

On Warriors, Battlecamps, and Stakes

Over the past year my university has been something of a center of attention in the raging "Intelligent Design" controversy. One of our ISU faculty members is co-author of a visible book expositing ID and the university's most militant atheist has taken it upon himself to stir up academic indignation towards this person. Others on both sides of the controversy have raised their "ID warrior" banners and managed to attract national media attention (including a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* about discussion of ID in a "God and Science" course). It appears that by now our administration has had about enough of the whole thing.

As this has developed, I have found myself questioning--not the zeal or good intentions of those fighting this fight on the pro-ID side, but--the real wisdom of an approach to saying what is true about "origins and science" that 1) conducts battle in the press seeking popular support and approval both inside and outside the Christian community and 2) attempts to present ID as something independent of Biblical motivation and seeks for it the validation of "Science" (with the big S).

The Scriptures tell us "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" and "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." With orthodox Christians throughout history we hold to the Nicene Creed "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of light, Very God of very God, begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He arose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the prophets; and I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead; and the life of the world to come. Amen."

This is the genuine Truth that Christians are called to proclaim. When Darwinists declare that all is "natural" and that all life came about by "natural processes" from primordial slime (of unspecified origin), *this* is our proper response.

But it is hard (?personally embarrassing?) to leave it at this in a time when "Science" is king (a beggarly king indeed, but that is another subject). And some look for a "scientific" argument for the empty souls around us who acknowledge nothing but the "natural world." The creationist enterprise of pointing out that, of course, what is seen in the physical world is not inconsistent with the Biblical record is mocked by our

unbelieving colleagues, so many have cast about for something else, and the ID "argument from complexity" has gained popularity.

That argument is technically consistent with the truth, but it is not in any way the whole truth, and I am afraid in the end is tangential to and can even be harmful to the big, bold, fundamental "In the beginning, God ..." of the Scriptures. In fact, I've seen public statements from proponents of ID with language along the lines of "we conclude nothing about the nature of the designer ... we don't even dismiss the possibility of multiple designers." The public face of the movement has been (at least at my university) intentionally formally divorced from Christianity, apparently with the hope of attracting supporters from other religions, to make it palatable to the irreligious, and particularly to make it palatable to "Scientists." (This is an impossibility, a false hope, but my basic concern is not whether this will "work.")

Despite the ID movement's intentional formal separation from Christianity, it seems to be commonly assumed that Christians, tired of having their children assaulted daily with a steady stream of Darwinist propaganda in the public schools, should flock to the pro-ID battlecamp, attracted by the prospect of something like fair treatment for an alternative to Darwinism in the public arena. (At ISU, there was also the unjust and irrational persecution of the Christian brother who co-authored the offending book to draw believers to the fray. There was a serious move at ISU to publish a petition countering a well-subscribed polemic raised by the campus atheist attacking ID and ultimately the author. The intention seemed to be to establish numerical strength of support for our Christian colleague, and to make the logical arguments for ID.) But this assumption that Christians should en masse join a public ID battle is, I believe, misguided for a number of reasons.

For one, there is the basic issue of being honest with all (including ourselves) about motivation. Very very few people drawn to the pro-ID battlecamp are there because they know or really care very much about the philosophy of science. (This is not pejorative, just fact ... there are only so many hours in the day, and not many of us have this calling.) They are there because of their Christianity, just as essentially all in the anti-ID battlecamp are there because of their low view of (to outright hatred of) God. While the anti-ID warriors pretend to be objective philosophers of science (perhaps even fooling themselves in this regard), ordinary Christians can not and should not profess any kind of aloof detachment concerning the question of origins, even if failing to do so makes one an "easy kill" for the other side in public tussling. To profess "objectivity" on essential matters is not only disingenuous, but is dangerously close to a denial of our Master. A document full of technical pro-ID argumentation sponsored by a Christian organization is easily dismissed by the anti-ID camp as the "intrusion of religion into Science," while that same document signed by the same people (most of whom are not specialists in the issues) represented as the considered philosophic stance of a group of impartial citizens is both a misrepresentation and a de facto public denial of the signers' loyalty to their King. (And it is, for example, irrelevant that the ISU anti-ID petition was a misrepresentation of the motivation of *its* signers. The believer's standard of behavior is not that of his or her antagonists, but rather the Holiness of God.)

Related to this point is the matter of the place that a widespread Christian involvement in the ID battle gives to the false god of "Science." I am convinced that the hope of making any Biblically compatible theory of origins (like ID) palatable to those committed to "big 'S' Science" is futile. But even if that were not the case, consider what it says to those outside the faith when Christians appear to desperately seek the blessing of Science for their understanding of how things are and came to be. What then appears to be the final authority? But if a unanimous vote of "Scientists" were to declare the Scriptures null and void, should Christians give up and go home? Much energy put into the ID debate by Christians broadcasts the fundamentally erroneous message that Science is the final arbiter of reality, and that we and our God seek and need its approval.

Before flocking to join a pro-ID army, Christians ought also consider the real irrelevance of numerical/political strength to things of substance. We give those outside the faith the wrong impression about the real nature of truth when we seem to them "just another group organizing to get what it wants." We and those to whom we speak must know instead, that even the solitary representative and herald of the true King of the Universe speaks with the authority of heaven. Truth is truth independent of numbers.

So, I suspect that by now you have gathered that I don't think that ordinary Christians belong in the pro-ID battlecamp. This is not because I see all aspects of the ID effort as lacking merit. (I do have a real problem with "we say nothing about the designer(s)" rhetoric, but I'll assume that to be a minority aberration.) And it is not because I think that believers should ignore the fight being waged. (The ASA Board should hear from individuals protesting it taking a position on our behalf in a basically political fight about presuppositions really having nothing to do with statistics. My university president, provost, and dean heard from me personally, protesting the persecution of the ISU ID author.) But I submit that most of us should find ourselves, not in a platoon in the battlecamp, but individually standing ready to "go to the stake" for unashamed fidelity to our Lord and loyalty to His people. Most of us are not called to be philosophers of science. But we are all called to be His witnesses and to stand with persecuted brethren.

Christian witness is not about political organization, numerical strength, or clever argumentation. It is not about epistemology or the philosophy of science. It is instead about simple, clear, courageous individual testimony to what is really true, regardless of personal cost, in ways that are consistent with that truth. We are to be uncowed by the implicit and explicit threats of people such as our ISU campus atheist, and the sneers and disrespect of unbelieving colleagues. We are to be ready to "burn at the stake" for our Savior and His Truth. But it is absolutely essential that those doing the burning understand why we (and they) are there. If they can tell themselves that it's about something other than the central issue of existence, Jesus and Him crucified, it profits nothing. So, when people want to argue "origins," let us be crystal clear that we "... believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible ..." and that *alone* is why we're gladly at the stake.

Soli Deo Gloria

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