

Interview with John Leonard

By Judy Simperts

How would you describe your new book, *Divine Evolution: a Hybrid Theory Reconciling Creationism and Evolution*?

This book represents my best effort to reconcile the biblical creation account found in Genesis with scientific evidence supporting evolution. It is partially a labor of love and in part a search for truth. I started writing a book and didn't realize at first that's what I was doing. It all began when I was working on a website one evening with the television on in the background. World famous zoologist and atheist Richard Dawkins was promoting his book titled *The God Delusion* on the comedy show *The Colbert Report*. Dawkins told Colbert that computers, cars, and cell phones were all intelligently designed, but people were not. At first I was incredulous; having someone claim they don't believe in God was nothing new, but having it proclaimed so boldly and assuredly was somewhat disconcerting. To be honest, I hadn't given much thought to the creation account found in the Bible for years, and it had been a quarter century since I studied the theory of evolution. I began to do research and take notes. About two years later I had four hundred pages of notes that my wife and I began to edit into this book. There's enough material left over for a sequel.

Is your book appropriate for all age groups?

Certainly in terms of using offensive language or other explicit material, but very young children may have difficulty understanding some of the scientific terms used in the book. Also, several compelling but possibly disturbing stories documented as true are recounted in later chapters. Some of this information may also be deemed inappropriate for younger audiences. Parental discretion is advised, particularly in the chapters titled "Spooky Stuff" and "Misunderstanding God."

What was the time frame for writing *Divine Evolution: a Hybrid Theory Reconciling Creationism and Evolution*?

The book took about two years of research and maybe eight months of editing. My wife is one tough editor. Some chapters took six or seven complete rewrites before she liked them.

Which chapter is your most compelling chapter?

Probably Reason to Believe, the chapter in which I investigated the Near Death Experience accounts and scientific studies into NDEs.

Was there a chapter that was difficult to write?

Several chapters were tough to write. "Fiction Science" was a difficult chapter because I don't want to come across as anti-science except when scientists like Richard Dawkins make wildly audacious and ultimately unsubstantiated claims about how to interpret some scientific data. "Existential Questions" was another tough chapter, trying to tackle the "who am I?" and "why am I here?" questions we all ask ourselves at some point in our lives.

Who are your favorite authors?

That's a tough question because I read so many books of different genres. In fiction I gravitate toward mystery and suspense thrillers, and I really like T. Jefferson Parker, Nelson DeMille, Jeffrey Deaver, Andrew Klavan, and Robert B. Parker. For non-fiction, I've really enjoyed reading Michael Benton, Hugh Ross, Karl Jung, Paul Davies, Melvin Morse, Michael Ruse and Stephen Hawking.

Any writing quirks you'd like to share with your readers?

My whole personality is pretty quirky, so I can't single out anything specific about how I write. I only know how the writing process works for me, so who's to say what's quirky and what isn't. I don't know how other writers go about their business, either. I sit at the computer in the morning and go to bed late at night. In between, I alternate between researching on the Internet, reading books and writing.

Do you have advice for aspiring writers?

Don't delay. Even if you aren't ready to start writing your first book or short story, record good information for posterity and write when you have more time. I procrastinated for years, busy with work, family, sports and everything else but writing. I didn't forget all the good old stories from those days, but I wish I'd kept a diary or made notes regularly. I've forgotten some great material, too.

What are your future goals?

I plan to write until I die. Hopefully that's a while off. I'd like to travel with my wife now the kids are grown, and play more golf. But mostly, I plan to keep writing. I currently have more material than time to write it all down, which is a happy problem to have. No writer's block for me!