

**ROLL OVER, CHARLES DARWIN  
2-21-10  
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**“TWENTY MINUTES OUT SIDE OF CINCINNATI, JUST OVER THE KENTUCKY BORDER, IS THE FIRST-EVER CREATION MUSEUM. IT WAS PLACED IN THIS LOCATION TO BE AS ACCESSIBLE AND AVAILABLE TO THE GREATEST NUMBER OF AMERICAN PILGRIMS. THIS PAST NOVEMBER WAS THE 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF CHARLES DARWIN’S ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES AND LAST FEBRUARY, 2009 MARKED THE 200<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF DARWIN’S BIRTH – SO EXPLORING THE CREATION MUSEUM MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME TO SEE WHAT THE WORLD LOOKS LIKE WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF SCIENCE. IN SPITE OF THE OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE THE “THEORY OF EVOLUTION” – IF YOU WANT TO GET THROUGH A CLASS, A DINNER, A LONG HAUL FLIGHT IN PEACE, IT’S BEST NOT TO GO THERE. THIS IS ONE ARGUMENT THAT REFUSES, IF I MAY SAY, TO EVOLVE.” TWO INTREPID TRAVELERS DECIDED TO FIND OUT WHAT GOES ON AT THE CREATION MUSEUM - THE AUTHOR OF AN ARTICLE IN THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF VANITY FAIR MAGAZINE AND PAUL BETTANY, THE ACTOR WHO PLAYS CHARLES DARWIN IN THE NEW FILM CREATION. SO OFF THEY WENT TO WHAT THEY DESCRIBE AS “NOWHERESVILLE, KENTUCKY TO VISIT A MODERNISTIC BUILDING LANDSCAPED WITH GARDENS FILLED WITH DINOSAUR TOPIARIES. IT COST 27 MILLION AND WAS COMPLETED IN 2007. IT ANSWERS THE FAMOUS QUESTION ABOUT WHAT GOD COULD HAVE DONE IF HE HAD HAD MONEY. ACCORDING TO OUR VISITORS, THIS IS IT. ODDLY, IT IS A CONSPICUOUSLY AND EMPHATICALLY SECULAR CONSTRUCTION – THERE IS NO RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM. NO CROSSES. NO STAINED GLASS. IT HAS BORROWED THE EMPIRICAL VERNACULAR OF THE ENEMY TO WRAP THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS IN THE FAÇADE OF A LIBERAL ARTS GALLERY OR LIBRARY. THE FIRST THING THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE NOTICED WERE THE SECURITY GUARDS – DESCRIBING THEM AS ABSURDLY OVER-ARMED, OVERDRESSED AND OVERWEIGHT. IT THOUGHT PERHAPS THE MUSEUM WAS CONCERNED THAT ARMED RADICAL ATHEISTS, MADDENED BY THE VOICES OF REASON IN THEIR CONFUSED HEADS, MIGHT STORM IN WAVING THE PERIODIC TABLE SCREAMING, “I THINK, THEREFORE I**

AM.” BUT WHAT HE AND THE ACTOR FOUND AT THE CREATION MUSEUM IS THAT IT REALLY ISN’T A MUSEUM AT ALL. IT’S AN ARGUMENT – AMMUNITION FOR AN ARGUMENT. IT IS THE WORD MADE INTO BULLETS. AN ARMORY OF RIGHTEOUS REVISIONISM. THE WHOLE BUILDING IS DEVOTED TO THE LITERAL VERACITY OF THE FIRST 11 CHAPTERS OF GENESIS: GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN SIX DAYS AND THE WHOLE THING IS NO MORE THE 6,000 YEARS OLD. EVERYTHING CAME AT ONCE, SO TYRANNOSAURUS REX AND NOAH SHARED A CABIN. THIS MUSEUM DOESN’T JUST TAKE ON EVOLUTION – IT SQUARES OFF WITH GEOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, PALEONTOLOGY, HISTORY, CHEMISTRY, ASTRONOMY, ZOOLOGY, BIOLOGY – AND ACCORDING TO OUR AUTHOR – GOOD TASTE. THE MUSEUM STARTS WITH CREATION OF THE WORLD – AND IMMEDIATELY WE HAVE A PROBLEM. YOU GET LIGHT THREE DAYS BEFORE YOU GET THE SUN – AND THEN THERE IS A ROOM THAT HAS ALL THE STUFF GOD MADE ON EACH DAY. WHAT THEY FOUND TRULY INSPIRING IS THE TASK THAT THE MUSEUM SET FOR ITSELF. IT HAD TO RATIONALIZE A STORY WRITTEN 3,000 YEARS AGO, WITHOUT ALLOWING FOR ANY METAPHORIC OR SYMBOLIC WIGGLE ROOM. IT STARTS WITH THE DEFINITIVE ANSWER, AND ALL THE QUESTIONS HAVE TO BE MADE TO FIT UNDER IT. THAT’S TOUGH. SCIENCE HAS IT A WHOLE LOT EASIER. SCIENCE CAN EXPAND AND HYPOTHESIZE AND TINKER. SCIENTISTS HAVE ALL THIS COOL EQUIPMENT AND STUFF. THEY CAN SEE STUFF THAT’S INVISIBLE – THEY’VE STAYED ON AT SCHOOL PAST 14. SCIENCE HAS GIVEN ITSELF MILLIONS OF YEARS, EONS, TO PLAY WITH, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE GOT TO GET THE WHOLE LOT IN, IN LESS THAN 6,000 YEARS, USING JUST A PITCHFORK AND A LOUD VOICE. IN FAIRNESS, THE AUTHOR WANTED TO CUT THE CREATIONISTS A LITTLE SLACK, BECAUSE EVERY NEW BIT OF EVIDENCE, EVERY DISCOVERY, IS A NIGHTMARE FOR THEM. TAKE THE ARK – THE BIG BOAT BUSINESS POSES ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS. BUT, AGAIN, THEY’VE GOT ANSWERS. THERE ARE MODELS AND PLANS AND LAYOUTS OF THE VESSEL. YOU CAN WALK THROUGH A PART OF THE HULL. THERE’S BIBLICAL CARPENTRY AND WEATHER REPORTS. AND THE DINOSAURS ARE ON BOARD (THEY WERE PROBABLY SMALL DINOSAURS, THE MUSEUM HELPFULLY ADS.) BUT JUST RECENTLY SCIENTISTS FOUND A NEW GIANT RAT AND A FANGED FROG IN NEW GUINEA, SO NOW SOME NOAH-ISTS HAVE TO REDESIGN THE AMPHIBIAN DISPLAY. THE RATS PROBABLY SORT THEMSELVES OUT – SOMEHOW. OK,

SO YOU GET EVERYBODY ABOARD, 10 MILLION CREATURES, TIMES TWO. WHERE DID THE WATER COME FROM? YOU HAVE TO FLOOD THE WHOLE WORLD. PRESUMABLY THE WATER CAME FROM UNDER THE GROUND – AND BY THE WAY, THE FLOOD IS WHERE WE GET FOSSILS FROM. WHEN THE WATERS ABATED, THE ANIMALS GOT OFF THE ARK, STRETCHED, AND WALKED AROUND THE WORLD EATING ONE ANOTHER’S CHILDREN. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED. I CAN’T MAKE THIS STUFF UP. THE MUSEUM, ACCORDING TO OUR AUTHOR, REALLY GETS GOOD WHEN ADAM COMES ON LOOKING LIKE THE HISPANIC BASS PLAYER FOR A JANIS JOPLIN BACKUP BAND, WITH A LOT OF HAIR AND A TAN. THERE HE IS ALL ALONE IN EDEN – AND THEN YOU GET EVE, A DEMURE, FOXY LITTLE GIRL WHO COULD BE JULIET IN A GUATEMALAN SCHOOL PLAY. HER LONG HAIR IS METICULOUSLY GLUED TO HER PERT AND PERKY BREASTS. ADAM HAS HIS MANHOOD CONCEALED BEHIND FOLIAGE. THERE IS SOMETHING WINCINGLY SALACIOUS ABOUT THIS BEARDED HIPPIE AND HIS SCHOOLGIRL MATE. AND HE HAS WHAT LOOKS SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE A BELLY BUTTON. THE GARDEN OF EDEN, ACCORDING TO OUR AUTHOR, IS WELL WORTH THE TRIP TO PETERSBURG, KENTUCKY. SEEING AS THIS MUSEUM IS IN THE LITERAL TRUTH BUSINESS, THIS MUST BE THE LITERAL GARDEN OF EDEN. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE – THIS IS NO SIMILE, NO MOCK-UP, NO ARTIST’S IMPRESSIONS. THIS IS IT. AND IT TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY. SHARING THE PERFECT REST STOP WITH ADAM ARE A WHOLE MESS OF ANIMALS. A SHEEP, A FOX, CHIMP, WALLABY, BEAR, LLAMA, SCARLET IBIS, DEER, COUGAR, DINOSAUR AND, OF COURSE, A SNAKE. IT COULD BE THE DIORAMA IN A HUNTING GOODS STORE – SOUNDS A LOT LIKE CABELLAS. THE ANIMALS AREN’T DOING MUCH – JUST HANGING OUT, WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN. COMPARE THIS TO THE CREATION STORY IN MICHELANGELO’S SISTINE CHAPEL, MASACCIO’S EXPULSION FROM EDEN OR ANY OF THE THOUSANDS OF FLICKERING IMAGES, ICONS AND INSTALLATIONS BASED ON FAITH RATHER THAN LITERALIST REALISM – AND IT TRULY MAKES YOU WONDER. IS ALL THIS RIGHTEOUS IRE, ALL THIS MONEY, ALL THIS PENTECOSTAL FLAME-THROWING THE BEST THEY COULD COME UP WITH? THIS CHEAP COUNTRY-FAIR SIDE SHOW – IS THIS THEIR BEST SHOT?

I WANT TO READ SOMETHING TO YOU – THIS IS FROM A BOOKLET PUBLISHED BY THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL I ATTENDED IN FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN IN 1949 REGARDING EVOLUTION. “CATHOLICS BELIEVE THAT ALMIGHTY GOD CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH AND ALL THE THINGS OUT OF NOTHING BY A SINGLE ACT OF HIS ALL POWERFUL WILL. IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO BELIEVE THAT GOD DIRECTLY AND IMMEDIATELY CREATED EVERYTHING. HE ACTS ORDINARILY THROUGH SECONDARY AGENTS, SUCH AS THE LAWS OF NATURE, HUMAN BEINGS, OR INANIMATE CREATURES. THERE IS NOTHING CONTRARY TO CATHOLIC FAITH IN THE DOCTRINE OF EVOLUTION, IN THE MINERAL, PLANT AND ANIMAL KINGDOM, BUT IN NO CASE COULD THE HUMAN SOUL HAVE COME INTO EXISTENCE THROUGH MATERIAL EVOLUTIONARY PROCESSES. SINCE THE SOUL IS SPIRITUAL AND IMMORTAL, IT OWES ITS ORIGIN TO THE DIRECT CREATIVE ACT OF GOD.” AS A CHILD IN CATHOLIC SCHOOL SCIENCE CLASS IN THE 1950’S AND 60’S – WE WERE TAUGHT THAT DARWIN’S THEORY OF EVOLUTION WAS THE BIGGEST BREAKTHROUGH THAT HUMANKIND HAD MADE IN UNCOVERING THE MYSTERIES OF HOW LIFE – ALL LIFE – HAD EVOLVED ON OUR PLANET. SO WHAT HAPPENED? WHY HAVE THE TRUTHS OF SCIENCE BECOME SO FRIGHTENING TO THE FAITHFUL? I BELIEVE IN LARGE PART BECAUSE OF THE FIERCE CULTURAL WAR THAT SURROUNDS EVOLUTION. THOSE WHO HAVE ACCEPTED EVOLUTION HAVE BEEN BRANDED OVER TIME BY ANTI-EVOLUTION TYPES AS GODLESS ATHEISTS, A LABEL THAT HAS BECOME ALMOST AS MUCH AN INSULT AS BEING CALLED – WELL LIBERAL – AND ANTI-EVOLUTION TYPES HAVE IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS THE ONES WHO ARE RELIGIOUS. EVOLUTION HAS BEEN SET UP AS IMMORAL, NON-RELIGIOUS, AND COLDLY SCIENTIFIC. THERE IS SOMETHING SO FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG WITH THIS – THE FIRST IS THE ASSUMPTION THAT ANYONE WHO BELIEVES IN EVOLUTION CAN’T POSSIBLE BELIEVE IN GOD. THAT IS ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE. MANY THEISTS, CHRISTIANS, JEWS, MUSLIMS AND BUDDHISTS HAVE NO PROBLEM RECONCILING EVOLUTION WITH THEIR FAITH. CATHOLICS HAD BEEN DOING IT FOR YEARS. NEITHER IS IT TRUE THAT YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE IN GOD TO BE A MORAL PERSON. ATHEISTS CAN BE DEEPLY SPIRITUAL AND DEEPLY MORAL. AND MOST CERTAINLY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS HAVE LONG CELEBRATED DARWIN AND HIS EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTION TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD. IN DARWIN’S DAY – THE IDEA OF MANY PATHS TO

ONE TRUTH WAS LESS ACCEPTED. THROUGHOUT EUROPEAN HISTORY, WHENEVER NEW IDEAS THREATENED ESTABLISHED TRUTHS, THE REACTION WAS SEVERE AND SWIFT – AS WE DISCUSSED EARLIER THIS MONTH. PEOPLE WERE WILLING TO GIVE THEIR LIVES AND BECOME MARTYRS FOR THEIR FAITH WHEN THEY SENT UP AGAINST THE ESTABLISHED TRUTHS OF THEIR TIME. WHEN PROTESTANTISM EMERGED IN THE LATE 1400S THE BURNINGS BEGAN. WHEN GALILEO DISCOVERED THAT THE EARTH WAS ROUND IN THE 1630S, HE WAS CRUELLY PRESSURED UNTIL HE RECANTED. BUT BY THE LATE 1700S, YOU JUST COULDN'T IGNORE THE FACT THAT DISCOVERIES LEFT, RIGHT AND CENTER WERE CHALLENGING THE VERY BEDROCK OF THE WESTERN WORLD. ONE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT WAS THE DISCIPLINE OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM. THIS WAS THE PROCESS OF QUESTIONING THE ORIGINS OF THE BIBLE AND EXPLORING HOW IT WAS WRITTEN. MANY SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES, ARCHEOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS, AND LITERARY STUDIES OF ORIGINAL SCRIPTURE WERE UNEARTHING NEW TRUTHS THAT CHALLENGED THE WAY WE UNDERSTOOD THE BIBLE, AND THE RIPPLE EFFECTS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WESTERN WORLD. IN FACT, OUR VERY OWN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM EMERGED IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE LATE 1700S AND EARLY 1800S AS PART OF THE GROWTH OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM. WE WERE SOME OF THE FIRST TO QUESTION THE LITERAL TRUTH OF THE BIBLE. AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, THOUGH, OTHERS WERE INCREDIBLY THREATENED BY THIS. IN FACT, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WERE. IN GENERAL SOCIETY, THERE WAS LITTLE ROOM FOR THE IDEA THAT THERE ARE MANY PATHS TO TRUTH – WHICH IS THE FUNDAMENTAL MESSAGE OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM. THE BIBLE WAS FOR THE MOST PART UNDERSTOOD QUITE LITERALLY AND HELD TO BE DEFINITIVE IN MATTERS LIKE HOW THE EARTH CREATED. RELIGIOUSLY CHARLES DARWIN HAD A UNITARIAN BACKGROUND, HAVING LEARNED FROM HIS GRANDFATHER ERASMUS DARWIN THAT “UNITARIANISM IS A FEATHERBED TO CATCH A FALLING CHRISTIAN.” THEOLOGICALLY DARWIN PREFERRED BEING CALLED A DEIST, OR AN AGNOSTIC. HE HAD NEVER BEEN AN ATHEIST IN THE SENSE OF DENYING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. WHEN DARWIN PUBLISHED “ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES IN 1860, AT THE AGE OF 50, IS IT ANY WONDER THAT THE OUTCRY WAS FIERCE AND SUSTAINED? THE GENESIS CREATION STORIES PUT HUMANKIND AT THE PINNACLE OF CREATION. WE ARE IT. THE HIGHEST FORM OF LIFE. AND WHETHER WE ARE TO

DOMINATE THE EARTH OR BE ITS CUSTODIANS, WE ARE IN CHARGE. DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION, WHICH STATES THAT NATURAL SELECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS COMBINE TO EXPLAIN THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE WE SEE ON EARTH, TOOK HUMANITY OFF THE PEDESTAL WE HAD BUILT FOR OURSELVES. AND THE RESISTANCE BEGAN. THE IDEA THAT HUMAN KIND COULD HAVE EVOLVED FROM ANOTHER SPECIES, LIKE THE MONKEY OR THE APE, SEEMED TO CROSS THE LINE THAT SEPARATED US FROM THE ANIMALS. THERE WAS A CERTAIN MORALITY ATTACHED TO THAT SEPARATION, A MORALITY THAT NEEDED TO KEEP US PURE FROM WHAT MANY CONSIDERED AN EVIL AND FALLEN WORLD. THIS OUTRAGE WAS OFTEN EXPRESSED IN POLITICAL CARTOONS. ONE THAT SEEMED TO EMBODY THE CRUX OF THE OUTRAGE AGAINST HIM, WAS A DRAWING OF DARWIN'S HEAD AFFIXED TO THE BODY OF A MONKEY. IT'S HARD TO SAY WHAT WAS MORE THREATENING – THE IDEA THAT THE BIBLE MIGHT NOT BE LITERALLY TRUE, OR THE IDEA THAT WE ARE NOT SOME SPECIAL SPECIES CREATED AND ANOINTED TO RULE THE WORLD. SUDDENLY, WE WERE OF THE SAME STUFF AS ANIMALS, AND IT WAS NATURAL SELECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES TAKING PLACE OVER MILLIONS OF YEARS, NOT CREATION BY AN INTERVENING GOD IN ONE DAY, THAT LED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITY. TODAY, WE ARE HAVING A BELATED CELEBRATION OF CHARLES DARWIN – AND I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE MOVIE CREATION. HIS THEORY OF EVOLUTION IS THE BASIS FOR OUR SEVENTH UU PRINCIPLE, WHICH STATES THAT WE ARE ALL INTERCONNECTED ON THE PLANET. OUR SEVENTH UU PRINCIPLE HAS HAD A VERY PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE WORLD. IT WAS OUR CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE 1960S THAT RAISED AWARENESS OF TRYING TO LEAVE A SMALLER FOOTPRINT ON THE EARTH. ALTHOUGH 150 YEARS HAVE PASSED AND SCIENCE CONTINUES TO MAKE MOMENTOUS STRIDES IN UNCOVERING THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE, OUR PLANET AND LIFE, ITSELF – PEOPLE REMAIN SEPARATED IN THEIR ACCEPTANCE AND BELIEFS. THE CREATION MUSEUM WILL NOT GO AWAY – IT WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE A FOLLOWING OF PEOPLE WHO ARE STILL THREATENED AND FRIGHTENED OF ANYTHING THAT IS NOT WRITTEN DOWN IN - WHAT IS FOR THEM – THE FONT OF ALL KNOWLEDGE – THE BIBLE. ME – I'LL PUT MY TRUST IN THE INTERNET. HAPPY 201<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY, CHARLES DARWIN. SO BE IT.

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**SOURCES USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS PAPER:**

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FEBRUARY 10, 2008 AT THE BIG SKY UU FELLOWSHIP**