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Q&A: 'Expelled' producer Logan Craft; Written by Jerry Pierce | Managing Editor; Posted Monday, January 28, 2008

The Southern Baptist TEXAN's Jerry Pierce interviewed Logan Craft, one of the executive producers of the upcoming movie documentary "Expelled," starring Ben Stein, which will debut in theaters in April. Craft, a University of Texas at Austin alumnus now living in Santa Fe, N.M., is chairman of Premise Media.

"Expelled" exposes the blacklisting of academics who question the prevailing Darwinian dogma. It includes interviews with William Dembski, a leading intelligent design thinker and a research professor of philosophy at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, and Robert Marks, a distinguished professor of engineering at Baylor University in Waco.

The following is transcribed from a phone interview with Craft.

TEXAN: How did Premise Media get involved in this project?

CRAFT: There are three partners, executive producers, of Premise—Walt Ruloff, John Sullivan and myself. I'm the chairman, Walt Ruloff is the CEO and John is the president. And we have an extensive team that works directly for the company and then is contracted also by the company on the film "Expelled."

The original inspiration came specifically in this subject matter to Walt Ruloff, who is a Canadian. He lives in Vancouver. I used to live in Vancouver, where I studied under a theologian named J.I. Packer at Regent, and Walt and I became acquainted.

Walt was a very successful technology entrepreneur, founder of a software company. And he was doing some business in Houston and he picked up a "Wired" magazine in the Houston Intercontinental Airport lounge and he read an article about this debate between evolution and intelligent design. He had always been interested in the subject matter and he got inspired and kind of had an epiphany on the flight back to Canada, and he wrote out a treatment on a screenplay.

And that very beginning, a sort of inspirational moment for Walt, turned into a partnership between John, Walt and myself to explore controversial subject matter related to science and to science and religion. I had been working in New Mexico. I produced and hosted a regionally televised program called "Church and State with Logan Craft." And "Church and State" explored a lot of the controversial social issues and political issues that both religious and non-religious people were interested in.

So when Walt and John brought this to me, I was interested because I had been covering a panoply of issues over the years and was very, very aware of the connection between the landmark issues in the culture war and the debate over evolution. So we formed a partnership in 2005, developed the company in 2006 and began filming and acquiring raw material footage in the middle of 2006.

TEXAN: How did Ben Stein come to be involved in the film?

CRAFT: Well, John had a real insight, we believe, into the necessity to have a person, first of all, who wasn't overtly Christian or overtly religious and also someone who had a comic element to their personality or their repertoire, but also an intellectual. Well, that kind of limits the field. There aren't that many of those folks out there.

Once Ben became acquainted with what we were doing, he got excited because he began to see a connection between our exploration and sanctity of life issues. He's a very, very strong pro-life advocate. He has a high view of human dignity and human sanctity. And he saw a connection between what we were exploring, and sanctity of life issues and the historical elements of the eugenics movement, and especially as a Jewish person, the eugenics movement as it morphed into the Nazi racial cleansing laws.

TEXAN: How do you answer those who charge that ID is simply a Trojan horse for getting six-day biblical creationism taught in public schools? CRAFT: That's fanciful to the point of comedy. Understand that although all the producers are Christians and we have, let's say, complementary views about most moral issues, I can't say we came to this project with any uniform view or underlying agenda.

TEXAN: Why do you think intelligent design is such a lightning-rod issue with the academic establishment?

CRAFT: ID is a threat to the Darwinian establishment because ID really is a scientific rather than theological discipline. Intelligent design as a scientific arena of exploration, inquiry and research—it doesn't reference any divine test. It doesn't even reference any natural philosophy that tries to explain God, per se. The public—wherever they are on the spectrum of how things started and developed, whether it was in six days and the world is 10,000 years old or whether it was a longer process—the number of people who actually understand and then buy into the Darwinian theory is very small.

The reason ID is a lightning rod is because ID threatens that foundational mechanism of Darwinism. It threatens the mechanics of random mutation and it threatens what we maintain is a metaphysical position of Darwinism, not a scientific position that it is an undesigned, random process.

Intelligent design says, look, there is design in these structures in nature and the intelligence that we know more and more and more about every week now related to what is driving the structures, that's designed. It's obviously designed. It's extremely plausible that this is a designed structure. Intelligent design doesn't even address within the scientific inquiry the existence of a Designer, capital D; it's merely trying to say, "Look, when we come to studying phenomena in nature, we have basically been given a template where we must not study phenomena with any sort of design presuppositions." We are saying that's becoming more and more untenable based on what we see in the DNA, the operations of the cell, the intelligence of the cell, the code that's driving structures and driving changes—this has got to be designed. Let's look at it from a design perspective.

Random mutation may have made sense to Darwin 150 years ago, but that's because he thought the cell was protoplasm. He didn't know about the unbelievable intricacy and complexity of the cell and the machines working in the cell and the duplication and replication and regeneration going on in the cell. He didn't know about that.

How is that code and that intelligence going to mutate along the lines of a Darwinian framework? It's becoming more and more implausible. Science has become captive to an overarching philosophy of scientific materialism, and we believe science became captive to that predominantly through the propagation of the theory of Darwinism, especially the theory of Darwinism resting on its mechanics, which is random mutation, chance, and purposelessness in the complexity of the development of life forms.

Intelligent design, you see, goes right for the jugular and challenges that assumption, which then shakes the foundation which science has become captive to. If there is design in nature, it does beg the metaphysical question, does it not?

If it's design, is it nature itself doing this, or is there a designer? That's what the Darwinists who are committed atheists do not like. They hate that.

TEXAN: I understand that William Dembski, formerly at Baylor, is in this film, as well as Robert Marks of Baylor. What was your reaction when you discovered the resistance to intelligent design research at places like Baylor or SMU?

CRAFT: That's no surprise. To me, the long history of religiously founded universities and colleges in the United States is typically one of the ultimate capturing of the colleges and universities by the progressive secularists. I think you see that at Baylor partly. You see that at SMU almost entirely.

The state universities and colleges are a different animal. What we see here is a struggle for a religiously founded university to maintain its credibility to the larger academic world and frequently that has come by simply being co-opted by whatever the zeitgeist of the day is, in this case, this commitment to scientific materialism. And so I think that Baylor and SMU don't easily have structures set up where those kinds of positions can be resisted at the institutional level. That's the problem.

It's not that there are not academics or scientists or people like Marks or Dembski at these schools, it's at the institutional level—the same thing we see happening in science—that the high ground and levers of power are captured by people who are sympathetic to or embrace a materialistic outlook.

TEXAN: What's the most egregious example of discrimination on this issue that you've seen thus far?

CRAFT: We have a whole portfolio of some the 150 scientists we interviewed on both sides of this issue and even more educators who have been persecuted. I think the most egregious example today is Guillermo Gonzales, who is in the film. And the reason that is so egregious is because he is such an exemplary scientist and astronomer. And his view that the physical cosmos, the universe, the galaxies, reveal a structure of design, and for that alone that he would be denied tenure at a very prestigious state university [Iowa State], a man who has discovered two planets, and certain contributions he has made to the field of astronomy are groundbreaking—to me he's the most egregious example of discrimination, even though he wasn't fired.

Guillermo is kind of like a modern-day Copernicus or Galileo, but on the other side of the issue.

Now it's not the church overreaching the realm of its expertise and persecuting scientists, it's just the opposite. People are always using that as an example of the church, but that was 500 years ago or more. That's not the world we live in now. The shoe is on the other foot. The secularists are persecuting religious people.

TEXAN: What would you say to a public school educator or untenured professor with doubts about Darwinian dogma?

CRAFT: We asked Guillermo that question in the film. He says two things: First, they'd be smart if they're concerned about their career and their advancement to be quiet. On the other hand, he says, "My hope is that enough independent scientists and academics will stand up and say 'Look, let's admit to everyone what's going on here in science, that science is making metaphysical and religious and spiritual claims.'"

Anti-religious and anti-spiritual claims are still faith based, not empirically based. That's inappropriate. And science has become captive to a theory that has overextended its reach. So he says, "If you're concerned about your career, be quiet. If you have concerns about the common good and the welfare of humanity, speak up."

And I can understand why most scientists who have trouble with Darwinism—and they have just gotten their Ph.D. and they're 33 and they have two little infants and a wife who's been working and putting them through school and is ready to stay at home with the children—why they shut up. And you can hardly blame them, right? And we have people telling us that story on the phone.

TEXAN: Any predictions, five or 10 years out, where we'll be in this controversy?

CRAFT: I think it's possible that the social conservatives either as independents or within the Republican Party will begin to make this a part of their educational platform to say "Look, let's open up the debate here and let's stop allowing one metaphysical viewpoint to shut down discussion within colleges and universities and within high schools. "I think the public, once they understand more and more what

Darwinian evolution represents, I think they will reject that and move against it.

I think Darwin, in my opinion, whatever his contributions were—and I think he did make contributions, particularly in the area of microevolution—he represents one of the big three of hypermodernity, of which we have Marx and Freud. I call them the three bearded men, or ZZ Top of the 19th century.

I think Freud has largely been relegated to a part of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, where in the past he was psychiatry and psychoanalysis. I think Marx, his theory which used to be the reigning orthodoxy in the departments of economics and most universities around the world has now been discredited, and his contributions to economics have now been relegated to those areas where he really did make contributions and insights, and that's a very small piece of territory. That's a necessary contraction that's required with these leaders of modernity who have been used as platforms for the secular progressives.

Marx and Freud have already been contracted, and I think Darwin is on his way to being contracted. And I think that's a good thing. I think there's been too much adulation and far, far too much credence given to their theories as grand, sweeping meta-narratives to explain origin, life, the human soul and human economics. Darwin's theory has been revised such that it looks less and less like his theory, but it still has his name on it. Less and less the information we're receiving through the study of phenomena doesn't uphold his theory because his theory's too simple to explain how life develops.

And nobody has a credible theory, scientifically, of how life originated. No one.

The Darwinists admit it on the phone. There is no scientific theory for human or life origins. Nobody knows how inorganic transformed into organic. We know what we believe as religious people—"Well, God did it."

That's not a scientific answer. That's a metaphysical answer, which I think is the right answer. But how it actually happened mechanically, no one knows.

And that's an interesting point when you have a theory of life development such as Darwinism, which doesn't have any theory of the origin of life that's credible.

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