

# *In Defense of Theistic Evolution* Randy Isaac

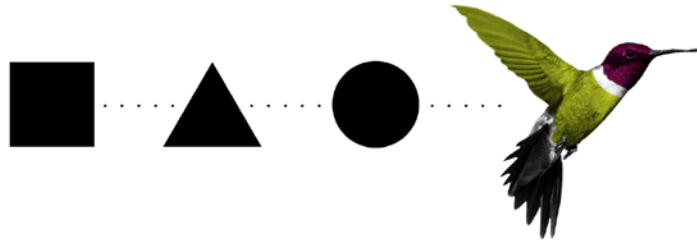
ASA  
GORDON COLLEGE  
JULY 29, 2018



FOREWORD BY STEVE FULLER

# THEISTIC EVOLUTION

A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique



Edited by

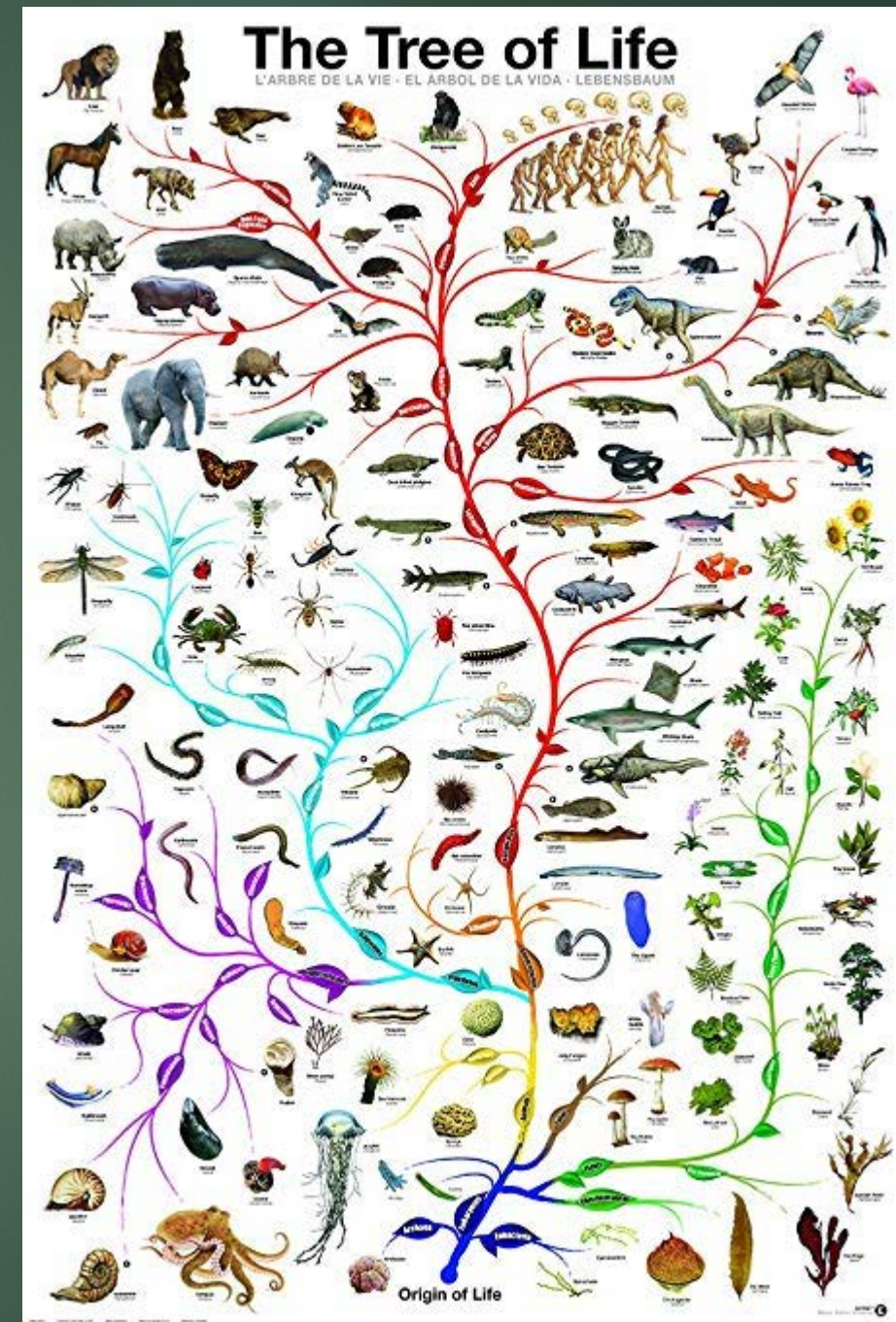
J. P. Moreland, Stephen C. Meyer,  
Christopher Shaw, Ann K. Gauger,  
and Wayne Grudem

- A critique of theistic evolution
- Published Nov 30 2018
- 5 editors
  - Moreland, Meyer, Shaw, Gauger, and Grudem
- 25 authors
- 3 sections
  - Scientific
  - Philosophical
  - Theological
- 31 chapters
- 1,000 pages



# Quick Overview

- ➔ Brief History of ASA Views on Evolution
- My Personal Opinion of Theistic Evolution
- The Scientific Critique of Theistic Evolution





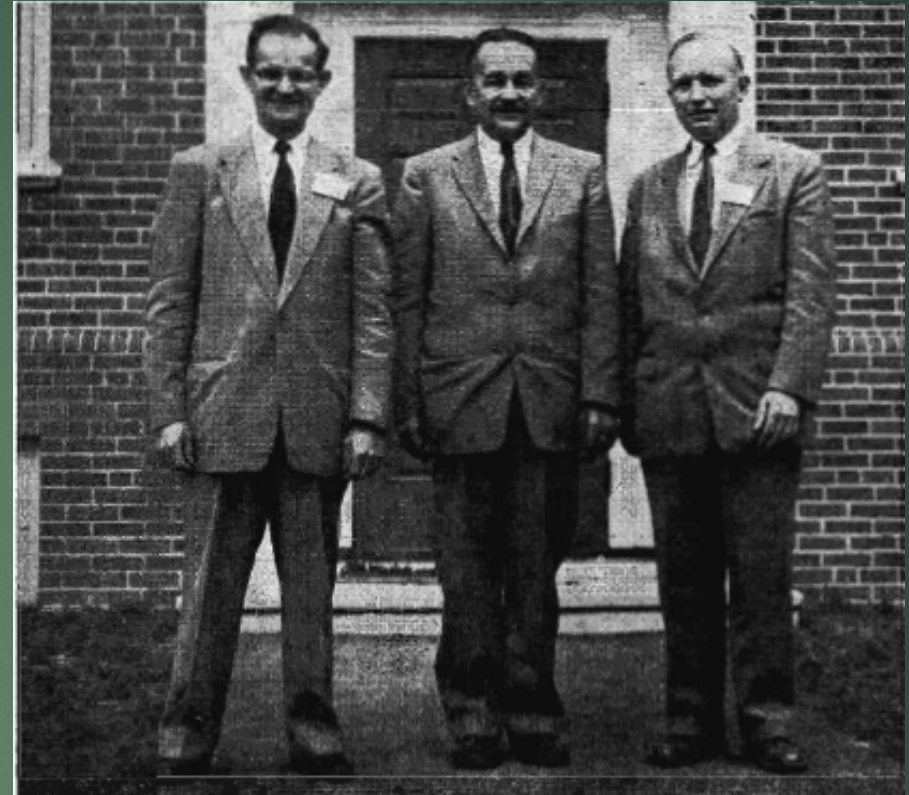
## A Brief History: *ASA Views*

“The ASA has never taken a position on any scientific theory ... We as a group, do not believe in theistic evolution, neither do we believe in any other form of evolution.”

— H. Harold Hartzler, Executive Director ASA  
*Private communication, 1968*



"The twelfth annual ASA convention was held at Gordon College August 27-29, 1957. It is interesting that this was the first ASA meeting that the idea of theistic evolution was openly discussed and advocated by some."

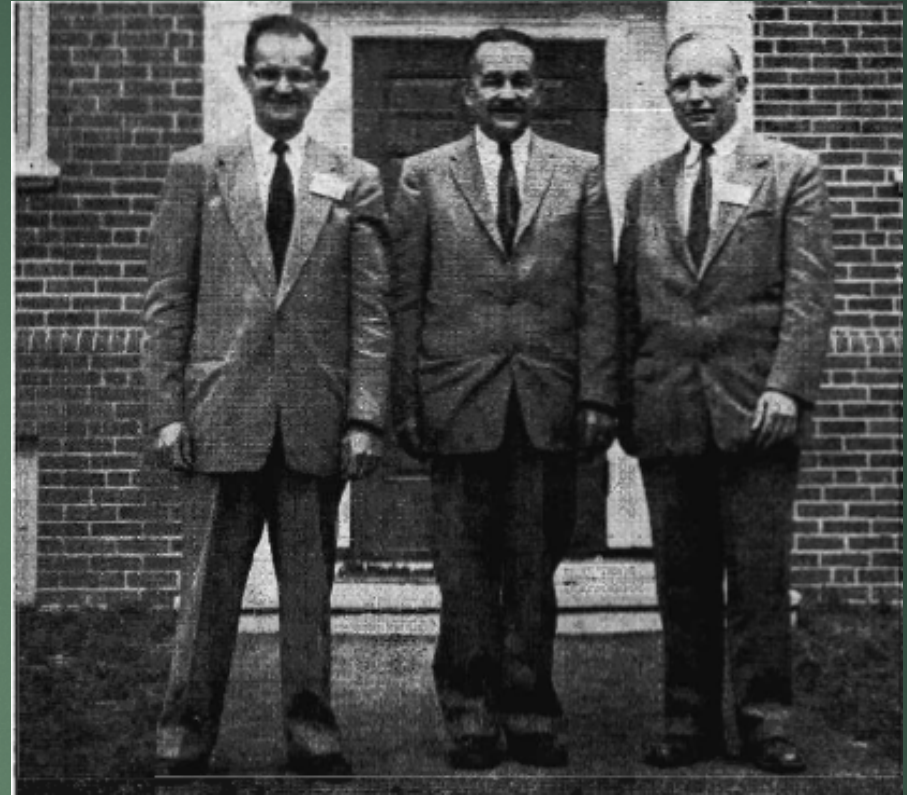


- ▶ — H. Harold Hartzler, ASA Executive Director,
- ▶ *"Forty Years with the ASA" in PSCF 37 (June 1985): 86-92*



“We remember the days  
when A.S.A. first organized.  
We were all against evolution  
then. Satan has thus worked  
fast to bring us to such a  
compromise . . . .”

— Letter to the editor, *JASA* Vol. 15,  
p.100 September 1963



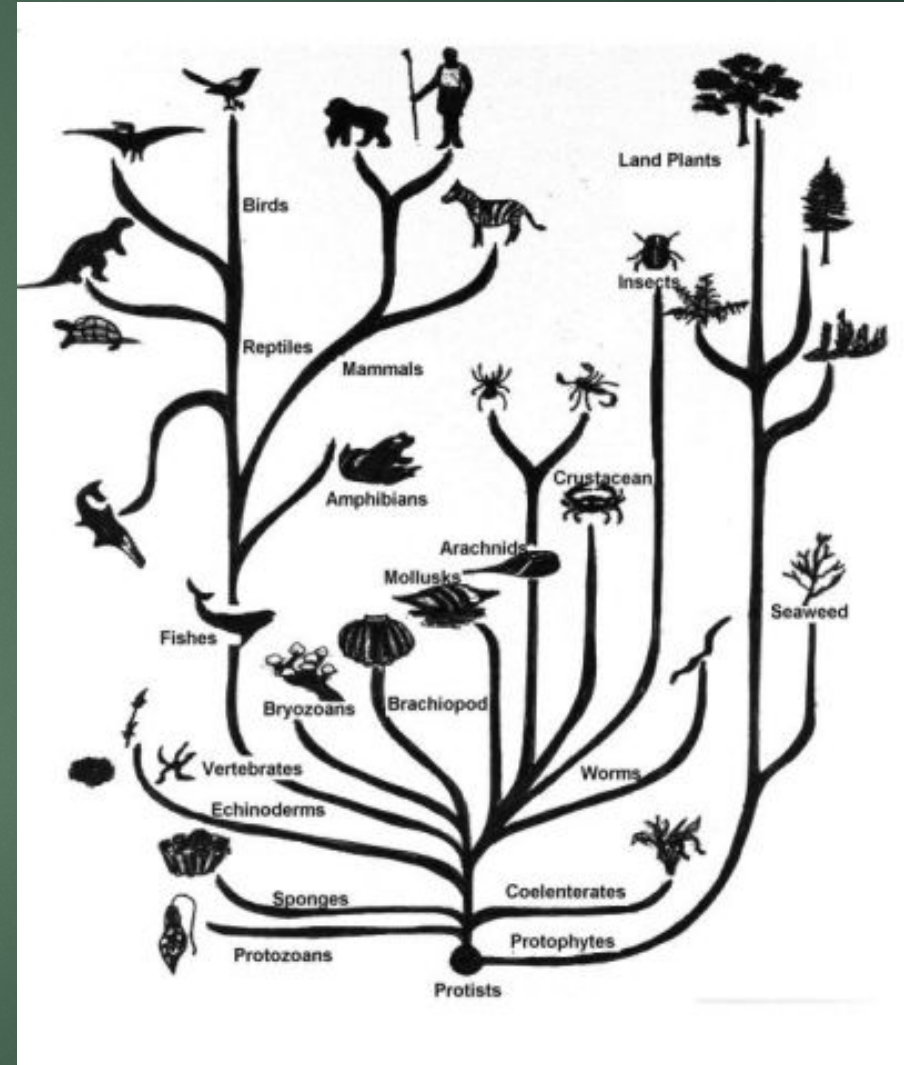
Philip B. Marquart, M.D.  
*Tennessee Temple College*  
*Chattanooga, Tennessee*



# ASA Views

Theistic evolution gradually became more common in the ASA as evidence in favor of it mounted. Richard Bube as editor of the journal advocated that it be considered a viable option for Christians.

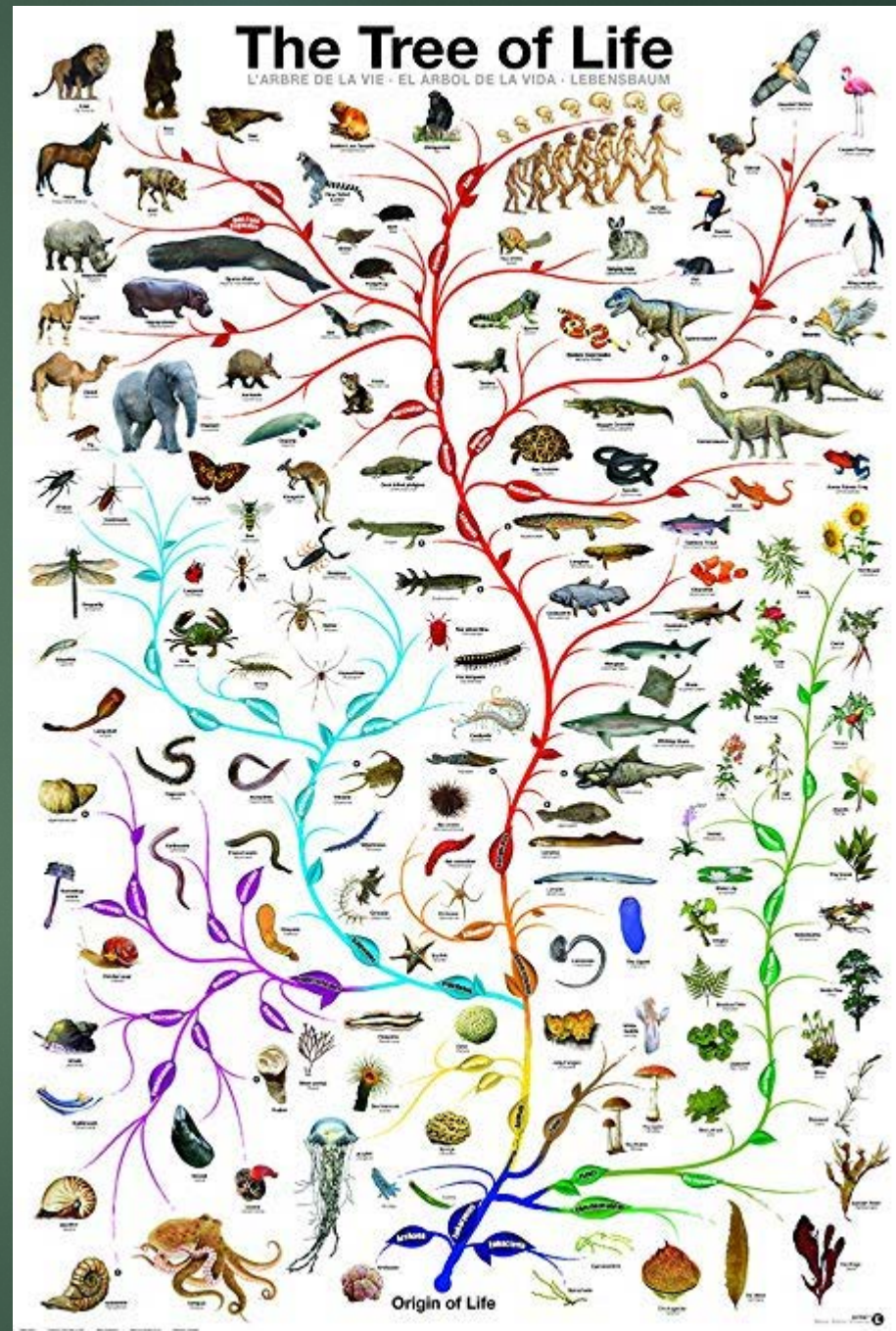
Terry Gray provides an excellent brief history in his article "The ASA Does Not Take an Official Position on Controversial Questions" in *PSCF* Vol 68, p. 177 September 2016





# ASA Views

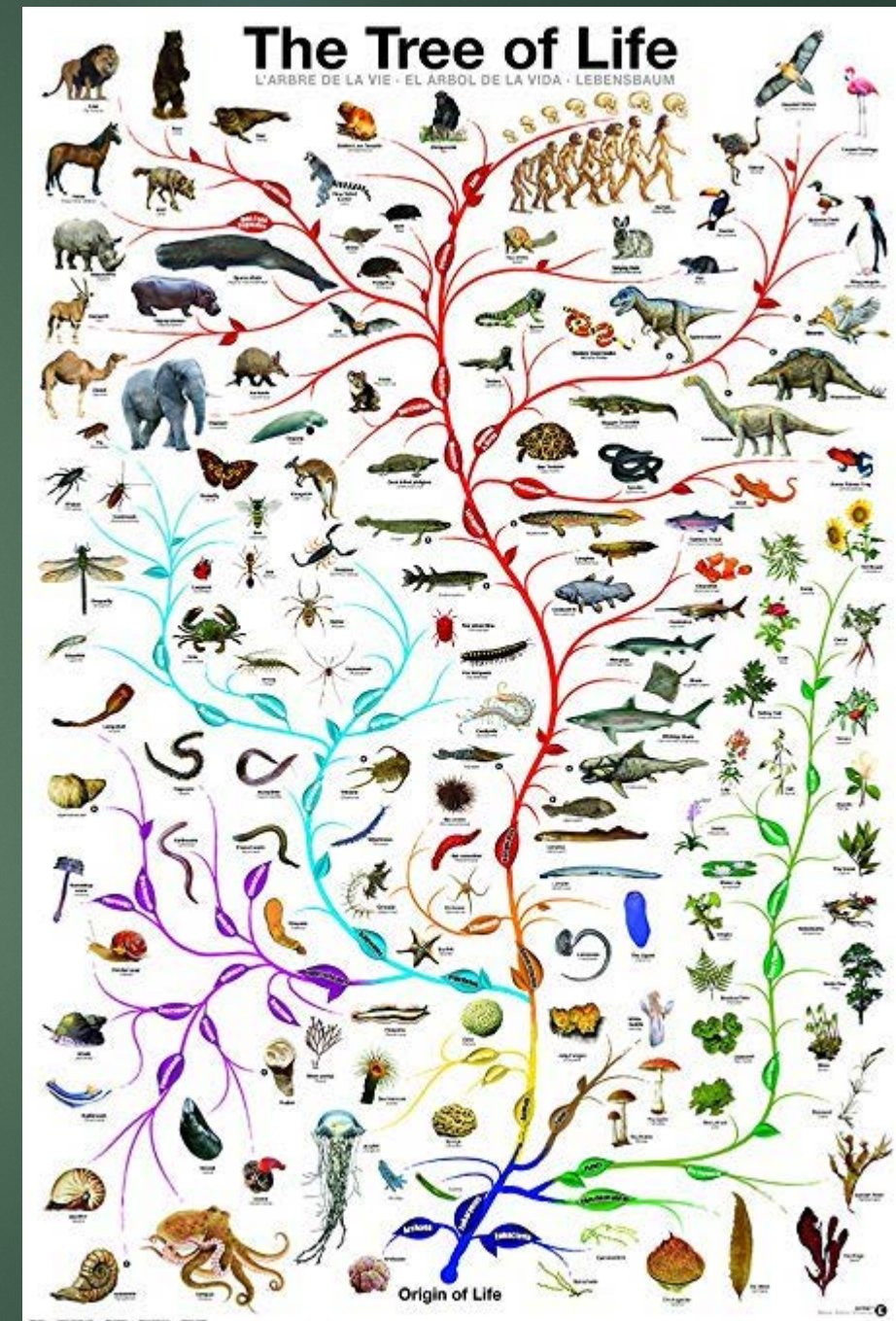
- A survey of ASA members in 2008 showed that 61% of respondents felt there was compelling scientific evidence for biological evolution of plants, animals, and humans





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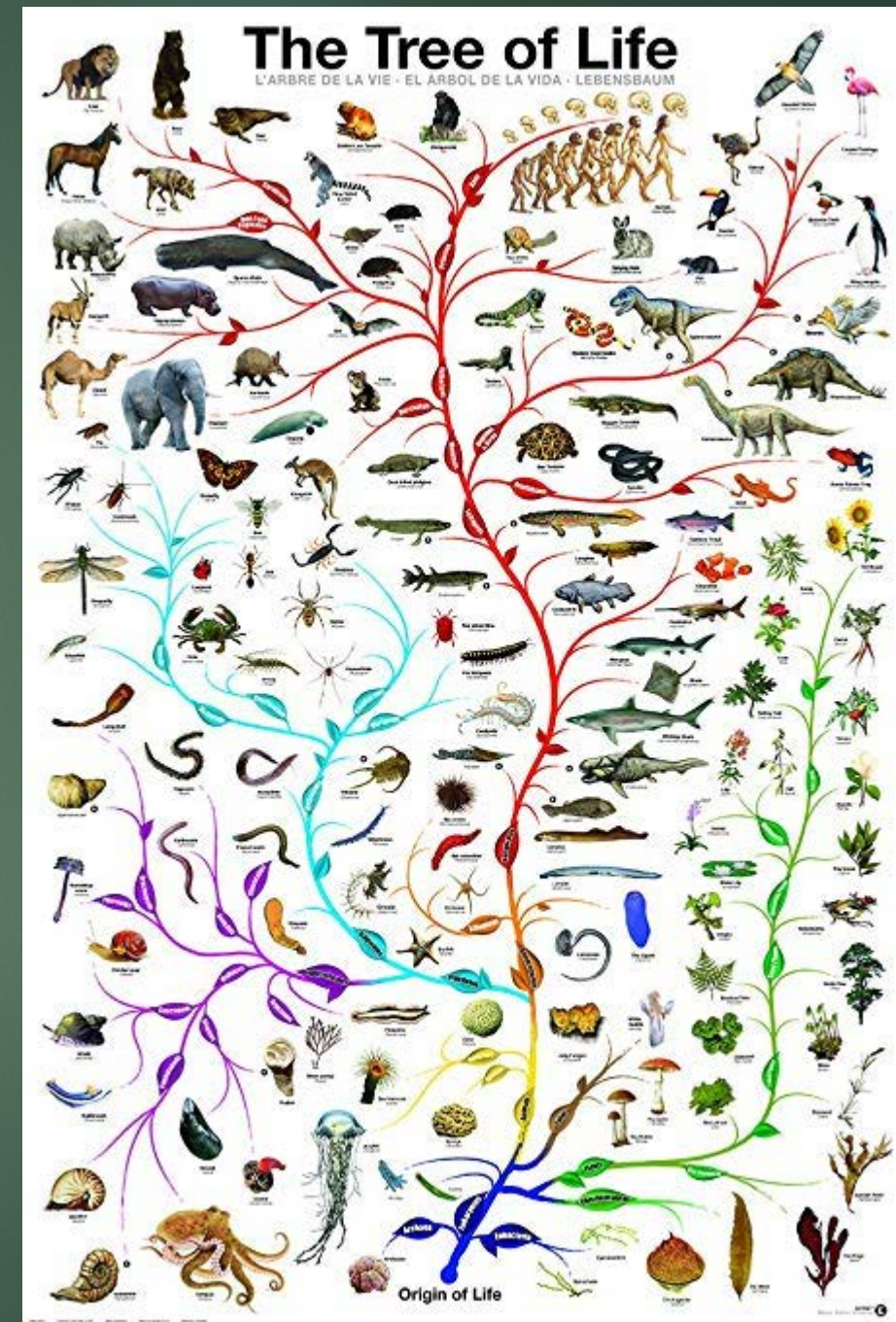
# *In Defense of Theistic Evolution*

- ▶ 'Theistic' refers to the doctrine of creation
- ▶ 'Evolution' refers to the theory that all living species originated from one or a few forms through descent with modification and selection by survival
- ▶ 'Theistic evolution' refers to the compatibility of these two ideas
- ▶ Evolution is the only scientific theory of the origin of species and is used universally in biology
- ▶ Theistic Evolution is the only viable view of the origin of species for a Christian



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# Stephen Meyer Rejects the “God of the Gaps” Accusation



<https://youtu.be/tGqzCA1mnyM>



# Steven Meyer's Response

- Cause A (evolution) cannot cause Effect X (creation of new information like the genetic code in DNA)
- Cause B (intelligent mind) is known to be able to generate new information
- Therefore, Cause B can be inferred to be the cause of X.
- It is not a "God of the gaps" logic since there is independent evidence that B is able to cause X



# Randy Isaac's Opinion

▶ Cause A (evolution)  
CAN cause new  
information so there  
is no gap

▶ Cause B (intelligent  
mind) has NOT been  
shown to be necessary  
or able to generate all  
types of new  
information



# TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS

## MEYER

- ▶ Natural processes **cannot** generate new information including the genetic code in DNA
- ▶ Intelligent agents **have** been shown to be capable of generating new information and can therefore generate the genetic code

## ISAAC

- ▶ Natural processes **can** generate new **biological** information including genetic code in DNA
- ▶ Intelligent agents **have not** been shown to be necessary or capable of generating **biological** information including the genetic code



# Steven Meyer's Claim

- “All our experience shows that *functional* information is always generated by an intelligent mind.”
- Examples:
  - Language
  - Phone numbers
  - Computer code
  - Engineering designs and construction, etc.
- All examples are of human-designed systems



# Randy Isaac's Claim

- All our experience *in biological systems* shows that functional information does NOT REQUIRE an intelligent mind.
  - Reproduction events do not require an intelligent mind
  - All reproductive events and mutations generate new information which is functional for every organism that survives and is successful in reproduction
  - Intelligent minds have not been observed to create a genetic code in biology



# FUNCTIONAL INFORMATION IS CONNECTED TO INTELLIGENCE THROUGH ABSTRACT RELATIONSHIPS

- Abstract reasoning is a defining hallmark of intelligence
- Functionality in human-designed systems is determined by abstract relationships
  - Intelligence is required
- Functionality in biological systems is determined by offspring survival and success in reproduction
  - No intelligence is required



# Does Functional Information Require Intelligence?

- If functionality is determined by abstract relationships, then **YES**
  - Virtually all human-designed systems define functionality abstractly and therefore require intelligence
- If not, then **NO**
  - Biological systems determine functionality by survival and success in reproduction which is physical and not abstract



# Conclusion

- It has not been shown that (1) evolution cannot and (2) an intelligent mind can cause the genetic code or any new biological information
- The scientific critique of theistic evolution is not persuasive
- Theistic evolution is not just a viable option but the only one for the origin of life for Christians



# For Further Study

- *Perspectives on an Evolving Creation*, ed. by Keith Miller, Eerdmans (2003)
- Theme issue of *PSCF* on information, December 2011
- BioLogos blog post series by Dennis Venema, "Letters to the Duchess" 14-part series from June 9, 2016 to June 8, 2017
- More details on my forum at [www.asa3.org/Resources/Forums/Director Emeritus Musings/tag=theistic evolution](http://www.asa3.org/Resources/Forums/DirectorEmeritusMusings/tag=theistic+evolution)

