such a course leads inevitably to a conflict of interests.... Men would apparently rather die in their sin than live forever in obedience (1978, p. 146).

Paul reminded the Christians in Rome of those who, “knowing God, glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind” (Romans 1:21,28). The problem about which the apostle wrote was not a failure to accept what was **unknowable** (the text in Romans clearly indicates that these were people who could, and did, know of the existence of God). Rather, it was a problem of refusing to accept what was **knowable**—i.e., God's reality. Those to whom Paul referred had such a built-in prejudice against God (what Sproul labeled “the never-ending bias”) that they abjectly **refused** to have God in their knowledge. This situation, then, caused the apostle to write (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) that “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). In biblical usage, the term “fool” generally does not indicate a person of diminished intelligence, and it certainly is not used here in such a fashion. Instead, the term carries both a moral and religious judgment. As Bertram has noted:

With reference to men the use is predominantly psychological. The word implies censure on man himself: his acts, thoughts, counsels, and words are not as they should be. The weakness may be due to a specific failure in judgment or decision, but a general deficiency of intellectual and spiritual capacities may also be asserted (1971, 4:832).

This is why the psalmist (again, by inspiration) wrote that “the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Psalm 14:1). If “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10), then, conversely, foolishness has its origin in the rejection of God. Isaiah referred to a man as a fool whose “mind plots iniquity to practice ungodliness” and whose attitude of practical atheism causes him to “utter error concerning the Lord” (Isaiah 32:5, RSV). When Paul wrote his first epistle to the Christians in Corinth, he observed that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Man’s bias against God thus has become one of the chief causes of unbelief, which no doubt explains why the Hebrew writer warned: “Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an **evil heart of unbelief** in falling away from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).

Parents and Upbringing

In Romans 14:7, Paul stated that “none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself.” The essence of that thought has been perpetuated in the saying that “no man is an island.” How true an observation that is. From the beginning to the end of this pilgrimage we call “life,” we interact socially with those around us. But surely one of the most formidable influences upon any human being comes in the form of parents. Generally speaking, mothers and fathers have not only an initial, but a continuing effect upon their offspring. Children are born with sponge-like minds that begin basically as “blank slates” upon which parents have a grand opportunity (and awesome responsibility) to write. It has been said that a child’s mind is like Jell-O® and that the parents’ task is to put in all the “good stuff” before it “sets.”

Sometimes that task is accomplished by instruction, which is why parents are admonished to teach and nurture their children “in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Sometimes it is accomplished by discipline, which is why the proverbs writer wisely observed that “the rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother” (29:15). And some-

times it is accomplished by exemplary behavior that provides a proper example, which is why the apostle Peter discussed those very things in the context of a family relationship. He spoke of the potential effect a godly wife could have upon her unbelieving husband when he wrote: “In like manner, ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not

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the word, they may without a word be gained by the behavior of their wives, beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear” (1 Peter 3:1-2). What a sobering thought—that one person (e.g., a godly wife), through consistently impressive behavior tempered by a reverent fear of God, could set such a good example that another person (e.g., an unbelieving husband) might be convicted of God’s existence and convinced to obey His will.

But consider the obvious corollary to this principle. If accurate instruction, timely discipline, and a proper example coupled with faithfulness can produce such wonderful results, what results might inaccurate instruction, a lack of discipline, and an improper example coupled with unfaithfulness produce? Does not practical experience answer that question in a thousand different ways? Although at times we wish they did not, the truth of the matter is that more often than not the decisions

we make, and the actions that stem from those decisions, inevitably affect those we love the most. Certainly this is true in a spiritual context. One expert in child psychology put it this way:

I believe that much atheism has the ground prepared for it in the disillusionment with the parent which has arisen in the child. Disbelief in life, skepticism about humanity, the denial of God—all sink their roots in the soil of emotion long before exposure to courses in philosophy and science. Life has scarred such people early and has made them unwilling to believe either in man or in God (Liebman, 1946, pp. 147-148).

Is it not the case that children often are influenced—rightly or wrongly—by the attitudes and actions of their parents? As proof of this point, consider the following real-life situation. One of the foremost atheists of our day is Harvard’s famed paleontologist, Stephen Jay Gould. Dr. Gould is one of the atheism’s fieriest apostles, and an indefatigable crusader on behalf of organic evolution. He is a cogent writer and a gifted speaker, as well as one of the evolutionary establishment’s most prolific and best-read authors. The January 1983 issue of *Discover* magazine designated him “Scientist of the Year,” he often was featured as a special guest on Phil Donahue’s television talk show, and through the past two or three decades his articles have appeared frequently not only in refereed scientific journals (e.g., *Science*, *New Scientist*, *Paleobiology*, etc.), but in popular science magazines as well (*Discover*, *Omni*, *Science Digest*, and others). In addition, he is the co-developer (with Niles Eldredge from the American Museum of Natural History) of the popular concept known as “punctuated equilibrium” that provides a new twist regarding the tempo and mode of evolution. All this being true, when Dr. Gould speaks, many people listen. Gould himself has suggested: “When we come to popular writing about evolution, I suppose that my own essays are as well read as any” (1987, 8[1]:67). One writer described him in these words:

...Stephen Jay Gould is as charming on television and in his popular essays about his atheism as he is about his love of baseball. Gould is almost jolly in his condescending remarks

about religionists, patting such minor minds on the head with avuncular goodwill, as one might humor a foolish relative (Lockerbie, 1998, p. 229).

Interestingly, relatives and atheism share a common connection in Gould's life. In his 1999 book, *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*, Dr. Gould discussed his early years

...in a New York Jewish family following the standard pattern of generational rise: immigrant grandparents who started in the sweatshops, parents who reached the lower ranks of the middle classes but had no advanced schooling, and my third generation, headed for a college education and a professional life to fulfill the postponed destiny (p. 7).

His "New York Jewish family," however, was different than most, as he explained.

I shared the enormous benefits of a respect for learning that pervades Jewish culture, even at the poorest economic levels. But **I had no formal religious education**—I did not even have a bar mitzvah—**because my parents had rebelled** against a previously unquestioned family background. (In my current judgment, they rebelled too far, but opinions on such questions tend to swing on a pendulum from one generation to the next, perhaps eventually coming to rest at a wise center.) But my parents retained pride in Jewish history and heritage, **while abandoning all theology and religious belief**.... I am not a believer (1999, p. 8, emp. added; parenthetical comments are Gould's).

While many no doubt are aware of the fact that Dr. Gould is **not** "a believer," they may not be aware of the fact that he **is** a devout Marxist. Exactly where did Gould de-

velop his Marxism, and the atheism that inevitably accompanies it? Through one of his parents! As Gould himself admitted: "It may also not be irrelevant to our personal preferences that one of us learned his Marxism, literally, at his daddy's knee" (Gould and Eldredge, 1977, 3:145). In an article on "The Darwin Debate" in *Marxism Today*, Robert M. Young wrote that

Aspects of evolutionism are perfectly consistent with Marxism. The explanation of the origins of humankind and of mind by purely natural forces was, and remains, as welcome to Marxists as to any other secularists. The sources of value and responsibility are not to be found in a separate mental realm or in an immortal soul, much less in the inspired words of the Bible (1982, 26:21).

Indeed, it may "not be irrelevant" that as a youngster Stephen Jay Gould was reared in a family who "abandoned all theology and religious belief," enthusiastically embraced Marxism in their place, and subsequently immersed him in the godless, dialectical materialism of that doctrine—thereby producing one of the foremost evolutionists of our generation.

If children witness callous indifference, skepticism, or outright infidelity on the part of their parents in regard to spiritual matters, more often than not those children will exhibit the same callousness, skepticism, or infidelity in their own lives. And is it not also extremely likely that **their** future children will be reared in the same atmosphere? (Ask yourself—what do you think Dr. Gould's own son is being taught by his father, and probably will grow up believing?) Thus, in the end, the spiritual condition of not one, but several generations has been affected adversely as

a direct result of the instruction/example of parents and the subsequent upbringing received at their hands.

Education

Surely one of the most important causes of unbelief in the world today relates to the kind of education a person receives. [Please notice that I did not say unbelief "relates to the education" a person receives; rather, I said unbelief "relates to the **kind** of education" a person receives. I do not mean to "throw the baby out with the bath water" by suggesting that **all** education results in unbelief, for that most certainly is not the case and is not representative of my position.] Generally speaking, the educational system in America is the end product of John Dewey's "progressive education movement." Renowned humanist philosopher, Will Durant, wrote that "there is hardly a school in America that has not felt his influence" (1961, p. 390). But it was not just American schools that Dewey influenced. In his book, *The Long War Against God*, Henry Morris discussed how the progressive education movement "profoundly changed education not only in America but also in many other countries" as well (1989, p. 38).

Dewey, who was a socialist and materialistic pantheist, was one of the founders (and the first president) of the American Humanist Association, formed in 1933. I have discussed Dewey's atheistic views elsewhere (see Thompson, 1994, 1999). At this juncture, I simply would like to make the point that as a result of Dewey's efforts through the educational establishment, the **kind** of education now being offered in many public schools has the potential to discourage or destroy faith in God, while at the same time encouraging and promoting unbelief. One of the most important tools employed by Dewey and his intellectual offspring to cripple belief was, and is, organic evolution. As Samuel Blumenfeld stated in his classic text, *NEA: Trojan Horse in American Education*:

An absolute faith in science became the driving force behind the progressives.... The most important idea that would influence the educators was that of evolution—the notion that man, through a process of natu-



SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Dr. Bert Thompson

June 26	Wetumpka, AL	(334) 567-6561
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ral selection, had evolved to his present state from a common animal ancestry. Evolution was as sharp a break with the Biblical view of creation as anyone could make, and it was quickly picked up by those anxious to disprove the validity of orthodox religion (1984, p. 43).

Morris correctly assessed the post-Dewey situation when he observed:

The underlying assumption of progressive education was that the child is simply an evolved animal and must be trained as such—not as an individual created in God’s image with tremendous potential as an individual. A child was considered but one member in a group and therefore must be trained collectively to fit into his or her appropriate place in society (1989, p. 48).

The child’s “appropriate place in society”—specifically the humanistic society that Dewey and his cohorts envisioned—neither included nor allowed for belief in the God of the Bible. Thus, every effort was made to use the influence of the educational system to gain new recruits. Alfred Rehwinkel discussed just such a situation.

The shock received by the inexperienced young student is therefore overwhelming when he enters the classroom of such teachers and suddenly discovers to his great bewilderment that these men and women of acclaimed learning do not believe the views taught him in his early childhood days; and since the student sits at their feet day after day, it usually does not require a great deal of time until the foundation of his faith begins to crumble as stone upon stone is being removed from it by these unbelieving teachers. Only too often the results are disastrous. The young Christian becomes disturbed, confused, and bewildered. Social pressure and the weight of authority add to his difficulties. First he begins to doubt the infallibility of the Bible in matters of geology, but he will not stop there. Other difficulties arise, and before long skepticism and unbelief have taken the place of his childhood faith, and the saddest of all tragedies has happened. Once more a pious Christian youth has gained a glittering world of pseudo-learning but has lost his own immortal soul (1951, p. xvii).

The scenario Rehwinkel has described is not theoretical, but practical. Consider as one example the case of renowned Harvard evolutionist, Edward O. Wilson, who is recognized as the “father of sociobiology.” Wilson summarized his own youthful educational experience as follows:

As were many persons in Alabama, I was a born-again Christian. When I was fifteen, I entered the Southern Baptist Church with great fervor and interest in the fundamentalist religion. I left at seventeen when I got to the University of Alabama and heard about evolutionary theory (1982, p. 40).

*Somewhere
in time, the
unbeliever
lost his way.
In his pride, finite
man sought to rid
himself of the
infinite God.*

Chet Raymo serves as yet another example of a person who once cherished his belief in God, but who ultimately lost his faith as a result of the kind of education he received. Raymo is a professor of physics and astronomy at Stonehill College in Massachusetts, has written a weekly column on science for the *Boston Globe* for more than a dozen years and was reared as a Roman Catholic. In his book, *Skeptics and True Believers*, he wrote:

I learned something else in my study of science, something that had an even greater effect upon my religious faith. None of the miracles I had been offered in my religious training were as impressively revealing of God’s power as the facts that I was learning in science (1998, p. 20).

Little wonder, then, that the thesis of Raymo’s book is that there is an unavoidable dichotomy between educated people of science who empirically “know” things and those in religion who spiritually “believe” things—with the educated, scientifically oriented folks obviously being on the more desirable end of the spectrum (and winning out in the end).

There can be little doubt that many today believe in evolution because it is what they have been taught. For the past century, evolution has been in the limelight. And for the past quarter of a century or more, it has been taught as **scientific fact** in many elementary, junior high, and senior high schools, as well as in most colleges and universities. Marshall and Sandra Hall have offered this summary.

In the first place, evolution is what is taught in the schools. At least two, and in some cases three and four generations, have used textbooks that presented it as proven fact. The teachers, who for the most part learned it as truth, pass it on as truth. Students are as thoroughly and surely indoctrinated with the concept of evolution as students have ever been indoctrinated with any unproven belief (1974, p. 10).

In *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*, Bales and Clark confirmed such an observation.

Evolution is taken for granted today and thus it is uncritically accepted by scientists as well as laymen. It is accepted by them today because it was already accepted by others who went before them and under whose direction they obtained their education (1966, p. 106).

Further exacerbating the problem is the fact that evolution has been given the “stamp of approval” by important spokespersons from practically every field of human endeavor. While there have been those from politics, the humanities, the arts, and other fields who openly have defended evolution as factual, in no other area has this defense been as pronounced as in the sciences. Because science has seen so many successes, and because these successes have been so visible and well publicized, scientists have been granted an aura of respectability that only can be envied by non-scientists. As a result, when scientists champion a cause, people take notice.

After all, it is their workings through the scientific method that have eradicated smallpox, put men on the Moon, prevented polio, and lengthened life spans. We have grown used to seeing “experts” from various scientific disciplines ply their trade in an endless stream of amazing feats. Heart surgery has become commonplace; organ transplants have become routine; space shuttles flying to the heavens have become standard fare.

Thus, when the atheistic concept of evolution is presented as something that “all reputable scientists believe,” there are many who accept such a statement at face value, and who fall in line with what they believe is a well-proven dictum that has been enshrouded with the cloak of scientific respectability. As philosopher Paul Ricci has written: “The reliability of evolution not only as a theory but as a principle of understanding is not contested by the vast majority of biologists, geologists, astronomers, and other scientists” (1986, p. 172). Or, as Stephen Jay Gould put it: “The fact of evolution is as well established as anything in science (as secure as the revolution of the earth around the sun), though absolute certainty has no place in our [scientists’—BT] lexicon (1987, 8[1]:64; parenthetical phrase is Gould’s).

Such comments leave the impression that well-informed, intelligent people do not doubt the truthfulness of evolution. The message is: “All scientists believe it; so should you.” Marshall and Sandra Hall have inquired: “How, then, are people with little or no special knowledge of the various sciences and related subjects to challenge the authorities? It is natural to accept what ‘experts’ say, and most people do” (1974, p. 10).

Huston Smith, a leading philosopher and professor of religion at Syracuse University has commented on this phenomenon as follows:

One reason education undoes belief is its teaching of evolution; Darwin’s own drift from orthodoxy to agnosticism was symptomatic. Martin Lings is probably right in saying that “more cases of loss of religious faith are to be traced to the theory of evolution...than to anything else” (1982, p. 755; Lings’ quote is from *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 1970, Winter).

Sir Julian Huxley, the famous United Nations biologist, put it this way: “Darwinism removed the whole idea of God as the creator of organisms from the sphere of rational discussion” (1960, p. 45).

The simple fact is, however, that truth is not determined by popular opinion or majority vote. A thing may be, and often is, true even when accepted only by the minority. Furthermore, a thing may be, and often is, false even though accepted by the majority. Believing something based on the assumption that “everyone else” also believes it often can lead to disastrous results. As Guy N. Woods remarked: “It is dangerous to follow the multitude because the majority is almost always on the wrong side in this world” (1982, 124[1]:2). Or, as Moses warned the children of Israel: “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil” (Exodus 23:2).

[to be continued]

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

A PERSONAL NOTE—ON THE DEATH OF A MOTHER

[Most readers of *Reason & Revelation* know that it is an extremely rare occurrence for us to mention purely personal items in these pages. Our goal is to produce a journal that is as professional as possible in both appearance and content. Generally speaking, therefore, it has been our view that personal matters are best discussed in other venues. With this month's "Note from the Editor," however, I would like to make a temporary departure from that policy—for reasons that I hope will become obvious.]

On April 28, 1999, my mother, Mary Ruth Thompson of Dalhart, Texas, passed away after a stroke. She had battled severe diabetes since she was nineteen. Living alone as she did (my father, Charles A. Thompson, D.V.M, passed away on August 28, 1983), when the stroke occurred she was unable to administer the insulin upon which she was so dependent. By the time friends realized the seriousness of her condition, the effects of the stroke and the out-of-control diabetes were too much for her tired, frail body to overcome.

On Tuesday, May 4, funeral services were held at the building of the church of Christ in Dalhart. My parents had been members of that congregation since 1945, and my sister Cindy and I (both adopted by Charles and Mary Ruth when we were but a few days old) were reared there. Gaylord Cook, the local evangelist and one of mother's dearest friends, presided. She was buried beside my father (a devout, Christian gentleman known to everyone simply as "The Doc") and her husband of forty-one years. She would have been 75 years old in December.

While I admit to being somewhat biased, I think I can say truthfully that everyone who knew her loved, admired, and respected her. When my sister and I went to college, she did likewise—to finish the baccalaureate degree she had put on hold years earlier in order to rear us. After completing her degree, she taught science in Dallam and Hartley counties

for twenty years. It was important to her that each of her students understand the truth about their origin via creation at the hand of Almighty God because she knew that, ultimately, origins and destinies go hand-in-hand. She taught them wisely, and loved them deeply. Hundreds of students came under her beneficent influence and lovingly called her "teacher." But more importantly, they called her "friend."

Upon retiring, she began writing articles for *Discovery*, the monthly paper on Scripture and science for children published by Apologetics Press. She used her knowledge of science and the Bible to teach youngsters about their God, His world, and His Word. As her articles are reprinted in the days yet to come, it shall be said of her that she, "being dead, yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4)—a fitting tribute that she would have relished.

She was a tiny, precious creature with a lovely demeanor and a gentle presence. But underneath the facade of that demure body lay an indomitable Christian spirit and a rock-solid biblical faith—both of which resulted from a life of service to her Lord. She was the most loving of mothers, and the most brilliant of examples. I am where I am today because she shared her faith with me. And I am—in a very literal sense—eternally grateful! Fortunately, she retained an ample portion of that faith for herself. On April 28, it served her well and carried her home. Oh, how I shall miss her. But oh, how I look forward to seeing her again in the beautiful city set four-square "whose Builder and Maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

— Bert Thompson

[I wrote a eulogy about my mother's life and times that was read as a special tribute at her May 4 funeral. If you would like to receive a complimentary copy, feel free to contact my office and I will be happy to send you one.]

