

Witnessing in a World Where Evolution Claims “There Is No God”

by Mark Bergemann

World famous atheist Richard Dawkins said, “Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.”¹

We know from Scripture that thousands of years ago God created every kind of plant and animal. Yet evolution claims that all living things descended from other living things over millions of years. Evolution has shipwrecked the faith of many with its temptation that a creator god is unnecessary. Evolution is a strong temptation to many, yet it can become extremely weak when one learns of evolution’s logical problems – particularly about the faulty assumptions on which evolution is based.

This article series discusses the use of reason in apologetics (i.e., defending the faith) when ministering to Christians and when witnessing to unbelievers, particularly regarding creation/evolution.

Part 1: Why Confront Evolution in Your Witness?

Part 2: Handling Evolution in Your Witness.

Part 3: Evolution/Creation – Two Starting Points.

Part 4: Evolution is Incompatible with the Christian Faith.

Part 1: Why Confront Evolution in Your Witness?

We tell others about Jesus with the hope that they will become fellow heirs of eternal life through faith (trust) in Jesus, the Savior. God reveals that people come to faith only through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, and that unbelievers cannot understand spiritual matters (Romans 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 2: 4,14). Belief in creation is not an essential part of saving faith. Certainly many who believe in evolution while in this world will spend eternity with God in heaven. So: is there any worth in telling people about the logical problems with evolution? Yes, there can be great worth!

Many See No Need For a Savior

Those who hold to humanism often have no concept of sin. Evolution fits this worldview well. Many evolutionists imagine that morality and ideas of “right” and “wrong” are characteristics humans have acquired for personal gain.² Those who do not believe in a “Law Giver” imagine that each individual or society must decide for himself/itself what is right and what is wrong.

¹ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker: Why Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*, revised ed. (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 10.

² “True morality evolved as a function of the fact that it is not enough to fake being a good person, because in our ancestral environments of small bands of hunter-gatherers in which everyone was either related to one another or knew one another intimately, faux morality would be unmasked. You actually have to be a good person by believing it yourself and acting accordingly. By employing the logic of deception and self-deception, we can build a bottom up theory for the evolution of emotions that control behavior judged good or evil by our fellow primates.” Michael Shermer, “Lies We Tell Ourselves – How

Individuals who have no understanding of sin cannot understand how they can be separated from God by sin. By planting doubt about evolution, and by appealing to their natural knowledge of God, we may help them to see their own sin (Law) and their need for a Savior, thus preparing them to listen to the Gospel. Even atheists have a natural knowledge of God, but they suppress that knowledge (Romans 1:18-32).

Evolution Is a Stumbling Block for Many

Evolution encourages many to ignore the Gospel message. It holds that belief in any god was for the ignorant people in the unscientific past, but not for thinking people today.

Questioning the assumptions of evolution in your witness may be useful for silencing objections to the validity of Scripture. Jesus repeatedly used arguments from reason to silence unbelieving religious leaders who sought to trap him with questions (Matthew 12:24-29; 21:23-27).

Rational arguments in and of themselves are worthless for witnessing to unbelievers, but are of worth if they provide a point of contact with the unbeliever, giving a Christian the opportunity to share the Gospel message. Peter and Paul sometimes preceded their Gospel message with arguments from reason (Acts 2:14-15; 14:15-17; 17:22,23,28).

The Gospel is Essential

The purpose of your witness to unbelievers is to tell them about their Savior from sin (the Gospel). Telling them of the scientific problems facing evolution, and about the natural knowledge of God, will save no one. Try to intermix brief Gospel messages as you talk about evolution. Always work to lead the conversation to talking about Jesus our Redeemer.

Presentation of Law (if needed) and Gospel (always needed) is the one essential part of any witness. Only the Gospel message can change hearts and produce faith. Even so, as mentioned above, apologetics from reason can sometimes provide opportunities to share the Gospel. Hopefully you can share the Gospel; if you can't, then maybe your apologetic from reason may linger in their minds and lead them to listen to the Gospel at a later date.

The Apostle Paul addressed unbelievers in Lystra who were unfamiliar with the Bible (Acts 14:8-20). As an introduction, or point of contact, Paul appealed to their natural knowledge of God, first by talking about God our creator, and then by talking about God our preserver. Paul's testimony was cut short by Jews from nearby cities who turned the crowd against him. As a result, he never did present the Gospel – though that was his intent. This can sometimes happen to us, too. Nevertheless, do not view arguments from reason as an end, but simply as tools to open opportunities to share the Gospel.

Lessening the Temptation of Evolution

Scripture shows that arguments from reason (such as scientific arguments) can help believers better understand spiritual truths. In passages such as 1 Corinthians 9 and 15 St. Paul uses arguments from reason while writing to fellow Christians. Reason can be used to help believers see the logical inconsistencies which are so often apparent in unbelief. Learning about what science is and is not, and learning about the assumptions on which evolution is based, is especially important for Christian teens who may face strong attacks on their Christian faith in school and from peers.

For Further Study

This article is based on a much longer paper, *“The Place of Reason in Defending the Christian Faith – with Ministry Ideas Regarding Creation/Evolution.”* It is available partway down the left column at www.LutheranScience.org/apologetics.

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Part 2: Handling Evolution in Your Witness

Read About Evolution

Learn the basic story of evolution and a few of the many questionable assumptions on which evolution is based. Include this in your witness if needed. (See part 1 of this series of articles.) Anyone can easily learn a few important points to make. This article series is a good beginning!

I have found that some people blindly accept evolution without knowing even the very basics about evolution. One college student who believed in evolution accused me of making fun of evolutionists when I said that evolutionists claim that matter from imploding stars changed into people, over billions of years, all by itself. Yet that factual summary of the evolution story is used by many prominent evolutionists. For example, the famous evolutionist Carl Sagan said in the original *Cosmos* TV series, we are all “star stuff.”

Examples of Simple Ways to Question Evolution in Your Witness¹

Assumptions

I believe that the strongest and easiest arguments to make against evolution involve questioning the ASSUMPTIONS of evolutionists. Evolutionists base their evolution story on a tremendous number of biased assumptions. Evolutionists normally make reasonable conclusions and use solid science in writing the evolution story, but their biased assumptions often force them to draw unreasonable conclusions. Evolutionists sometimes admit that it is a mystery how this or that could happen without a god, but someday they will figure out how it could happen without him. A recent article in the prestigious science magazine *Nature* proclaims, “The origin of animals is almost as much a mystery as the origin of life itself.”²

Science

A strong all-encompassing argument against evolution involves explaining what “science” is. Science is an attempt to explain EVERYTHING through natural causes. This is a very basic definition of science, and it is overwhelmingly accepted by the scientific community. This definition has corollaries (consequences). If there is a god, that god could cause things that would NOT have natural causes (miracles). Therefore a scientist MUST reject the possibility of miracles. This works very well in creating our modern technological world. We do not take miracles into account while designing airplanes or cell phones.

The assumption of natural causes is the worst assumption possible when considering origins. The assumption of natural causes means that if something is the result of a miracle, then science will NEVER

¹ Some of these examples are taken from a video by Mark Bergemann, *Why Do Some Believe In Millions Of Years?* www.LutheranScience.org/video (April 11, 2013; accessed February 14, 2015).

² Philip C. J. Donoghue, “Palaeontology: Embryonic Identity Crisis,” *Nature* 445 (January 11, 2007), 155-156. <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v445/n7124/full/nature05520.html> (accessed February 25, 2015).

understand its origin. So if there is a creator god who made the universe, science will never be able to discover that fact.

Evolutionists START with the ASSUMPTION that there is no creator god. Evolution is the best story which can be constructed without a creator god. If God really did create everything as he reveals in Scripture, then evolution is WRONG, since evolution rejects that possibility regardless of the evidence.

Planet-wide Flood

Floods cause extensive damage. The year-long global Noachic Flood must have changed the face of the earth. Earth's vast quantities of fossils, deposits of coal and oil, and continental-sized sedimentary rock are what would be expected from a flood that covered the entire earth. Dead ocean creatures are buried by the trillions all over the earth. Many creationists believe Noah's Flood produced most fossils, and that dinosaurs became extinct because they could not survive in the post flood environment.

Sedimentary rock is formed when water (such as a flood) lays down sediments which are then compressed to form rock. There are sedimentary rock layers, one over the other, all over the earth. A planet-wide flood would be expected to somewhat sort the fossils it produces by burying bottom dwelling sea creatures together in some rock layers, other sea creatures in different rock layers, smaller land animals in other rock layers, and larger land animals in still other rock layers. The Noachic Flood sorted fossils according to the ecosystem in which each creature lived, and by the ability of each creature to temporarily escape the raging waters.

Even though the evidence for a world-wide flood is everywhere, evolutionists must interpret this evidence in other ways since a global flood would completely change the way they interpret the ages of fossils and rocks. Evolutionists assume that the various fossil containing sedimentary rock layers represent various time periods spanning hundreds of millions of years. They assume that the fossils of bottom dwelling sea creatures are the oldest fossils, and that the fossils of large land animals are the most recent.

No New Kinds of Animals

God created animals with the ability to have offspring which are bigger or smaller, with longer or shorter hair, and with other changes. Each "kind" of animal can develop large variations due to natural selection. Lions, cheetahs, and house cats differ greatly, but they may be of the same Biblical kind. The dozens of species of cats alive today may have descended from one or two pairs of cats on Noah's ark. Many cats can interbreed, including lions and tigers – one indication that they are of the same Biblical kind. It is so easy to see that all cat species may be of the same kind that a three year old child may call all these various cats "kitty."

No new kinds of animals ever develop; but some kinds, such as the dinosaur kinds, have gone extinct. For evolution to be true, new kinds of plants and animals must develop. Books on evolution often show a tree of life with one kind of animal turning into another kind. But there is almost no evidence at all to draw such a tree. Some evolutionists claim that any change from one kind of animal to another kind must have happened very fast since it left so little fossil evidence.

Biblical kinds of living plants and animals reproduce after their own kind. They are found essentially unchanged in the fossil record. Only a small handful of transitional forms are found in the fossil record, and each of these is highly questionable.

Stay Within Your Own Limits

Anyone can use creation apologetics, but everyone must be careful to stay within the boundaries of their scientific understanding. Do not present a particular scientific argument unless you are sure it is correct.

Never Make These Arguments

Some creationists incorrectly claim, “Evolution is ONLY a theory; it is not proven.” This shows that they know little about scientific terms. In science, the term “theory” denotes an explanation which is well accepted by the scientific community. “Theory” is an end stage in science. Theories never become “facts” as additional evidence is found. Scientific theories and laws are never proven with certainty. Any theory or law may be discarded and replaced tomorrow.³

Some creationists incorrectly claim, “God created each species, and no new species ever develop.” The modern term “species” is not the same as the biblical term “kind.” Most biblical “kinds” of creatures include many different species. No new biblical kind will ever develop, but new species do develop within those kinds. All of our present day species of land creatures would not have been able to fit into Noah’s ark, but all the Biblical kinds – including the dinosaur kinds – would easily have fit.

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³ For definitions of science, fact, hypothesis, law, and theory, see “Introduction,” *Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 1999), 1-2. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/6024.html> (accessed March 1, 2015).

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Evolution and creation are two competing explanations of origins. Both share the same observable evidence: the same fossils and rocks, the same plants and animals, and the same stars. Since creation and evolution share the same observable evidence, why do they have completely different explanations of origins?

Let's begin by reviewing evolution. There are many evolutionary views, but the following evolution story is held by most evolutionists. Much of evolution goes against Scripture. Therefore, we can be certain that those parts of evolution are false, because as Christians, we know that the Bible is true. Sometimes the evolution story can seem compelling, but it is not what it seems. It is a lie. The physical and spiritual world God reveals to us in Scripture is true reality. The imaginary world described by evolution is a fairy tale.¹

Evolution Story (a claim to truth)

At the beginning of time, 13.7 billion years ago, a very small point rapidly expanded producing time, space, and energy. This is called “The Big Bang.” Over thousands of years the resulting energy cooled, becoming the lightest element of matter, hydrogen. Some of that hydrogen gas was pulled into balls, under its own gravity, to form stars. Some of these first generation stars were large enough to produce heavier elements like iron, which they scattered across the universe when they imploded in supernovae. The matter these imploding stars expelled pulled together to form new stars, and planets formed around them from the remaining matter. Our planet, earth, was formed 4.5 billion years ago. Living things came about naturally from non-living chemicals. The first one-celled life forms gradually changed into all the various plants and animals. Through a process of death and suffering, driven by mutations, animals evolved into new kinds of animals. Ape-like creatures evolved into humans through this same process of death and suffering. Famous evolutionist Carl Sagan said in the Cosmos TV series, we are all “star stuff.” He said this because evolutionists claim that matter from imploding stars changed into people, over billions of years, all by itself.

In the Bible we learn the truth of our origins from the one who was there: from God.

Creation Account (truth revealed by God in Scripture)

At the beginning of time, thousands of years ago, God created time, space, and everything in the entire universe. He did this in six days of ordinary length. During those six days God created every “kind” of plant and animal. [The Biblical “kind” is not the same as the scientific word “species.” There are many species in most Biblical “kinds.”] God made the first two people, Adam and Eve, on day six of creation week. Adam and Eve are the ancestors of every human being, including every one of us. God created a perfect world. There was no suffering or death. People and animals lived in perfect harmony with each other. All animals and all people were vegetarians. Originally Adam and Eve were very happy and content, but this changed when they turned against God. Their rebellion corrupted their entire thinking. We, as their descendants, have inherited this corruption.

¹ This evolution story, creation account, and other parts of this article, are taken from a video; Mark Bergemann, *Why Do Some Believe In Millions Of Years?*, April 11, 2013. www.LutheranScience.org/video (accessed February 14, 2015)

When Adam and Eve rebelled, everything changed. They now had evil thoughts and desires, and they did evil things. They no longer loved and trusted God as they had before. Their corrupt thinking (their sin) separated them from God, just as our sin separates us from God. Because of Adam's rebellion, God cursed the earth, causing weeds to grow. The animals were also affected, and they eventually began to kill each other. Suffering and death entered the world because of the rebellion of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve's children married each other and populated the world. After many generations the earth became populated with people who did not care about God. Only Noah's family still worshipped God. After warning the people for 120 years, God flooded the entire earth with water. God saved Noah's family and two of every land animal, using a large ship called an ark. All the people and land animals alive today descended from the people and animals aboard Noah's Ark.

Evolutionists use science to write a story about how they think things might have come into existence without a creator god.

Different Starting Points

Creation and evolution are so very different, because creationists and evolutionists hold different beliefs, or different worldviews.

Creation is the view that there is a Creator God as described in the Bible. Creationists interpret observable evidence in light of this.

Evolution is the view that all things came into existence naturally, with no miracles. If there is a god, he had nothing to do with origins. This view is called "naturalism." Evolutionists interpret observable evidence in light of this. Since evolutionists reject the possibility of a creator god, they use science to write a story about how they think things might have come into existence without a creator god. [There are some Christian scientists who think God used evolution to create everything, but they also write the evolution story as if there were no creator god.]

Scientists who accept Biblical creation do so through faith. When these scientists use their human reason (i.e., use science) to evaluate the evidence, they conclude that this world exists just as one would expect based on what the Bible teaches about creation. They reject any interpretation of evidence which is contrary to Scripture.

Scientists who accept evolution do so through human reason. When these scientists use their human reason (i.e., use science) to evaluate the same evidence, they conclude that evolution is true. They reject any interpretation of evidence inferring creation, such as a young earth or a world-wide flood.

Different Conclusions

The creationist and evolutionist reach completely different conclusions about origins, because they begin at different starting points. The creationist starts with the conviction that there is a Creator God. The evolutionist starts with the conviction that there are only natural causes (that there is no creator god). The creationist and the evolutionist examine the same evidence and use science to reach conclusions. The conclusions of the creationist conform to Scripture, because the creationist rejects any interpretations which do not conform to Scripture. The conclusions of the evolutionist conform to natural (physical) causes, because the evolutionist rejects any interpretations which do not use natural causes.

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Christians who accept evolution place their Christian faith in jeopardy. All false doctrine, including denying creation, leads away from Jesus and is damaging to faith. Evolution is especially dangerous, since it attacks the gospel message. Let’s look at some of the reasons why evolution is incompatible with the Christian faith.

Creation Throughout Scripture

The evolution story is contrary to the historical accounts God reveals in Genesis 1-11. Evolution is also contrary to the rest of Scripture. The prophets, Jesus, and the Apostles spoke about Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Enoch, Noah, the flood, Eden, creation, the fall into sin, and the curse, as real people and true events.²

Death a Result of Sin

The evolution story claims animals and people were produced through millions of years of death and suffering. If evolution were true, then death and suffering would be part of God’s design. But on the last day of creation, God declared everything he created “very good” (Gen 1:31). Death is not “very good.” Death and suffering are not the means God used to create animals and people.

Death and suffering entered into the world as a result of sin. Throughout Scriptures, God repeatedly reveals that death resulted from the disobedience of Adam, and that death will be destroyed by Christ Jesus. Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-49 explain this in great detail. Here are a few select quotes.

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Romans 5:15

Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19

¹ Much of part 4 is taken from a video; Mark Bergemann, *Why Do Some Believe In Millions Of Years?*, April 11, 2013. www.LutheranScience.org/video (accessed February 14, 2015)

² Exodus 20:8-11; 1 Chronicles 1:1; 1 Chronicles 1:1-27; Psalm 90:3; Psalm 103:14; Psalm 104; Ecclesiastes 3:20; Isaiah 54:9; Matthew 19:3-6; Matthew 19:28; Matthew 23:34-35; Matthew 24:36-39; Mark 10:6-9; Luke 3:23-38; Luke 11:50-51; Luke 17:26-27; Acts 3:17-21; Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 11:8; 1 Corinthians 11:12; 1 Corinthians 15:20-22; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; Hebrews 11:4; Hebrews 11:5; Hebrews 11:7; Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:3-6; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11; Jude 14, Revelation 22:3.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 1 Corinthians 15:26

Did God really say?

In the Garden Of Eden, Satan tempted our mother Eve by asking, "Did God really say?" Today Satan tempts us through evolution by asking,

- Did God really say, that He created everything in six days?
- Did God really say, that there was a flood that covered the whole earth?
- Did God really say, that death and suffering are a consequence of sin?
- Did God really say, that Jesus came to destroy death and return creation to its original state?

Other Issues

Evolution attacks the very Gospel itself, the need for a Savior, and the doctrines of man, original sin, actual sin, the fall into sin, the law, and death. For an excellent resource, see Lyle W. Lange's *God So Loved the World – A Study of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 158-161.

Suppressing the Truth of Creation

Why do some people, even some Christians, believe in millions of years? The simple answer is because of sin. The Old Adam in each of us does not want a creator, because then we would be subject to the creator's authority. Peer pressure also tempts us to reject God's revealed truth, and instead believe the lie of evolution. Everywhere we are told that creationists are unscientific. How can thinking people believe in a Creator God who made everything in six days? This is why evolution can be so seductive to us.

It may be understandable that an atheist would try to construct a story about how the world came to be without a creator god. It may be harder to understand why a Christian would replace God's revealed truth about creation with a man-made story constructed for the purpose of eliminating the need for a creator.

Roman 1:18-32 describes the sinful human nature which we all possess. God reveals himself as Creator to all people through nature, yet we suppress that truth. Christians who accept evolution place their Christian faith in jeopardy.

Blunting The Temptation Of Evolution³

Evolution truly is a deception of Satan, which he uses to pull God's children (you and me) away from trust in Jesus. It is through faith that we believe in creation. Even so, the temptation of evolution is blunted when we learn of evolution's logical problems and especially of the biased assumptions on which evolution is based.

The Lutheran Science Institute (LSI) website has many resources showing logical problems with evolution. Take some time to look through the collection of 200 LSI Journal articles, 900 LSI Blog entries, and dozens of articles by other Confessional Lutherans.

www.LutheranScience.org

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³ This section is taken from Mark Bergemann, "How Can A Lie Like Evolution Have Scientific Evidence?" *LSI Journal* (Jan - March, 2015), 8. www.LutheranScience.org/LieHaveEvidence (accessed February 14, 2015)