Catherine Baker, *The Evolution Dialogues: Science, Christianity, and the Quest for Understanding* (AAAS, Washington, 2006), 208pp., $9.95

In *The Evolution Dialogues*, the "AAAS seeks to correct some of . . . the deep misunderstandings about what biological evolution is, what science itself is, and what views people of faith, especially Christians, have applied to their interpretation of the science." (p. 13) The *Dialogues* focus on Christianity because "those most troubled by evolution and most active in challenging it as part of the public school curriculum are identified with Christianity." (p. 15)

To this end, the AAAS engaged the services of a "professional plain language writer" working under the direction of an editorial advisory committee and reviewers. The result is a book of eight chapters, the odd chapters describing an aspect of science related to Darwin and evolution ("Science in Darwin's time," "The theory of evolution," "The science behind evolution," "The world as explained by evolution") and the even chapters devoted to responses to the preceding odd chapters ("Christianity in Darwin's time," "Initial responses to Darwin's theory," "Christian worldviews," "Contemporary stances toward evolution").

Each chapter is prefaced by an episode in a continuing story of Angela Rawlett, a college student "on a journey of discovery," mentored academically by biology professor Laurel Dunbar and spiritually by campus minister Phil Compton. The dilemma faced by Angela is her requirement, as a biology major, to take a course in evolution, in which her father, whom she respects, has vocally expressed disbelief. The episodes in the odd chapters find Angela discussing matters with Professor Dunbar, followed by episodes in the even chapters spent with Rev. Compton.

Like Quammen's short biography of Darwin, the Dialogues note that "*The Origin of Species* took humankind off its pinnacle as the ultimate purpose of God's creation and placed on the meandering path of evolution." (p. 75) And, in responding to Angela's father's objection that evolution is a "theory," the *Dialogues* spend the entirety of chapter five articulating the theory-building process of science. Moreover, the text in the sixth chapter suggests that scientists have greater expectation of change in their theories than do theologians in their doctrines. Theologians do not place the emphasis on testing doctrines that scientists place on testing theories.

The confrontation between evolution and Intelligent Design is framed in the text of the final chapter: "The continuum [of Christian response to evolution] ranges from those who would change science in order to make it consistent with their theological commitments to those who would modify their religious understanding in order to take account of an evolving universe." (pp. 154-155) The text goes on to note that the present opposition to teaching evolution in high schools had its origin in a post-Sputnik biology text focused on evolution supported by NSF. At that time the opposers were creationists, who later evolved into "scientific" creationists who attempted to disprove the legitimacy of data supporting evolution.

Eschewing religious references and claiming to be scientific, "intelligent design" (or "ID") is based on Dembski's argument that the "complex specified information" of life could not have happened by natural law or chance, ditto by Behe regarding life's "irreducible complexity." ID

has appealed to a broader base in that it does not disallow microevolution and does not require abandoning science. All it asks is to "teach the controversy," imputing the connotation of "hunch" to the "theory" of evolution rather than recognize a theory to be the best explanation of the facts at hand. The text also observes that more money has been spent to lobby for ID than to establish its scientific validity.

The Epilogue, titled "Advancing beyond dialogue," tries to bring things together. Phil Compton comes to a program on the "Evolution of Life Elsewhere" to which Angela has invited him, and Angela is surprised that he knows Professor Dunbar. The following text attempts a synthesis as well, by stating that what enables scientists to work compatibly with their belief in Christianity is a core of values shared by both scientists and Christians, among them truthfulness, community, tradition, and reason. Scientists who are Christians are in a unique position to show other Christians that science is not only compatible with Christianity but also shares common values with it. But this type of synthesis would not seem to apply to Christians "who would change science in order to make it consistent with their theological commitments."

- John L. Roeder