

## Unfashionable genes

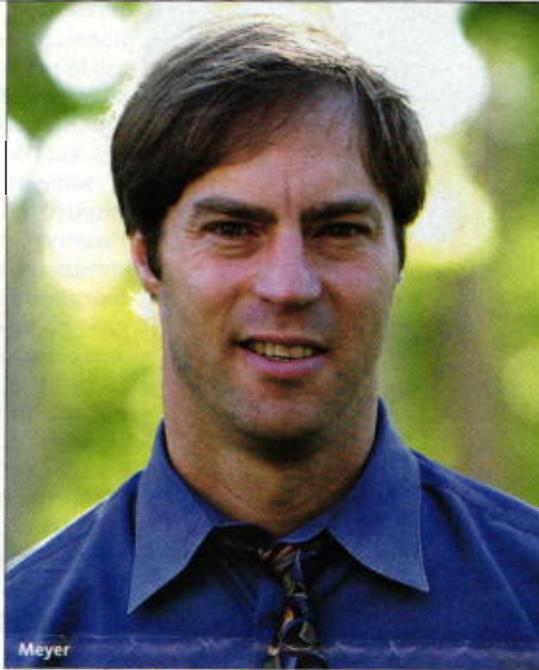
**SCIENCE:** Darwinists lash out as ID scientist makes an important inroad | by Mark Bergin in Seattle

**L**AST MONTH THE Intelligent Design (ID) team pushed a run across the plate, and its Darwinist opponents promptly promised not to let it happen again.

The ID breakthrough came when a paper titled "The Origin of Biological Information and the Higher Taxonomic Categories" by Stephen Meyer appeared in *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*. A peer-reviewed journal, *Proceedings* only prints articles approved by scientists at mainstream institutions—and until now the Darwinian establishment has excluded from such journals all ID articles.

Mr. Meyer, a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute in Seattle, argues in the paper that Darwinian mechanisms cannot explain the production of new information needed for novel genes and proposes ID as a better explanation. The ID movement already has produced peer-reviewed books: William Dembski's *The Design Inference* and Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*. But publication of Mr. Meyer's paper means that Darwinians will no longer be able to dismiss the ID movement by saying that such articles cannot pass muster.

Darwinists reacted to the publication quickly and harshly. The Biological Society of Washington (BSW) called it "a significant departure from the nearly purely taxonomic content for which this journal has been known throughout its 124-year history. It was published without the prior knowledge of the council." BSW called the paper "inappropriate for the pages of the *Proceedings*" and promised the topic of design "will not be addressed in future issues."



Meyer

*Proceedings* published Mr. Meyer's article with the approval of former editor Richard Sternberg, who resigned for unrelated reasons in October 2003 but continued to serve until a new editor was selected in May 2004. Mr. Sternberg insists he followed the standard peer-review process, submitting Mr. Meyer's

paper for examination to three qualified evolutionary and molecular biologists teaching at well-known institutions. Mr. Meyer confirms that he revised his original paper based on recommendations from the three peer reviewers.

Darwinians have lambasted Mr. Sternberg for allowing Mr. Meyer's paper to see the light of day. Some scientists have called Mr. Sternberg a closet creationist; Mr. Sternberg calls himself a process structuralist who does "not subscribe to the claims of young-earth creationism." Darwinians have also found Mr. Sternberg, who holds two Ph.D.s in evolutionary biology and has written more than 30 articles for peer-reviewed scientific books and publications, guilty by association: He met Mr. Meyer at an ID conference in 2002 and the two—both skeptical of neo-Darwinism—discussed the possible publication of an article calling into question the widely accepted theory.

Upon learning its journal had published the paper, BSW alerted Eugene C. Scott, executive director for the National Center for Science Education. A leading opponent of ID, Mr. Scott lamented the journal's decision. But Mr. Meyer said he was pleased that his article had "breached that barrier. The controversy creates a tremendous platform to get our message out to scientists." More than 60 scientists from around the world have requested copies of the article and an accompanying packet of reference materials. ☺

## Teaching design

**W**HILE THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVEMENT IS MAKING INROADS AMONG scientists, it is also deepening its involvement with evangelical theologians. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary announced last month the establishment of a Center for Science and Theology that will be headed by philosopher of science and mathematician William Dembski, a leading ID advocate and author. Mr. Dembski, a professor at Baylor since 1999, has also taught at Notre Dame and Northwestern. His books include *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* and *The Design Revolution*.

Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. noted that "Intelligent Design is not tantamount to the biblical doctrine of creation. Theologically, Intelligent Design falls far short of requiring any affirmation of the doctrine of creation as revealed in the Bible. Nevertheless, it is a useful and important intellectual tool, and a scientific movement with great promise. The real significance of Intelligent Design theory and its related movement is the success with which it undermines the materialistic and naturalistic worldview central to the theory of evolution." ☺



**CONCRETE DECISION:** Planned Parenthood paid four times the market rate for concrete to get a supplier in time for its Sept. 23 ribbon-cutting.

the livelihood of his 100 employees and the well-being of their families.

Friends, colleagues, and opponents describe him as kind and generous. He describes himself as a devout Catholic who grew up in Catholic schools and still goes to mass every Sunday where his daughter is an altar girl. He said he "detests" abortion, but makes allowances in cases of rape or poverty.

"We are all Catholic and we all carry a Book and we all carry a cross and we all try to keep a balance," he said. "When the day comes, I hope I'm more on the pluses than the minuses. But that's a personal thing. . . . [My workers] have hung around with me in all of these tight economical situations and they're not hanging with me because I am putting my religious convictions above the business. They're hanging around with me because they believe I'm going to do what's legal and what's correct, but I'm doing what's best for business."

Mr. Carrasquillo said he doesn't have much respect for those who organize boycotts and protests. He said that in January he unsuccessfully invited TCSL

contractors to join him in trying to address the causes of abortion by helping young mothers with free daycare, transportation, and school books. "That is a much tougher job than going there and standing in front of the Planned Parenthood building, and being a Superman, and making a lot of noise." There is no need, he said, for hardball tactics.

Mr. Danze said he can't account for all behavior of all pro-lifers, but defended TCSL's actions as "legal and ethical. We won't cross over to the illegal."

**T**HE MANAGEMENT OF THE LUCRATIVE bus-facility contract may turn out to have been illegal, but even the money from that job couldn't save Rainbow. Still \$5 million in debt, Mr. Carrasquillo on June 15 sold the firm to a competitor who, as it turned out, is a firm supporter of TCSL's pro-life boycott. That pinched Planned Parenthood again, shutting off the only ready source of concrete for the Choice Project. With no supplier, subcontractors were reduced to building curbs with concrete mixed in wheelbarrows "one bag at a time," according to Mr. Danze.

"If Ramon [Carrasquillo] hadn't caved they might still be waiting on concrete,"

said Mr. Danze. Still, he's not disappointed with the way events have unfolded. TCSL has already met its goals, he said: to stop construction or at least slow it down, and to make the process more expensive for Planned Parenthood.

Mr. Danze believes the boycott is a public-relations disaster for Planned Parenthood. TCSL's experience showed that it sometimes takes as little as one phone call to persuade a contractor to steer clear of working for an abortion business: "Pro-life people all over the country will say, 'Let's do that here!'" he said.

Some, at least in Texas, already have. Inspired by the success in Austin, the Houston Coalition for Life is organizing a construction boycott of a 45,000-square-foot abortion center in that city. The groups sent out 1,000 letters to Houston-area contractors in August.

In Dallas, the Catholic Pro-Life Committee is heading an effort to delay the retrofit of an Aaron's Women's Center abortion center to meet state standards for late-term abortion facilities. To comply with Texas law, late-term clinics now must be equipped to perform surgeries. Roel Garcia, an electrician and a minister, did not know he was working on an abortion business. After learning what would go on inside the Women's Center building, he walked away from the job.

Pro-lifers in Lufkin, Texas, are gearing up to boycott Planned Parenthood's likely attempt to "upgrade" its facility there to an abortion center. Mr. Danze expects them to succeed since Lufkin is a small city, making peer pressure and community standards powerful weapons.

Meanwhile in Austin, the Choice Project wing remains a mere slab in the ground, and Planned Parenthood by law cannot obtain a permanent certificate of occupancy until the entire project is done. The city can issue up to 60 days of temporary permits, but a city building inspector and boycott leaders expect Austin's famously liberal political hierarchy to exert pressure, allowing Planned Parenthood to slide along on temporary permits as long as it needs to.

And it may need to: Mr. Danze said a second-string general contractor and third-tier subcontractors may take weeks to complete the project. He has no illusions of stopping Planned Parenthood, but if delays carry into the holidays, the center is unlikely to open until well into 2005. ☺

—with reporting by Courtney Russell

# The Politics of Stem Cells

*Why do some scientists and politicians insist on exploiting embryos?*

**C. Christopher Hook, director of ethics education for the Mayo Graduate School of Medicine, knows blood very well. As an experienced hematologist and a senior fellow at the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, he's done a lot of thinking about the debate over stem cells, which we glimpsed in an interview he gave to associate editor Agnieszka Tennant. Hook stressed that his comments are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Mayo Clinic.**

**Have you used adult stem cells in therapy?**

I have used adult stem cells in bone marrow and peripheral stem-cell transplantation for the treatment of diseases that otherwise would be incurable. They include acute leukemias, Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphomas, and other serious hematologic disorders.

**Are adult stem cells as good a material for healing diseases as embryonic stem cells?**

Because of the limited and often disappointing use of embryonic stem cells to date, one has to honestly respond that we don't know the answer to that question. However, is it really the right or most important question to ask?

The ostensible reason cited by many scientists, clinicians, and politicians for vigorously pursuing embryo destruction or cloning is the promise for creating treatments that will help, or in the best case, heal, millions of people suffering from a whole host of diseases. If that is the real goal, and you can achieve those same therapeutic benefits without having to destroy or clone embryonic human beings, then even if embryonic stem cells might prove easier to use—still a highly debatable hypothesis—it doesn't matter. You can achieve this goal without commodifying human beings in the process.

**What do we know about the effectiveness of adult stem-cell therapies?**

The advances in adult stem-cell therapy development have been nothing short of astounding. I don't see any reason to believe that we will not achieve the therapeutic goals we all desire using adult stem cells. The September issue of *Nature Cell Biology* reviews the ability of bone-marrow derived cells to be reprogrammed after incorporation in defective tissues, healing and regenerating the organ. My friend and colleague, Dr. David Prentice, presented an excellent overview of the

derivation and therapeutic use of adult stem cells before the President's Council on Bioethics (see [http://bioethicsprint.bioethics.gov/background/prentice\\_paper.html](http://bioethicsprint.bioethics.gov/background/prentice_paper.html)).

**Why is there such vigorous disagreement among scientists over adult stem cells?**

Scientists in general do not like to hear the word *no*. They believe that science is an unmitigated good, and thus should not be restricted. Science has indeed benefited humanity in many ways. The products of science and technology, however, have also produced significant problems for humanity and the environment, and thus these activities require careful oversight and regulation. Unfortunately, science has evolved more into techno-science and is big business for individual scientists, universities, and industry

in general. There are patents, profits, professional posturing, and political power at stake in this debate, and I fear that this is really what is driving much of the demand for unrestricted research.

**Scientists in general do not like to hear the word *no*.**

**Why is there an even more passionate debate among politicians over this issue?**

There is a lot of political currency that comes with being seen as pro-progress, pro-health, pro-hope, and pro-science. Consequently, it is often difficult for politicians to question or oppose something that is constantly hyped as the cure for everything, even if such claims are vastly overblown, devoid of evidence, and may have a huge ethical price tag. Hope sells.

Protecting the embryo from becoming a research subject is an even greater threat to abortion-rights claims than banning partial-birth abortion, and we have seen just how vigorously the abortionists have fought any restrictions there. The forces that need to continue to denigrate preborn human beings have been lobbying strong and hard against any restrictions.

Recently at a Washington hearing about adult stem-cell progress, a scientist who was reporting on her research was verbally threatened by a member of Congress with a "question," the essence of which went: "I demand that you disclose every pro-life organization you have ever belonged to immediately, or I will hold you in contempt of Congress!" It is sad when our elected representatives are unable to consider objective scientific information without spinning their political agendas and delusions.



instead set up a mother-son relationship with churches overseas."

Though Ji's complaints can be questioned, anyone familiar with the history of Christianity in China—its complicity in the opium trade, its blessing of treaties that exploited China, its support of Western militarism—will have no trouble understanding the sometimes-deep resentment many Chinese Christians feel about Western Christianity, and the motivation behind the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. They'll also understand why, when Ji made this last comment, his voice was noticeably tinged with irritation.

After Ji finished, I said, "It sounds like this sort of thing makes you angry."

He replied as a diplomat should: "I'm not that upset by it." Then he paused, looked down reflectively, and added, "But sometimes, yes, I get very angry."

#### THOSE ARRESTED CHRISTIANS

I asked Ji what I should tell American Christians who believe that all Christians in China are persecuted by the Communists.

"Do I look like I'm persecuted? Do I look like I'm being controlled by the government?" He was becoming animated again. "All I can say is, look at the church here, look at the Christians here. You'll see a much different picture than the one painted by some overseas."

Indeed the picture is complex. Perhaps the most telling example came at a dinner I attended with a leader of a registered church in Zhejiang province. He was visiting an unregistered church in Beijing to help lead a revival. The lines between registered and unregistered are becoming increasingly blurred.

But that picture Ji speaks of still includes Christians who are languishing in jail, some of whom are treated brutally, even killed. Aren't Christians still being persecuted? According to underground Christians, the answer is a definite "Yes!"

Yet Presbyterian Ji told me, "There is no persecution of Christians in China."

Who is right? In some ways, both. For example, in a recent trial in Hangzhou city, Zhejiang province, three Christians were arrested, tried, and sentenced. What provoked the arrest and trial was the fact that all three defendants had informed Western sources about the trial and prison

abuse of Christians in China. Many China watchers point to this as a clear case of Christian persecution. But according to the court documents, they were convicted not for being Christians or worshiping Christ, but for "illegally leaking . . . state intelligence overseas."

Naturally a man in Ji's position could have no other official view of persecution. "Yes some Christians get arrested," he explained, "but not for their faith. They get arrested because they have broken some law. It is not against the law to be a Christian or to practice your faith."

And yet Christians, along with many other religionists, get arrested regularly and are often treated brutally in prison. Is this harassment of Christians as such? Not necessarily. The fact is, the government goes after anyone who for any reason reports on Chinese prison torture. Would it be better to simply call it severe human-rights abuse? Maybe, but some Communist officials still harbor deep animosity toward this Western "imperialist" religion and make up excuses to go after believers, especially if they have contacts with the West. Of course, to those languishing in prison unjustly, it's mere semantics whether it's "Christian persecution" or general "human-rights abuse."

Still, Ji doesn't seem to have his head in the sand. No one can work that closely with any government and think that everything is just A-OK. I believe he put it as frankly as his position allows. "Yes, in some places, officials make it difficult to implement church policies," he admitted, and he believes one of his roles is "to educate officials about official policy on religion."

That, to put it mildly, is a difficult job for a man in his position. Naturally, champions of the underground church question whether he advocates strongly and often enough for religious rights. And naturally, registered churches, which today enjoy more freedom than imaginable even five years ago, don't want him to push so hard it would provoke a government backlash.

It's another of the many tensions that Presbyterian Ji, and the Protestant church in China—registered and not—feel every day. 9

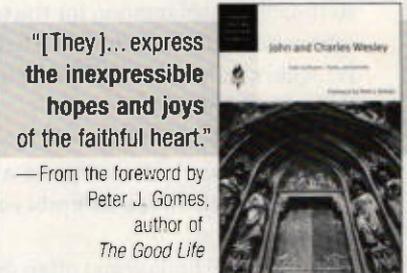
Mark Galli is managing editor of CT.

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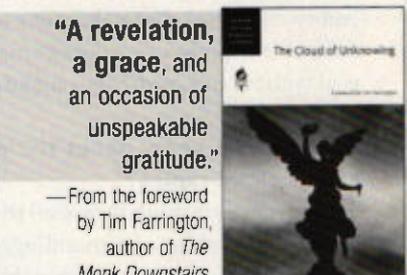
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