

NEW FILM EXPOSES SUPPRESSION OF SPEECH

*Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed," Motive Entertainment.
Opens nationwide on April 18.*

A new documentary hosted by Ben Stein, "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed," examines whether academic freedom and freedom of speech are being suppressed at our nation's universities and bastions of "big science." The film argues that those who broach the subject of intelligent design often invoke the wrath of their colleagues and superiors. In many cases, they are silenced or even drummed out of their positions.

Such strong reactions on the part of evolutionists to the suggestion that mankind is the work of a Creator is not unexpected. Many also responded harshly on July 7, 2005 when Christoph Cardinal Schonborn, the Archbishop of Vienna and member of the Congregation for Catholic Education, published an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*. His aim was to clear up lingering confusion about Pope John Paul II's stance on evolution. The late pontiff was, and still is, widely quoted as calling evolution "more than just a hypothesis." Schonborn acknowledged this statement, but also reminded readers that His Holiness also said, "All the observations concerning the development of life lead to a similar conclusion. The evolution of living beings, of which science seeks to determine the stages and to discern the mechanism, presents an internal finality which arouses admiration. This finality which directs beings in a direction for which they are not responsible or in charge, obliges one to suppose a Mind which is its inventor, its creator."

This essay came shortly after newly installed Pope Benedict XVI declared, "We are not some casual and meaningless product

of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God.” No one with any familiarity with Catholic teaching should have been surprised by the idea that the Church teaches God is the source of all life. As the cardinal also pointed out, the Catechism explicitly states, “We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom. It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance.” The International Theological Commission was even more straightforward in 2004 (under the leadership of then-Cardinal Ratzinger), when it released a statement reading: “An unguided evolutionary process—one that falls outside the bounds of divine providence—simply cannot exist.”

Yet the cardinal’s piece provoked quite a troubling reaction. What was troubling were the almost hysterical cries from those—both inside and outside of Catholic circles—who labeled the cardinal’s take as backward or even anti-science. Georgetown University theologian John F. Haught, writing in *Commonweal*, declared Schonborn’s essay to be “a setback in the dialogue of religion and science.” British astrophysicist Sir Martin Rees, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Science, looked for the academy to distance itself from the cardinal’s piece. Liberal critic Andrew Sullivan charged, “And so we return to the 19th century.” Additionally, several leading Catholic scientists appealed to the pope to clarify the cardinal’s words.

Cardinal Schonborn clarified his own (rather clear) words a few months later, saying. “I see no difficulty in joining belief in the Creator with the theory of evolution, but under the prerequisite that the borders of scientific theory are maintained.” This seemed to quell some of the loudest protestors, but the question remained: Why did His Eminence’s article cause such a fuss? Why were his words met with such strong resistance, and in some cases, loathing?

The producers of “Expelled” wouldn’t be surprised at the uproar over Cardinal Schonborn’s essay. The film presents

viewers with a number of well-credentialed scholars and scientists who were driven out of their offices or universities for similarly expressing hesitation about the atheistic neo-Darwinian theory of evolution that is so prevalent in education.

Host Ben Stein is a man of many talents—he's known as much for comedic roles in films as for his days as a White House lawyer and speechwriter. Stein sets the tone for the project: entertaining, but with a strong foundation of scholarship. The film kicks off with an address by Stein to an audience of students. Speaking of the importance of freedom, Stein says he was disturbed to learn that academic freedom is far from guaranteed at many of our nation's most prestigious campuses. As he continues that it is frightening how worthy professors have been silenced by those Darwinian advocates who want to suppress other ideas, viewers may find the interspersed images of West Germany and the Berlin Wall more than excessive. However, as the filmmakers unleash tale after tale of woe met by earnest men and woman who have dared to question the status quo, it becomes clear that the metaphor—while heavy handed—is apt.

Many of those interviewed in the film have histories of being drummed out of their careers after making even the slightest suggestion that the theory of intelligent design should be taken seriously. The case of Richard Sternberg, who was interviewed for the film, may be the most widely known due to media coverage that surrounded his story. Sternberg, a prominent researcher at the National Museum of Natural History (a division of the Smithsonian), served as managing editor of the journal *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*. When Sternberg published a peer-reviewed article by a proponent of intelligent design, he quickly met the wrath of his colleagues and superiors. A Catholic, he even was warned that Christians should keep their faith quiet and was eventually banned from his office.

Skeptics would naturally suspect that something else must have happened to warrant Sternberg's dismissal. After all, it's the job of a publisher to run peer-reviewed articles in scholarly journals—they don't get fired merely because some articles are more controversial than others. But as "Expelled" shows, Sternberg's is no isolated case. Many others have dared to bring up the subject of intelligent design, only to be labeled Creationists and find themselves pushed to the fringes of the academic community. Even at schools like Baylor in Texas, the world's largest Baptist university, professors have found themselves mocked and penalized for treating intelligent design as a theory worthy of study.

The problem of suppression of views that counter Darwinism, however, isn't limited to higher education and advanced scientific think tanks. A number of Darwin's advocates are working hard to ensure that American kids are not presented with any alternatives to their theory in the classroom. One such advocate interviewed is Eugenie Scott, head of the National Center for Science Education (NCSE). The NCSE, an activist group, opposes any attempts to introduce the theory of intelligent design to students in public schools. They follow cases where parents and school boards express an interest in broadening the scope of the scientific materials with which students are presented. When so-called "attacks on evolution education" pop up in communities across the country, the NCSE comes in with offers of help for like-minded locals. This help can include talking points and legal assistance should they wish to pursue litigation. Scott defends the practice, noting for good measure that Catholics support evolution. (This is exactly the sort of thinking Cardinal Schonborn tried to clear up.)

Not every story of supposedly persecuted scholars comes across as proof of an anti-intelligent design cabal operating in the scientific community. An Iowa State professor was denied tenure after his views became known, but the film presents no

proof to counter the university's claim that he simply did not meet the qualifications they seek in those to whom tenure is granted. However, taken as a whole, it does seem apparent that there is a strong bias against those whose views differ from the strictly Darwinian.

Most compelling are the attitudes shown by the anti-intelligent design advocates in the film. Richard Dawkins, well known British atheist and biologist (he has written books such as *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design* and *The God Delusion*) seems barely able to contain his anger as Stein peppers him with questions about the origins of life. Though Dawkins is unable to explain to his interviewer how, exactly, life started, he's sure it didn't start with a god. A gleeful Stein enjoys gently prodding Dawkins, tripping his subject up and leaving him sputtering for answers. Stein repeatedly questions him on his atheism. Is Dawkins an atheist when it comes to the Muslim god? To the Hindu gods? To the God of the Old Testament? Dawkins, routinely protesting that he doesn't believe in any god, can't figure out why Stein needles him so incessantly. The answer appears to be that Stein just likes to have a good time, and needling Dawkins is a hoot.

Stein's occasional boyish jocularity serves as a welcome break among some of the more horrifying subject matter. To underscore the results that can arise when we reject the idea of man as a unique creation of God, the film highlights the eugenics movement, and takes viewers on a tour of the German prisons where Nazi doctors performed their cruel experiments on humans they saw as being of lesser races. Stein is careful to clarify that he isn't charging belief in Darwinism inevitably leads to such ends, but that Darwinian theory has been used to justify appalling acts.

According to spokesmen for the film, when Stein was first approached for this project, he accepted because he loathes any attempts to suppress speech. He did, however, express his

feelings that intelligent design is a load of nonsense. But making the film influenced his view. Stein's change in attitude is evident in the contrast in the tone he takes with different interview subjects. The skeptical questioner yields to a man convinced that the theory of Darwinian evolution has huge gaps that are being ignored.

Overall, "Expelled" makes a compelling case for the argument that higher education and "big science" are no bastions of academic freedom. What the typical viewer can do to change things is left unstated. But checking out this thoroughly enjoyable documentary is a good start.

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For more information, visit www.GetExpelled.com.