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"Intelligent design" belittles God, says Vatican astronomer [3]

The director of the Vatican Observatory, Father George V. Coyne S.J., delivered a talk in which he argued that "the Intelligent Design (ID) movement, while evoking a God of power and might, a designer God, actually belittles God" on January 31, 2006. His talk, entitled "Science Does Not Need God. Or Does It? A Catholic Scientist Looks at Evolution," was presented as the annual Aquinas Lecture at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Unsurprisingly, a central target of Coyne's was Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn's [essay](#) [4] "Finding Design in Nature" (*The New York Times*, July 27, 2005) which was widely hailed by the "intelligent design" movement and widely criticized by a number of prominent Catholic scientists, including [Kenneth R. Miller](#) [5] of Brown University, [Nicola Cabibbo](#) [6] of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and, most recently, writing in the official Vatican newspaper, [Fiorenzo Facchini](#) [7] of the University of Bologna. In his [talk](#) [8], Coyne described Schoenborn's op-ed as a "tragic" episode in the relationship of the Catholic Church to science, writing:

To my estimation, the cardinal is in error on at least five fundamental issues, among others: (1) the scientific theory of evolution, as all scientific theories, is completely neutral with respect to religious thinking; (2) the message of John Paul II, which I have just referred to and which is dismissed by the cardinal as "rather vague and unimportant," is a fundamental church teaching which significantly advances the evolution debate; (3) neo-Darwinian evolution is not in the words of the cardinal: "an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection"; (4) the apparent directionality seen by science in the evolutionary process does not require a designer; (5) Intelligent Design is not science despite the cardinal's statement that "neo-Darwinism and the multiverse hypothesis in cosmology [were] invented to avoid the overwhelming evidence for purpose and design found in modern

science."

Approvingly quoting John Henry Newman's comment that "[T]he theory of Darwin, true or not, is not necessarily atheistic; on the contrary, it may simply be suggesting a larger idea of divine providence and skill," Coyne also explored what he sees as the implications of modern science for religious belief, writing, "One gets the impression from certain religious believers that they fondly hope for the durability of certain gaps in our scientific knowledge of evolution, so that they can fill them with God. This is the exact opposite of what human intelligence is all about."

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