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Christ and Culture

Week 4: Defeating Darwinism

Basic Idea: Naturalistic materialism is fundamental to the secular worldview that dominates our culture; Darwinism is fundamental to naturalistic materialism. For Christians to take back the place at the table in our culture, we have to show that naturalistic materialism (and Darwinism along with it) is seriously flawed and every bit as much a religion as Christianity.

Positively: Science is more and more an ally to destroy atheism. The idea that science has proven that there is no God is ludicrous and a lie. It is important for Christians to know that and boldly stand their ground for a place at the table in the center of culture. We have a winning worldview... far better than that of naturalistic materialism

Key texts for today's lesson: Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Crossway, 2004); Eric Metaxas, *Is Atheism Dead?* (Salem Books, 2021)

Definitions:

Naturalism: the idea that science and philosophy share the same goals, and that any mention of the supernatural has no place in either philosophy or science.

Materialism: the idea that all that exists is matter and energy; only matter and energy are real, and the universe is only made up of matter/energy.

[Remember that Einstein's theory of relativity asserted that matter is just another form of energy and vice versa: $E = mc^2$]

Darwinism: all of life has evolved by a process of random mutations and natural selection – mutations that prove beneficial to the species and enable it to survive.

Nancy Pearcey's basic thesis: Christians should reject the secularization of our common culture by presenting the Christian worldview as superior to the secular worldview.

Secular = two-tiered view of truth

PRIVATE SPHERE [VALUES]
 Personal Preferences, Religious Values
 Nonrational, Noncognitive
 Subjective, Relative to Particular Groups
 "Truth for me," "Truth for you"

PUBLIC SPHERE [FACTS]
 Scientific Knowledge
 Rational, Verifiable
 Facts, Binding on Everyone, Objective
 Universally Valid

Basic flawed conception: science has proven that there is no God.

Eric Metaxas's book, *Is Atheism Dead?*, argues that science is making a greater and greater case for the existence of the wise, powerful, personal creator.

His primary evidence: the finely-tuned universe; a planet just right for life; the insurmountable difficulties of Darwinism.

I. Basic Worldview

"A Christian worldview involves three fundamental dimensions: the original good creation; the perversion of that creation through sin, and the restoration of that creation in Christ." Albert Wolters

A. All Worldviews Should Be Forced to Address These Same Three

1. Origins: Where did everything come from?
2. Fall: Why is everything so messed up?

3. Redemption: How can those problems be solved? And... where is all this heading?

B. Christian Worldview is Superior to All Other Worldviews

1. We should make our culture be honest about its answers to these questions
2. Most people are inconsistent when it comes to living out the implications of their worldview
3. That is especially true when it comes to evolution

C. Evolutionary Worldview

1. Origins: All things came from matter originally, organizing itself through blind chance and the law of natural selection
2. Fall: Things are neither good nor bad... they just are; evolution will do whatever it necessary to ensure the survival of the fittest
3. Destination: survival of the fittest... or ultimate extinction of all things

II. Darwinism Has Affected Our Culture More Than We Can Possibly Know

A. Many Kids Go Off to College...

1. When they get there, they are stunned and overwhelmed by the intimidation of "scientific proof" that there is no God
2. They feel unequipped to answer, marginalized, pressured to conform... mocked if they assert biblical faith without agreeing to the supremacy of scientific knowledge in all fields

B. "Today Biology, Tomorrow the World"

1. The central problem with Darwinism is the assertion that matter is all there is, that everything in human experience comes down to matter
2. That has little by little expanded beyond biology to conquer all areas of knowledge
3. When naturalistic evolution is taught unquestioned in the schoolrooms across America, an entire worldview is being taught along with it

"A naturalistic definition of science has the effect of indoctrinating students into a naturalistic worldview." [Pearcey, 207]

4. Darwinism functions as the scientific support for an overarching naturalistic worldview

5. Some even claim we are entering an age of “Universal Darwinism”

C. Universal Darwinism

1. Francis Schaeffer’s diagnosis of the real reason why Christians have failed in the public square...
2. We tend to see things in “bits and pieces” rather than as a big picture (worldview) that connects all the dots

What “bits and pieces”? Issues... family breakdown, abortion, violence in schools, Critical Race Theory, gay rights, transgenderism, etc.

3. BUT... what is the overarching worldview that connects all these dots?

Schaeffer: “All these forms of cultural dissolution have come about due to a shift in worldview... to a worldview based on the idea that the final reality is impersonal matter or energy shaped into its current form by impersonal chance.”

4. It all comes down to your view on ORIGINS: If you start with impersonal forces operating by chance—naturalistic evolution—eventually you end up with naturalism in moral, social, and political philosophy
5. More and more Darwinists are applying their overarching philosophy to social and cultural issues: evolutionary psychology asserts that all aspects of human belief and behavior come from evolution... the “survival of the fittest” dynamic
6. SO... all human ethics comes through that same grid...

“What is in our genes’ interests is what seems ‘right’ – morally right.” Robert Wright [*The Moral Animal: Why We Are the Way We Are*]

7. Morality is defined only as whatever serves evolution... helps the species to survive. Even worse... nothing can be truly deemed “good” or “evil” but only “useful for survival”
8. And, if a behavior trait exists in any human being, it has survived to this point and therefore must have *some* value for evolution... even great evils like rape or genocide have their roots in evolution

“The basis of ethics does not lie in God’s will... Ethics is an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate.”

“Humans simply function better if they are deceived by their genes into thinking that there is a disinterested objective morality binding upon them, which all should obey.” [E. O. Wilson, Michael Ruse “The Evolution of Ethics” ... quoted in Pearcey, 208-9]

9. This obviously extends to religion as well... a deception foisted on us by chemicals in our brains... a biochemical illusion

D. The Devastating Outcome

“Over a half century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of old people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: ‘Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.’ Since then, I have spent well-nigh fifty years working on the history of our revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected thousands of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: ‘Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.’”

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, author of *Gulag Archipelago*, documenting the Soviet Union’s extensive prison camp system. This quote comes from Metaxas’s book

Communism flourished from an atheistic, materialistic, evolutionary worldview... and has resulted in staggering levels of suffering worldwide.

E. The Bible’s Explanation

Romans 1:18-25 *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

²⁴ *Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.*

F. More on this next week... God willing

Evolution is Bad Science

I. Defining “Evolution”

A. Micro-evolution:

Changes within a species based on adaptation to surrounding circumstances or selective breeding

Examples abound: dog breeding, horticultural development (e.g. increasing sugar content in the sugar beet), the famous example from Kettlewell of peppered moths changing color

Biblically: “Races” of human beings with widely different physical characteristics, yet all coming from one set of parent

Acts 17:26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

Note: if this verse is true, then all the genetic information for Asians, Africans, Europeans, etc. were in Adam... including varieties in skin color, eye shape, hair color and texture, height, etc.

B. Macro-evolution:

1. Defined by evolutionists

- “It is important to note that biological evolution refers to populations and not to individuals and that the changes must be passed on to the next generation. In practice this means that, **Evolution is a process that results in heritable changes in a population spread over many generations.**” Laurence Moran, “What is Evolution?”

2. Defined by creationists

- “Evolution is the view that non-living substance gave rise to the first living material, which subsequently reproduced and diversified to produce all extinct and extant organisms.” Wayne Frair and Percival Davis, *A Case for Creation*, (Norcross, GA: CRS Books, 1983), p. 25.
- “The framework behind the evolutionist interpretation is *naturalism*—it is assumed that things made themselves, that no divine intervention has happened,

and that God has not revealed to us knowledge about the past. **Evolution is a deduction from this assumption, and it is essentially the idea that things made themselves.** It includes these unproven ideas: nothing gave rise to something at an alleged ‘big bang,’ non-living matter gave rise to life, single-celled organisms gave rise to many-celled organisms, invertebrates gave rise to vertebrates, ape-like creatures gave rise to man, non-intelligent and amoral matter gave rise to intelligence and morality, man’s yearnings gave rise to religions, etc.” Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Evolution*, (El Cajon, CA: Master Books), p. 16.

II. The Religion of Evolution

A. This is truly a clash of worldviews

1. Douglas Futuyma’s true statement:

“Creation and evolution together exhaust the logical possibilities for the existence of the universe.”

2. Therefore, this is a struggle of two totally incompatible worldviews

An Evolutionist admits: “Evolution is a theory universally accepted not because it can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation is clearly incredible.” Professor D.M.S. Watson, “Adaptation,” *Nature* 124:233, 1929.

3. Scientists not as “unbiased” and “truth-seeking” as they purport

4. Therefore many scientists have implicit bias against creation and the Genesis account

“We take the side of science *in spite of* the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for **we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.**” Richard Lewontin, “Billions and Billions of Demons,” *The New York Review*, January 9, 1997.

Three Problems for Naturalistic Evolution: The Origin of Life, the Fossil Record, & “Irreducible Complexity”

I. Three Problems Simply Stated

- A. How did life evolve from non-life?
- B. If evolution has been going on for billions of years, why does the fossil record show so little evidence of it... and absolutely NO evidence for earlier stages?

Where are the billions of dead ancestors between each major stage of evolution?

- C. How did complex organs and capabilities evolve up from nothing? Why would a species maintain an organ that wasn't “finished” yet if it was useless? What good is a wing that's 28% evolved and that can't yet support flight?

II. A Devastating Problem for Evolution: Life from Non-Life

- A. The Issue

How could life have evolved from non-life?

How do we move from a bunch of non-living chemicals on earth at one moment, to the first living cell the next?

In 1952, the “Miller-Urey Experiment” seemed to be a major breakthrough. These two University of Chicago scientists ran an electrical current through a glass flask containing four basic chemicals: water, methane, ammonia, and hydrogen. They called that the “prebiotic soup,” and they assumed these things were all available on pre-life planet Earth; and they hypothesized that maybe a lightning strike may have supplied the needed energy. When they did that, they got *amino acids*. That seemed to settle whether life could have been formed from non-living chemicals.

But since that time, millions of research dollars have been poured into the next step with no positive results. If anything, the goal is further away now than it was 71 years ago.

Why? Because of what we have learned about the staggering complexities of the living cell.

Amino acids are not anywhere close to life. It was assumed they could arrange themselves into proteins... but that is overwhelmingly complicated. And after that... what???

B. The Scope of the Problem

The Inverted Pyramid of Cards:

1. Big-Bang
2. Stars formed
3. Solar system formed
4. Earth formed just right for life
5. Non-living chemicals to amino acids
6. Amino acids (all left-handed) to proteins
7. Proteins to RNA
8. RNA to DNA
9. DNA to single-celled organisms (“Life” according to definition)
10. Single-celled organisms to multi-celled organisms
11. Multi-celled organisms to invertebrate marine life
12. Invertebrates to vertebrate marine life
13. Vertebrates to amphibious animals
14. Amphibious to reptiles
15. Reptiles to mammals
16. Mammals to primates
17. Primates to Man



B. Ever-increasingly Difficult Obstacles on Mount Improbable

FIRST CHALLENGE: Primitive Earth Atmosphere

1. Primitive earth model: no oxygen in atmosphere

NEXT CHALLENGE: Amino Acids

2. “Simple” chemical evolution: primitive chemicals to amino acids
 - a. big problem here: energy to form amino acids would destroy what was formed
 - b. bigger problem: we need a HUGE concentration of amino acids for proteins to form... no “few” amino acids will do
 - c. even **BIGGER** problem: amino acids exist in left-handed and right-handed forms (except glycine, the simplest), and naturally

exist in a 50-50 ratio... BUT only LEFT-handed amino acids are used in living structures

NEXT CHALLENGE: Proteins

3. Combinations of amino acids into proteins

Two problems:

- 1) How they combine chemically?
- 2) How they were arranged in intelligent sequence?

NEXT CHALLENGE: Protein sequencing [i.e. information]

4. Sequencing of proteins to form complex molecules: enzymes, RNA, DNA

NEXT CHALLENGE: The First Living Cell

5. Formation of first cell: self-maintaining, self-replicating

NEXT CHALLENGE: The First Living Multi-cellular Structures

6. Arrangement of early cells into higher levels of multi-celled organisms

The Origin of Life Prize:

\$1.35 million prize for “plausible theory” for origin of life

a. must answer each of the four following issues

- 1) anticipation of biological ends: metabolic and structural
- 2) ability to convey information, deliver orders, and produce needed biological end-products
- 3) explanation of how the “recipe” for life was assembled chemically in non-living substances to be passed on to future living ones; explanation of how the non-living substance “assembled itself” to meet the nine conditions of “life” listed below
- 4) explanation of how a pure concentration of left-handed amino acids and right-handed sugars arose out of a

mixed chemical environment in which reactions give rise to each type equally

To be counted as “Alive”, this substance must deal with the following:

1. **“Cell Wall”**: Delineate itself from its environment through the production and maintenance of a **membrane** equivalent, most probably a rudimentary or quasi-active-transport membrane necessary for selective absorption of nutrients, excretion of wastes, and overcoming osmotic and toxic gradients,
2. **Information for Reproduction**: Write, store, and pass along into **progeny** prescriptive **information** (instruction) needed for organization; provide instructions for energy derivation and for needed metabolite production and function; symbolically encode and communicate functional message through a transmission channel to a receiver/decoder/destination/effector mechanism; integrate past, present and future time into its biological prescriptive information (instruction) content,
3. **From Information to Chemicals**: Bring to pass the above recipe instructions into the production or acquisition of actual catalysts, coenzymes, cofactors, etc.; physically orchestrate the biochemical processes/pathways of metabolic reality; manufacture and maintain physical cellular architecture; establish and operate a semiotic system using "signal molecules"
4. **Eat**: Capture, transduce, store, and call up energy for utilization (work),
5. **Reproduce**: Actively self-replicate and eventually reproduce, not just passively polymerize or crystallize; pass along the apparatus and "know-how" for homeostatic metabolism and reproduction into progeny,
6. **Heal**: Self-monitor and repair its constantly deteriorating physical matrix of bioinstruction retention/transmission, and of architecture,
7. **Grow**: Develop and grow from immaturity to reproductive maturity,
8. **Deal with Environment**: Productively react to environmental stimuli. Respond in an efficacious manner that is supportive of survival, development, growth, and reproduction, and
9. **Be Stable Yet Adaptable**: Possess relative genetic stability, yet sufficient diversity to allow for adaptation and potential evolution.

- b. the proposal must be published in a reputable technical journal of peer-judged materials

E. Hoyle’s Analysis: A Tornado in a Junkyard

“A junkyard contains all the bits and pieces of a Boeing-747, dismembered and in disarray. A whirlwind happens to blow through the yard. What is the chance that after its passage a fully assembled 747, ready to fly, will be found standing there?” Fred Hoyle(1983): "The Intelligent Universe", page 19.

A Boeing 747 has about 6 million parts... BUT

“the probability of the spontaneous origin of 2000 proteins of 200 amino acids each is 10^{-40000} .” That’s just about zero

James Tour, the leading nanoscientist in the world... he knows as much about creating molecules as anyone in the world. He says all the research toward recreating primordial life... the first living cell... have been **UTTER FAILURES**... he says “I know better than anyone in the world. There is no one in the world with a plausible scenario.”

He puts the odds against non-living chemical arranging themselves into a living cell at 1 in $10^{87,000,000}$

Friends... that is the largest number I have ever seen in my life.

This is so remarkable that Stephen Jay Gould says if we started all over again, we would not end with life

III. Another Devastating Problem for Evolution: The Fossil Record

A. Charles Darwin’s Assessment of His Own Theory

1. Darwin’s theory based on uniformitarian theories of geologist, Charles Lyell
2. Lyell never accepted Darwinism. Why? The fossil record.
3. Darwin himself acknowledged the problem

“Why, if species have descended from other species by insensibly fine gradations, do we not everywhere see **innumerable transitional forms**? Why is not nature in all confusion instead of the species being, as we see them, well-defined?”

“I do not pretend that I should have ever suspected how **poor a record** of the mutations of life, the best preserved geological section presented, had not the difficulty of our **not discovering innumerable transitional links** between the species which appeared at the commencement and close of each formation, pressed so hardly on my theory.”

He hoped later generations would supply the “missing links”

B. Essence of the Issue: Abrupt Appearance... No Transitional Forms

Problem Only Made WORSE by 150 Years of Fossil Research... and by “Millions and millions of years”!!

1. Scientific theory testable by predictions it makes
2. Should be **billions and billions** of transitional forms
3. There ARE one-quarter of a million fossil species; tens of millions of cataloged forms
4. YET... NO TRANSITIONAL FORMS EXIST!!...
 - a. not one transitional form from **multi-celled creatures to marine invertebrates**

Duane Gish: “Nowhere on the face of the earth have we found a single ancestor for these complicated invertebrates. Soft-bodied microscopic bacteria have been found, but not a single transitional form!!”

Trilobites entered the fossil record totally formed... with all kinds of complexities; but there’s not a single transitional form leading up to a trilobite

- b. not one transitional form from **marine invertebrates to marine vertebrates**

Again, the “experts” tell us that this evolution took 100 million years. Yet there’s not one single transitional form from invertebrate to marine vertebrate! NOT ONE!!! There should be millions of forms, supported by billions of dead things. NOT ONE! This is a great embarrassment to Evolutionists.

- c. from **fish to amphibian**
- d. from **amphibian to reptile**
- e. from **reptile to mammal**
- f. from **reptile to bird**

But this fails to explain the evolution of flight itself, or why there is only one candidate for a transitional forms, when there are so many flying species around today

D. Gould’s White Flag on the Fossil Record: “Punctuated Equilibrium”

1. Reason for the theory

“In 1972, Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould revived this idea, under the name *Punctuated Equilibrium*. They agreed that transitional fossils are plentiful, and that smooth transitional figures are sometimes found.[Where????] **However, they argued that these are not as**

common as theory predicted. Instead, we often see a species go on unchanged for a long time. And then the species is replaced, without any transition, by a new species that looks like a variation of the old one."

2. Significance of the theory: proof that the fossil record is hostile to evolution
3. Controversial!! NOTE: my textbook's disclaimer

"Punctuated equilibria theory, which has generated much debate, is still controversial among biologists today... But whatever the pace of change may have been, it is clear that organisms have evolved over time." Miller & Levine, *Biology*, p. 313

"Don't confuse me with the evidence...!!!"

E. Fossil Record: Great Evidence that Evolution is a Faith

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

"Now evolution is the assurance of **fossils** hoped for, the conviction of **transition forms** not seen." Duane Gish, *Evolution: The Fossils Still Say No!*, p. 367

IV. Another Devastating Problem for Evolution: Irreducible Complexity

A. Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*

B. Definition of "Irreducible Complexity"

What does the existence of irreducibly complex systems mean, and how does their existence impact neo-Darwinian theory?:

"In *The Origin of Species* Darwin stated:

'If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.'

A system which meets Darwin's criterion is one which exhibits irreducible complexity. By irreducible complexity I mean a single system which is composed of several interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, and where the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning." - Michael J. Behe, *"Molecular Machines: Experimental Support for the Design Inference"*

Illus. The simple mousetrap

C. Behe's Examples:

1. Vision...
2. Bacterial flagellum...
3. The cilium

D. Other Example: Flight

1. Four types of flying things have ever existed

birds flying insects flying mammals (e.g. squirrels, bats) flying reptiles (extinct)

2. Each of these have unique physical structures that enable flight to occur
3. As noted above, none of the "transitional figures" exist in fossil record
4. Problem also for "irreducible complexity"

What good is a wing that's 28% evolved and that can't yet support flight?

Richard Dawkins, leading defender of evolution, said that organs must be beneficial to the species at every step of the evolutionary trail, or evolution is false.

Thus a wing evolved 28% must be advantageous to the species (creature) or natural selection will rule it out.

Problem: this must extend to incredibly fine details of flight... like the complexities of feathers with their tubular design and strength/weight advantages.

What use is a feather for a creature if it cannot fly?

To argue that many species have feathers that cannot fly (e.g. ostrich, chickens).

BUT the creationist is under no obligation to prove usefulness... we can simply answer "God made it that way!" An evolutionist must show that the feathers were **ADVANTAGEOUS** to the creature (species) even before they could fly.