

# **A Creationist Becomes An Evolutionist: The Case History of Janet Kellogg Ray**

Author

[Dr. Jerry Bergman, PhD](#)

## **Introduction**

No small number of persons who were reared as Young Earth Creationists (YEC) have rejected this worldview and accepted the evolutionary worldview. I have read and written extensively about this problem (Bergman, 2019). This paper is one more example which supports my conclusion that the case for creation typically presented in churches and Christian schools has been grossly inadequate, superficial, and limited to the scriptures, while the enormous scientific support for this worldview has been largely ignored.

## **The Case of Janet Kellogg Ray**

Janet Kellogg Ray is up-front regarding her goal in writing the two books and the articles that are reviewed here, namely to help Christians reject creation and accept evolution while retaining their acceptance of Christianity (Ray 2021, 19). Furthermore, she believes that evolution is not just a theory, but is a fact “supported by decades of research. Evolution is foundational to understanding all of modern biology” (Ray 2021, 19). She is up-front with her worldview, which is “I accept evolution and the descent of all life, including humans, from a common ancestor” (Ray 2021, 9). The book *Darwinism is the Doorway to Atheism* (Bergman 2019) documents the fact that the acceptance of Darwinism destroys the foundation of Christianity in spite of claims to the contrary. The reason, as explained by a leading atheist published in an atheist magazine, is as follows:

“Christians who regard the creation stories as myths or allegories are undermining the rest of Scripture. **if there was no Adam, there was no fall; and if there was no fall there was no hell; and if there was no hell, there was no need of Jesus as Second Adam** and Incarnate Savior, crucified and risen. **As a result, the whole biblical system of salvation collapses.**” (Mattill 1982, 1 boldface added) [1](#)

Acceptance of evolution does not always lead to atheism, but it often leads to a Christianity that is void of the faith’s core foundations. David Kinnaman correctly observed that “issues of science are one of the major reasons people are leaving the church” (Ray 2021, x). One example of this is Janet Kellogg Ray, who has published several books about her journey from creationism to theistic evolution. Theistic evolution usually consists of an evolution foundation covered with a thin veneer of theism.

I have never met Janet Ray. For this review I heavily relied on her writings published by the evangelical publisher William B. Eerdmans in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which I will quote from extensively. She was reared in a YEC church which she explained as follows: “in my evangelical tradition, we would have no more questioned the Genesis creation story than we would have questioned the existence of Christ” (Ray 2023, 1). She adds that

My church was absolutely central to our family’s life. The tradition I was raised in was a very conservative, fundamental type church, part of the American restoration movement. It was the main line. Churches of Christ is [sic are] where I was raised. My family went to church three times a week, twice on Sunday, once on Wednesday, and every night of the week if it was gospel meeting time. (Janet Kellogg Ray 2023b)

She went to secular schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, and after graduation attended Abilene Christian University majoring in biology. Her “freshman biology course, [was taught by] the professor who ended up being my [her] favorite professor of all.... I remember him distinctly pointing out a section in our textbook and saying, ‘Here’s where it talks about evolution. You need to know it’.” (Ray 2023b). After graduating, she has taught at Christian universities. As will be obvious, her education in creationism was sorely deficient. She related that a critical event which moved her from what she calls a ‘Science denier creationist’ to an evolutionist

was reading evolutionary claims in many of her college textbooks when a student. Her response to objections to evolution included:

Some people note “I just find it distasteful or icky to think that we may have common ancestors with apes and monkeys.” I have sometimes responded with, “Is it less distasteful to think that you came from dust or dirt to begin with?” Why can’t God transform this other living material into humanity, instead of transforming non-living material into humanity? (Ray 2023b)

My response is that Genesis does not teach that God transformed monkeys into humans, nor does science support this view (Bergman 2020). Ray claimed that “Modern genetics sealed the deal” proving to her mind that evolution is true (Ray 2023, 99). Ironically, genetics has persuaded many professors that Darwinian evolution is impossible (Bergman 2022). Evolution teaches that apes were transformed into people by mutations, which is contrary to well established science fact (Bergman, J. 2022.)

Modern Darwinism (aka “Neo-Darwinism”) teaches that we, and all life, are the product of billions of damage events to the genome, called genetic mutations, which are then selected by natural selection. The result is that the “survival-of-the-fittest” law results in the more evolved life-forms to be more likely to survive. These genetic damage events are caused by toxins, including radiation, (such as gamma rays), along with cosmic rays and mutagenic chemicals. The major problem with this idea is that close to 99 percent of all mutations that are not repaired are near-neutral, deleterious (very harmful), or lethal. The slight damage adds up in time, eventually causing genetic catastrophe, i. e., death and eventually species extinction.

Scientists know a great deal about mutations because they cause diseases, including cancer. Mutational changes most often occur in a few areas, called hot spots and, for this and other reasons, will rarely produce potential improvements, but rather in the vast majority of cases will cause gene deterioration. My four decades of Cancer research employment has documented that mutations always fail to produce viable productive changes. Without a viable means to produce new genetic information, Darwinian evolution fails.

One critical event converting Ray from a creationist to an evolutionist was Brown University professor Kenneth Miller’s book *Finding Darwin’s God*, about which she

writes was for her “a game-changer” and “a breath of fresh air” (Ray 2021, 7). This fact further supports my thesis that her poor background in creation made her susceptible to evolutionary propaganda. The thesis of her book is that God created everything but He somehow used evolution to do so. The “how” was not specified. Throughout his book, Miller ridicules the idea that design exists in nature, yet Miller suggests that *the laws of nature were designed* (Miller 1999, 191). Miller asserts that Phillip Johnson's position on intelligent design cannot be tested, cannot be disproven, and cannot even be investigated. But then he tests intelligent design by consulting the evolutionary literature, thereby, he claims, disproving it (Miller 1999, 126).

Miller is harshest on Biblical creationists because, he claims, they have let their theology drive their science. Yet Miller does the same thing that he accuses his critics of when he assumes what God would or wouldn't do. For example, he argues that God would not create *ex nihilo* but would somehow use evolution to create. He then uses this assumption to close off some realms of scientific inquiry because he thinks God would do things only in a certain way (Miller 1999, 101). In the beginning of the book he states that he believes in God "because evolution is right" (Miller 1999, 17). Ultimately, his book is about a particular theology and the science Miller selects which he feels appears to support it.

Ray makes scores of mistakes in her attempt to prove evolution, such as claiming that “microevolution events over time result in macroevolution.” No empirical evidence supports this claim and much evidence is against it (Erwin 2010, 180-193). Out of over two million known species of animals, only a handful have resulted in a semi-viable transition to the modern wild type animal and even these examples are very problematic (Bergman 2019b). The most well-known examples cited, besides humans, are horses and whales, all three of which have problems.

She is also opposed to the intelligent design concept, writing: “According to intelligent design, unguided natural processes could never produce the intricacies and complexities we see in living things. Only an ‘intelligent designer’ could produce such awesome complexity” found in living things (Ray 2021, 135). She disagrees with this claim, concluding that the unguided natural process of mutations could produce all of the intricacies and awesome complexity found in all living things. How anyone could study and teach biology, genetics, cell biology, and biochemistry, and yet conclude that unguided natural processes could achieve life, I find incomprehensible.

## **What About Adam?**

Janet Ray accepts the evolutionary belief that the father of all humans was not Adam, but rather was a large number of humans that evolved from an apelike common ancestor as a result of millions of genetic mutations. She writes that “Theistic evolution/evolutionary creationists hold varying opinions regarding whether or not Adam and Eve were historical people. However, Adam and Eve are not accepted as the genetic ancestors of all humans” (Ray 2021, 58).

Part of her “evidence” for rejecting a historical Adam is her belief that too much genetic variety exists in humans today to be descended from one man and one woman who lived 6,000 years ago. She believes that to obtain this amount of genetic variety would require humans to have descended from thousands of pre-human creatures which lived many thousands of years ago.

As evidence for this view, she relates the story that, about 10-to-12 thousand years ago, a catastrophe occurred which wiped out most of the world’s cheetah population, leaving only 7 to 12 individuals. This bottleneck produced a situation that forced large amounts of interbreeding. This in turn produced a population that was immunologically homogeneous to the extent that they now have the ability to allow organ transplants, including blood transfusions, to occur with little concern for organ transplant rejection (Ray 2021, 168).

Ray reasoned that we could not be descended from a pair of humans that lived 6,000 years ago because, if this was true, human blood and organ transplants would face, at best, only a mild rejection. Consequently, evolutionists believe that we must have descended, not from one couple that lived six thousand years ago, but from about ten thousand individuals that lived around 150,000 years ago. This, evolutionists claim, would produce the immune differences seen in humans today. This is what supposedly “evolved” the large amount of immunological heterogeneity. Creationists conclude that the variety Ray noted was built into Adam and Eve.

## **Problems With This Theory**

Another explanation for this lack of foreign tissue rejection is that the cheetah has a very weak immune system compared to modern humans. Consequently, organ

transplants from other cheetahs produce only a very weak rejection, if that. A harmful result of this weak immune system is that cheetahs are “very vulnerable to disease and have an infant mortality as high as 70 percent” or 70 per 100 births (O’Brian, et al. 1986, 84).

Organ transplants are more of a problem for humans because we have a much stronger immune system. One result is that the human infant mortality rate in 1985 was 10.9 per 1,000 deaths or 1.09 per 100 deaths (Miller 1985, 31). The reason for the difference involved several factors, one of which is the much more aggressive human immune system. The creation explanation is that Adam and Eve were created with a very powerful and effective immune system, which is what science has shown. Given several explanations for the same data, Ray accepts the one that is most hostile to the Genesis account.

This “ten thousand individuals that lived around 150,000 years ago” idea came from Dennis Venema, an ex-young-Earth creationist who now is an evolutionist. In his book *Adam and the Genome* (Venema and McKnight 2017), the new theory, called *evolutionary creation*, is an attempt to baptize evolution as a full member of Christianity. *Evolutionary creation* supports the theory that the Biblical Adam was a class of humans that were evolving from our ape-like human evolutionary ancestors which God imbued with the Holy Spirit. This class is what is referred to as “Adam.” According to Venema and McKnight, Adam and Eve were not real persons, but a class of individuals.

In short, we humans descended from a population of brute pre-humans and are not the offspring of Adam and Eve as taught by Christians, Jews, and the followers of Islam for over 2,000 years. Some readers interpret Venema’s teaching to mean that the Biblical Adam and Eve are actually only fictional literary characters. Venema and McKnight show little evidence or awareness of the major problems with the so-called “pre-humans” belief, nor do they show much evidence of research with this problem of evolution. In addition, Ray shows no evidence that she read, or was even familiar with, the 524-page book edited by Terry Mortenson (2016) that effectively refuted this claim.

Thus, their teaching is that if God had any role in creating humans it was by causing damage to their genome, called mutations, which were then acted upon by survival-of-the-fittest mechanisms as a result of fighting to the death in the struggle for existence. Venema and McKnight are great salesmen for Darwinism, but rely heavily

on misinformation to build their case. They also show no evidence of awareness of the information in Mortenson's 2016 book mentioned above.

However, they must be aware of the other side to their arguments because on the third page of the introduction Dennis Venema states: "if evolution is true, the Bible can't be; if evolution is true, the historical Adam never existed; and thus, if evolution is true, there is no reason to preach the gospel at all" (Venema 2017, xi). This agrees with Mattill in his 1982 article "Three Cheers for the Creationists", quoted above.

Venema is currently a professor of biology at the largest Christian university in Canada, Trinity Western University, in Langley, British Columbia. Venema is also active in presenting his views at both Christian universities and churches. In one lecture, he argued that, just as language evolved, so too does life. The problems with this comparison are many. One is that language is the result of intelligent designers called humans. Secondly, of the thousands of fossils caught in amber and fossil impressions in rock, not one example exists of evidence for the gradual evolution that Darwin required. Rather, thousands of examples of living fossils exist, life that has not changed during the vast time that Darwinists believe they have existed.

## **Summary**

This case history involving two ex-creationists illustrates several commonalities that are documented in the literature. Specifically, extensive involvement of Bible study and church activities must be supplemented with responsible, well-documented education in apologetics, focusing on the evidence for creation and against the evolutionary worldview. Several excellent programs for churches are available from Answers in Genesis on this topic. This review also supports the observation that all too often young people do not get substantial training in the evidence for creation and the well-documented scientific case against evolution.

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- 1Scripturally, He is the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45) and the "second Man" (1 Cor. 15:47).



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