

and the study of his creation. I am still working in education at a university level and researching natural sciences. I thank God and the Millers for all their essay meant to me.

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PETER RÜST (RUEST), "Creative Providence in Biology," *PSCF* 53, no. 3 (2001): 179–83.

Ever since I came to faith in Christ as a sophomore in high school, I have been convinced of God's loving care for me, his provision for my needs, and his guidance in my everyday life. At specific moments in my life, the timing of certain events, the awareness of key insights at the right time, or the provision of specific resources or opportunities just when they were needed were so extraordinary that I knew without a doubt that they were "God things" rather than just the products of my own wisdom and resourcefulness, the generosity of others, or blind luck. No violations of natural law characterized any of these cases—just an impeccable timing that convinced me these were the product of divine actions. There are many passages of scripture I could point to that are consistent with this conclusion (e.g., Prov. 3:5–6; Matt. 6:25–34; Matt. 7:7–11; Phil. 4:19).

I have long held the view that God, as Creator and Sustainer of all that exists, designed the universe so that physical structures (galaxies, stars, planets) formed and complex biological organisms (bacteria, amphibians, reptiles, humans, etc.) evolved by natural processes according to the very laws he created. But exactly how do we describe the mode of divine action in this evolutionary creation (i.e., theistic evolution) model for God's creation of living things? Were the physical properties of matter and the natural laws that God created enough to account for the emergence of life on this planet and its subsequent diversification and complexity? Or was God's ongoing activity required to guide the entire process? In 2001, Peter Rüst published a communication in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* that addressed these questions. This paper resonated with me based on my training as a biologist and my observations of God's providence in my personal life and the lives of others.

Rüst proposed, on both theological and scientific grounds, that God's creative and providential activities have *not* ceased after his initial creation, but that they are continuous, and usually hidden. God's divine actions in creation, or "hidden options" as Rüst called them, may include "quantum uncertainties, randomness in elementary events, unpredictability due to minute parameter value deviations in nonlinear systems liable to produce deterministic chaos, and coincidences." According to Rüst, these "hidden options" do not represent violations of any natural laws, but they are "specific acts of *selection* among distributions of many different naturally possible values for stochastic variables." He cited, as a hypothetical example, the spontaneous occurrence of specific *combinations* of mutations required for the emergence of a certain enzyme activity that may be "transastronomically improbable" in the context of strictly *undirected*, random processes alone.

Rüst argued effectively in this paper that the proposed "hidden options" model did not represent "God-of-the-Gaps" type speculation that may be a shortcoming in other models for divine action in creation. He maintained, for example, that there are no gaps in "creation's economy," to use language similar to Howard Van Till, "as all materials and their properties were fully in place and well equipped to proceed anywhere in development ("Basil, Augustine, and the Doctrine of Creation's Functional Integrity," *Science and Christian Belief* 8 [April 1996]: 21–38)." It is more an issue of the limited time available for "random-walk trials." Sometimes specific direction by God is required to guide the process of evolution through the virtual infinitude of "possibility space."

The beauty of Rüst's "hidden options" proposal is that it is consistent with scriptural teaching on God's role as Creator and Sustainer of the universe and all living things while explaining *how* God may have used the evolutionary process as a means for creating the diversity of life on this planet. At the same time, it does not contradict the abundant evidence for evolution that has been obtained by scientific investigation. Moreover, it accords with our experience of God's providential work in our everyday lives and in history.

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