

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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