

Making Sense of Evolution

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Here's something creationists and evolutionary naturalists agree about: Darwin's theory of evolution leads inevitably to atheism. John F. Haught disagrees. In *Making Sense of Evolution*, he proposes that one need not choose between God and Darwin.

Haught

is most concerned with people such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett who define faith in narrow, ultraconservative terms. He challenges them by suggesting that one can be faithful to a religious tradition and also open to modern science. Haught reminds those of us who are people of faith open to evolutionary science that coexistence doesn't mean living in separate homes (as Stephen J. Gould suggested).

Making Sense of Evolution

invites the reader to develop a "theology of evolution." The key to Haught's argument is found in the second half of the book's subtitle: "the Drama of Life." Science offers one lens on reality, but it doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't offer answers to questions of meaning or purpose or explain why people continue to believe in God. Haught suggests that evolution is like a set of grammatical rules that guide the telling of the story of reality but don't define its content. As we seek to understand this story, we also ask what role God might play in the drama.

The traditional answer to this question is to point to design, and no one laid out the principles of design better than William Paley. But as Darwin himself discovered, Paley's principles of design were too simple, too mechanical. Haught sees reality as involving multiple layers, one of which can be seen from the vantage point of science. Drama is another one of the layers. In this layer,

God is not an engineer laying out the machine called life (Darwin effectively overthrew that image) but is coming into reality from the future, luring and beckoning life to move forward toward God's desired end. Of course not all the scenes are written in this scenario, for God must adapt to the choices that are made.

A theology of evolution offers an "ultimate reason why things are the way they are." "It is not in the design, diversity, and descent," says Haught, "but in the transformative drama of life, that theology finally makes its deepest contact with Darwin's science."

Haught's theology is process-oriented. He makes wide use of Whitehead, Hartshorne and Tillich. He assumes that God's involvement in the creative process is noncoercive and synergistic. Humans play a significant role in the evolutionary process.

Drama allows creation the freedom to work in relationship with the creator. The process isn't always pretty, but do we really want a preordained, preset world that provides no opportunity for growth or contribution from the creation? Haught doesn't.

If Christians wish to join in the scientific conversation, they need resources like this one. Evolutionary science and theology need not be done in isolation. Instead, we can see Darwin's theory as a spiritual gift that will further our understandings of God in our age.