

Christianity and Science: ~~Disputes~~ Among the Faithful *Dialogues*

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Part I: Why This Matters

Why This Matters

millennium essay

Fighting the wrong battle

Scientists who scoff at religious belief miss the point and damage their cause.

Issues of science and religion are important to our civilization - far too significant to be left to either the devoutly religious physicist or the scoffing atheistical biologist. People holding different beliefs and forms of expertise need to work together in an open, non-confrontational environment accepting both science and religion as valid aspects of human experience. It is a challenge facing the coming millennium.

not only assert that science and religion are totally incompatible, but claim that science was responsible for the decline of religion over the past century or two. But this claim is not supported by the evidence. Historians who have investigated why religion — more specifically, mainstream Christianity — appears to have declined in Britain point to



A confusion of tongues? A babel of arguments obstructs progress across the science–religion divide.

Nature 403: 831 (2000)

Why This Matters



MENU

TIME

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Sorry, But Media Coverage of Pope Francis is Papal Bull

Elizabeth Dias @elizabethjdias | Oct. 29, 2014

The "Pope Francis supports evolution" story is just the latest example of the press getting the Catholic Church completely wrong

It is official: the media has gone bananas in its coverage of Pope Francis.

The OMG-Pope-Francis-Supports-Evolution story of the past two days is just the latest example. Almost every news outlet, major and minor, has plastered Pope Francis' name across the interwebs and proclaimed he has finally planted the Catholic Church in the evolution camp of the creation-evolution debate. The only problem? Almost every outlet has got the story



Time Oct. 29, 2014

The Personal Importance

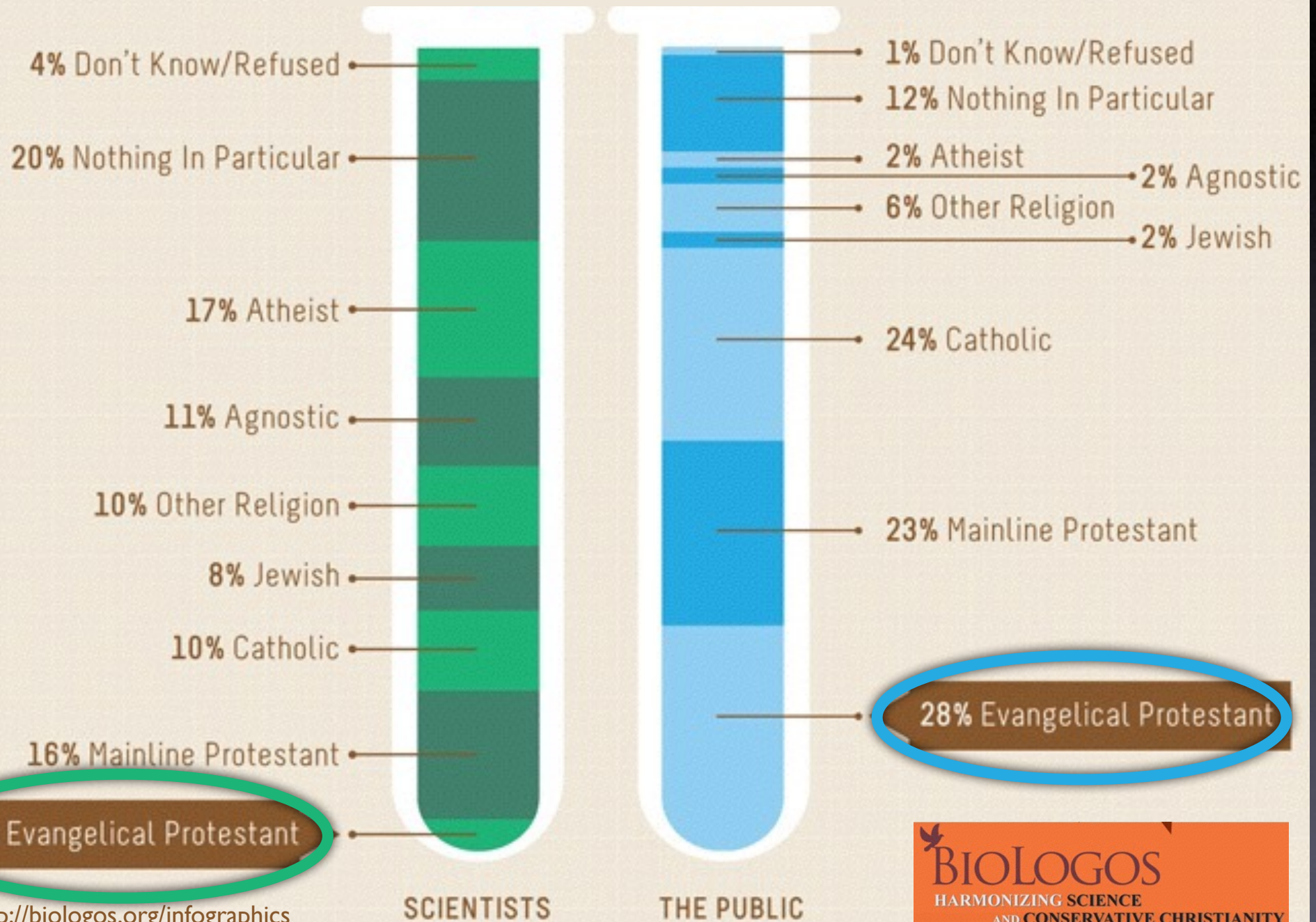
- Professor and Chair of a **Zoology Department** at a major research university
- A **Christian** with a **M.Div. degree** from an evangelical seminary before pursuing a Ph.D. at U.C.-Berkeley
- **Not** an evolutionary biologist (I study embryos)
- Faculty advisor for **Christian student groups**

Elaine Howard Ecklund (Rice Univ.)



<http://wikipedia.org>

Skim or 4%?



The Personal Toll of the Issue

Jeremy O'Connell, 2006



Lack of congruence

Alyssa Bryant Rockenbach

["Spirituality in Higher Education: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning a Purpose."]

'To get the "A," you've got to repeat what the teacher tells you, regurgitate it, get your "A," and get out—even though you might not believe in it. I mean, to me, the irony of it all is that I have to play the part of somebody that is not true to himself.'

A Portrait of Evangelical Christian Students in College (2007)

<http://religion.ssrc.org/reforum/Bryant.pdf>

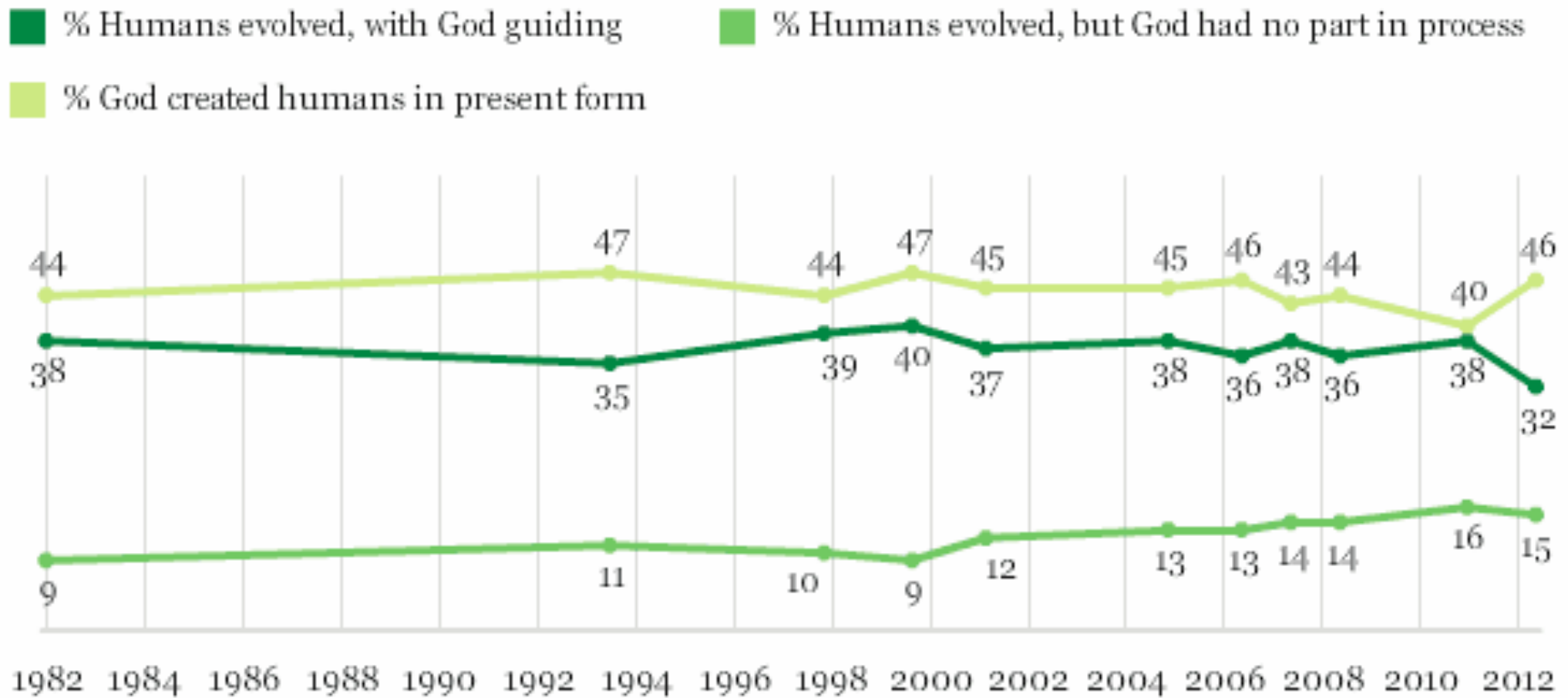


http://ced.ncsu.edu/user/alyssa_rockenbach

Part 2:

Evangelicals and Science

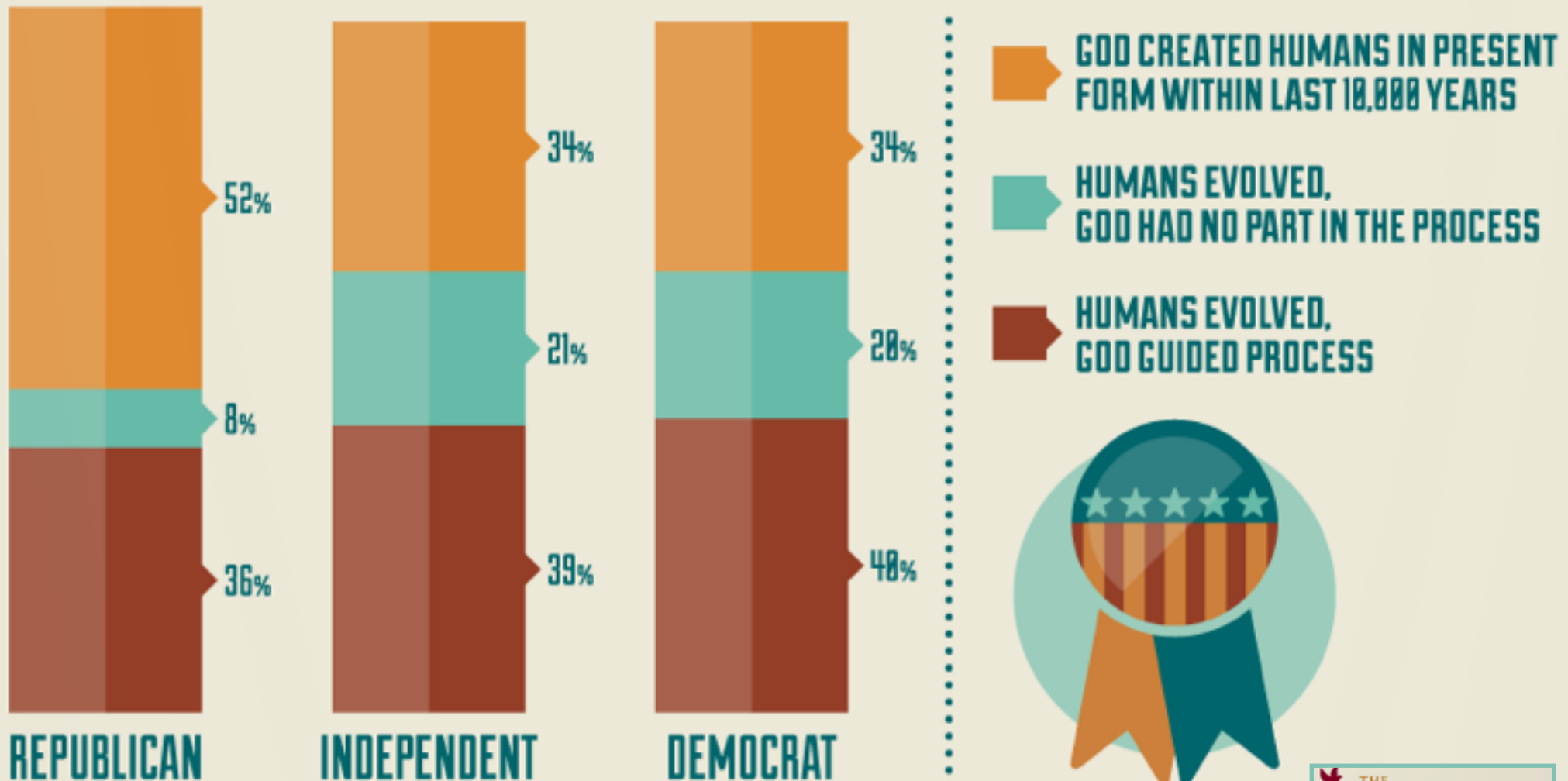
Gallup Poll (2012)



<http://www.gallup.com/poll/21814/evolution-creationism-intelligent-design.aspx>




Views on evolution

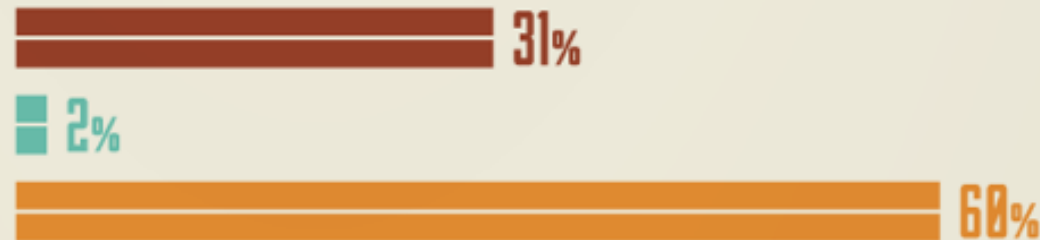
BY POLITICAL PARTY



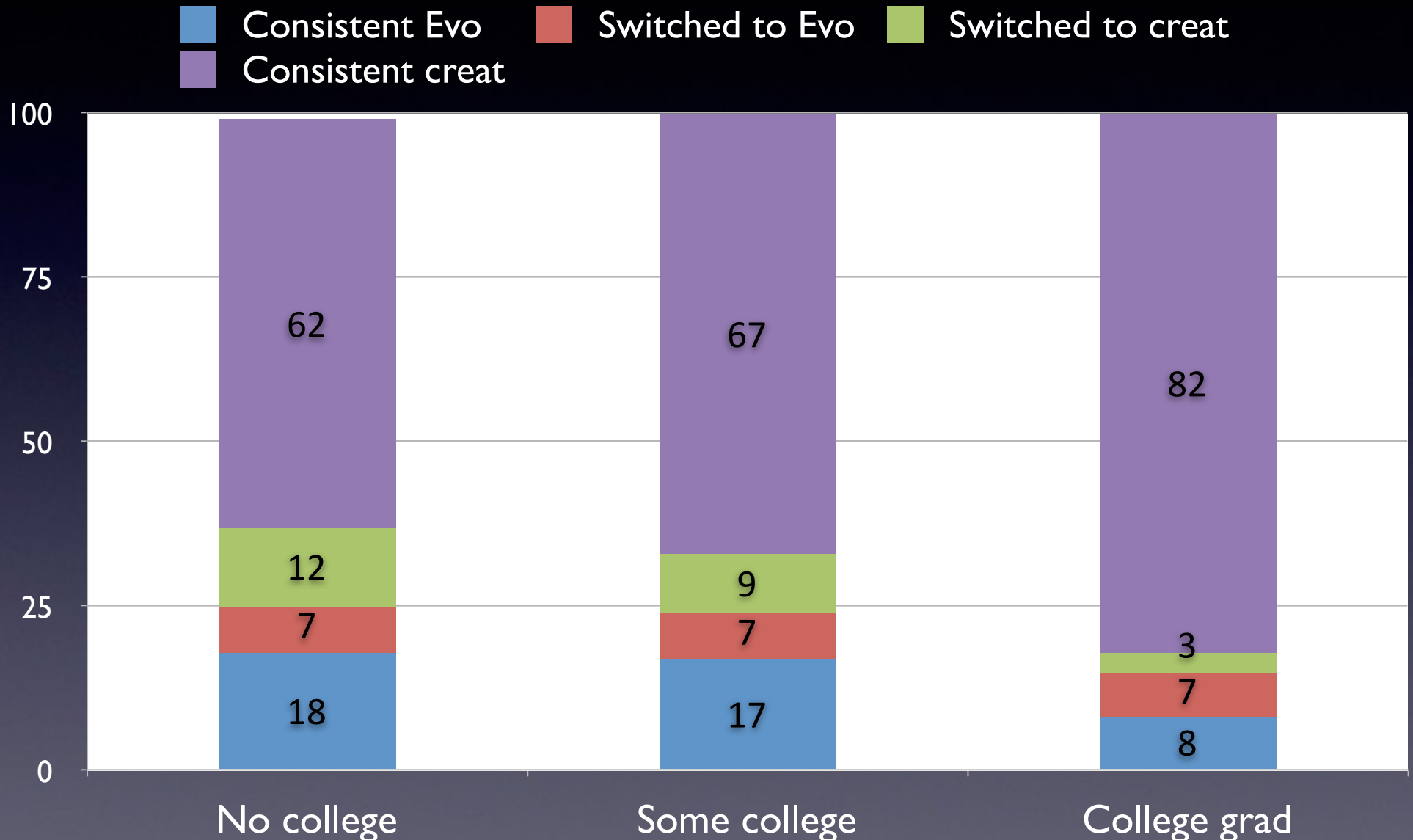
Views on evolution (church)



-  HUMANS EVOLVED, GOD GUIDED PROCESS
-  HUMANS EVOLVED, GOD HAD NO PART IN THE PROCESS
-  GOD CREATED HUMANS IN PRESENT FORM WITHIN LAST 10,000 YEARS



Evangelical Emerging Adults Who Switch Views on Evolution by Amount of Education



Jonathan Hill (Calvin College); Change of attitude from
“Wave 2 (age 16-20)” to “Wave 3 (18-25)”; Nat. Study of Youth & Religion

National Study of Religion & Human Origins (October 2014)



Jon Hill (Calvin College)

(<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/sociology/news/archive.html>)



- Disaggregates components of common survey questions
- Gauge the influence of social context on these beliefs.

John Evans - General Social Survey

- There is no religious group that knows less, and mainline Protestants know *more*, than those who are not religiously active.
- The only difference: **evangelicals have taken *more* science classes.**
- Many from religious groups **do not accept the validity of scientific methodology** for the few fact claims for which there is a differing religious explanation (this includes evolution).



<http://sociology.ucsd.edu/faculty/bio/evansj.shtml>

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (2011) 50(4):707–727

John Evans - General Social Survey

- *[T]he solution to conflicts over evolution—for ordinary people, not activists—is not in teaching religious people the scientific method, or in showing how scientific institutions produce true knowledge. Conservative Protestants already accept that. Rather, it lies in convincing conservative Protestants that scientists are not systematically biasing the findings of their knowledge.*

- In other words, **trust is as important as data.**



<http://sociology.ucsd.edu/faculty/bio/evansj.shtml>

Conclusions

- Changing attitudes about science is likely more about **allaying theological concerns** than about imparting information.
- Changing attitudes about science may be as much about **social and relational considerations** as it is about information.

Part 3:

A Case Study

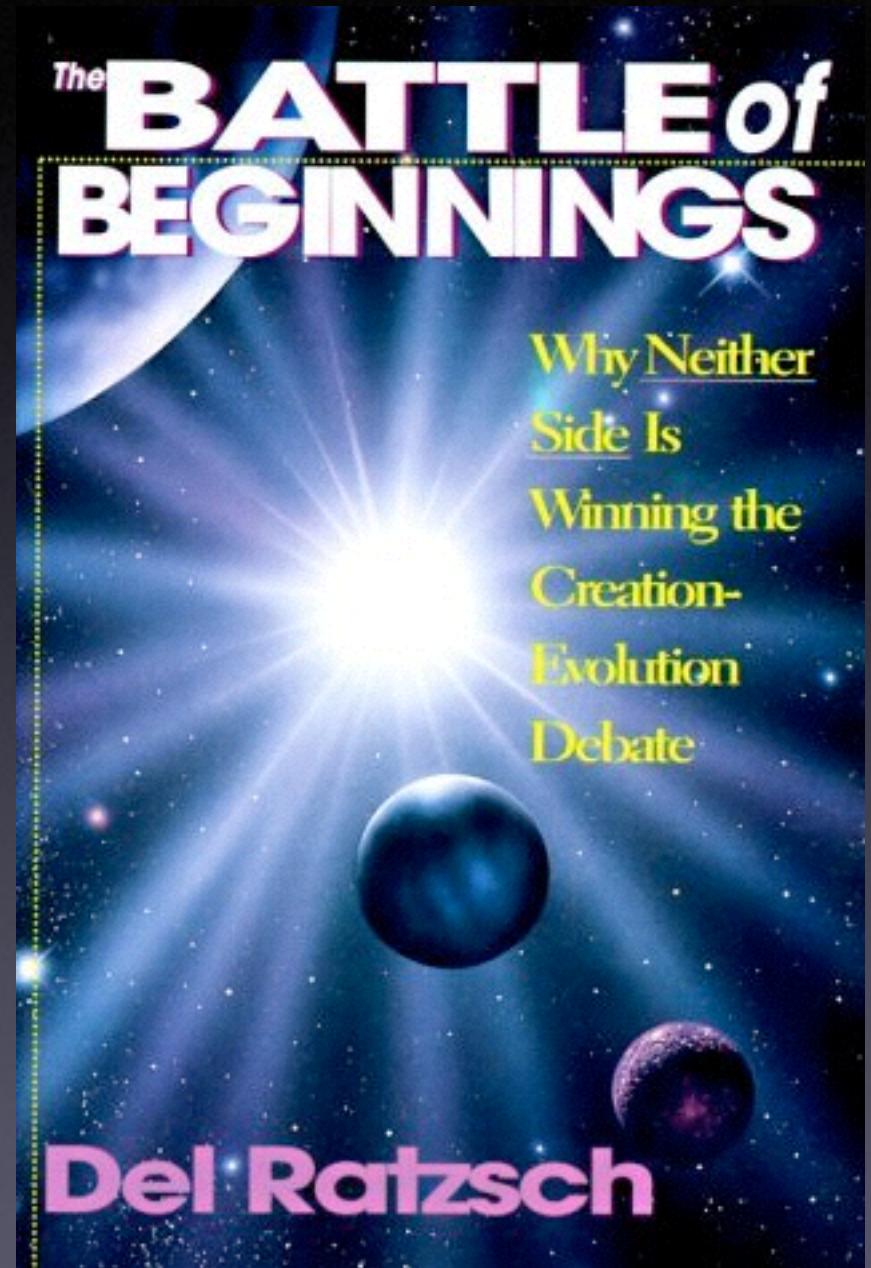
The Big Idea

Christians should **avoid**
binary thinking about
the question of origins.

Not So Fruitful Approach

*One of the attractions of the popular caricatures that reign in this area is that **they make confident choice appear supremely easy.***

*(Del Ratzsch, *The Battle of Beginnings*. InterVarsity Press, 1996, p. 8)*



What Do All Christians Affirm about Creation?

- Colossians 1:16-17: 16 For by him *all things were created*: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all things were created by him and for him*. 17 He is before all things, and *in him all things hold together*.

What Do All Christians Affirm about Creation?

- Nicene Creed (AD 325): *We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, **Maker of all things visible and invisible***
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father
By whom all things were made

Two Books: Psalm 19 (NIV)

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge...

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Francis Bacon

(16th century; important figure in “Scientific Revolution”)

*“...let no man...think or maintain, that a man can search too far or be too well studied in **the book of God’s word**, or in **the book of God’s works**.”*

quoted by Charles Darwin in the preface to *The Origin of Species* and Henry Morris in *Men of Science, Men of God*, pp. 13, 14



http://www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/globe/bacon_files/bacon.jpg

What Is “Evolution”?

- Change over time
- Biological evolution: the process of biological change over time
- Involves descent with modification, and made possible by mutation plus natural selection, along with other genetic mechanisms (genetic drift, etc.)

What Is “Evolution”?

- **Microevolution**: small evolutionary changes, usually within a population
- **Macroevolution**: large evolutionary changes, including speciation and extinction, typically occurring over long periods of time and across gene pools.

What Is “Creationism”?

- The position that the universe, and [ultimately] life on Earth were **created by one or more intelligent agents.**
- For Christians **this agent is God.**
- Therefore **all Christians are creationists.**

What Is “Naturalism”?

- **Methodological naturalism**: the natural world is to be explained in terms of natural processes [some would prefer “**natural science**”]
- **Metaphysical naturalism**: a philosophical **worldview** that the natural world is all there is, and that excludes the supernatural
- No Christians are metaphysical naturalists, but some are methodological naturalists.

Fruitful Approach

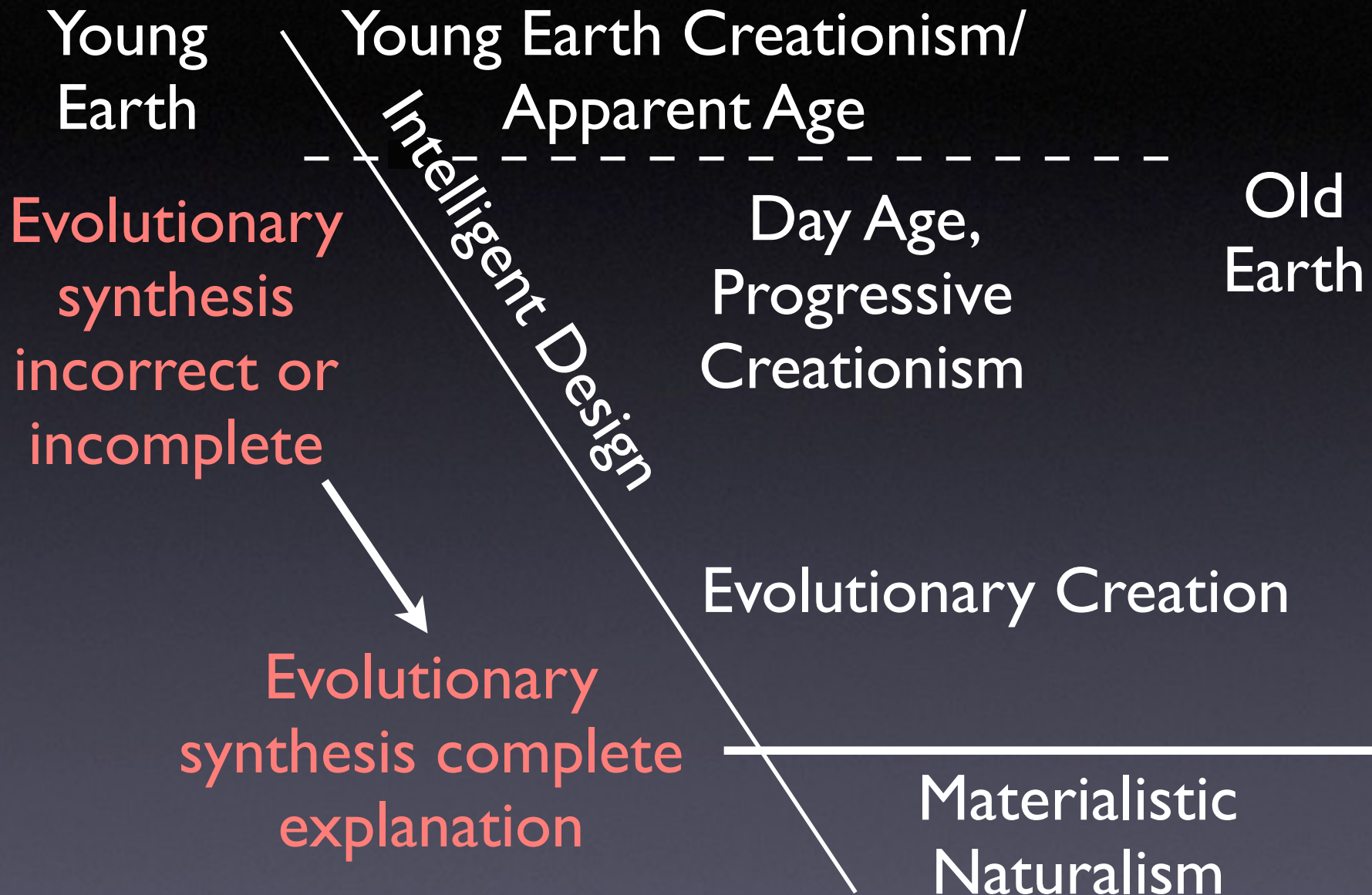
Eugenie Scott

Many—if not most—Americans think of the creation/evolution controversy as a dichotomy...The true situation is much more complicated. I encourage people to reject the creation/evolution dichotomy and to recognize the creation/evolution continuum.

(Reports of the National Center for Sci. Educ., July/Aug. 1999)

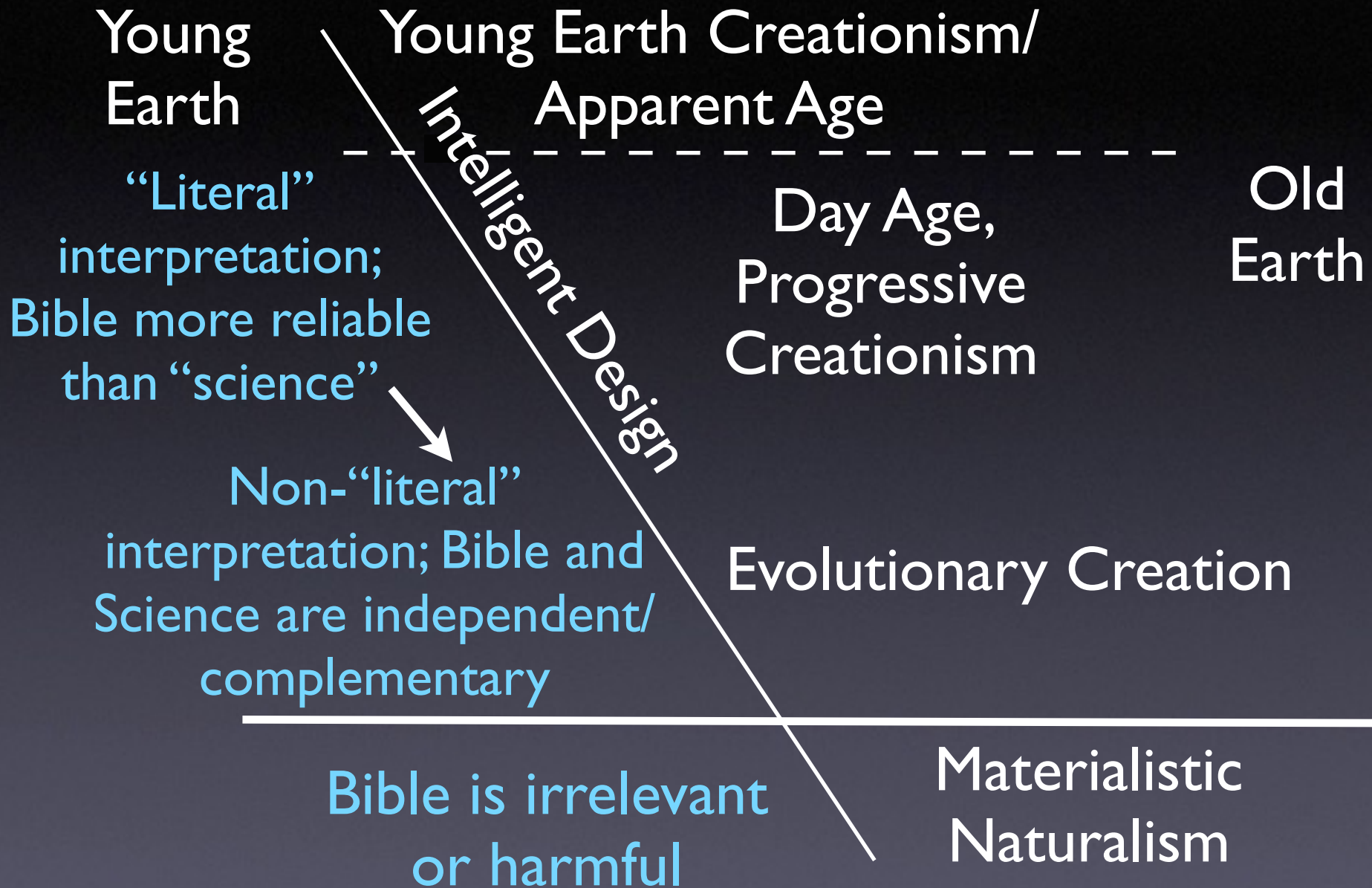


Christian Faith and Origins



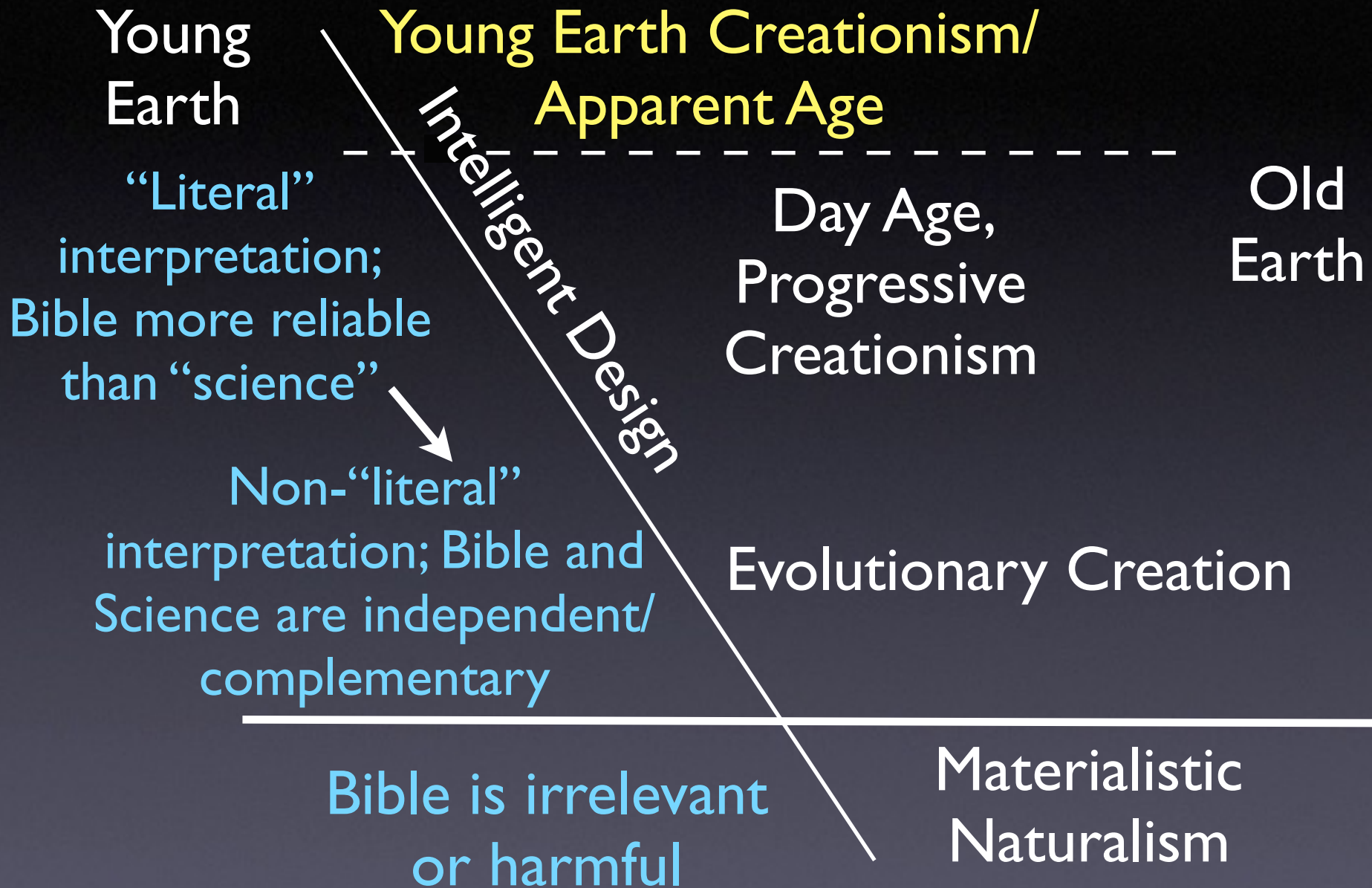
Adapted from Scott, E.C., *Evolution vs. Creationism*, p. 57

Christian Faith and Origins



Adapted from Scott, E.C., *Evolution vs. Creationism*, p. 57

Christian Faith and Origins



Adapted from Scott, E.C., *Evolution vs. Creationism*, p. 57

YEC: Joe Francis

Jeff Hardin's college
roommate, who
unsuccessfully tried
to help Jeff with his
jump shot

[http://www2.masters.edu/
DeptPageNew.asp?PageId=2805](http://www2.masters.edu/DeptPageNew.asp?PageId=2805)



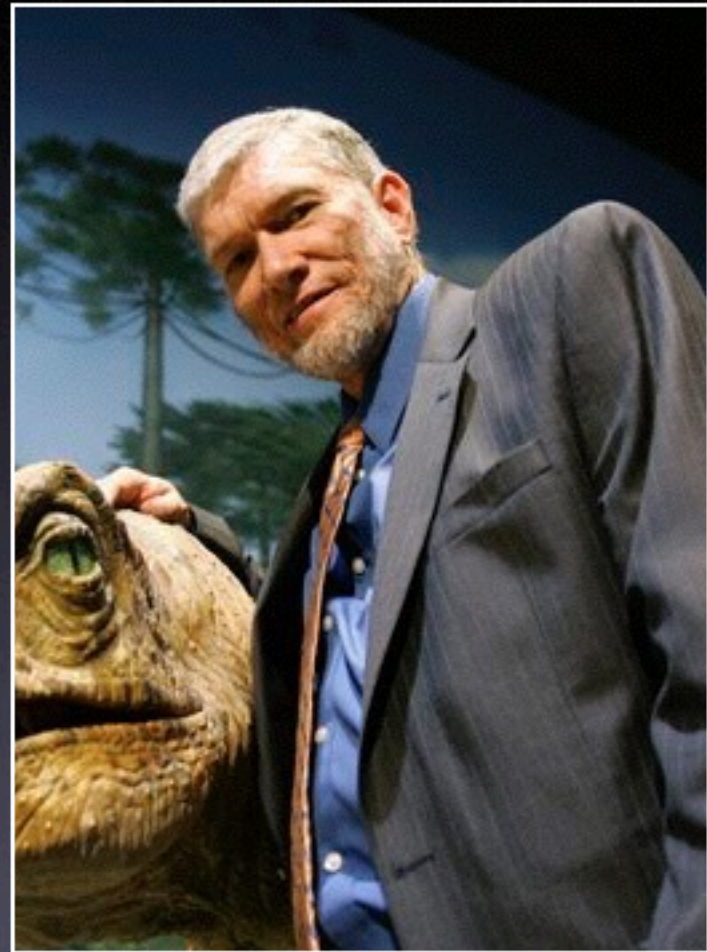
YEC: Motivations

- Seeks to uphold a **strong view of Scripture** and **God's sovereignty** in the world
- Seeks to be faithful to a **“literal” hermeneutic** [“If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.”]
- Seeks to avoid the **“hermeneutical slippery slope”**: the belief that if a “literal” reading of Genesis is relinquished, then the rest of Scripture cannot be trusted.

YEC: Motivation

Ken Ham (founder,
Answers in Genesis)

*I want to make it VERY clear that we don't want to be known primarily as 'young-Earth creationists.' AiG's main thrust is NOT 'young Earth' as such; **our emphasis is on Biblical authority.** (January 1998 AiG-USA Newsletter)*



[http://www.evangelicalright.com/
2007/05/
kentucky_creation_museum_opens
_1.html#bios/warfield.html](http://www.evangelicalright.com/2007/05/kentucky_creation_museum_opens_1.html#bios/warfield.html)

Epistemological dominoes



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/04/Dominoes.jpg>

YEC: Challenges

Paul Nelson (and John
Mark Reynolds)

*Natural science at the
moment seems to
overwhelmingly point to an old
cosmos...It is safe to say that
most recent creationists are
motivated by religious
concerns.*

*(Three Views on Creation and
Evolution, p. 49)*



<http://www.discovery.org/p/45>

YEC: Challenges

Dennis Venema

I have seen students struggle with their faith, close their minds to the scientific evidence, and even resolutely declare that no amount of evidence would ever be enough to convince them that evolution is real...I have seen students willing to discard nearly the entirety of modern science in order to maintain a particular ... view.

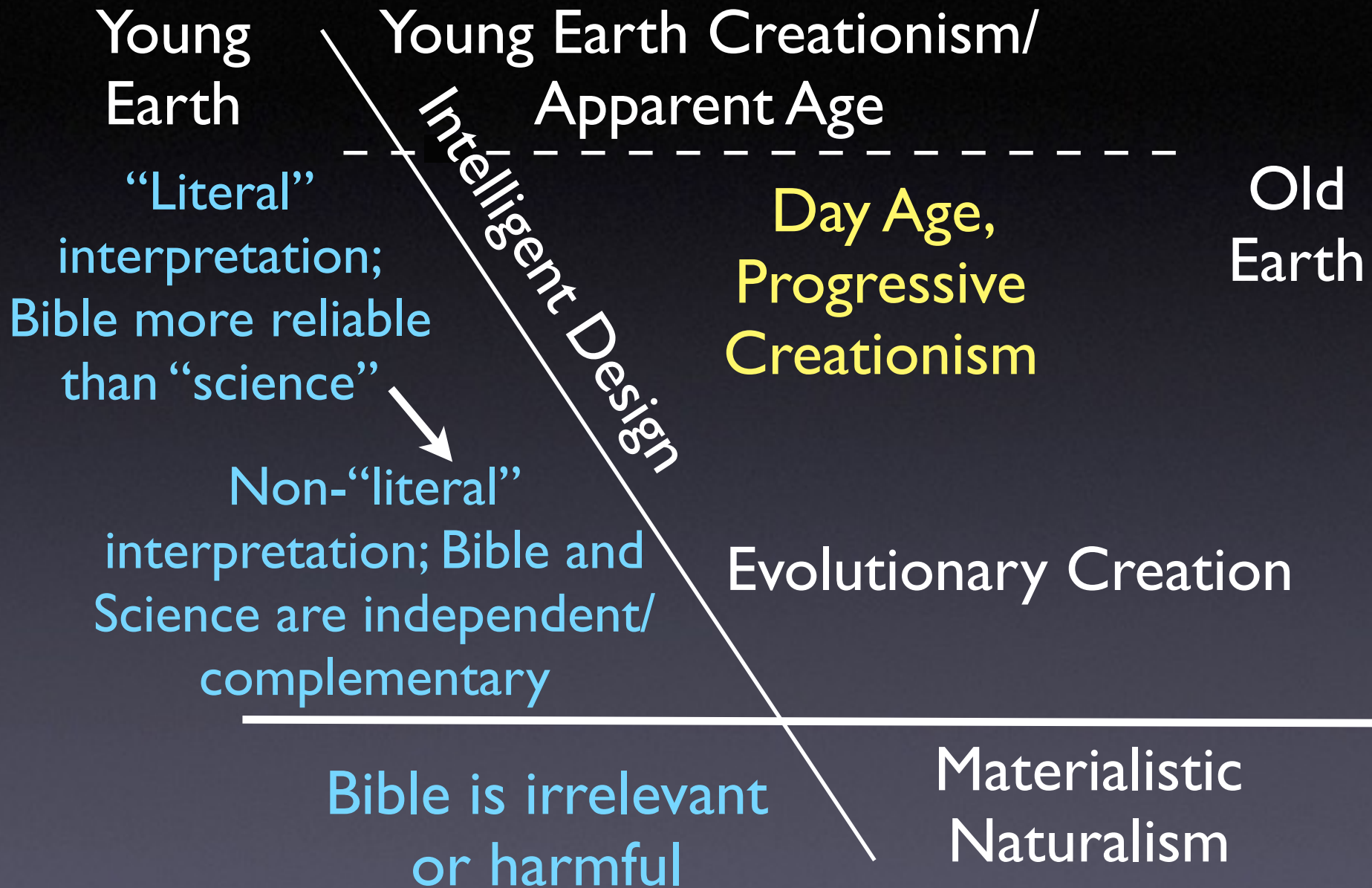


<http://biologos.org/blog/the-sorrows-and-joys-of-teaching-evolution>

YEC: Challenges

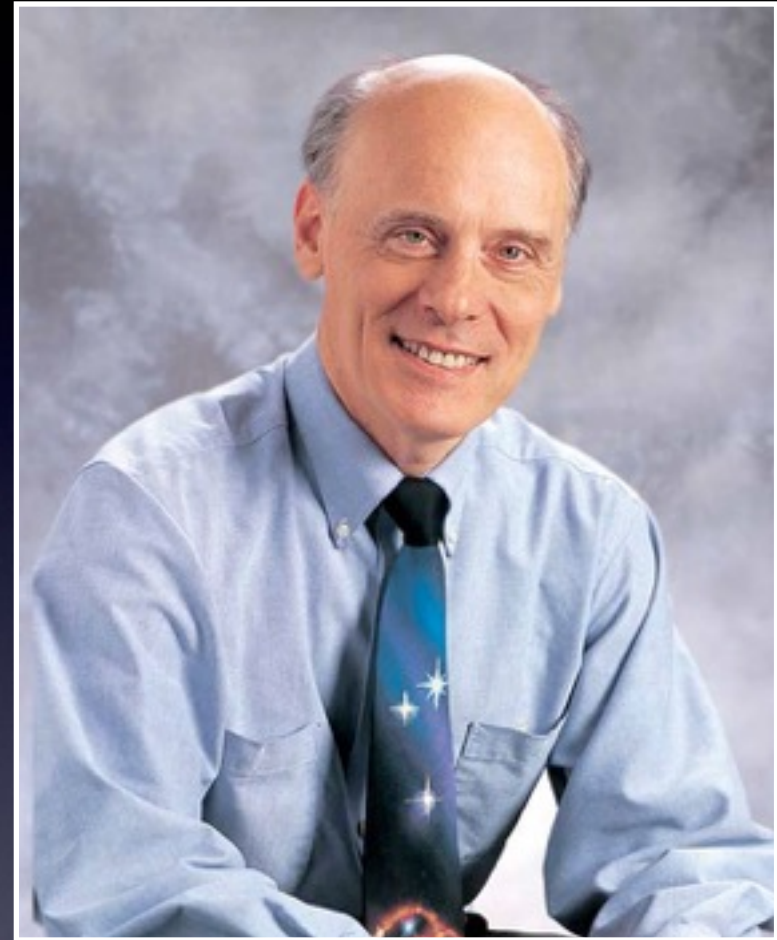
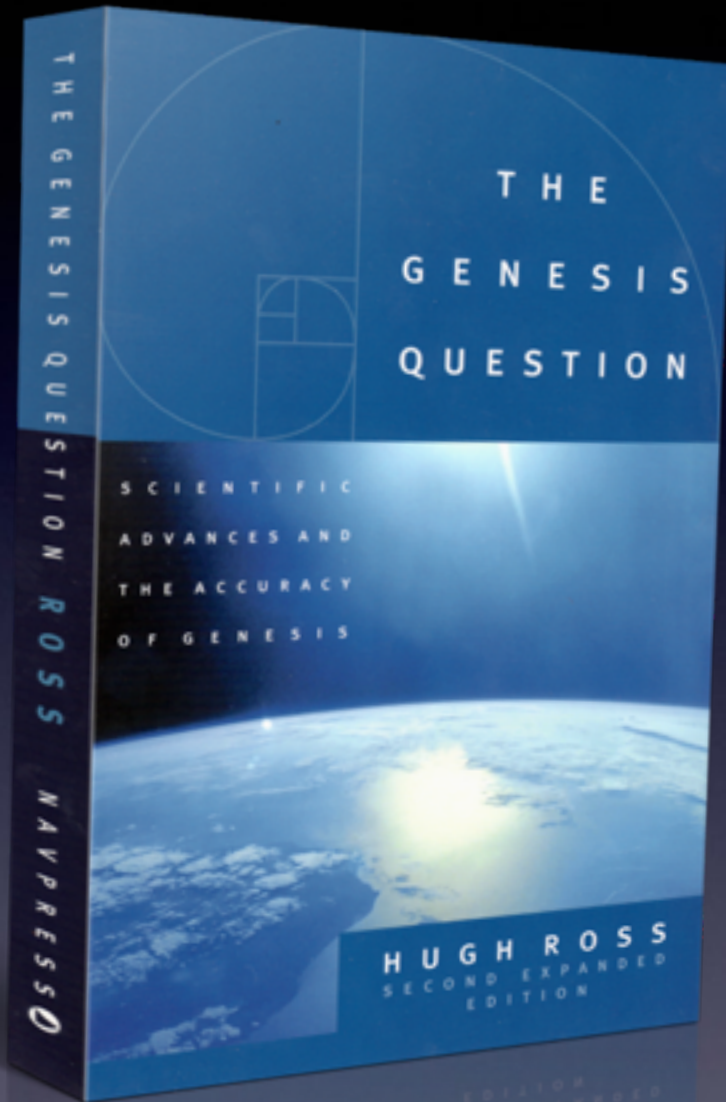
- Some Christians ask whether apparent age may create **theological concerns** (can the “Second Book” be trusted?)
- Some Christians feel the YEC **interpretive approach to Genesis** does not take the Bible “literally” enough or seek its “plain” sense for its original audience.

Christian Faith and Origins



Adapted from Scott, E.C., *Evolution vs. Creationism*, p. 57

OEC: Reasons to Believe



Hugh Ross

[http://www.churchchannel.tv/watch/images/
programs/Hugh%20Ross.jpg](http://www.churchchannel.tv/watch/images/programs/Hugh%20Ross.jpg)

others: Walter Bradley, C. John Collins, some ASA members

OEC: Motivations

- Seeks to uphold a **strong view of the authority of the Bible** and **God's sovereignty** in the world, **balanced against seemingly congruent results from the physical sciences.**
- Seeks to uphold the **uniqueness of humans** and the **historicity of the Fall** [a cataclysmic event in which our first parents sinned against God].

OEC: Macroevolution

RTB [Reason to Believe] scholars believe that God miraculously intervened throughout the history of the universe in various ways millions, possibly even billions, of times to create each and every new species of life on Earth.

Fazale Rana

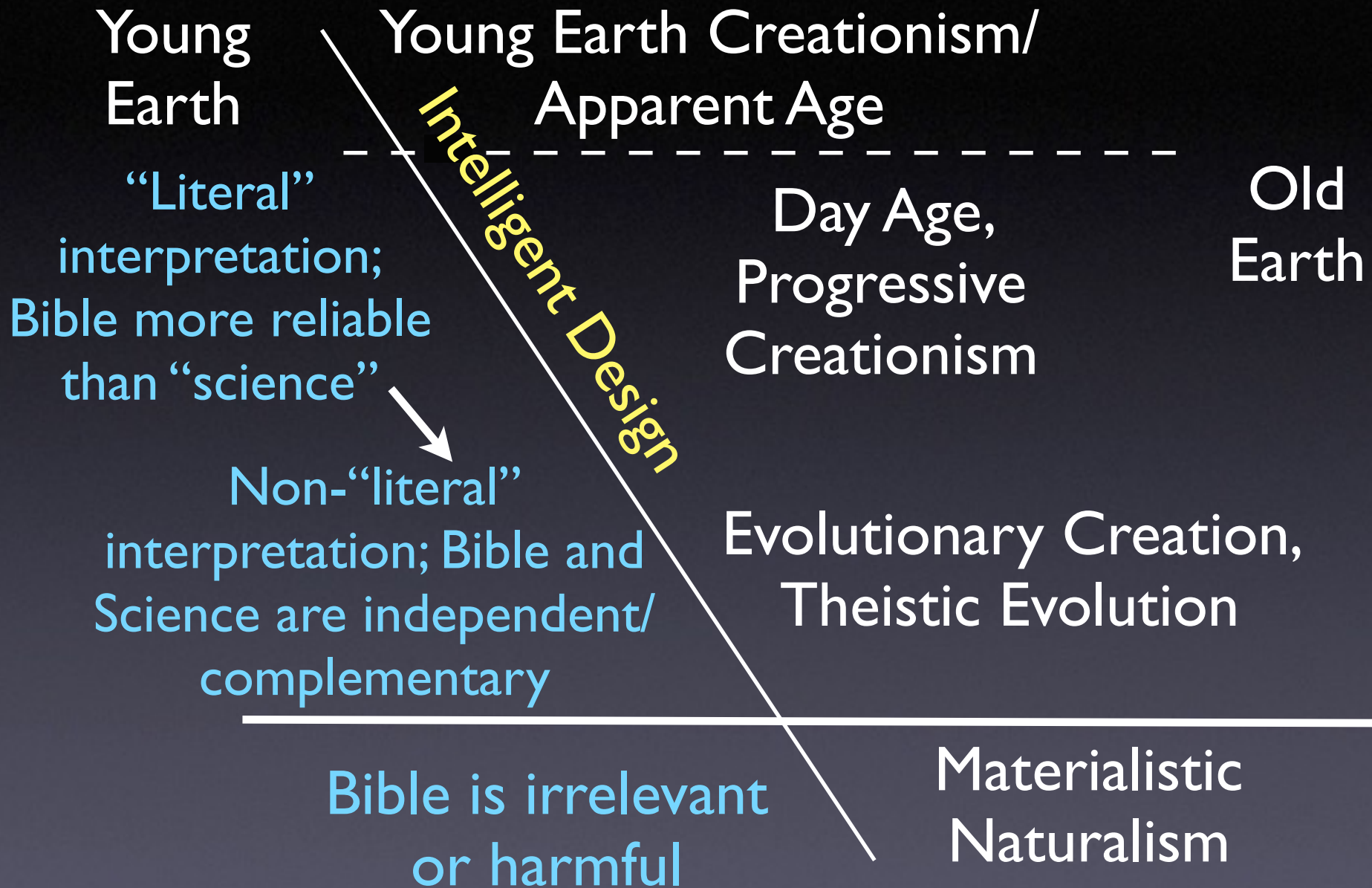


[http://www.reasons.org/
about-us/faq](http://www.reasons.org/about-us/faq)

OEC: Challenges

- YEC Christians are troubled by it because it accepts an **old earth**.
- EC Christians wonder whether its view of God's creative activity is **“ad hoc”**.
- The concordist approach may bring **modern approaches to the text** that would not make sense to the original audience.

Christian Faith and Origins



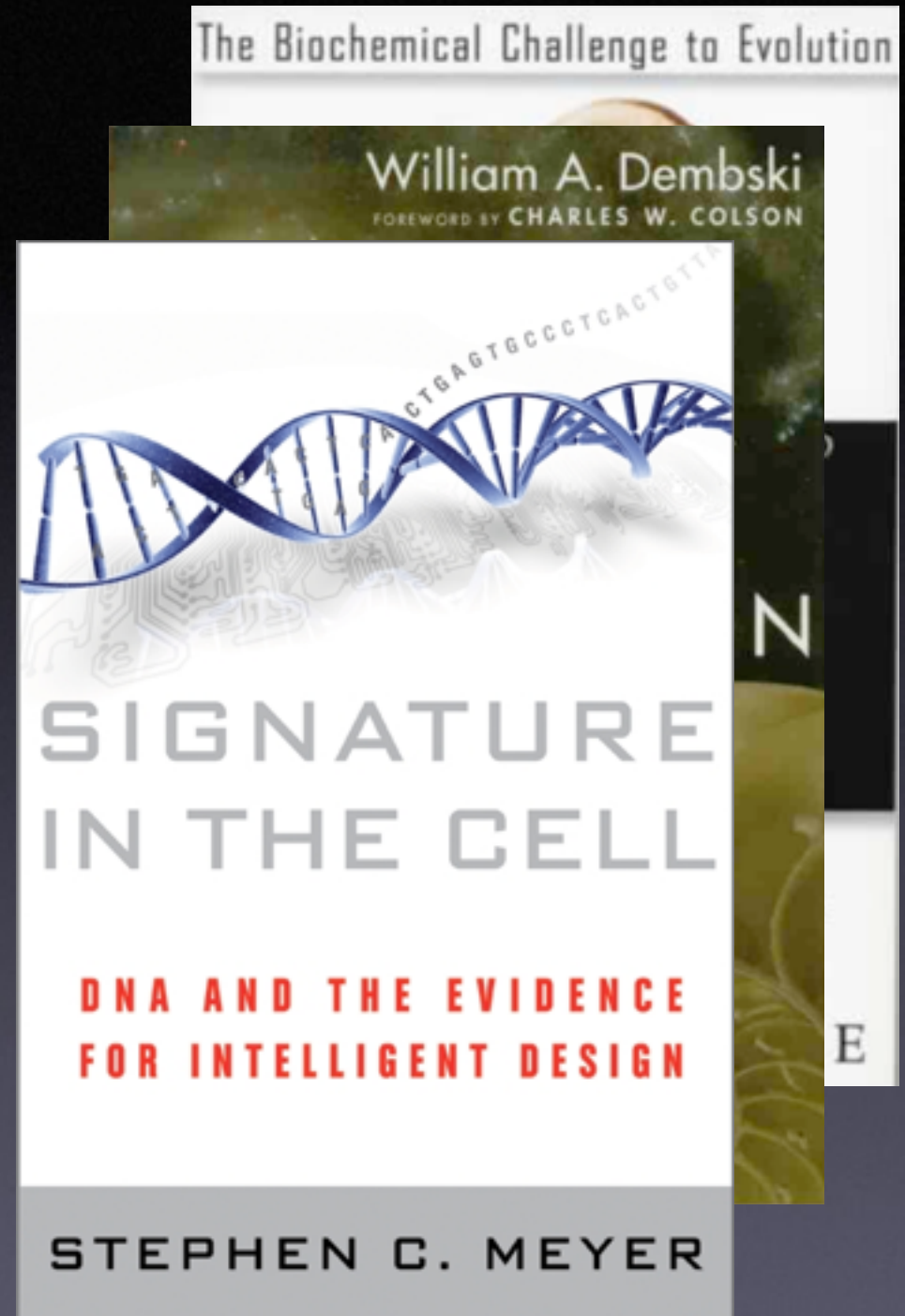
Adapted from Scott, E.C., *Evolution vs. Creationism*, p. 57

Intelligent Design (ID)

- Christians accept the idea that intentionality underlies creation (Col. 1:16-17). This is not what is meant by ID in a technical sense.
- ID as a technical concept is an argument for the existence of a designer based on the premise that certain features of the universe and of living things can only be explained by an intelligent cause.

Intelligent Design (ID)

Others: Phillip Johnson
Guillermo Gonzalez, J.P.
Moreland, Paul Nelson



ID: Motivations

- Main stated motivation: to **provide an alternative to Neo-Darwinian theory**, since this theory is viewed as inadequate.
- Since many [but not all] ID proponents are Christians, a key motivation internal to the movement is concern that Neo-Darwinian evolution is **dysteleological in nature** [there is no inherent purpose in natural selection].

ID: Challenges

- Many scientists who are Christians feel that ID **makes no positive predictions** about how to do science or about scientific mechanism that lead to testable hypotheses.
- **No alternatives to methodological naturalism** have emerged.
- **ID proponents feel this is simply a matter of time.**

ID: Challenges

Paul Nelson

Easily the biggest challenge facing the ID community is to develop a full-fledged theory of biological design...

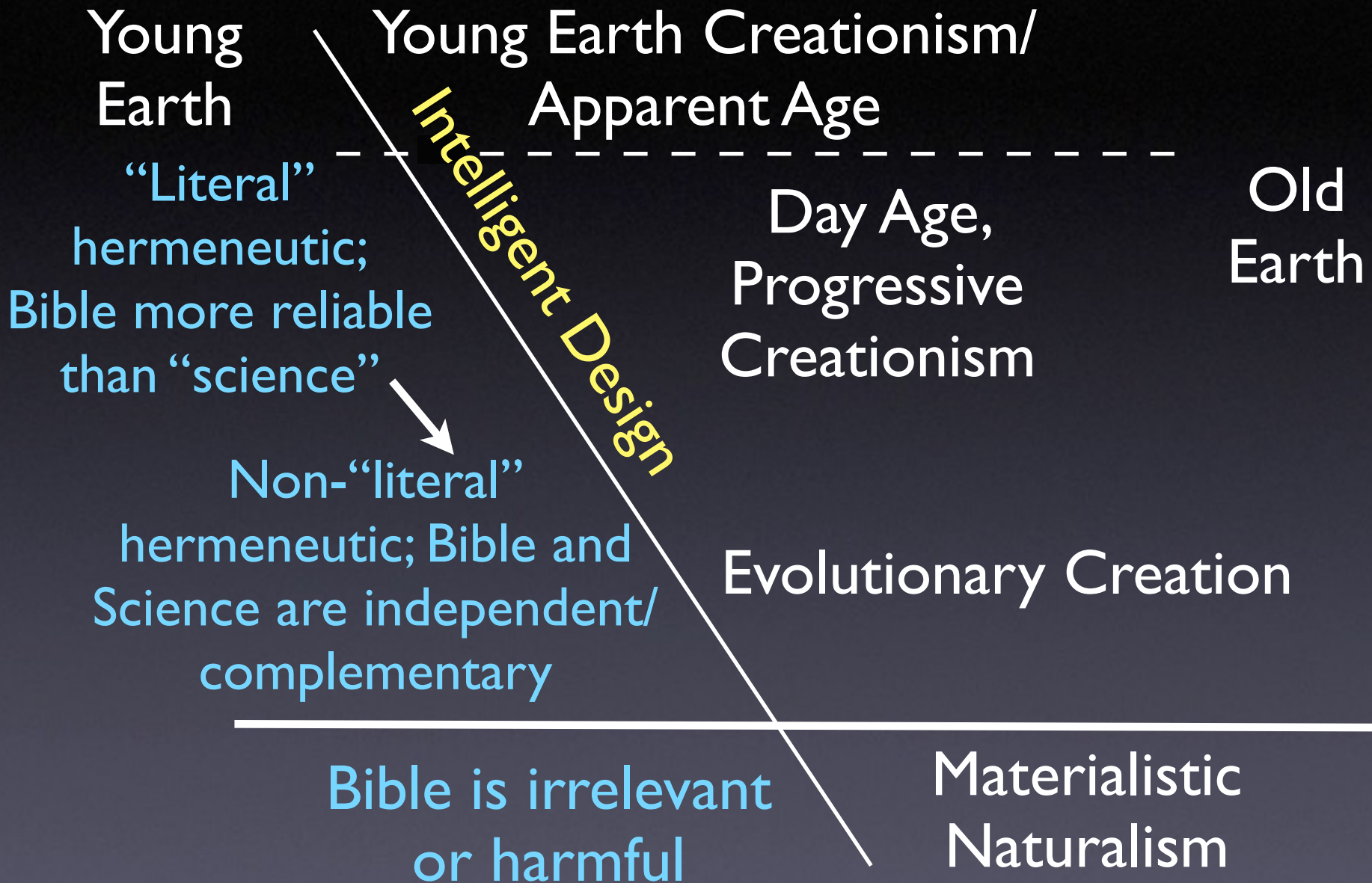
*Without a theory, it's very hard to know where to direct your research focus... **Right now, we have a bag of powerful intuitions...***

(Touchstone Magazine 17, no. 6, 2004, 64-65)



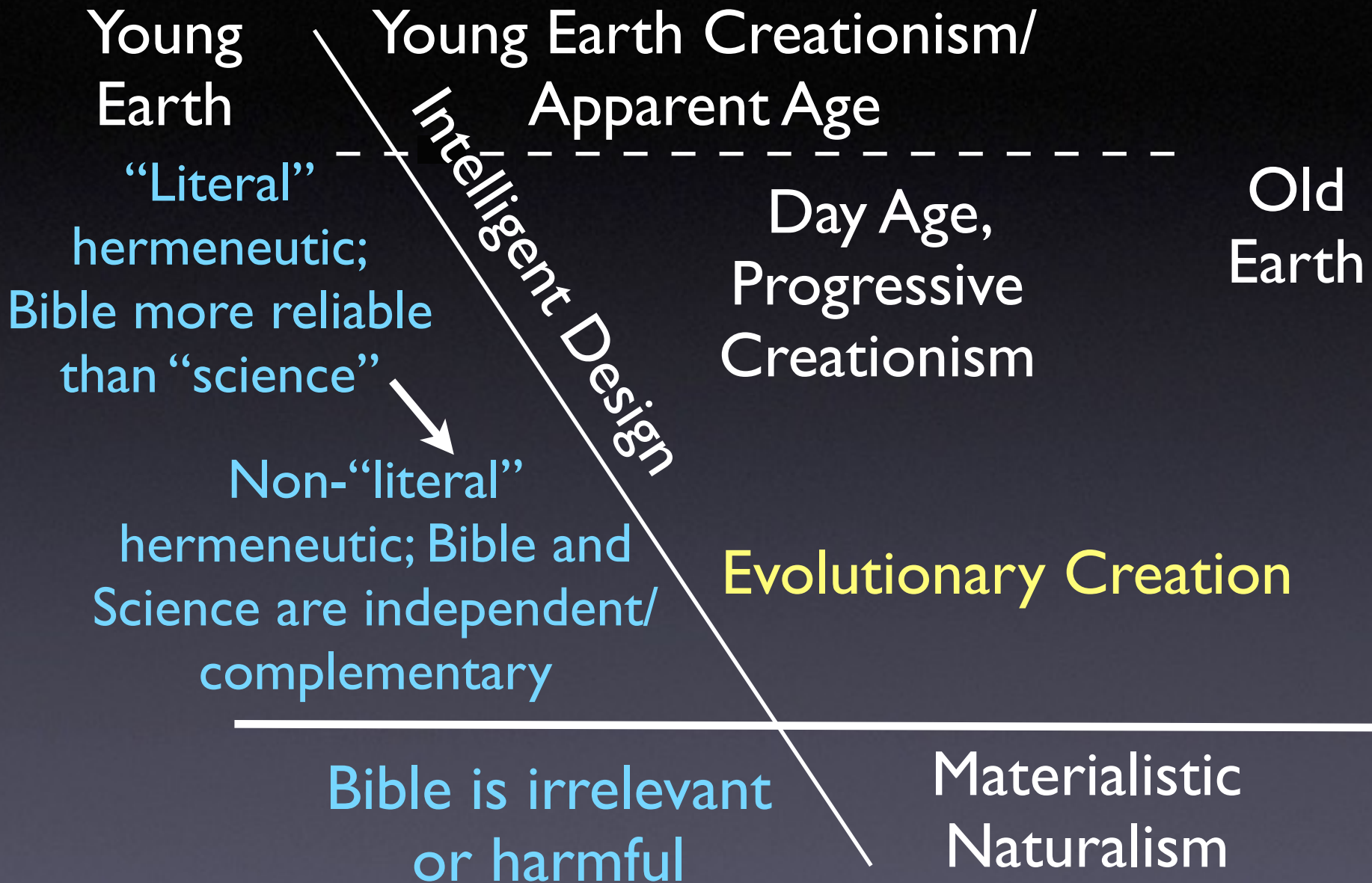
<http://www.discovery.org/p/45>

Christian Faith and Origins



Adapted from Scott, E.C., *Evolution vs. Creationism*, p. 57

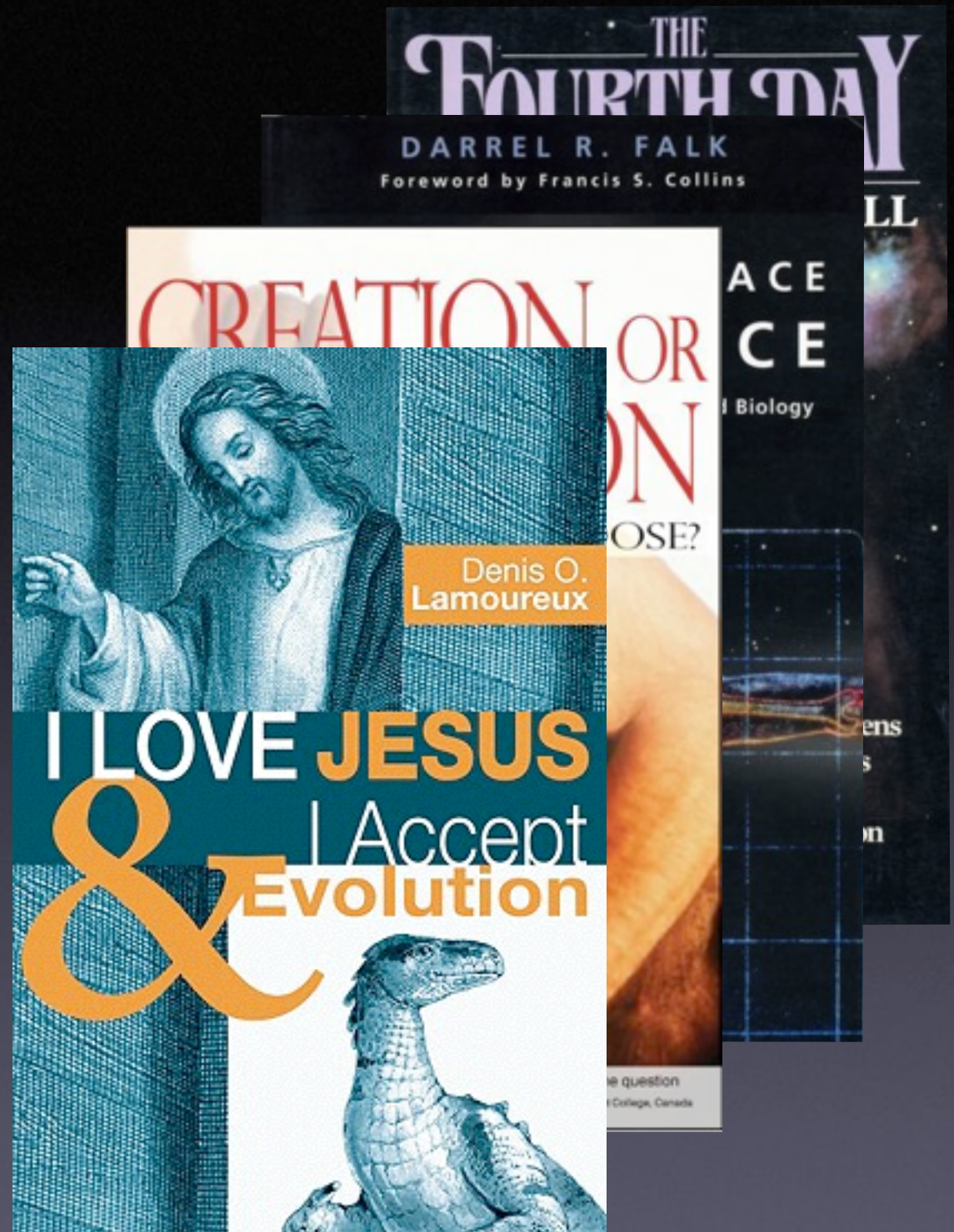
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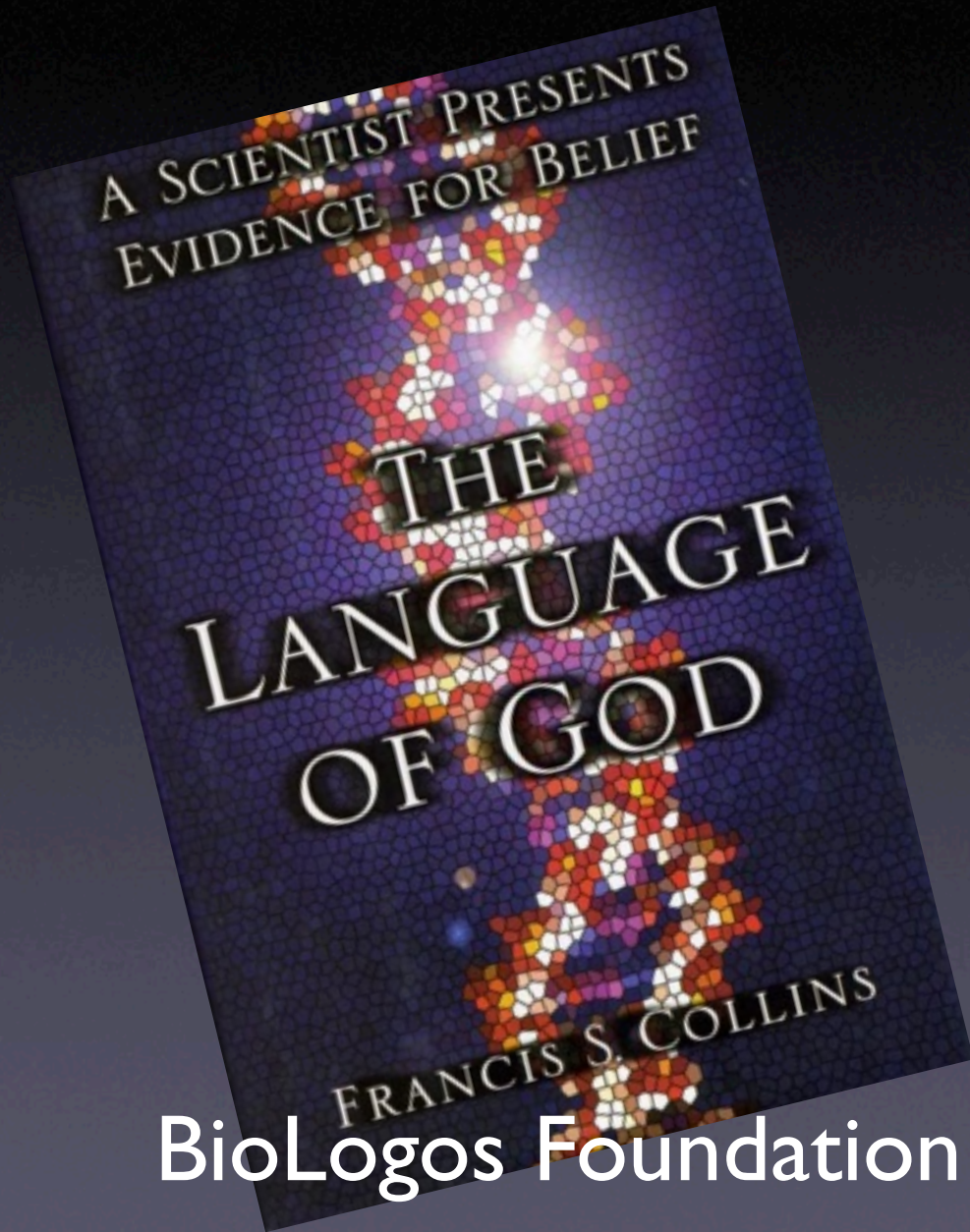
Evolutionary Creationists (ECs)

Scientific Christians
US: ASA
UK: CiS, Faraday
Institute



Francis Collins

(Key scientist in Human Genome Project)



[http://www.science.tamu.edu/
articles/Collins.jpg](http://www.science.tamu.edu/articles/Collins.jpg)

BioLogos Foundation

EC: Motivations

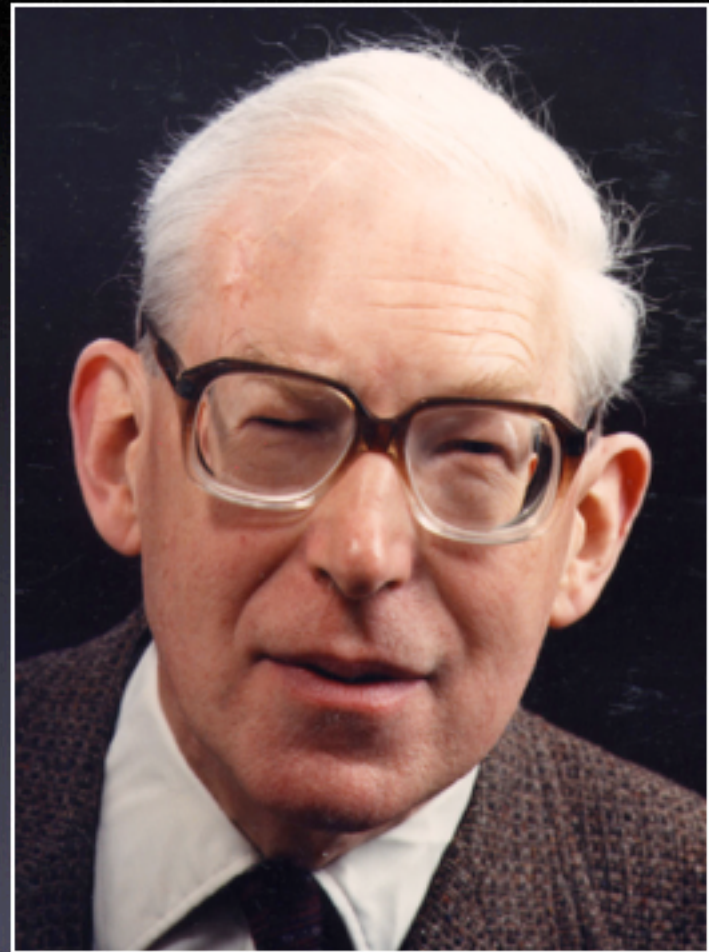
- Seeks to integrate what appears to be strong evidence for biological evolution with Christian theism, while seeking to maintain commitment to biblical authority.
- Seeks to honor the “Second Book” by acknowledging new biological data in addition to data from the physical sciences.

Inerrancy and Evolution

J.I. Packer (conservative Anglican theologian)

“I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, and maintain it in print, but I cannot see that anything Scripture says, in the first chapters of Genesis or elsewhere, bears on the biological theory of evolution one way or the other.”

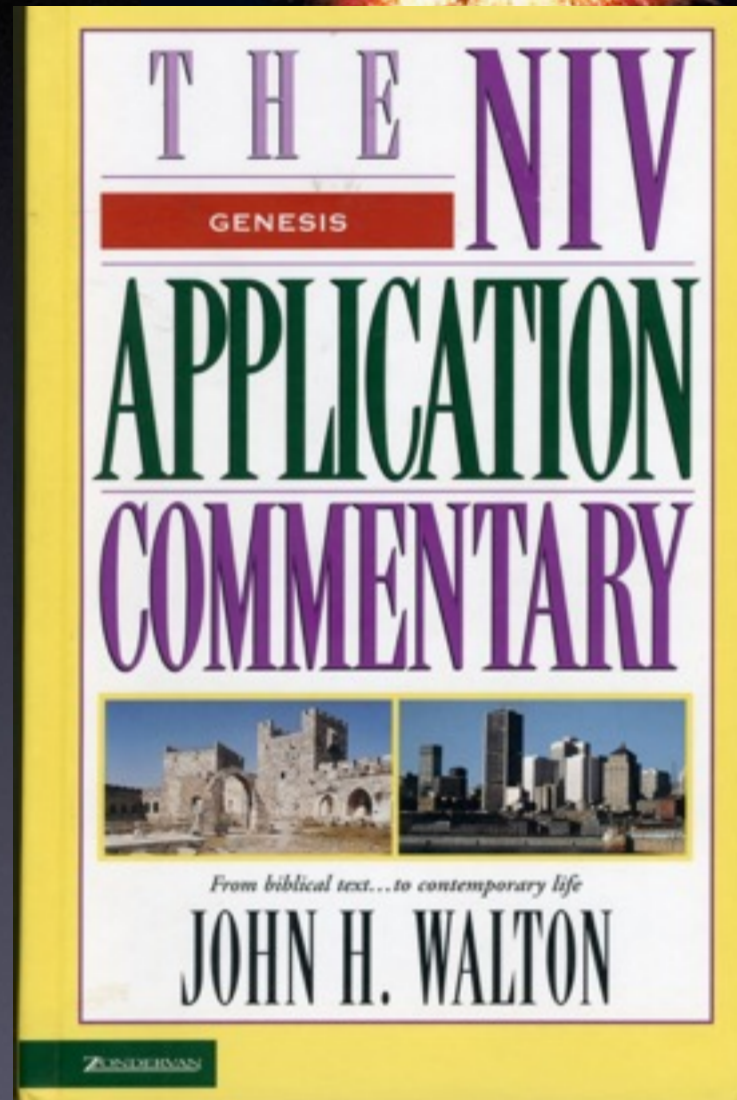
(J. I. Packer, 1978, *The Evangelical Anglican Identity Problem*, p. 5)
[emphasis mine]



http://www.cambridgebibles.com/Media/PubComAuthors/Packer_JI.jpg

EC and Recent Evangelical Interpretation

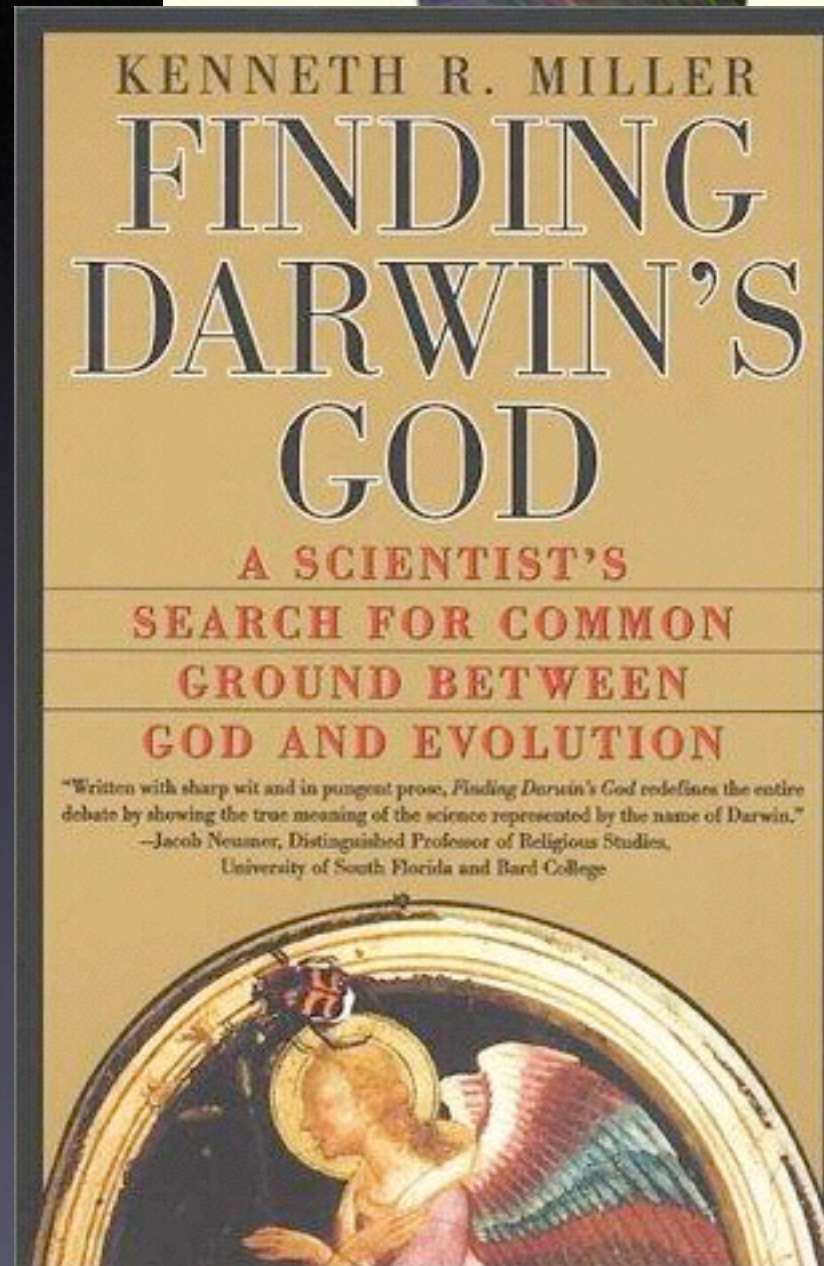
Literary/cultural
analysis



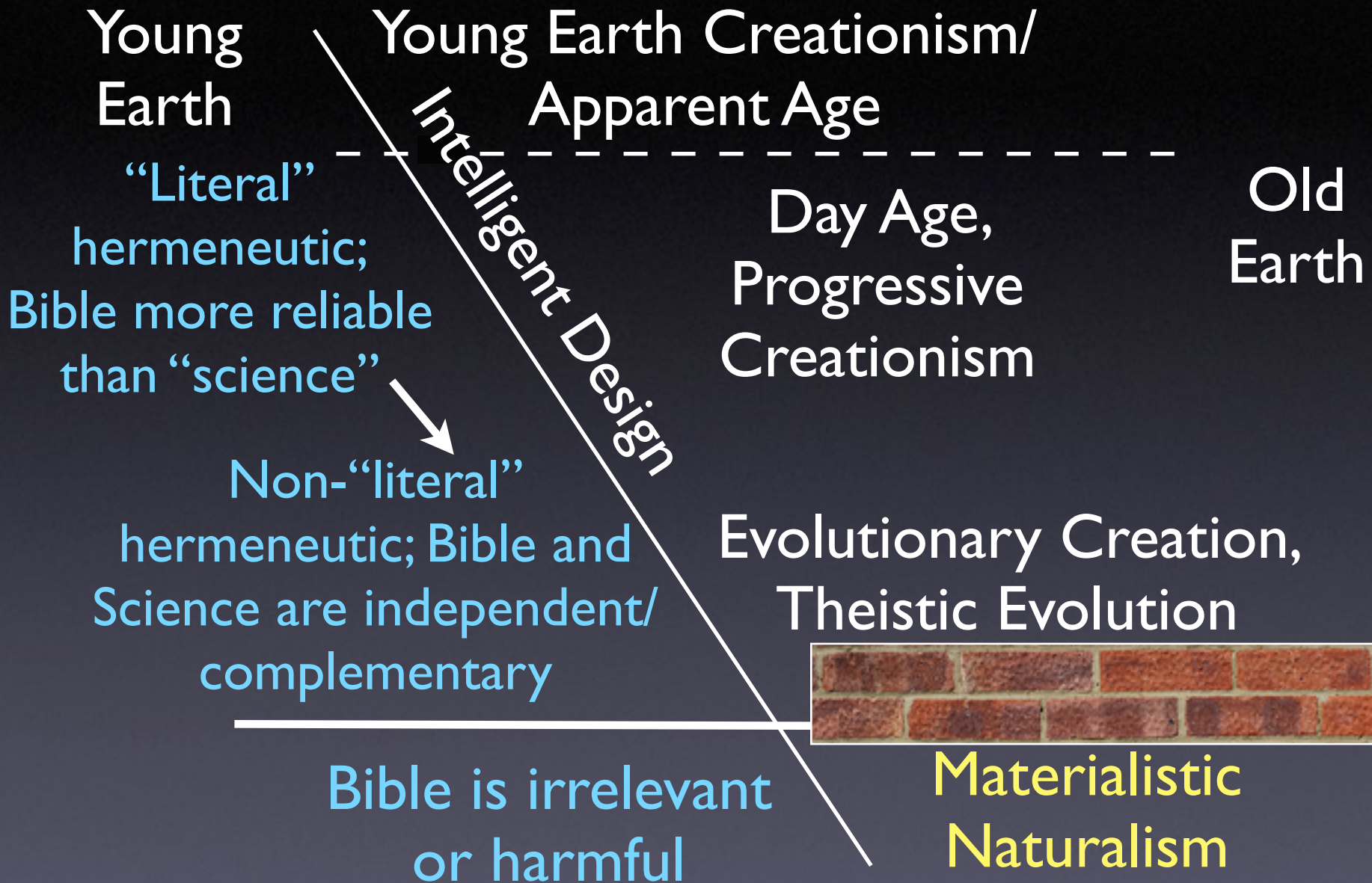
EC: Challenges

- Many Christians consider Neo-Darwinian theory to be **dysteleological (lacking in purpose)**.
- Many Christians have concerns about the EC **view of Scripture**.
- Many Christians are concerned about the implications of EC for **understanding the Fall (the cataclysmic event by which human sin entered the world)**.

Evolution and Other Christian Traditions



Christian Faith and Origins



Adapted from Scott, E.C., *Evolution vs. Creationism*, p. 57

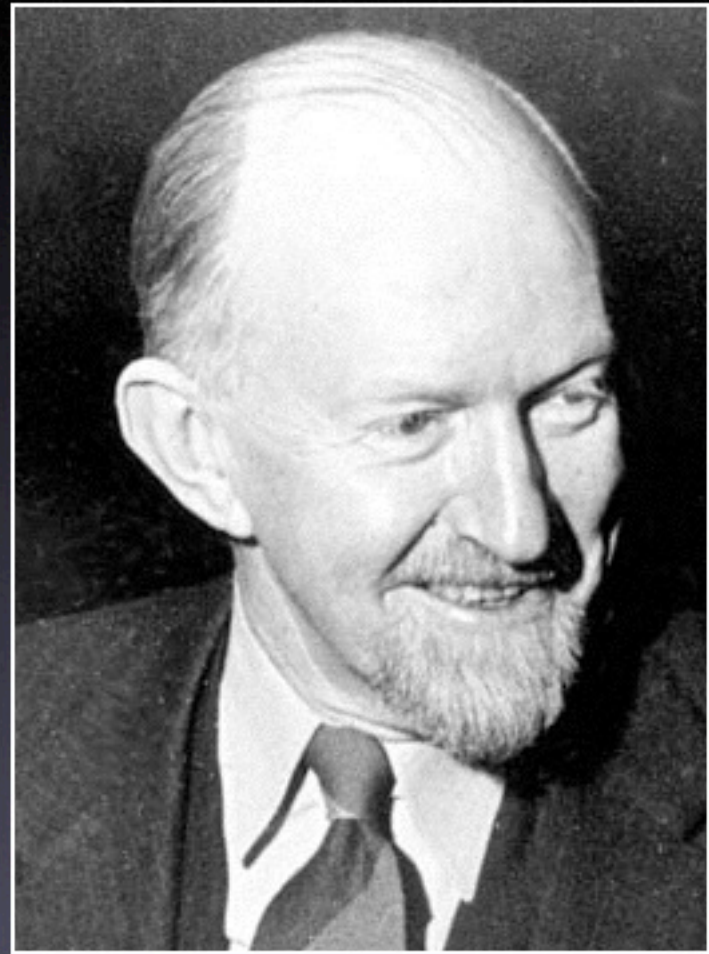
George Gaylord Simpson

(20th century paleontologist)

“Man was certainly not the goal of evolution, which evidently had no goal. **He was not planned, in an operation wholly planless.**”

The Meaning of Evolution, p. 292

[emphasis mine]



<http://www.daviddarling.info/encyclopedia/S/Simpson.html>

Richard Dawkins

(21st cent. Evolutionary
Biologist)

*Darwin made it
possible to be an
intellectually fulfilled
atheist.*

The Blind Watchmaker, p. 6



<http://www.listal.com/viewimage/31772>

MNs: Stephen Jay Gould, Steven Pinker, Christopher Hitchens, others

What's Going On Here?

- What we're engaging in **no longer appears to be *natural explanation***
- We seem to be discussing a ***worldview of metaphysical naturalism***

Thomas Nagel

(21st century philosopher, NYU)

I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! ...



<http://www.faithinterface.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/nagel.jpg>

Thomas Nagel

(21st century philosopher, NYU)

*My guess is that this **cosmic authority problem** is not a rare condition and that it is responsible for much of the scientism and reductionism of our time. One of the tendencies it supports is the ludicrous overuse of evolutionary biology to explain everything about life.”*

The Last Word, p. 130-131



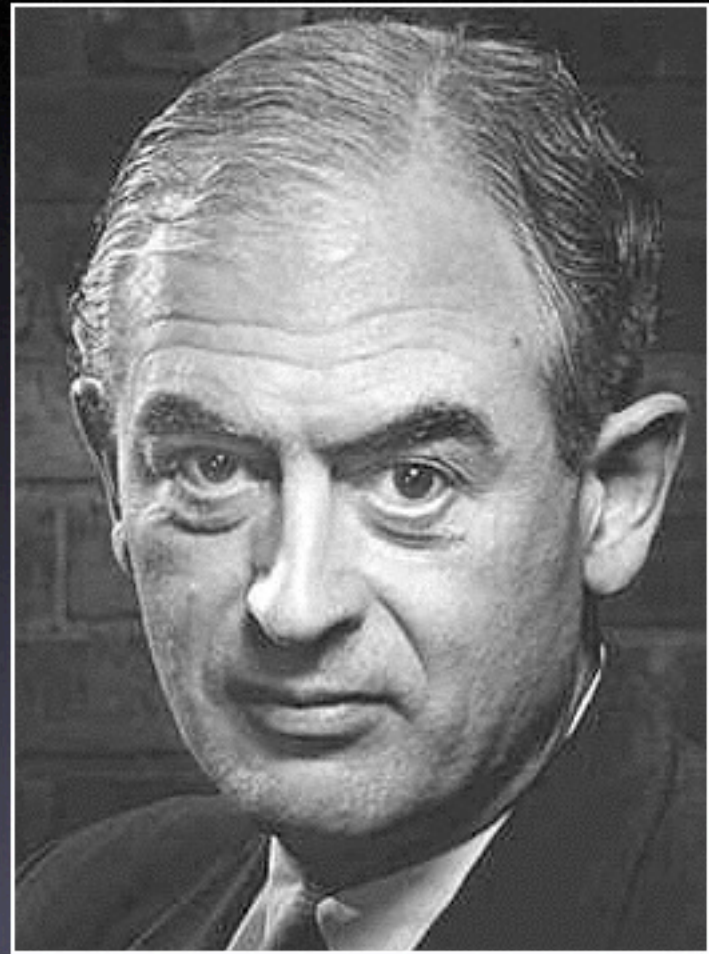
<http://www.faithinterface.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/nagel.jpg>

Peter Medawar

(Nobel Laureate for work on
the immune system)

“The existence of a limit to science, is however, made clear by **its inability to answer childlike questions having to do with first and last things — questions such as ‘How did everything begin?’ ‘What are we all here for?’ ‘What is the point of living?’**”

The Limits of Science, p. 59
[emphasis mine]



<http://www.proud2blebanese.com/pics-lg/30.jpg>

Where Do We Go From Here?

- This is a topic about which sincere Christians can and do sincerely differ
- All Christian discourse should be characterized by humility, patience and charity (Eph. 4:29)

Francis Bacon

“...But rather, let men endeavour an endless progress or proficience in both; only **let men beware that they apply both to charity, and not to swelling; to use and not to ostentation; and again that they do not unwisely mingle or confound those learnings together.**”

(Advancement of Learning, Bk I)
[emphasis mine]



[http://www.bnl.gov/bera/
activities/globe/bacon_files/
bacon.jpg](http://www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/globe/bacon_files/bacon.jpg)

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