

# The Herald Journal

## Priest Delivers Evolution Speech

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The concept of intelligent design is “blasphemous,” according to an evolutionary biologist and ordained Catholic priest who addressed a large crowd during a campus lecture Thursday night.

Francisco J. Ayala, a professor in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of California, Irvine, and author of the book “Darwin’s Gift to Science and Religion,” spoke at Utah State University, as a guest of the Center for Integrated BioSystems, about the ongoing debate between evolution and intelligent design.

Ayala focused much of his presentation on Charles Darwin, emphasizing the book “On the Origin of Species,” now in its 150th year of publication.

Using the Copernican principle of cosmology, Ayala showed that human beings — like the Earth as historically perceived — are not the “center” of the biological universe.

“Darwin moved humans from being the center of all life and made them just another species,” said Ayala. “Darwin completed the Copernican revolution.”

Reading aloud from the “Origin of Species,” Ayala joked that the author likely didn’t intend for his book to be written with a Spanish accent. The crowd laughed, but the message was clear; Darwin’s focus wasn’t evolution — it was natural selection.

“What is the purpose of evolution without the ability to explain it?” he asked. “Natural selection is the principle for the diversity of organisms.”

Ayala explained that natural selection happens when a random mutation increases an organism’s ability to survive. One example was England’s peppered moth. Before the industrial revolution, he explained, the moth was light-colored and blended well with the bark of a similarly-colored tree. Soot from burning coal darkened the trunks of the trees adjacent to industrial areas of England and the population of darker moths exploded.

Thursday’s presenter argued that intelligent design isn’t science because it cannot be tested and that anatomical shortcomings in an organism cannot be the design flaw of a “benevolent creator.” He added that natural forms are full of “bad design,” citing human

teeth that are too big for the jaw and heads that are too large for the birth canal.

Ayala argues that God would have to be “inept, cruel, sadistic and pervert(ed)” to be the sole designer and orchestrator of the natural world. To drive his point, Ayala called God the “greatest abortionist in the world,” explaining that 20 percent of all pregnancies are naturally and spontaneously aborted.

“Intelligent design is contrary to religion,” he said, “and incompatible with an omnipotent, wise and benevolent creator.”

In his book, Ayala says “Christians need not see evolution as a threat to their beliefs. ... There need not be conflict between religion and science.”

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