



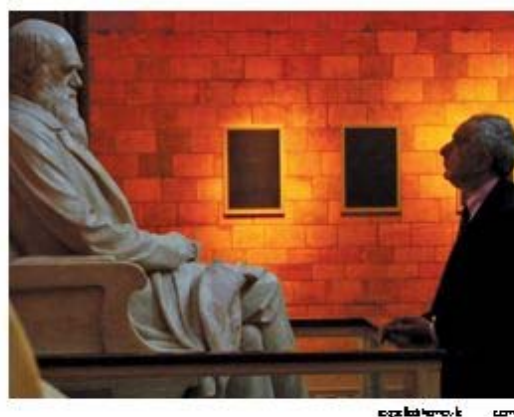
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Allow Intelligence!

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Ben Stein ponders the meaning of Darwinism.

Traditionally minded Americans don't often cheer Hollywood products. We gladly report an exception: *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* (rated PG).

As many *New American* readers know, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution transformed Western culture. The Bible taught that life forms are creations of God, with man the centerpiece, made in God's image. Darwin introduced a new doctrine: random interactions of chemicals had created life, and man was just an animal, evolved from lower life forms through survival of the fittest. Sold to the public as scientific fact, "Social Darwinism," with its view of man as beast, helped spawn unprecedented cruelties under communism and Naziism.

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Now, however, science has evolution on the retreat. For example:

- A single cell, which Darwin thought “simple,” is encoded with information that would fill thousands of books, and is far too complex to have formed by chance.
- In his book *Darwin’s Black Box*, Lehigh University biochemist Michael Behe demonstrates that certain biochemical systems, such as blood clotting and the immune system, are “irreducibly complex” — that is, they consist of interdependent parts that cannot function in lesser stages, and thus cannot have evolved step-by-step.
- In *Not by Chance*, Dr. Lee Spetner, who taught information theory at Johns Hopkins University, documents that random mutations — evolution’s alleged building blocks — cause losses of genetic information, not gains.
- In *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, molecular biologist Michael Denton shows that, on a cellular level, there is no evidence for the proclaimed evolutionary sequence “fish to amphibian to reptile to mammal.”

As the new data has emerged, evolutionists have fought to prevent classrooms from openly discussing the weaknesses in Darwin’s theory. Freedom of speech has been suppressed in academia, and educators persecuted for daring to address intelligent design (ID). It was this trend that prompted the documentary *Expelled*.

According to the film’s website, the project “began with an observation made by [co-producer Walt] Ruloff, a successful computer software entrepreneur who comes from a high-tech world in which innovation is constant and eagerly sought. In stark contrast, he noticed, the scientific and academic communities were deeply resistant to innovation, in this case innovation that might revise Darwin’s theory that random mutation and natural selection drive all variation in life forms.”

The film’s host and narrator is Ben Stein, economist, law professor, speech writer for Presidents Nixon and Ford, and author of over 20 books, but probably best known as a comedy actor, with his trademark monotone voice. He is also a pro-life creationist, making him a maverick in Hollywood.

Liberty and Justice — for All?

“Scientists are supposed to be allowed to follow the evidence wherever it may lead, no matter what the implications are,” says Stein. “Freedom of inquiry has been greatly compromised, and this is not only anti-science, it’s anti-American.” The film underscores America’s tradition of personal freedom with visits to landmarks such as the Jefferson Memorial and Washington Monument, and contrasts these with images of the Berlin Wall, symbol of tyranny. That wall is gone, but another, we learn, has been erected in American universities.

Stein interviews double Ph.D. biologist Richard Sternberg, a research fellow at the Smithsonian Institution. In 2004, as editor of *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, Sternberg allowed publication of a peer-reviewed article suggesting there is evidence for intelligent design in nature. This resulted in a vicious, smear-tainted campaign of abuse against Dr. Sternberg, driven by certain Smithsonian officials and by the National Center for Science Education (self-described as a “clearinghouse for information and advice to keep evolution in the science classroom and ‘scientific creationism’ out”). The attack on Sternberg was so outrageous that it led to a congressional investigation and an ensuing report, *Intolerance and the Politicization of Science at the Smithsonian*.

Among others, Stein also visits:

- astrophysicist Guillermo Gonzalez, who, despite publishing over 60 articles in peer-reviewed science journals and being credited with helping discover new planets, was refused tenure at Iowa State University after he advocated teaching intelligent design;
- molecular biologist Caroline Crocker, compelled to leave George Mason University after including several slides about intelligent design in one of her lectures;
- NASA-honored engineering professor Robert J. Marks II, forced by Baylor to remove an ID-friendly website from the university's servers.

But Stein doesn't just meet intelligent design's defenders, he also takes on some of its most adamant critics, including Eugenie Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education; Michael Shermer, founder of the Skeptics Society; Cornell professor William Provine; and atheist blogger P.Z. Myers. Ultimately he travels to England to confront Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion* and probably the most vocal critic of ID and creation.

Producer Ruloff warns: "People will be stunned to actually find out what elitist scientists proclaim, which is that a large majority of Americans are simpletons who believe in a fairy tale."

During his interview, Dawkins dismisses religion as "primitive superstition," and those who reject evolution for it "ignorant or insane." Logically questioned by Stein, Dawkins admits that life could have come from "a higher intelligence" that "seeded" it on this planet — i.e., he could accept aliens as our creator, but not God. But this begs for an answer to the question: how did life get started on the aliens' planet?

Ideas Have Consequences

Creation-evolution is a vital issue. It is far more than a science discussion. Most Americans believe, as Thomas Jefferson said, that "men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." If, as Darwinism says, there was no Creator, then there is no basis for rights, no moral absolutes, nor any God to whom we are accountable for our actions.

Small wonder, then, that Darwinism has always found a comfortable home in totalitarian states. Stein visits the former mental institution at Hadamar, Germany, where over 14,000 mentally ill were once executed by the Nazis. As Stein notes, Charles Darwin advocated eugenics, writing that "the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man.... Excepting in the case of man himself, hardly anyone is so ignorant as to allow his worst animals to breed." Stein explores the link between Darwin and Nazi eugenics, interviewing California State University professor Richard Weikart, author of *From Darwin to Hitler*. And he notes that eugenics was espoused in America by Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger.

The film also exposes media bias. Intelligent-design advocates tell Stein how the politically correct press has distorted their positions. Journalist Pamela Winnick recounts the abuse she received after trying to report on the evolution-design controversy in a balanced manner. A discomfiting moment for Americans comes in the film when Polish scientist Maciej Giertych tells Stein that there is less censorship on this issue in Poland today than in the United States.

A Model of Communication

Expelled

strikes a blow for free speech, and is drawing much-needed attention to the creation-evolution battle. It has been effectively marketed by Motive Entertainment, which also took on *The Passion of The Christ* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Motive's appealing website for the film, www.expelledthemovie.com, along with grass-roots promotion from advocates of creation and intelligent design, has spurred a groundswell of demand.

Atheists have been bitterly denouncing the film. Atheist P.Z. Myers declared: "It's going to appeal strongly to the religious, the paranoid, the conspiracy theorists, and the ignorant — which means they're going to draw in about 90% of the American market." Such attacks have unintentionally served as further promotion. On April 18, *Expelled* opened in 1,052 theaters, breaking the record for documentaries (Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* opened in 868).

Expelled

is not your grandfather's documentary. A fast pace, rocking soundtrack, and Stein's deadpan humor all defy that word's connotations. The interviews never drag — they are interspersed with clips from old films to underscore points being made. There are two superb animation sequences, one demonstrating the cell's complexity, the other a satirical "casino of life" in which hundreds of slot machines must simultaneously hit jackpots in order for life to commence by chance. This movie will leave you entertained *and* informed (we know plenty these days that do neither).

Near the film's end, shots of the Berlin Wall coming down remind us that the walls of academic censorship must fall also. Stein's final words exhort audience members to get involved.

Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed is a model of communication that all can learn something from.

James Perloff is author of *Tornado in a Junkyard: The Relentless Myth of Darwinism*.



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