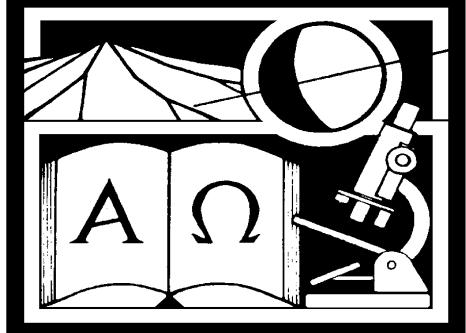


Origins Insights

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CREATION SCIENCE FELLOWSHIP



March 2001

Wedge of Truth

The Beginning of the End for Neo-Darwinism's Cultural

by Bob Harsh

I enjoyed reading Phil Johnson's book, *The Wedge of Truth* last summer. As with most of his books, *The Wedge* was fairly easy to read and presented a lot of food for thought. I am always looking for a head start in composing my articles and *The Wedge* seemed like a winner. I could picture my fingers flying and my mind gliding along with ease. These were my thoughts last November, when I had in mind a simple report on a book that easily held my interest.

The time has come to put the words down and I am having a difficult time. I find myself feeling a little like a person who has just come to grips with the thought that maybe they shouldn't be so supportive of their hero; let's call him Robin Hood. After all, Robin Hood was a thief! But he does so much good! Law-abiding citizens need him! But he breaks the law and I feel like I shouldn't be supporting anyone who is a purposeful law-breaker.

Let's get a glimpse of what Phillip Johnson is up to.

Phillip Johnson is relentlessly logical. That is, he insists that there be good, or at least some, evidence to support a claim--evidence other

than that the claim is of the "right" sort. This is an irritating trait, and plenty of people are irritated by his insistence on evidence. But the insistence on evidence is what from antiquity has characterized scientific work--not a set of conclusions which must be defended at all costs. It is evidence that drives the Wedge of truth.

In American culture today the real issue is who shall have the right to determine policy. Knowledge confers the right to act and to lead. So the question becomes, Who gets to say what knowledge is? If you can successfully define knowledge in such a way that your convictions are knowledge and those of others are not, you get to determine policy,

MEETING INFORMATION

Host: Bob Harsh

Topic: The Wedge of Truth: The Case Against Naturalism

The Beginning of the End for Neo-Darwinism's Cultural Dominance or Non-Theistic Creationism?

The topic for discussion at our March 20, 2001 Creation Science Fellowship meeting will be a review of Phillip Johnson's new book, *The Wedge of Truth* and a critique of the "Design Theory Movement". The Intelligent Design Movement is the most visible arm of modern creationism in America. The leaders of the movement, Michael Behe, Phillip Johnson, William Dembski, Jonathan Wells, and Stephen Meyers have all received the honor of being thoroughly reprimanded by the scientific establishment. Evolutionism has a strangle hold on our culture and *The Wedge* by Phillip Johnson may be the tip of a tool that may be a beginning to splitting the tough log of evolutionism open, so that people can see it for what it is.

Bob Harsh will be leading our discussion of the importance of the "Intelligent Design Movement" and the Wedge Strategy at our meeting on March 20. Come and join in our discussion of this important topic.

DATE: Tuesday, March 20, 2001

TIME: 7:30 PM

PLACE: Mars Alliance Church, 997 Route 228, Mars, PA, 16046.
Church Phone: (724) 776-9400

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to direct human life.

But if you successfully define knowledge in terms of materialistic "science," then there will be no knowledge to guide life, for "science" materialistically interpreted tells you nothing about how life should be lived. It can help you only if you already know how life should be lived. Which is exactly what naturalism inconsistently assumes, for *its* answers concerning how life should be lived--and it certainly has them--cannot be derived from the science which it proclaims to be the source of all knowledge. It is thus forced into rationalization rather than reasoning. It has, as an intellectual outlook, only a style and no substance. [Dallas Willard in forward to *The Wedge* by Phillip Johnson. InterVarsity Press.2000]

In what sense can Phillip Johnson be viewed as a hero? One of the greatest thefts of all time came when evolutionism stole all of the trump cards and took over all authority in "SCIENCE". For centuries there had been recognition that the Bible was just as reliable as any natural phenomenon that could be observed. Today "SCIENCE" claims the authority for any teaching in the realm of truth about nature. Of course SCIENCE has not always enjoyed that authoritative standing.

Here is the basis of the dispute in simple terms according to Philip Johnson.

At the heart of the problem of scientific authority is the fact that there are two distinct definitions of science in our culture. On the one hand, science is devoted to unbiased empirical investigation. According to

this definition, scientists should follow the empirical evidence wherever it leads--even if it leads to recognition of the presence of intelligent causes in biology. According to the other definition, science is devoted to providing explanations for all phenomena that employ only natural or material causes. According to the second definition, scientists must ignore evidence pointing to the presence of intelligent causes in biology, and must affirm the sufficiency of natural (unintelligent) causes regardless of the evidence.

[Phillip Johnson]

For many years I have believed that God has revealed Himself to us in two ways. I certainly believe that the clearest knowledge about God may be found by studying His message in the Bible. The other way to understand God is through study of His creation. By the way, I also believe that God can reveal Himself any way He chooses. The great tragedy is that "Science" has laid

claim to all authority about truth in nature. "The prevailing definition of knowledge rests on the so-called fact/value distinction. 'Facts' are objective, rational, and true for everyone; 'values' are personal, subjective, and valid only for believers. Real knowledge can be had only of 'facts.' That's why Darwinian evolution is permitted in the science classroom, where we teach knowledge. But creation is relegated to the comparative religion class, where we explore people's subjective beliefs.

[Nancy R. Pearcey, World Magazine (July 29, 2000)]

When young people from Bible teaching families wonder about the origin of life or the beginning of the universe they have a dilemma facing them. Do they believe the Biblical accounts of the creation story, Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, and the great worldwide flood or do they believe that nature created nature without God intervening, man evolved from "lower" animals, the notion of sin is fiction, and the tale of Noah's flood is an interesting folk story?

I am a professional educator and believe truth is truth, regardless of

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its source. The modern “creationist movement” has been one of my interests for over a dozen years. I believe we have made great strides and have felt that modern creationism has made outstanding progress. **Then I took a good look in the mirror. I was reminded that I am still on the losing side!** You have no doubt heard about the treatment of the creationists in Kansas. In case you haven’t heard, our brothers in Kansas were portrayed in the worst light possible by the news media, on the internet and, important for our present discussion, by all of the important scientific journals.

When a science teacher presumes to speak sympathetically about “creation,” the mainstream media ask us to associate that concept with a view held by supposedly anti-intellectual, anti-scientific, unthinking, bigoted, narrow-minded, uneducated fundamentalists who still believe the world is flat and the Earth is at the center of the Universe. Yet, when a science professor from the local state university comes to the defense of “evolution,” we are encouraged to think of a view endorsed by “all reputable scientists” and “thinking people everywhere.” [Major, T. 2000. The intelligent design movement [part I]. *Reason and Revelation*. 20 [10] October. See also

[www.ApologeticsPress.org.\]](http://www.ApologeticsPress.org.)

A hero with the promise of victory, even in the far distant future, is refreshing to me. I didn’t hear about the “Intelligent Design Movement” until a couple of years ago. At first look, they reminded me of the Lone Ranger riding Silver in to round up the “bad guys” and put them out of business.

In preparing for this article, I have done a lot of investigating and have learned that not every creationist welcomes the “ID” movement. So after my investigation I am left with that uneasy feeling. On the one

hand, I owe it to the fight for TRUTH to support this modern day Robin Hood, but on the other hand, perhaps I will be supporting an outlaw.

Now, how could any rational creationist call, Phillip Johnson, my modern day Robin Hood, an outlaw? Phillip became an agnostic in college, was very successful in his profession, later became dissatisfied with his view of the meaning of his existence, heard the gospel message and placed his faith in Jesus. The result was a newfound meaning in his life. Phillip, an Elder in his church in Berkeley, California is openly a serious Christian. In fact, he dedicated his book, *The Wedge of Truth* to the congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley, California. But, just listen to his own words.

“To put things on a more rational basis, the first thing that has to be done is to get the Bible out of the discussion.”

[Johnson. Phillip. 1999. *The Wedge*. Touchstone, July] He went on, **“This is not to say that the biblical issues are unimportant; the point is rather that the time to address them will be after we have separated materialist prejudice from scientific fact.”**

I personally feel very uncomfortable leaving the “Message” of the great Creator out of the discussion and have discovered that several others agree. Listen to Henry Morris’ evaluation and advice.

There is a strong movement among evangelicals today to emphasize “intelligent design” as the argument of choice against naturalism and Darwinian evolution. The movement is also called “mere creation” or “the wedge movement”, the idea being to avoid controversial subjects such as the Biblical doctrine of creation in talking to evolutionists. Any discussion of a young earth, six-day creation, a worldwide flood and other Biblical records of early history will turn off scientists and other professionals, they say, so we should simply use the evidence of intelligent design as a “wedge” to pry them loose from their naturalistic premises. Then, later, we can follow up this opening by presenting the gospel, they hope.

But this approach, even if well meaning and effectively articulated, will not work! It has often been tried in the past and has failed, and it will fail today. **The**

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reason it won't work is because it is not the Biblical method."

[Morris. H. 1999 Design is not enough!]

Dr. Morris continues. “**The evidence of intelligent design does not bring them to Christ, but to Mother Nature.** Scientific creationism, which incorporates the evidence of design along with the overwhelming evidence against any evolutionary substitute (whether Darwinian atheism or New Age Pantheism) is vitally important, but **it must be either followed by or accompanied by a sound presentation of true Biblical creationism** if it is to be meaningful and lasting.”

Well, now let us hear from the other side. I get so disturbed just about every time I watch a good nature program on TV that I feel like turning the program off. I get so tired of the blatant announcements from NASA telling about the inevitability of finding evidence of life in outer space. All you need is a little methane, ammonia, carbon dioxide and, of course, water. Get some lightning energizing the mix and presto zumo we have life! It's all that simple! It's simply inevitable! ARGH! **Are you as frustrated with all of that stupidity and intellectual dishonesty as I am?** Well, even if you are not fed up, I am; and somebody has got to just tell them how wrong they are! Whew! Aren't you glad I got that off my chest?

But we can't “just tell them”! They won't believe us, and there are ten times more of them than us. How about this idea? **Let's debate the evolutionists and prove how lame their ideas are.** It seems to me that most debates are for the entertainment of the audience. I have a lot of respect for Dr. Gish. He is a talented debater and he is one of us. I am glad that he is willing to take on the best from the “other side”.

But, after the dust settles, both sides usually declare themselves to be the winners. **They really end up talking past each other.**

Phillip Johnson revealed some of his motivation in an interview in August 2000.

There is a deeper issue, and I explain it in *The Wedge of Truth*. **The sad story is that denying the true God is often the starting point for human wisdom.** We do not wish to honor the true God, and so **we turn from the creator to created things**, including idols of the mind like the theory of evolution. **The most important question is whether God is real or imaginary. Did God create man or did man create God?** The latter is the teaching of evolutionary naturalism, and even many Christian thinkers tacitly assume that position. In Chapter Four of *The Wedge of Truth* I ask whether theology has any access to knowledge - as opposed to being mere subjective belief. These are some of the most important intellectual questions of our time, and also of all other times.

Everybody starts from faith, just as every house has a foundation. The question is not whether you will build upon a foundation, but whether you will build upon a foundation of rock or upon a foundation of sand. [Interview with Christian Book Distributors, Inc. Email interview conducted the week of August 14, 2000]

Trevor Major is another young earth creationist who has written a very thoughtful endorsement of the intelligent design movement. He identified an interesting observation in a two-part discussion of the intelligent design movement. Major reminded his readers that, one of the high priests of modern evolutionism, Richard Dawkins, has made it a practice to admit that **although living things often give the appearance of having been designed, it is merely an illusion.** Natural selection does such a good job that the finished product works so well that it indeed “appears” to be a product of design. Since his paradigm concerning living things cannot allow the existence of a Designer, then there cannot be design in nature. Dawkins knows well that **“design always demands a designer!”** [I would highly recommend reading Trevor Major's very thoughtful two part essay “The Intelligent Design Movement” Parts I and II at www.apologeticspress.org.]

Major believes that the modern ID movement closely resembles William Paley's watchmaker argument from 200 years ago. One of Stephen Gould's **favorite arguments** against a designer is **the seeming imperfection** of many anatomical structures in nature. I thought Major had an excellent counter argument.

But this objection misses the mark entirely. If a watch does not keep time, then is it any less the product of an intelligent designer? The only way around this response is to say that, if there were a Creator-God, He must be pretty inept. Of course, this concedes that a Creator is at least a possibility. As for His being inept, that is another matter. How can we know that the less-than-perfect or “sub optimal” organ, system, or structure has not become so through time? My watch may be losing time now, but it might have run perfectly well before I dunked it

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in the ocean. And second, sub optimality is in the eye of the beholder. For instance, Gould is famous for talking about what he perceives to be the panda's "clumsy" pseudo thumb but, in fact, this particular appendage is an efficient tool for holding bamboo shoots and stripping off leaves (Thompson, 1991). Paley argued that we do not need perfection, nor a clear understanding of function, to see evidence of design. [Major, T. 2000. The intelligent design movement [part II]. Reason and Revelation. 20 [11] November.

The Wedge is not a tactic that is intended to stand alone. It is a part of the overall strategy of the Intelligent Design movement leadership. One of the most important sources of ID leadership is Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture. Its mission statement lays out its ultimate goal as seeking "nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies." [THE WEDGE STRATEGY at the Discovery Institute's web site] [By the way, I discovered this document, interestingly enough, as a link at an anti-creationism web site!]

In attempting to make their case, ID advocates have focused on two critical questions: (1) Is science, in principle, able to detect evidence of design in nature?; and (2) Is there, in fact, any such evidence of genuine design in nature (and in the biological world in particular)? Someone who is intent on pressing these questions does not wish to be distracted by arguments on radiometric dating, or how many animals could fit into the ark. So, for the sake of argument, those in the ID movement want to set aside (temporarily) questions about, say, Genesis and the age of the Earth. It is not that such questions are deemed as being either irrelevant or unimportant; it is just that they are being saved for another place and time. "[Major, T. 2000. The intelligent

design movement [part I]. [www.ApologeticsPress.org.\]](http://www.ApologeticsPress.org.)

The Discovery Institute claims, "The proposition that human beings are created in the image of God is one of the bedrock principles on which Western civilization was built. Its influence can be detected in most, if not all, of the West's greatest achievements, including representative democracy, human rights, free enterprise, and progress in the arts and sciences." Things changed however, "Yet a little over a century ago, this cardinal idea came under wholesale attack by intellectuals drawing on the discoveries of modern science. Debunking the traditional conceptions of both God and man, thinkers such as Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud portrayed humans not as moral and spiritual beings, but as animals or machines who inhabited a universe ruled by purely impersonal forces and whose behavior and very thoughts were dictated by the unbending forces of biology, chemistry, and environment. This materialistic conception of reality eventually infected virtually every area of our culture, from politics and economics to literature and art."

They would like to lead a fight against materialism for many reasons. "The cultural consequences of this triumph of materialism were devastating. Materialists denied the existence of objective moral standards, claiming that environment dictates our behavior and beliefs. Such moral relativism was uncritically adopted by much of the social sciences, and it still undergirds much of modern economics, political science, psychology and sociology.

Materialists also undermined personal responsibility by asserting that human thoughts and behaviors are dictated by our biology and environment. The results can be seen in modern approaches to criminal justice, product liability,

and welfare. In the materialist scheme of things, everyone is a victim and no one can be held accountable for his or her actions." [THE WEDGE STRATEGY at the Discovery Institute's web site]

If your roof leaks, the rather painless short term solution that doesn't cost much, is to place a bucket under the leak and just monitor it so that it can be emptied when it gets full. You know that this is not a very good solution but it seems to be the American way these days. It seems to be more politically correct to treat the symptoms and hope the disease goes away. The Discovery Institute has a strategy of treating the disease, not just the symptoms.

The social consequences of materialism have been devastating. As symptoms, those consequences are certainly worth treating. However, we are convinced that in order to defeat materialism, we must cut it off at its source. That source is scientific materialism. This is precisely our strategy. If we view the predominant materialistic science as a giant tree, our strategy is intended to function as a "wedge" that, while relatively small, can split the trunk when applied at its weakest points. The very beginning of this strategy, the "thin edge of the wedge," was Phillip Johnson's critique of Darwinism begun in 1991 in *Darwinism on Trial*, and continued in *Reason in the Balance* and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*. Michael Behe's highly successful *Darwin's Black Box* followed Johnson's work. We are building on this momentum, broadening the wedge with a positive scientific alternative to materialistic scientific theories, which has come to be called the theory of intelligent design (ID). Design theory promises to reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian (Continued on page 6)

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and theistic convictions. [THE WEDGE STRATEGY at the Discovery Institute's web site]

Read the goals of the Wedge and think about which of the goals you can support and which ones you are opposed to.

Governing Goals

- To defeat scientific materialism and its destructive moral, cultural and political legacies.
- To replace materialistic explanations with the theistic understanding that nature and human beings are created by God.

Five Year Goals

- To see intelligent design theory as an accepted alternative in the sciences and scientific research being done from the perspective of design theory.
- To see the beginning of the influence of design theory in spheres other than natural science.
- To see major new debates in education, life issues, legal and personal responsibility pushed to the front of the national agenda.

Twenty Year Goals

- To see intelligent design theory as the dominant perspective in science.
- To see design theory application in specific fields, including molecular biology, biochemistry, paleontology, phys-

ics and cosmology in the natural sciences, psychology, ethics, politics, theology and philosophy in the humanities; to see its influence in the fine arts.

- To see design theory permeate our religious, cultural, moral and political life.

I like them all; don't you?!! So what's all the fuss about? I don't see any mention of Jesus Christ or the use of the Bible as an important source of information about the topics under debate.

A major reason for leaving the Bible out of the discussion, for the present, is that many people will not listen to what creationists have to say because of the prevailing philosophy about the different roles of "science" and "religion". I utilize both as sources of truth about nature but **most scientists see science and religion having non-overlapping roles in our culture.**

The Bible tells us how to go to heaven; science tells us how the heavens operate. Philosophically, the **basic argument**--tirelessly repeated by Dr. Singer, among others--is that **belief in God is a matter of faith**, while **science** is a **matter of reason**, and never the twain shall meet. As she put it, "We can **respect the faith** of these people who believe the biblical story, but that has **nothing to do with science**," where we discover **what really happened**. What this means, effectively, is that **religion** is a matter of the **imagination**, that faith is a form of fantasy. **God** is there in the same territory as **Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, and Tinkerbell**. Belief in them is not outlawed, and you cannot absolutely prove that God does not exist. It is **entirely** a matter of **subjective belief**, with no standing in the evidence. [Evolution and the

Curriculum A Conversation with Phillip Johnson and Gregg Easterbrook]

I want to let Phillip Johnson have the last word in his optimistic manner. My hope is that you will be stimulated to investigate Phillip Johnson's book, *The Wedge of Truth* and will consider giving your support to the important work of the Wedge Project.

Persons who consider only the cultural power of evolutionary naturalism and see how thoroughly it dominates the contemporary mind, may suppose that the Wedge's critique of scientific materialism is a quixotic venture that can never succeed. On the contrary, **I think our success is all but inevitable**. In arguing that we should distinguish between objective empirical testing on the one hand and deductive reasoning from materialist philosophical assumptions on the other, we are making a point of elementary logic that is irresistible once it is understood. **The only obstacle** to a breakthrough is the **longstanding prejudice**, so deeply ingrained in educational practice, which says that materialism and science are the same thing, and that there cannot be evidence of design in biology because materialist prejudice forbids it. A prejudice like that can be protected for a while, but in the end reason always breaks through. I measure our success in two ways. First, many thousands of high-school and college students are reading our literature, and are responding very favorably. As they learn that the official textbooks present the evidence selectively, and even distort it in the manner illustrated by the finch-beak example, many become highly motivated to challenge the dogmatic system that is being foisted on them. **The most talented of these will be the Wedge members of the future.** Second, the Darwinists are com-

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pletely **unable to meet our challenge at the intellectual level**, and scarcely try. Their literature continues to promote the view that the only dissenters from Darwinism are religious fundamentalists who don't know about the overwhelming evidence that proves that "evolution has occurred." This caricature of the opposition works only with people who have never heard the dissenting arguments firsthand. Once independent-thinking young people have read the dissenting literature, they are not likely to be impressed with the evasive statements of the Darwinist establishment. Success for the Wedge does not mean replacing one dogmatic system with another. **Our objective is not to impose a solution, but to open the most important areas of intellectual inquiry to fresh thinking.** If the fall of Darwinism inspires materialists to develop a new theory that can survive unbiased scientific testing, then so be it. If they can't do that, then the world will face the astonishing truth that the evidence of biology actually *supports* the popular belief that living organisms are the product of an intelligent creator rather than a blind material force. When that realization sinks in, the next big project on the intellectual agenda will be to understand why so many brilliant people fooled themselves so completely for so long. Exploring that question will make the twenty-first century a very exciting time. [Johnson. P. Touchstone Magazine]

2001 CALENDARS

We still have some God the Creator 2001 Creation calendars available for sale! They are now \$10 / \$8 for CSF members (Regularly \$11.99).

The following is a description of a new book that is available for sale at the CSF meetings. Pick your copy up at the February meeting for \$18.00.

"in six days"

Why would any educated, self-respecting scientist with a PhD advocate a literal interpretation of the six days of creation? Why, indeed, when only one in three Americans believes "the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word" according to a recent Gallup poll.

Science can neither prove nor disprove evolution anymore than it can creation. Certainly there are no human eyewitness accounts of either. However, certain factors are present today which are capable of swaying one's beliefs one way or the other.

In this book are the testimonies of fifty men and women holding doctorates in a wide range of scientific fields who have been convinced by the evidence to believe in a literal six-day creation. For example, meet:

- The geneticist who concludes that there must have been 150 billion forerunners of "modern man" in order for the natural selection required by evolution to have taken place in the development of man. The evidence for such vast numbers of "prehistoric man" is in dire shortage.
- The orthodontist who discovered that European museum fossils of ancient man have been tampered with to adhere to evolution theories.
- The geologist who studied under Stephen Jay Gould and literally cut the Bible to pieces before totally rejecting evolution.

All fifty of these scientists, through faith and scientific fact, have come to the conclusion that God's Word is true and everything had its origin not so very long ago, in the beginning, In Six Days.

THE WEDGE OF TRUTH

by Phillip Johnson, is available at the CSF meetings for \$18.00. This book will be used as a reference for the meeting.

If there is a dispute, science arbitrates it. Yet a society ruled by science faces major problems. More important, while we may learn a great deal from science, it does not offer us unlimited knowledge. The deficiencies in science and naturalism call for a cognitive revolution, a fundamental change in our worldview and thinking habits. The Wedge of Truth does not abandon a foundation of rational thought but acknowledges that reason encompasses more than science can provide. In the end, Johnson prophetically concludes that the walls of naturalism will fall and that the Christian gospel must play a vital role in building a new foundation for thinking—not just about science and religion but about everything that gives human life hope and meaning.

First Ever International Creationist Build-Your-Own-Fossil-Museum Seminar

WHERE: Mt. Blanco Fossil Museum, Crosbyton, Texas U.S.A.

WHEN: Tuesday, April 24, 2001 (3:00 P.M.) through Wednesday, April 25, 2001 (9:00 P.M.)

COST: \$150.00 for individual. \$225.00 for husband/wife, or two people from same organization. Children are welcome. Call for registration price discount for children.

Contact Joe Taylor for more info via e-mail: mtblanco1@aol.com, or toll-free at **800-367-7454**, or **806-675-7777**

E-MAIL Preferences

Update: We have Adobe Acrobat for newsletter publication. **JUST A REMINDER, if you haven't already**, please verify whether or not you want to receive the newsletter via e-mail. csficc@csfpittsburgh.org.

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2001 MEETING TOPICS : SECOND QUARTER

Note: Bob Harsh and Steve Rodabaugh have switched the date of their scheduled talks.

APR 17 Intelligent Design: Is it All We Need for the Debate. Presenter: **Steve Rodabaugh**

MAY 15 Natural Selection Assimilation Laboratory. Hands on for all ages. Presenter: **Bob Harsh**

JUN 19 America B.C.: Diffusionism. Presenter: Reid Moon

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WINTER WEATHER SCHEDULE CHANGES:

If the monthly meeting will be cancelled due to any weather related problem—or still go on as scheduled, please call the CSF phone number at **412-341-4908** after 12 noon on the day of the meeting date and there will be a message indicating any cancellation or confirmation of the meeting scheduled.