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with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

**Frank:**

Theistic evolution: What is it? And, if it's true, exactly where does God intervene? What do the proponents of theistic evolution say? Is this kind of a halfway house between naturalism slash atheism and intelligent design? And what about the theistic evolution in the Bible? Does it contradict what the Bible says? Well, there's no better person on the planet to talk about this than my friend Dr. Stephen Meyer, who's been on the program several times before. Steve has his PhD in the Philosophy of Science from the University of Cambridge. And, of course, he's the director of the Discovery Institute Center for Science and Culture. He's written several great books, New York Times bestselling books, including *Signature in the Cell* and *Darwin's Doubt*. And he's a major contributor to the brand new, well it's about a year old now, this new book called *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. This book is nearly a thousand pages, ladies and gentlemen, but it is readable, and it has some wonderful information in it. He's joined forces with people you may have heard of like J.P. Moreland, and Wayne Grudem, and others to bring this together. So, it's great having Steve on the show with us again. Steve, how are you?

**Dr. Meyer:**

I'm doing really well. And it's been too long. I'm glad we're talking, Frank. This is great.

**Frank:**

Yeah, I know man. You've got to be on more because there's nobody better at boiling down these complex subjects regarding biology and evolution than you. In fact, I want to encourage our audience to go back and listen to two discussions we had on these topics. In fact, if you get the CrossExamined app (two words in the App Store: Cross Examined) go back and listen to the January 2017 conversation we have called *Royal Problems with Evolution*. We'll revisit that here in this discussion. And then go back to September 2014 and look at *Five Problems with macroevolution*; that was sort of a summary of Steve's book called *Darwin's Doubt*. Go back and listen to those. Those are evergreen shows; they're not dated shows. They have great information in them. Now, Steve, I want to start out if we could, by just kind of getting a little bit of an update because the last conversation we had about two and a half years ago, you had just returned from an event that occurred over in England, The Royal Society Event, where you had people coming together who are evolutionists saying: look, the current theory of

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macroevolution, Neo-Darwinism doesn't work. What developments have occurred since that time?

**Dr. Meyer:**

Well, quite a few that are in the exact same train. But you may recall that the opening talk at that conference, at really arguably the most august scientific body in the world, November 2016, was shared by an evolutionary biologist named Gerd Müller from Austria. And he kicked off the conference by enumerating what he called the explanatory deficits of Neo-Darwinism. One of which was the inability to explain the complexity of organisms, what he called the phenotypic complexity. Secondly, was the problem of morphological innovation. He acknowledged that mutation and natural selection do a decent job of explaining small scale variation, but they do not explain the major innovations in biological form that have occurred in the fossil record throughout the history of life. And that led to the third major problem was the abrupt appearance of major new forms of life in the fossil record, not the gradual, step by step kind of appearance we'd expect on a Darwinian model.

So those were just three of, I think he had five, major problems that he enumerated right out of the chute. And the conference was kind of framed by that talk. Now, since then, as you might expect, given the kind of ferment that's going on in evolutionary biology and the increasing recognition of an impasse in the field, with respect to its ability to explain the large scale, morphological, that is changes in form that we see in the history of life, there have been other defections from the standard theory. We've had a number of people now working with us at Discovery Institute who are quite prominent; who are former proponents of the mainstream theory. One is the paleontologist Günter Bechly from Germany, who was, until recently, one of the lead curators at the largest natural history museum in Europe: The Stuttgart Museum of Natural History. Günter announced, in fact shortly before that conference in 2016, that he had come to accept the theory of intelligent design. And after a couple of years of haggling and negotiating with the museum, he accepted a buyout. They made it clear they didn't want him there anymore if that was his point of view.

But he's now working full time with the Discovery Institute. And he's heading up a German institute called the German Center for Biocomplexity and Natural Teleology, which is the study of purpose in nature. So, this is kind of, you know, a major story. He's a big player in and has

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been a big player in evolutionary biology and paleontology. And he's come out explicitly for the theory of intelligent design and is working with us. Another similar story; earlier this year, there was a review of my book Darwin's Doubt published in the Claremont Review of Books. It was an extensive six-page review and a big broadsheet publication written by the Yale computer scientist David Gelernter.

**Frank:**

Wow!

Yes, good review.

**Dr. Meyer:**

And people who are familiar with computer science know what a big figure he is. He was the inventor of parallel processing and Java code. And he's also a brilliant polymath who's written books on the philosophy of mind, on politics, and economics. He's been a frequent contributor to publications like the Wall Street Journal Commentary, the Weekly Standard; You name it. And anyway, he came out with an extraordinary review of Darwin's Doubt in which he also had some favorable comments for David Berlinski's book The Deniable Darwin. And he said that these two books had convinced him to give up on Darwinism. And he explained his reasons in some depth. He cited the work of, for example, Douglas Axe, our colleague, who's established what is known as the extreme rarity of proteins in what's called sequence space. That's just another way of saying that it's incredibly improbable that mutation and selection would, by that process of undirected search by mutation and selection, would be able to find the incredibly rare arrangements of amino acids that form into the proteins that make all life possible. And that's a huge mathematical argument against Darwinian theory.

So, Gelernter explained this argument and explained that it had persuaded him, as well as the other arguments that had persuaded him to give up on Darwin. He also indicated he's not quite there yet on intelligent design. He's intrigued with it; he thinks it's a serious scientific argument, but he has some theological things he's thinking through. So, he's not ready to embrace intelligent design, but he's rejected Darwinism. So, these are the kinds of things that are going on. And yet, just as the point that you have the secular evolutionary biologists and then many other scientists beginning to question Darwinian evolution, you have this push within the

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Christian church to endorse, or even sort of baptize, the Darwinian account of biological origins, saying that if we don't accept this, we're scientifically backward and will bring intellectual disrepute to the church. So you have this kind of strange juxtaposition of secular evolutionary biologists and leading scientists in various fields rejecting the mainstream theory, and a well-funded effort within the Christian church to get Christians to accept Darwinian evolution, or the modern form of it called Neo Darwinism, lest we fall behind the times and be not on top of science.

**Frank:**

It's crazy what's going on. And that's why this new book that you have put together with a bunch of other scholars called *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique* is so essential because it covers the waterfront, Steve. You guys have done a wonderful job here. And when we come back from the break, we're going to talk about the theistic evolutionary theory. What is it? Does it comport with the Bible at all? Does it comport with the evidence at all? And what are Christians to make of it? Well, you're listening to *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* with Frank Turek here on the American Family Radio network. My guest today is Dr. Steven Meyer of the Discovery Institute, [discovery.org](http://discovery.org). Great material up there, go check that out. When we come back, we're going to dive into this new tome, *Theistic Evolution*. So, you don't want to miss that; do not go anywhere.

If you're low on the FM dial looking for NPR, go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent, anyway. I guarantee you; you're not going to hear Stephen Meyer on NPR. We're talking to my friend Dr. Stephen Meyer. His brand new well, a year or so old book, written with several others is called *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. It is a wealth of information on this topic. And before we go any further, I got to mention that tomorrow, if you're listening to this on Saturday, I'll be at Quail Lakes Baptist Church in Stockton, California in the morning. And an evening service, really a presentation with Q & A at 6:30. We'll be talking about: *If God, Why Evil?* Then Monday night, University of the Pacific; Tuesday night, Fresno State. Hope to see you out there. And then next weekend, I'll be in Tucson at Calvary Tucson; all the services, Sunday night event again. And then on Monday night, I want to say that's the seventh of October, I have to look at the calendar, that is the University of Arizona for *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*. So, I hope to see you out there. And then, the following weekend, my guest today, Dr. Steven

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Meyer, will join me and many others here in Charlotte, North Carolina, for the National Conference on Christian Apologetics. So, you don't want to miss that. If you're anywhere near Charlotte, that's where you want to be, anywhere on the East Coast. Check ses.edu, that's Southern Evangelical Seminars website, ses.edu, and click on NCCA. You'll see the conference there. You can still join. It's going to be a wonderful apologetics conference. So, you don't want to miss that. Now, back to my friend Steven Meyer. Steve, this book on theistic evolution, in your previous books, you were talking more about the reasons that macroevolution doesn't appear to be viable. There's so much evidence against it. You weren't saying it's because it contradicts the Bible. But in this particular tome, you have articles that do both: that deal with the reasons that macroevolution does not appear to be correct; and the idea that macroevolution, or even theistic evolution, comports with the Bible is not right. And that's what this book does. How did you guys go about putting this together? Because it is a vast tome; I mean, you are covering a lot of ground here.

**Dr. Meyer:**

Right? Well, I was principally involved in editing the scientific and philosophical sections of the book in which we challenged the notion of theistic evolution on scientific grounds and challenged the underlying philosophical assumptions that theistic evolutionists affirm that lead to their embrace of the evolutionary approach to biological origins. Then, in the final section, Wayne Grudem edited a section of theological articles critiquing theistic evolution from the standpoint of a biblical and theological perspective. So, showing that there's a tension between Orthodox Christianity and affirming the different notions of theistic evolution. One of the problems is, of course, that there are so many different ideas of theistic evolution because there are so many different ways you can define the term evolution. And so, what I did in an opening scientific and philosophical introduction, was to define the different meanings of the term, theistic evolution, and specifically focused on those meanings that we found either scientifically, philosophically, or theologically problematic. There are meanings of theistic evolution that are innocuous, like the idea that there's change over time in the history of life, and that God has caused that change. That's neither scientifically nor theologically problematic. But the idea that there's an undirected, unguided process of biological change produced by the mechanism of mutation and selection; and that that process explains away the appearance of design; and yet, somehow, God is involved with that, that's both scientifically and philosophically problematic. And then, Wayne Grudem and his team of authors also said it

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doesn't comport very well with a biblical understanding of where we came from. So, a key thing we did early on was sort of define the terms and define the position that we were critiquing. It happens to be the position that's kind of the dominant way of thinking in, for example, the Christian college biology departments.

**Frank:**

Well, this is interesting. I just read your chapter, the first chapter of the book. And as Steve just said, the chapter is called Scientific and Philosophical Introduction: Defining Theistic Evolution. Now our friend Greg Koukl has a tactic when somebody says something to you, you should ask them, "What do you mean by that?", if there is some ambiguity as to what they mean. So, I've been asked on a college campus, I know you've been asked much more than I have, "Do you believe in evolution?" And you should always stop and ask the question, what do you mean by the term, "evolution"? And Steve, in this opening chapter, you go through the different definitions of evolution. And as you said, the first definition you go through, change over time, not problematic for anybody. But what about the second definition? What is the second definition that is often used?

**Dr. Meyer:**

Yeah, the first definition is change over time. And that can refer to small scale variations in, for example, the coloration of the wings of peppered moths, or in the shape and size of finch beaks, that kind of stuff that we all learned in biology class. It could also refer to the fact that there are different creatures living on the planet today than those that were preserved in the fossil record so that we see, sure, that there's been change over the history of life. Nobody disputes any of that. The second meaning, however, is the idea that the change that we observe in the history of life is continuous and gradual, such that the best picture of the history of life is what Darwin called the idea of universal common descent. The idea that the history of life can be best depicted as a great branching tree, starting from one single route, or trunk, branching out into all the different forms of life we see today that would be represented by all the branches on the tree. So, it's the picture of continuous biological change from a single common ancestor a very long time ago. Now, that's a definition of evolution that could be merged with some meaningful form of theism. But we show that it is definitely a problematic view with respect to the biological evidence. And it's also problematic with respect to a straightforward reading of the biblical texts. So that's evolution number two. Evolution number

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three is the really problematic meaning of the term, the idea that natural selection and random mutation has creative power. And in fact, the creative power of that mechanism is such that, not only does it account for all the new forms of life that we see arising in history of life as documented in the fossil record, but that the mutation-selection mechanism, being an entirely undirected mechanism, can explain away the appearance of design that all biologists recognize in living organisms. So, the third meaning of evolution affirms the creative power of mutation and selection and its ability to explain all new forms of life, as well as the appearance of design that they manifest.

**Frank:**

Now, Steve, proponents of theistic evolution: where do they say God has actually intervened? Or do they? Or don't they?

**Dr. Meyer:**

That's been one of the questions we've been asking them. I mean, this is a big book critiquing the position, or positions, of theistic evolution. But in conversations publicly with folks that hold that kind of a view, we've mainly been asked asking them for clarification. I was in a conversation, a private conversation, about 10 years ago with one of the leading figures in the theistic evolution world. And I was in this conversation with a young scholar of ours who was, at the time, our Washington, DC office manager, and with a friend of his who was working for this other prominent theistic evolutionist. And they got together and said, look, your boss says- Well, actually I give it away by telling the book titles, but they seemed to be so similar that the two of these young guys said, well why do our two bosses disagree? So, they got us together to talk. And during the conversation, our young DC office director said to this very prominent person, "Well, Dr. so and so, you say you're a theistic evolutionist, but what do you mean by evolution? What do you think that God is doing? Is evolution a directed or an undirected process?" And this very prominent scientist paused a rather long time, and then there was a kind of halting response in which he said, "Well, it might be directed." And I took that to be an entirely political answer because the theistic evolutionist through organizations like bio logos, and many others, are attempting to get, first and foremost, the Christian church to adopt an evolutionary account of the origin of life and the origin of human life. In other words, they want us to embrace the Darwinian perspective within the church. But if they say mutation and selection, the driving mechanism of evolutionary change is undirected, most pastors and

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seminary professors and Christian leaders worth their salt are going to say: that sounds an awful lot like, well if not deism, something kind of similar. It at least means that God hasn't had much to do with anything. It would be in theological terms a view that would affirm a reduced role for divine sovereignty over the production of life.

On the other hand, if they say that the mechanism is directed, well that breaks, first of all, with the standard understanding of mutation and natural selection. And it breaks with the standard scientific understanding and the authority of the scientific community that they're invoking. And secondly, it is actually a form of intelligent design, not the form that I hold, but a form where it's a directed process. That means a designing agent is directing the evolutionary process towards some propitious endpoint or endpoints. But the theistic evolutionists have been critical of intelligent design. So, asking that question kind of puts them on the horns of a dilemma. Is it directed or undirected? They don't want to say. But yet, for the theory to have any import at all, it must have some specific, empirical content. It must answer questions like that. So, we've kind of been asking for clarification on this. And in the absence of such clarification, what we do in the book is kind of lay out the different possible answers that the theistic evolutionists could give and show that, in each case, they're either scientifically, philosophically, or theologically problematic. And often, they're all three.

**Frank:**

Yes, and that's what your first chapter lays out quite well. But, Steve, if they're not saying it's directed at all, in what sense could it be theistic? I mean, theistic implies that God is somehow involved. Why not just take theistic off there, and you're back to the Neo-Darwinian naturalistic view?

**Dr. Meyer:**

I have nothing to add to that rhetorical question except that's exactly the right question to be asking.

**Frank:**

I don't get this.

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**Dr. Meyer:**

In other words, what is God doing in this synthesis of theism, and a completely naturalistic, undirected theory of the evolution of life?

**Frank:**

Well, let's unpack it further.

**Dr. Meyer:**

No one's been, they've been loathed to say. If you ask, is he directing the evolutionary process? Or is he directing the mutations toward some propitious endpoint? they'll usually say no. Or they will get perilously vague and say, well, maybe. So, it's either not a theistic theory, or it's so perilously vague that it's not a theory at all.

**Frank:**

All right. Well, we're coming back to talk to Stephen Meyers some more. The new book, Theistic Evolution, you need to get. I'm Frank Turek. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. We're back in two.

So, trying to get a theistic evolutionist to tell us exactly where God intervenes in the process is like trying to nail jello to the wall, apparently. And that's what you'll learn when you read Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique, edited by my friend Dr. Steven Meyer who, not only edited, he wrote about four or five chapters in here. J.P. Moreland is involved as well, so is Wayne Grudem and several others, an amazing tome you need to get. it's got sections in here on science, obviously, on philosophy and on theology as well. So, a wonderful book. Now, Steve, there is something you talk about in quite length in the book called methodological naturalism. Can you explain what that is to our audience?

**Dr. Meyer:**

Well, methodological naturalism is the idea that if you're going to be a scientist, you have to limit yourself to strictly naturalistic or materialistic explanations for everything. And that sounds sensible on the surface because a lot of what scientists do is describe how one part of nature interacts with another. And for those sorts of descriptions or theories that we develop about

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those kinds of interactions, there's really no need to posit anything other than nature at work. If we want to understand how water erodes rocks, we don't need to talk about the God hypothesis, nor do we, for that matter, need to talk about the evolution of the planet. We're just talking about a process that we can observe in front of our eyes. But much of science occupies describing those kinds of processes. But science has also taken on these questions of origins, and also questions of human nature. So if you want to ask a question about, for example, the nature of the human mind, and whether or not we can explain human behavior and human thoughts solely as the result of the neurophysiological processes in the brain, well, that's a question that has a philosophical dimension. And as such, our answers to that question should not only consider strictly materialistic answers. It might be that the brain and the mind are not the same things, and that humans have something like a soul or an immaterial mind that is using the brain as an organ of thought. And in fact, many neurophysiologists think that. But that's not obeying the law of methodological naturalism because it says we can only talk about materialistic processes. So, if you think consciousness is something more than chemistry, you're going to run afoul the principle methodological naturalism.

Similarly, in the debate about biological origins, there's two possible causal explanations. One is, in broad terms, that everything that we see arose through undirected material processes, some form of undirected evolutionary change. Another idea that's been held all the way back to the ancient Greeks is that there was a mind that was shaping the material processes, that there was some kind of intelligent design. Now, if you hold to methodological naturalism, you're going to exclude the design hypothesis by definition. You're not even going to consider it whatever the evidence is. But it might be the case that we have encountered certain kinds of evidences in biological systems that would, in any other context, lead us to conclude design. For example, one of the things we've discovered at the foundation of life, which I've written about in a couple of different books, is the digital code stored in the DNA. We know that digital code, software, always comes from a programmer. And so, we might be tempted to consider the possibility that the information stored in DNA in a digital form is actually evidence of a master programmer for life. It would be like walking into the British Museum looking at the Rosetta Stone, saying: well, where did all those interesting inscriptions come from? If we're holding the methodological naturalism, we're going to have to say: well, something like wind and erosion, or some other materialistic process, even though we know from experience that information of the kind inscribed on the Rosetta Stone always comes from the mind. So, the problem with

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methodological naturalism is that it keeps us from following the evidence to wherever it leads, especially when we're looking at questions about origins or questions about the nature of the human mind, questions that have both a scientific and philosophical dimension to them.

**Frank:**

And the law of methodological naturalism did not come from a natural cause. It was a philosophical principle imposed on science by a mind. So, it doesn't even explain itself.

**Dr. Meyer:**

Well said. And, relevant to our current discussion, is that all theistic evolutionists accept this rule. They often don't tell you that, but when you probe them, you find that they do. In fact, when my book *Darwin's Doubt* was referred at the BioLogos website, the biologists objected to the argument of the book not based on the biological or paleontological evidence I presented. In fact, Darrell Falk, one of the biological reviewers, said that I was correct that not only the Neo-Darwinian view of evolutionary theory but more current views failed to account for the origin of the major innovations we see in the history of life, and that the mechanisms that they cited lacked the creative power to account for the origin of novel biological forms. But he said he was committed to a strictly naturalistic approach to science, and therefore he couldn't consider the Intelligent Design hypothesis. And he critiqued me for not embracing this definition of science that had led him to limit the scope of his inquiries.

**Frank:**

But again, Steve, and I'm preaching to the choir, this is for the audience, if this guy is claiming to be a theistic evolutionist, but he philosophically rules out theism as being involved in the process, in what sense is he a theistic evolutionist?

**Dr. Meyer:**

That's a really astute question, and I think you're pretty good at asking questions like this.

**Frank:**

Well so are you; it's all through the book, the *Theistic Evolution* book we're talking about.

**Dr. Meyer:**

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Yeah, but for them, what this boils down to is that they believe the standard evolutionary account to the extent that they can affirm it. In Darrell Falk's case, he honestly acknowledges the explanatory deficits of Neo-Darwinism like the mainstream, secular evolutionary biologists are increasingly doing; but he is committed to some kind of naturalistic evolutionary account of biological origins, even if an adequate one does not yet exist. And he believes in God. So those two things make theistic evolution, theistic evolution.

**Frank:**

Oh, that's it, he believes in God, okay.

**Dr. Meyer:**

He is not willing to say that God is doing anything that is detectable scientifically or empirically.

**Frank:**

Well, we have to deal with this, Steve, because it always comes up and you deal with it so well. They're going to say: okay, Steve, Dr. Meyer, we understand there are problems with the Neo Darwinian theory. That's why the Royal Society gets together and discusses these things. That's why you just had a meeting in Israel with other secular and religious scientists who are saying, hey, yeah, we got problems with macroevolution. But, just to say you have problems with a naturalistic set of processes doesn't necessarily mean that a theological or a theistic view is correct. I mean, is that not just the God of the gaps argument, Steve? You're just plugging God in the gap of your knowledge. How do you respond?

**Dr. Meyer:**

Well, the theory of intelligent design infers the action of a mind of some kind. And it does so not because of a gap in our knowledge, not because of what we don't know, but because of what we do know about, for example, the causes of the origin of functional information, especially the kind of information that we find in software; or in written languages; or, for that matter, in the DNA molecule. This is the argument that I made in *Signature in the Cell*. Whenever we see information and we trace it back to its source, whether we're talking about a hieroglyphic inscription; or a paragraph in a book; or a section of software in a computer program, invariably, we come to a mind, not just a material process. So, the discovery of the information at the foundation of life, I've argued, is best explained as the result of the activity

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of a mind. That's an inference based on what we know about the DNA molecule. And based on what we know about the causes, or cause, of information generally. So, it's not an argument from ignorance. It's not an argument based on a gap in our knowledge. But it's based on the best knowledge that we have, and all sciences based on the best knowledge that we have. We may get additional knowledge down the road, but we wouldn't say, for example, if the archaeologists who discovered the Rosetta Stone inferred an intelligent scribe had written those markings on the rock, we wouldn't say that that scribe was guilty of a scribe of the gaps argument because the archaeologists was making a reasonable inference based on the knowledge that we have both about the stone and about our processes of cause and effect that we observe in the world. And the key process we're talking about here is that it takes a mind to generate information. So, this isn't a God of the gaps argument. It's an inference to the best explanation based on our knowledge of cause and effect and based on the features of biological systems.

**Frank:**

Well said. In fact, I think the evolutionists are engaged in a natural law of the gaps argument because there are no known natural forces or combination thereof that can create biologically complex information that you talk about in Signature in the Cell. They just haven't found that ball yet, according to them. And so, I think they're engaged in the same kind of gap argument except it's really an objection.

**Dr. Meyer:**

Well, it's a naturalism of the gaps. This is what methodological naturalism is all about. It's that, even if we don't have an adequate naturalistic explanation, we're going to hold out for one at all costs. We are going to say that there is one even though there is a gap in our knowledge, that is to say, a gap in our knowledge of what natural processes can do. We're just going to assume that there is such an answer. So really, the shoes on the other foot. This is a form of projection where the materialists who are hidebound to an a priori assumption that governs all they're thinking about the subject, are accusing people who are following the evidence where it leads of having a prior theological assumption that's leading them to that conclusion. It's actually the methodological naturalists; or the theistic evolutionists; or the evolutionists, in this case, that are so committed to a materialistic worldview, that they're not willing to consider any alternative explanation for the origin of life.

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**Frank:**

It is a dogmatic faith position is what it is. That's what they're engaged in, ironically, they're the ones who-

**Dr. Meyer:**

But it masquerades as science. This is a great question that Philip Johnson used to ask. He said, "Is the question of the definition of science by science? Do we mean an empirically based inquiry that allows us to follow the evidence where it leads? Or do we mean a commitment to a materialistic answer whatever the evidence is that we encounter?" And part of what we've been doing in the intelligent design research community is challenging our colleagues in the broader scientific community to change their understanding of science back to a science that's that embraces the more open-ended inquiry, rather than a science that is committed to a certain kind of answer, whatever the evidence says.

**Frank:**

This is why I've said before in this program, ladies, and gentlemen, that science doesn't say anything, scientists do. And too many of the scientists that consider themselves macro evolutionists, naturalists, are basically following their atheistic philosophy because they've already ruled out intelligent causes before they look at the evidence. So, is it any wonder they're always going to say it has to be some sort of natural cause? Even if we haven't found it yet, we have faith we will find it. That's naturalism at the gaps. We're back in just a couple of minutes. My guest is Dr. Steven Meyer of the Discovery Institute, his brand-new book, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. We're back with our final segment. I'm Frank Turek. Don't go away.

I can't waste a second of time with my friend Dr. Stephen Meyer. He is brilliant on this topic, as he is on many topics, *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*. Before we get back into that, Steve, I got a couple of questions that have been asked of me that I'd like to bounce off you. One question deals with the simple to complex life forms that we find in the fossil record. From a biblical perspective, how do we explain the fact that it does appear that the geological strata goes from simple to complex?

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**Dr. Meyer:**

Well, let me just address that from the standpoint of both evolutionary theory and the theory of intelligent design. This is one of Darwin's five arguments for universal common ancestry. There is a general progression from simple to complex, but there are many exceptions to that as you go up and down the sedimentary rock column. And the more striking pattern, and this is the one that's really difficult to explain, is that you have multiple abrupt appearances of major new forms of life where each new form exhibits an integrated complexity that's distinct from forms that arose before. So, I've written a whole book about what's called the Cambrian explosion, which is the event in the history of life in which the majority of the new forms of animal life first arise, and quite abruptly. But in the book, the Theistic Evolution book that we've been discussing, Günter Bechley, the paleontologist that I mentioned in the earlier segment tonight, have co-authored an article about not just the Cambrian explosion, but about sixteen other major abrupt appearances of new forms of life, starting from the origin of the first life; looking at the origin of animals; the origin of flowering plants; the origin of the first mammals; the first winged insects and birds. Most of the major groups of plants and animals in the history of life arise very abruptly and discreetly in the fossil record, not in the gradual sort of pattern that you'd expect on a Darwinian point of view. So, going back to your question about a biblical point of view, if you look at the Genesis account, you get the sense that there is a progression of new forms of life that are being created by God over time. Some people think it's a very compressed time scale, others think it's a very long-time scale. But setting that aside, what you would expect is a kind of progression of created forms. And that happens to be exactly what we see in the fossil record where these new forms arise quite abruptly, and not in the sort of gradual step by step way we'd expect on a Darwinian Tree of Life pattern that has long been accepted in evolutionary theory.

**Frank:**

In fact, I've seen one of the best videos ever done this topic you helped put together, it's called Darwin's Dilemma. And I think it's actually on YouTube now. Friends, if you haven't seen Darwin's Dilemma, this is all explained very well in that video with all sorts of graphics and videos. In fact, I remember Jonathan Wells, one of your colleagues, Stephen, saying that if he had a botanical illustration to give regarding the history of life, it would not be a tree, it would be a lawn, that things just kind of came up individually. Would you agree with him on that?

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**Dr. Meyer:**

Yeah, lawn's pretty good. Even better, would be an orchard of separate trees, because there is variability within limits within each group. But the trees don't all marry up into one big tree. Instead, you have this kind of orchard-like picture. Except that the trees are arising up and down the rock column, if you will, so that you have these disconnected- sometimes the paleontologists call them punctuations, or radiations, or just explosions. I used to tell my students; you will know them by their euphemisms. And there's a lot of euphemisms in paleontology to get around this pattern, this overwhelming pattern, of abrupt appearance, and for the most part, what they call stasis, or changelessness. The basic form of organisms, once introduced into the fossil record, doesn't change although there's variations on basic themes.

**Frank:**

Now, the second question that I've gotten recently is the question regarding the dating, the Cambrian explosion five hundred and something million years ago. Is it sedimentation rate that gives them these dates? How do they date these different layers, or these different eras, or these different explosions? In fact, that was interesting, I did read the chapter, All These Different Explosions. As you said, it's not just the Cambrian explosion, there's all these other explosions.

**Dr. Meyer:**

Yeah, we documented seventeen total and there are more we could have talked about.

**Frank:**

It's amazing.

**Dr. Meyer:**

Well, yeah, the dates that give us those numbers and millions of years are typically rendered using radiometric methods, where we measure the known rates of radiometric decay of certain isotopes: potassium and argon, for example. In the case of the Cambrian explosion, it was really interesting, for quite a long time it was dated to be about an eighty million year event in the history of life. Then there was this major discovery of Cambrian era fossils in China. And the window of the explosion narrowed dramatically. In Darwin's Doubt I showed that there are a couple dozen of these new animal phyla, the major groups of organisms that exemplify the

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different body plants as they're called. But in one narrow seam of rock that's been dated at no more than five to six million years, there are thirteen to sixteen different phyla that first emerged in that period of time. Now that sounds like a lot of time. But that's not only geologically abrupt, it's biologically abrupt. There's this problem in evolutionary theory known as the waiting times problem, where if you know, the population size; the generation time; and the mutation rate, you can compute about how much evolutionary change should take place in a given amount of time, or how much time it would take to generate a given amount of evolutionary change. And just looking at a very small amount of evolutionary change, like the amount of time needed to produce two coordinated mutations in the hominid line, those calculations are rendering numbers in the hundreds of millions of years, or tens of millions of years, for just two coordinated mutations. Well, if you get thirteen to sixteen new animal phyla arising in a five million year window, there's not nearly enough time by Darwinian processes to produce that.

**Frank:**

Forget about it. It's not happening.

**Dr. Meyer:**

It's not happening. So, this is just one more reason why there are explanatory deficits in the Neo-Darwinian scheme of things. The Neo-Darwinian math that flows out of these analyses is showing the Neo-Darwinian mechanism is not sufficient.

**Frank:**

Ladies and gentlemen, this is one of the reasons why you have secular scientists now doubting Darwinism. Because of the kind of work that Stephen Meyer has done, and Doug Axe has done, and many other people at Discovery Institute. So, it's not the right time for the church to start adopting Darwinism when the secular world is realizing Darwinism doesn't work. And we could spend a lot of time talking about why it doesn't work. We've done that in previous broadcasts. Go back and listen to the September 2014 edition of this program called Five Problems with macroevolution. Also, go back and listen to Five Royal Problems with Evolution from January 2017. You've got to get the CrossExamined app (two words in the app store: Cross Examined) to access those. Dr. Stephen Meyer was my guest for both of those. Dr. Doug Axe was also a guest on one of those. But Steve, before we go, I want to talk a little bit about your new book,

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because you have a new book coming out here in about six months. And you know, about ten or twelve years ago, you did this great series with Focus on the Family, where you basically went through all the evidence, or much of the evidence, that Christianity is true. And it was a video series. I can't remember, what did you call that?

**Dr. Meyer:**

It was called TrueU with a big "U", like short for university.

**Frank:**

That's it. TrueU, man. That was great. And you did it in this classroom, and you acted out all the parts. You were Einstein at one part, and you were, you know-

**Dr. Meyer:**

I was being my goofy college professor self again. Yeah, it was kind of fun,

**Frank:**

That's right. Now, how does this new book, this design hypothesis, is this dealing just with theism, or are you going into Christianity as well?

**Dr. Meyer:**

No, it's a case for theism based on an ensemble of scientific evidences that three big discoveries that reveal the mind behind the universe is the likely subtitle for the book. And I've called this for years The Return of the God Hypothesis. It tells the story first of the influence of Judeo-Christian worldview on the rise of modern science during the period known as the scientific revolution, roughly 1500 to 1700. And then how, during the 19th century, a more materialistic understanding of the natural world arose as a result of theories like Darwin's theory of evolution. And then the majority of the book then tells the story of three big discoveries that have brought back the God hypothesis and challenged what's called scientific materialism. And those discoveries are, first, that the universe had a beginning. Second, that from the beginning, the universe has been finely tuned in its physical laws and properties to allow for the possibility of life. And then thirdly, that since the beginning, there have been these massive infusions of information into the biosphere, making new forms of life possible. And I argue that when we

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look at those three discoveries together, we take that ensemble of evidence together, only the worldview of theism can account for all three of the discoveries.

A deist might be able to explain the evidence for the universe having a beginning and even being designed from the beginning. But a deist couldn't explain why there are big infusions of information, and therefore evidence of design occurring after the beginning. Someone affirming some sort of space alien designer as Francis Crick and Richard Dawkins have both proposed could maybe explain the evidence of design in biology after the beginning of the universe. So, it's not a very good explanation for that for various reasons. But anyone positing a designing intelligence that's imminent, and within the cosmos, cannot explain with that the origin of the universe itself and the laws of physics that apply to that designing it entity. And so, as we look at sort of the possibilities, materialism fails on all three counts, and pantheism is a form of materialism that makes God equivalent to nature. So, what I do is I kind of take the infrastructure that I've used in making the case for intelligent design up one level to examine the different metaphysical, or worldview, hypotheses. And I argue that only theism, the kind which affirms a God who is transcendent, intelligent, and active in the creation, as, for example, Jews and Christians believe; only that kind of a God can account for the ensemble of evidence that we see in the natural world.

**Frank:**

And, Steve, you're going to do this at the conference here in Charlotte, October 11, and 12th. Go to ses.edu, friends, if you want to be a part of that. Right, Steve? You're going to be talking about the God hypothesis?

**Dr. Meyer:**

Absolutely. I'm going to give a big plenary conference talk on The Return of the God Hypothesis.

**Frank:**

All right, that's wonderful. My guest has been Dr. Stephen Meyer. I wish we had more time. But, Steve, we're gonna have to do this again soon. Okay.

**Dr. Meyer:**

Absolutely. This is a ton of fun.

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**Frank:**

All right. That's my guest, Stephen Meyer, the book Theistic Evolution. Steve, what's the website again? Get that website in there again. What is it?

**Dr. Meyer:**

Well, darwinsdoubt.com has information about all these things, the new book, the old book, and the Theistic Evolution book.

**Frank:**

Darwinsdoubt.com, friends. Check it out. All right. Remember, I'm in California this week, Arizona the next. See you there!

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