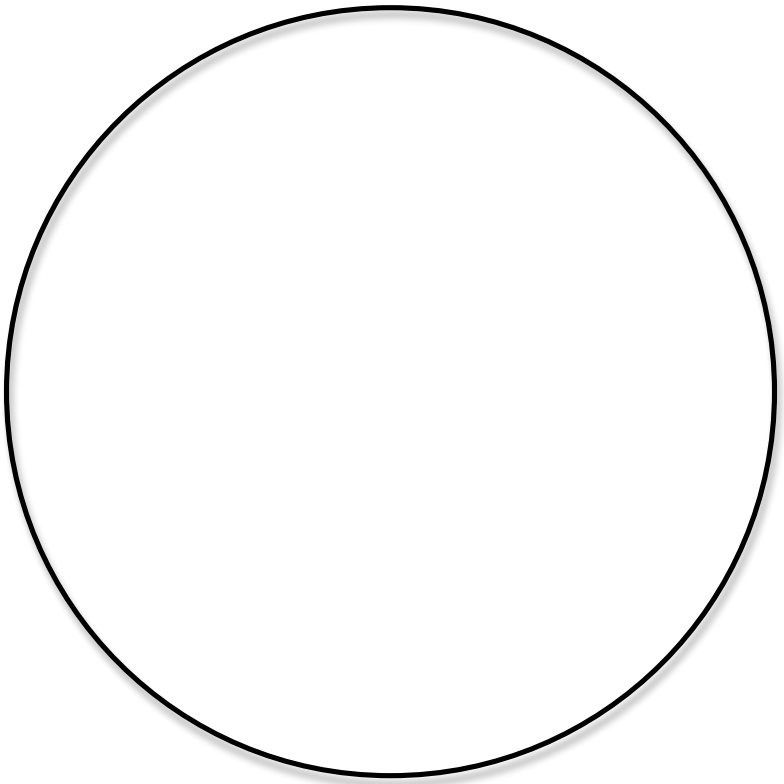
Reasons to Believe
Apologetics 101

Small Group Discussion:

- What is the best argument you have heard for God's existence?
  What is the worst argument you have heard for God's existence?

- What concerns do you have about discussing your beliefs about God with someone who does not share your beliefs about God?

The Circle of Knowledge:



➲ Question:

A Castle in the Sand

➲ Question:

The Kalam Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God

Everything that begins has a cause for its beginning; now the universe is a thing which had a beginning; therefore the universe has a cause for its beginning.

➲ Premise 1: Whatever begins to _____ has a cause.

➲ Premise 2: The _____ began to exist.

➲ Premise 3: Therefore, the universe has a _____.

This argument is so marvelously simple that it's easy to memorize and share with another person. It's also a logically airtight argument. If the two premises are true, then the conclusion necessarily follows. So anybody who wants to deny the conclusion must regard either premise 1 or premise 2 as false. So the whole question is: Is it more probable that these statements are true or that they are false? William Lane Craig – *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precisions*

➲ The Kalam cosmological argument leads us to ask a great question:

The kalam argument presents a number of dilemmas. First, the argument states that the universe either had a beginning or it did not. If it had a beginning, then this beginning was either caused or uncaused. If the beginning was caused, the cause was either personal or not personal. The burden of the argument is to establish one horn of each dilemma, and in so doing, to argue for the existence of a personal Creator. Thus, the argument attempts to show that there had to be a beginning to the universe which was caused by a personal Being. J.P. Moreland – *Scaling the Secular City*

➲ The Three Dilemmas:

- ➥ Universe: Beginning *or* No Beginning
- ➥ Beginning: Caused *or* Not Caused
- ➥ Cause: Personal *or* Not Personal

The First Dilemma:

➲ The universe had a beginning or it has _____ _____

➥ Option 1: Beginning

➥ Option 2: No Beginning

➲ A Problem with Option 2: How long would it take to count to infinity?

➥ 2 Types of Infinites:

1) _____ infinite (continually *becoming*)

2) _____ infinite (constantly *is*)

➲ Question: If the universe has always existed, how many days have gone by to arrive at today?

The Second Dilemma:

➲ The beginning of the universe was caused or it _____ _____

➥ Option 1: Caused

➥ Option 2: Not Caused

➲ A Problem with Option 2: What existed prior to the universe?

➥ The Challenge of Nothing:

- _____ cannot come from _____

- From "nothingness" _____ comes

➥ The Principle of _____ and _____

The Third Dilemma:

➲ The cause of the beginning of the universe was personal or it was an _____
_____

➥ Option 1: Personal

➥ Option 2: Not Personal

➲ A Problem with Option 2: Who turned on the lights?

➥ An impersonal force cannot be the _____ cause

- What _____ it to _____ the beginning?

CONCLUSION:

➲ The universe had a _____, which was _____
by _____

Finding God

➲ Who is God?

First then, in my judgment, we must make a distinction and ask, What is that which always is and has no becoming; and what is that which is always becoming and never is … Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created … Was the heaven then or the world, whether called by this or by any other more appropriate name-assuming the name, I am asking a question which has to be asked at the beginning of an enquiry about anything-was the world, I say, always in existence and without beginning? or created, and had it a beginning? Created, I reply, being visible and tangible and having a body, and therefore sensible; and all sensible things are apprehended by opinion and sense and are in a process of creation and created. Now that which is created must, as we affirm, of necessity be created by a cause. But the father and maker of all this universe is past finding out; and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible. Plato – *Timaeus 27–28*

➲ Two Things We Discover About God by Looking at Ourselves:

1) The _____ nature of man is rooted in God

➥ Each of us has an internal sense of _____ and _____

- This is revealed in two ways:

1. Whenever we bring up the concepts of _____ or _____

2. Whenever we attempt to _____ our _____

➥ If there is a _____ _____, then there is a _____ _____

➥ If God is the _____ of morality, then God is _____

If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless. But, if it is, then we are making ourselves enemies to that goodness every day, and are not in the least likely to do any better tomorrow, and so our case is hopeless again. We cannot do without it, and we cannot do with it. God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror: the thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from. He is our only possible ally, and we have made ourselves His enemies. Some people talk as if meeting the gaze of absolute goodness would be fun. They need to think again. They are still only playing with religion. Goodness is either the great safety or the great danger – according to the way you react to it. And we have reacted the wrong way. C.S. Lewis – *Mere Christianity*

2) The _____ nature of man is rooted in God

➥ Each of us has a basic need for _____

➥ If we have been made for _____,
then perhaps the Maker can be _____

➥ If the Maker can be _____,
then perhaps the Maker has _____ himself

Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. David – Psalm 34:8

HOMEWORK:

➲ Read Handout: "The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask" Chapter 2 by Mark Mittelberg

➲ Read Chapter 5 from "Know Why You Believe" by Paul Little

Chapter 2 of the book
"The Questions Christians Hope No One Will Ask"

Week 2
Homework Reading Assignment
for *Reasons to Believe* Essentials

CHAPTER 2:

"Didn't evolution put God out of a job? Why rely on religion in an age of science and knowledge?"

Brad had little time—and even less respect—for religion. He had long been convinced that the Bible's teachings had been displaced by insights from science and philosophy. He was a biology student at a major university, an evolutionist, and an atheist, and he loved debating truth with any unwitting Christian he managed to corner.

One day Brad was enjoying a cigarette in the student dining area when he happened upon a table of students talking about spiritual matters. A moth to the flame, Brad was soon in the thick of the conversation. Things got really interesting, though, when a guy whom they hadn't seen before joined them. He was polite, respectful, and articulate—especially when defending his Christian faith.

Raw meat for a good argument, Brad thought. Even though they were all in the discussion, he became increasingly engaged with what this guy was saying, and the more they interacted, the more Brad smoked. Partly interested and partly hoping to shut the guy down, he threw out his best arguments

in rapid succession, and then blew cigarette smoke in the poor guy's face while he was trying to answer the questions.

Not only did the fellow endure this abuse, but he showed up for more the next day. The two of them talked again about science, faith, and religion. By the third day the others had left, and it was just Brad and his new friend—talking intensely.

Over the three days a subtle shift took place. Gradually Brad found himself moving from the offense to the defense—an unfamiliar place for him. So rarely had a Christian even tried to withstand his barrage of objections that he was stunned when this guy not only answered his questions but also began prodding Brad to reconsider his own beliefs.

By the end of that third and final conversation, Brad had heard a wealth of information that challenged his long-held opinions. He realized that many of his assumptions were evaporating before his eyes, even if he wasn't convinced on every point. He still believed in evolution, but even that was now mixed with doubt, and he realized the theory didn't explain everything the way he once thought it did. He also walked away with a new view of God—and even of his own life.

That very night, alone, Brad humbled himself and prayed to the God he had long resisted, asking him to forgive his sins and to lead his life. To this day, more than twenty years later, he can't talk about that night without getting choked up—as he is again filled with awe of God's amazing grace.

Has Brad's life changed? Yes—in remarkable ways! He married a Christian woman, and they've raised their three kids as followers of Jesus. He shares his faith with anyone who will listen, and he answers countless questions people ask him about his Christian faith. He's a strong believer in God as the Creator, though it took him a couple more years of study before he modified his evolutionary point of view.

In addition, Brad helped me start an apologetics ministry at our church in Chicago that is still active many years later, and he was an encouragement to Lee Strobel when Lee started working on the material that would later become *The Case for a Creator*.[1]

Also, thankfully, Brad quit smoking—and blowing smoke in people's faces—many years ago!

One of the top questions in our survey of issues Christians hope no one will ask was the title of this chapter: "Didn't evolution put God out of a job? Why rely on religion in an age of science and knowledge?"

Whether it comes from a character such as my friend Brad, an acquaintance at work, a family member, or a young person who is confused by questions that come up in a science class at school, this is an issue that pervades our culture—one we'd better prepare for because it's not going away anytime soon.

It's easy to feel intimidated when you hear the increasingly adamant claims of best-selling authors such as anti-God evangelist Richard Dawkins, who boldly declares, "Today the theory of evolution is about as much open to doubt as the theory that the earth goes round the sun."[2] He also says, "It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)."[3]

But when we consider the research and conclusions of

other scientists and great thinkers on the subject, as we will in this chapter, the problem won't seem so daunting. The evidence *for* a creator is actually much more compelling than for a universe without one.

As the question indicates, many people assume that, if evolution is true, then science has already explained the mysteries of the origin of life and there's no longer a need for a divine creator. Is that conclusion true—has Darwinian evolution really put God out of a job?

The answer to the question is, in a word, *no*.

Charles Darwin, and the evolutionary theory that flowed from his work, doesn't even try to answer the question of where life came from. His book is called *The Origin of Species*—referring to the successive origins of each new species as it gradually grew out of other previous, more primitive, ones. The theory entails that all species would eventually trace back to one original ancestor—to the trunk, in his classic tree illustration—but how *that* being first came to life was beyond the scope of Darwin's focus. Its existence was obviously implied, but never really explained.

DEGREES OF CHANGE

Darwin was right at least in this: living things do change and adapt over time—everyone agrees that's true to some degree. That is, virtually no one denies that *microevolution* occurs—meaning the adaptations that happen over time within the assorted species. There are lots of examples: the variations in the beaks of finches in the Galapagos Islands that Darwin himself reported; the lightening or darkening of the famed peppered moths in Britain as they adapt to

their fluctuating environment; the gradual increases in the size of horses, as well as changes in various breeds of dogs over the centuries.

The question of whether examples of microevolution really provide evidence for Darwin's grand scheme of *macroevolution*—species gradually growing into other species, all beginning with one common ancestor—is one of the great challenges to his theory. For example, the finch with the adapted beak is still a finch; the peppered moths, whether light or dark, are still peppered moths; the horses are still horses (and not dogs—and vice versa), regardless of their size; and so forth. So it's worth noting that most of the evidence offered for evolution is really just evidence for microevolution—which Christians and non-Christians alike acknowledge as happening—but it's a leap to say this proves the much larger claims of Darwinian macroevolution.

THREE MISSING ELEMENTS

Where did life come from in the first place? Did it mysteriously emerge out of the proverbial primordial soup? Even if that answer could be defended, where did the ingredients for the soup come from? Further, where is the recipe that explains how those ingredients all fit together?

There are at least three major building blocks that Darwin's theory relies upon—but which it can't account for: (1) the formation of a universe in which all organic life would reside along with the "ingredients" it would consist of; (2) the origin of the first life itself; and (3) the encoding of information that makes all organic life possible. Let's look at each of these more closely.

1. Matter matters

Let's start by discussing the ingredients themselves, as well as the environment in which they purportedly came together. There is a joke that is popular on the Internet that's worth repeating here:

> *One day a group of scientists got together and decided that humankind had come a long way and no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him that they were done with Him. The scientist walked up to God and said, "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We're to the point where we can clone people and do many miraculous things, so why don't you just go on and mind your own business?"*
>
> *God listened very patiently to the man. After the scientist was done talking, God said, "Very well, how about this? Let's say we have a people-making contest," to which the scientist replied, "Okay, we can handle that!"*
>
> *"But," God added, "we're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam."*
>
> *The scientist said, "Sure, no problem," and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt.*
>
> *God looked at him and said, "No, no, no. You go get your* own *dirt!"*

In a similar vein, agnostic astronomer and author Carl Sagan once conceded, "If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe."[4]

You see, evolution could never have gotten off the ground without all the necessary ingredients already present and accounted for. But to say this happened on its own, by mere chance, is a *huge* leap. It's like declaring, "In the beginning . . . the stuff was already here—the heavens and the earth. And the stuff rattled around, bumping into itself, and over eons of time it ultimately got its act together. Randomly, without cause or purpose or outside help of any kind, it arranged itself into the exact elements and order necessary to cause self-replicating and upwardly evolving life to suddenly leap into existence."

Again, where did the vast supply of raw "stuff" come from in the first place? As we saw in the last chapter, most scientists say that all matter came into existence—along with time itself—at the Big Bang. It was out of that cataclysmic explosion (the "singularity event") that the entire universe sprang from an infinitesimal point into what would become the vast expanse of solar systems, stars, galaxies, and constellations that we now gawk at in the dark of night.

But here's what is interesting: it's possible to *name* an event—call it the Big Bang or whatever—without *explaining* how or why it happened. That, I believe, is exactly what scientists (that is, the ones who deny God's existence) have done. They've described something that, when you really understand it as it was detailed in the last paragraph, was a metaphysical as well as a physical event; put a scientific label on it; and then claimed to know that this astounding turn of events happened in the complete absence of any outside mind or creative designer.

How do they know that?

Simply put, they don't. They've just ruled God out of the equation by definition, saying—as modern science now characteristically does, under the influence of *philosophical naturalism*—that only natural (non-supernatural) explanations will be considered as possible causes or influences, regardless of the topic or the strength of the evidence presented. In effect, this is an attempt to decree that science will be, from this point forward, atheistic.[5]

But we don't have to accept that decree or the conclusions that go with it. Most of the great scientists of the past were strong believers in God, and many are today as well. A recently published book by the assistant professor of sociology at Rice University, Elaine Howard Ecklund, called *Science vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think*, shows this to be the case. As one reviewer summarized, "Ecklund surveyed nearly 1,700 scientists and interviewed 275 of them. She finds that most of what we believe about the faith lives of elite scientists is wrong. Nearly 50 percent of them are religious."[6] *Discover* magazine said the book will "seriously undercut some widespread assumptions out there concerning the science-religion relationship."[7]

Further, John Polkinghorne, former professor of mathematical physics at Cambridge University, insists, "Science and religion . . . are friends, not foes, in the common quest for knowledge."[8] And more specifically relevant to our discussion, a document on a Web site has been created with the heading "A Scientific Dissent from Darwinism"[9] for credentialed scientists who would like to sign it as a way of affirming these statements: "We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to

account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged." Already about eight hundred scientists have signed their names to that public document.[10]

Science is not—or at least it does not have to be—an atheistic enterprise that rules out the possibility of influences from intelligent sources beyond the normal order of nature. We can stay open to *all* of what science shows us—not limiting our conclusions to merely naturalistic ones.[11]

So, again, just to get started, evolution would have required the presence of matter and the universe as a whole, which modern science can't account for apart from the Big Bang. And the Big Bang, according to a scholar who is renowned as the world's greatest observational cosmologist, Allan Sandage, "was a supernatural event that cannot be explained within the realm of physics as we know it."[12]

Put another way, it was a supernatural event that is best explained by the cosmological argument that we looked at in chapter 1:

1. Whatever begins to exist must have a cause for its existence.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe must have a cause for its existence.
4. The attributes of the cause of the universe (being timeless, existing outside of space, and so on) are the attributes of God.
5. Therefore, the cause of the universe must be God.

And this squares perfectly with the first book of the Bible, Genesis, where the opening verse says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*

In addition, there is the evidence from the incredible fine-tuning of the universe that we discussed in chapter 1. This shows that the Designer precisely shaped the environment in a way that was "just so," making it the exact kind of place that could uniquely support and sustain life—including yours and mine. This kind of evidence alone has convinced spiritual skeptics that there must be an intelligent designer behind the physical universe; in fact, this evidence was instrumental in former atheist Patrick Glynn's concluding that God does exist.

Glynn wrote about his spiritual journey in his book *GOD: The Evidence*, including how this information helped convince him that what "cosmology had come up with was something of a scientific embarrassment: a universe with a definite beginning, expressly designed for life. Ironically, the picture of the universe bequeathed to us by the most advanced science is closer in spirit to the vision presented in the Book of Genesis than anything offered by science since Copernicus."[13]

Summing up the points in this section, Darwin's theory does not explain the origin of the "stuff" that makes up the environment we live in (the universe), or even the matter of which we're made. Scientists try to explain these with the theory of the Big Bang. This theory, when properly understood, sounds much more like a miraculous event than a scientific explanation—thus inadvertently giving support to the Genesis concept of God creating the heavens and the

earth out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Many scientists are fine with that and are in fact religious themselves. Others who don't like that outcome have tried to resist that conclusion and define anything that is beyond the realm of ordinary naturalistic explanation as being nonscientific. But this is arbitrary and ultimately unsuccessful, since true science must follow the facts wherever they lead. And in this case, they seem to lead quite persuasively back to God and his creative activities.

2. The origin of the first life

The second prerequisite for Darwin's *Origin of the Species* model to get started, as mentioned earlier, is the *origin of the original species*—the very first life on the planet—which purportedly then evolved into all the varieties of living beings. But Darwin never even gave serious treatment to the question of how that first life began.

Many other scientists over the decades have proposed a variety of theories about the original inception of life—from sheer chance, to the (later disproved) inherent attraction between the building blocks of living matter, to life "riding in on the backs of crystals,"[14] to a theory known as *panspermia*, which says that life was planted here by beings from outer space. One of the discoverers of the structure of the DNA molecule, Francis Crick, toyed with a version of this theory, and even Richard Dawkins mentioned it as a possibility in an interview with Ben Stein in the movie *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed.*[15] But as Michael Denton, in *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* observed years ago, "Nothing illustrates more clearly just how intractable a problem the

origin of life has become than the fact that world authorities can seriously toy with the idea of panspermia."[16]

Most evolutionists today, including the most ardently atheistic ones, won't even venture a serious guess as to how life began on this planet. Biochemist Klaus Dose concludes, "More than thirty years of experimentation on the origin of life in the fields of chemical and molecular evolution have led to a better perception of the immensity of the problem of the origin of life on Earth rather than to its solution. At present all discussions on principal theories and experiments in the field either end in stalemate or in a confession of ignorance."[17]

Many scientists simply accept that life is here, acknowledge that they don't know how it got here, and assert what they think they do know: that it arrived on its own, apart from any supernatural guidance or help. But this unexplained arrival of the first life represents another huge leap in the naturalistic scientists' theories about the world we live in.

More than that, there are strong clues that the first life did not come through gradual, successive steps, as the theory of Darwinian evolution demands. Mathematician William Dembski, writing with Sean McDowell, discusses the fossil record and sums up the evidence like this:

> The first life form emerges suddenly. *According to standard dating, this first emergence of life was around 4 billion years ago. For the first 500 million years, the earth was too hot and turbulent for any life form to exist. And then, shortly after the earth was cool enough,* certain types of bacteria appear suddenly and abundantly.[18]

What this means is that, contrary to what we'd expect according to the principles of Darwinian evolution in which the earliest life-forms should have been traceable back to smaller and simpler component parts, the fossil record shows early life just showing up—bam!—unannounced and fully formed. (And as we'll see later in the chapter, this was true of later life-forms, as well.) So not only did Darwin fail to explain how life got here in the first place, the life that did get here first did so in ways that didn't fit his theory. Rather, it was almost as if a creative designer had just made and placed these life-forms here—supernaturally!

Also, consider the incredible complexity of even the "simplest" early life-forms and the overwhelming odds against those coming together by chance. Biochemist Michael Denton, in his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* poses the problem like this: "Is it really credible that random processes could have constructed a reality, the smallest element of which—a functional protein or gene—is complex beyond our own creative capacities, *a reality which is the very antithesis of chance,* which excels in every sense anything produced by the intelligence of man?"[19]

Cambridge-trained philosopher of science Stephen Meyer elaborates:

> *Consider what you'd need for a protein molecule to form by chance. First, you need the right bonds between the amino acids. Second, amino acids come in right-handed and left-handed versions, and you've got to get only left-handed ones. Third, the amino acids must link up in a specified sequence, like letters in a sentence.*

> *Run the odds of these things falling into place on their own and you find that the probabilities of forming a rather short functional protein at random would be one chance in a hundred thousand trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion trillion. That's a ten with 125 zeroes after it!*
>
> *And that would only be one protein molecule—a minimally complex cell would need between three hundred and five hundred protein molecules. . . .* To suggest chance against those odds is really to invoke a naturalistic miracle.[20]

I wouldn't bet those odds even if I *were* a gambling man! You may not have known that amino acids come in left- and right-handed versions (though being a southpaw myself, I appreciate that the left-handed versions are apparently more useful in building protein molecules). And we may not be able to fathom the size of the numbers Dr. Meyer was citing in his quote above. But rest assured of this: neither the scientific record nor the statistical chances point to the conclusion that life could have arisen on this planet spontaneously without the aid of some kind of a creative guiding force.

But if life didn't happen on its own, then what kind of intelligence or power—or both—helped it come into existence? Might it be an incredibly wise designer who helped put the necessary elements together to pull off the Big Bang (without a hitch) in the first place? As Christians I think we've got the best answer to that question!

3. The origin of information

There's one other element that needs to be in place for evolution to have even a chance of getting off the ground: *information.* Dembski and McDowell explain this clearly:

> *The key feature of life is* information*—specified complexity. Even the most simple bacterial cells teem with vast amounts of information. A single primitive cell would require hundreds of thousands of bits of information precisely sequenced in its DNA. . . . In the entire history of the universe, chance can only produce 400 bits of prespecified information, equivalent to Shakespeare's famous lines "To be or not to be, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer." The first primitive cell is therefore far beyond the reach of chance-based mechanisms.*
>
> *Because there is not evidence of simpler life forms from which bacteria could have evolved . . . evolutionary biologists are left with a mystery.* Here is the key question: How could nature, without intelligent guidance, take the massive informational jumps needed for life to originate? These hurdles simply cannot be cleared without information. *This is why a growing number of scientists today are turning to intelligent design as the best explanation for the origin of life.*[21]

And if one "primitive" first cell required that immense volume of information, what about the human body, with

all its millions of advanced and specialized cells? How much information does *it* require? That's exactly what Francis Collins and the team he led at the Human Genome Project discovered as they mapped the entire DNA sequence of the human species. Collins describes the information contained in our DNA like this:

> *This newly revealed text was 3 billion letters long, and written in a strange and cryptographic four-letter code. Such is the amazing complexity of the information carried within each cell of the human body, that a live reading of that code at a rate of three letters per second would take thirty-one years, even if reading continued day and night. Printing these letters out in regular font size on normal bond paper and binding them all together would result in a tower the height of the Washington Monument. For the first time on that summer morning this amazing script, carrying within it all of the instructions for building a human being, was available to the world.*[22]

You might want to go back and read that last paragraph another time or two; the truth it reveals about the information encoded into our every cell is simply astonishing. It's so breathtaking that Collins aptly named his book about it *The Language of God*—a title that echoes the words President Bill Clinton used when he stood next to Collins and announced that the amazing genome project had been completed: *"We are learning the language in which God created life."*[23]

Why did they use this theological language at a press conference for a scientific breakthrough? Because that scientific breakthrough unveiled the incredible scope of the biological language in which information—literally, the library of recipes by which living organisms are put together—is contained and conveyed.

But here's what is important to note about information: it is never recorded or communicated by nature alone. One popular illustration contrasts two different patterns on a beach: one formed by the waves, and the other, the words *John loves Mary* written in the sand. The wave-drawn patterns may be interesting to look at, but they're randomly formed by nature. The words *John loves Mary*, however, would never be mistaken for something random. Clearly they had at least *some* level of intelligence behind them. They comprise a message intended to communicate an idea—one to which John hopes Mary will be receptive!

But if something as simple as "John loves Mary" is obviously intelligent communication, how much more so is the life-giving, unimaginably complex "message" of human DNA, which is, as Francis Collins puts it, "3 billion letters long . . . written in a four-letter code . . . [and is] our own instruction book, previously known only to God"?[24]

So powerful is this evidence that Dean Kenyon, a biophysicist from San Francisco State University who had coauthored a book trying to explain the emergence of life apart from any supernatural involvement, later made a dramatic turnabout. "Kenyon . . . repudiated the conclusions of his own book, declaring that he had come to the point where he was critical of all naturalistic theories of origins.

Due to the immense molecular complexity of the cell and the information-bearing properties of DNA, Kenyon now believed that the best evidence pointed toward a designer of life."[25]

Kenyon summarized his own conclusion by saying, "This new realm of molecular genetics [is] where we see the most compelling evidence of design on the Earth." Kenyon's words echo the opinion of many other leading scientists and thinkers around the world—and one I hope we can help convince our friends of as well: the information encoded in DNA points powerfully to an intelligent designer.[26]

So we see that Darwin's theory of evolution—to even have the chance of getting started in the first place—relies on three essential events that design-oriented views best explain: the origin of the universe, the origin of life, and the origin of information.

THE "EVEN IF" APPROACH

You may have noticed that I've said very little in the way of direct criticism of Darwin's actual theory of evolution. Instead I've shown that his theory can't even get off the ground without three preconditions that neither Darwin nor broader science has been able to explain:

1. How did the universe and matter in general get here? (Yes, I accept some version of the Big Bang, but naming it doesn't explain it; the entire universe exploding out of one infinitesimally small point . . . sounds to me not like a *scientific explanation*, but like a *miracle of God*.)

2. How did life originate in the first place? (Science offers no real answers.)
3. Who wrote the informational instructions—the DNA "recipes"—that are required for life to form or replicate? (Information always emanates from intelligence.)

I've taken this approach to show that, far from evolution putting God out of a job, Darwinian evolution—if it is true at all—relies on these three factors (and probably more) that need God for their explanation! Or, putting it in the positive, all three of these points powerfully demonstrate, from a scientific perspective, the need for an intelligent designer.

The other reason I've taken the approach I have is because I don't think we necessarily have to change people's minds about evolution itself in order to lead them to faith in Jesus. In fact, trying to do so can actually put up an additional barrier for someone who might have been otherwise ready to hear and respond to the gospel message. That is, unfortunately, what some Christians inadvertently do with the people they talk to—making it seem that they'll need to go through two conversions in order to come to Christ: first to a particular scientific viewpoint, and then to a new spiritual one.

My friend Cliffe Knechtle, who has ministered with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship on countless university campuses over the years, told me about a professor he met and tried to share Christ with. The man explained that he could never become a Christian because he disagreed with the positions of certain creationists he had interacted with

years earlier. Cliffe explained to him that Bible-believing Christians have a variety of views and interpretations on that matter and that he didn't have to accept their scientific position in order to trust in Jesus for salvation. But the man could not be convinced, so sure was he that Christianity and that particular view of origins were vitally linked.

In keeping with Cliffe's efforts, our goal, as we discussed at the beginning of the book, is to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ—not to change their minds about every conceivable question or topic we might discuss with them. Even in the Great Commission, Jesus told us to "go and make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV). Notice that *making* disciples comes first, then the ongoing *teaching* of those disciples.

And remember Brad's story at the beginning of the chapter, where he "realized that many of his assumptions were evaporating before his eyes, even if he wasn't convinced on every point. He still believed in evolution, but even that was now mixed with doubt, and he realized the theory didn't explain everything the way he once thought it did." In spite of not being fully convinced concerning his long-held views about evolution, he still "humbled himself and prayed to the God he had long resisted, asking him to forgive his sins and to lead his life." Then, over the next couple of years, his views of evolution began to change as well. But if he'd been forced to change his point of view in these areas in the reverse order—becoming some form of a creationist first, and then a Christian—he probably would not have done either.

So my advice is to not make Darwin's theory the primary topic of discussion. Rather, focus your efforts on going after the anti-supernatural biases that many scientists harbor today in the viewpoint of *philosophical naturalism*, which we discussed earlier. From this viewpoint, everything that happens must do so by natural causes, which effectively squeezes God and his activities out of the very equation. Show how that bias is actually unwarranted prejudice and that it fails to explain the things we've examined: the origin of the universe, the origin of the first living being, and the origin of information encoded in the DNA of every living cell.

So *even if* Darwin's *Origin of the Species* were correct about how new species develop out of previous ones, that fact still would not hurt the truth that God exists, that he is the intelligence and power that created and sustains all things, and that he wants everyone to come to him for his forgiveness and leadership.

Here is how evangelical philosopher William Lane Craig argued this at the celebrated debate on "Atheism vs. Christianity" that Lee Strobel and I hosted at Willow Creek Community Church years ago:

> *Now, what about the question of evolution? Let me submit to you that this is a complete red herring. The theory of evolution is irrelevant to the truth of the Christian faith. Genesis 1 permits all manner of interpretations and Christians are not necessarily committed to special creationism. . . .*
>
> *And I want to emphasize this is not a retreat*

caused by modern science. St. Augustine, in the 300s, in his commentary on Genesis, argued that the days needn't be taken literally, nor need the creation be a few thousand years ago. He didn't even envisage special acts of creation. He said the world could have been made by God with certain potencies that unfolded in the progress of time. This interpretation was enunciated 1,500 years prior *to Darwin, and therefore this is a position that is consistent with being a Christian.*

Any doubts that I might have about the theory of evolution really are not biblical but scientific. *Namely, what the scenario envisages is just so fantastically improbable. In their book* The Anthropic Cosmological Principle, *Barrow and Tipler lay out ten steps necessary to the course of human evolution, each of which is so improbable that before it would occur the sun would have ceased to be a main-sequence star, and would have burned up the earth!*

Now it seems to me that if evolution did occur then it would have had to have been a miracle. In other words, evolution is literally evidence for the existence of God![27]

DIFFERING CHRISTIAN VIEWS

As you're surely beginning to see, Christians can and do have differing views on the finer points of this complex issue of origins. What are the various positions that Christians tend to take? A book called *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*[28] lays out the major viewpoints, the first of which is called Young Earth Creationism.

The main distinguishing features of the recent creation position are

1. *An open philosophy of science [which they describe later as the free inquiry of ideas].*
2. *All basic types of organisms were directly created by God during the creation week of Genesis 1–2.*
3. *The curse of Genesis 3:14-19 profoundly affected every aspect of the natural economy.*
4. *The flood of Noah was a historical event, global in extent and effect.*

Other distinctive aspects of the recent creation position (e.g., a historical Adam and Eve, directly created by God as the original parents of humankind) follow from these cardinal claims.[29]

This position is also characteristically associated with the belief that the age of the earth is much younger than is generally believed in scientific circles—usually stated to be as recent as eight to twelve thousand years old.

The second major position discussed in the book is Progressive Creationism (also called Old Earth Creationism). Here's how one of its advocates describes it:

As an old earth *creationist I understand that the earth and the universe were created far more than just a few thousand years ago as has been*

the traditional belief among Christians. Rather I think the earth is some four or five billion years old and the universe some ten to twenty billion years old.

As an old earth creationist *I believe that unguided evolution is not capable of producing the features we see in our universe—not the universe itself, life, its actual variety, not humankind. Nor do I think that God-guided evolution is the way God chose to create, at least not to produce the large-scale differences between the various plants and animals, nor to make humans. Presumably God is capable of creating everything we see either by means of miracles in just a few days (even no time at all!) or by guiding purely natural processes over a long period of time. But I don't think the biblical or scientific evidence we have suggests that he used either of these means exclusively. Instead, it seems to me that God used some combination of supernatural intervention and providential guidance to construct the universe.*[30]

The third position discussed in the book is Theistic Evolution (also described as Fully Gifted Creation):

I believe that the entire universe (everything that is not God) is a creation that has being only because God has given it being, from nothing, and that God continues to sustain it in being from moment to moment.

. . . I believe that God has so generously gifted the creation with the capabilities for self-organization and transformation that an unbroken line of evolutionary development from nonliving matter to the full array of existing life-forms is not only possible but has in fact taken place.[31]

These are three very different views by people who are all devoted followers of Christ but who interpret the Bible and the data of science in very different ways. The first sees the earth as very young and the days of creation as literal twenty-four-hour periods of time in which God made all things. The second believes that the earth is quite old but that God intervened at various points along the way ("days" in Genesis is usually interpreted as eras or ages) to supernaturally create life. The third holds that God worked actively but behind the scenes through an evolutionary process to bring about life as we see it today (this view would see the "days" and descriptions in Genesis as largely allegorical).

Should every Christian feel comfortable with all three? *Not at all—I don't feel comfortable with all of them!* But can I accept my brothers and sisters in Christ who hold to them? *Absolutely!* I see this as the kind of issue that fits broadly into the message of Romans 14, where God's Word admonishes us to "accept other believers . . . and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. . . . They are responsible to the Lord, so let him judge whether they are right or wrong. And with the Lord's help, they will do what is right and will receive his approval. . . . *You should each be fully convinced.* . . . If you serve Christ with this attitude,

you will please God, and others will approve of you, too. So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up" (vv. 1, 4-5, 18-19, emphasis mine).

Timothy Keller sums it up well when he says this in his powerful book *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*: "Since Christian believers occupy different positions on both the meaning of Genesis 1 and on the nature of evolution, *those who are considering Christianity as a whole should not allow themselves to be distracted by this intramural debate.*"[32]

FOR THE RECORD

We've seen that Darwinian evolution, if true at all, is dependent on three factors—all of which point back to God: the origin of the universe and of all matter, the origin of the first life, and the origin of complex information encoded in DNA. We also discussed the "even if" approach that says, *even if* we were to accept evolution as true, the scientific evidence still points to a Creator God who had to create the conditions and potentialities for that process to work. And we explored three different broad positions Christians take on the scientific and biblical data. All of that being said, before we end this discussion it's worth pointing out that the actual arguments for Darwinian evolution are flawed and incomplete for a number of reasons.

First, there is an almost complete lack of hard evidence for Darwin's so-called Tree of Life. Many people within the scientific community are so used to believing in it that they hold onto it with religious zeal, seeing everything through its filters. As an example, they note similarities between two

species and rush to call it *common descent*, when in reality it could be the work of a *common designer*.

For instance, there's a reason you generally know a Picasso painting when you see one. It's because Pablo Picasso, like most artists, had a characteristic style that marked his artwork and that was readily recognizable to even the casually aware observer. Why would it be any different if God were the artist that sculpted every creature on the planet? Wouldn't we expect to see similarities in his designs, whether in their outward appearances, their skeletal structures, or even in their genetic makeup?

And what about the fossil record itself? Even Darwin himself recognized that the record did not support his thesis, and he even conceded that the lack of transitional examples was one of the greatest objections to his model—but he was confident that further research would eventually fill in the gaps. If he had been right, then surely all the searching and digging over the 150 years since he first published *The Origin of Species* would have yielded countless transitional fossils. Yet to this day there is a complete lack of solid, undisputed examples.

What does the fossil record actually show? Revealed during what is known as the Cambrian era is what has sometimes been referred to as a *biological* Big Bang, during which an astonishing array of new, fully formed life-forms rapidly appeared. Then these new species exhibited what scientists refer to as *stasis*—the absence of evolutionary change. This "event" is commonly called the Cambrian Explosion—and it has befuddled evolutionists to the point where they've entertained, embraced, and then retreated from a variety of

theories to try to explain in naturalistic terms how new life forms can appear so quickly.

In light of all this, we can stand back and gently ask, "Might this not be evidence that a divine Creator somehow made and placed these creatures on our planet, just as the book that claims to be the Word of that Creator so clearly explains?"

> God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. . . .
>
> And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.
>
> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

> So God created man in his own image,
> in the image of God he created him;
> male and female he created them.
> God blessed them.
>
> (Gen. 1:20-21, 24-28, NIV)

Sometimes the simplest and most straightforward answer is the best one. But embracing that answer requires each of us—*and each of our friends*—to humble ourselves and to be willing to acknowledge the presence, power, and divine prerogative of the One who made us.

SUMMARY OF THE ANSWER

Question 2 asks us, "Didn't evolution put God out of a job? Why rely on religion in an age of science and knowledge?"

- The story at the beginning of this chapter, which shows how Brad became slowly convinced of the reality of God by a Christian who patiently listened and respectfully conversed about difficult topics—including this chapter's question—demonstrates how God's love and truth can break open even the most closed hearts.
- Darwin's theory does not account for the origin of the universe and all that's in it, the origin of the first living organism, or the encoding of complex information in DNA. Even if his theory were true, it would be dependent on these other things—all of which point to a creative intelligence outside the universe.
- The explanation by many scientists for how the universe began is the Big Bang theory. However, this event goes beyond physics or science, and it points to an intelligent cause outside of itself, as we saw in the first chapter.
- While some have attempted to put God and science at odds, many of the greatest scientists in both past and present have been strong believers in God. Science is not inherently atheistic.
- Our greatest opponent is not science or even evolution, but *philosophical naturalism*, which is the view many scientists hold that says only naturalistic (non-supernatural) causes can be considered. Rather, good science should follow the scientific facts wherever they lead—including to an intelligent designer.
- Unless our friends view evolution as incompatible with belief in God, we should focus on introducing them to the Savior. Bible-believing Christians hold a variety of views on this matter, and a person doesn't have to subscribe to a certain position before being able to trust Jesus for salvation.

TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT THIS ISSUE

- The topics discussed in this chapter are more technical than most of the others in the book. Therefore we should approach them with humility, being careful not to pretend that we know more than we do. Sometimes Christians come across as dogmatic in these areas in ways that can hurt our credibility and influence.
- When talking to people who don't believe the Bible, we're wise to focus at least initially on the broader evidence that backs up what we believe as Christians. We've done that in this chapter, and we will throughout the book—looking to the findings of science, history, philosophy, archeology, and current events to help our friends see the truths that are also revealed in the Bible.
- As we build up the Bible's credibility through the broader evidence mentioned in the last point, we can increasingly use it as an authoritative source of truth. (For us as Christians, it already is that—but to convince our friends, we're generally wise to draw from areas they already trust, like science and history, and

show how the truths found there square with the teachings in the Bible.)

- Try not to overreact to what your friends say they believe. A strong commitment to the teachings of evolution, for instance, can mean different things to different people. As always, ask questions and really listen to their answers. Do they believe just in microevolution (adaptations within the various species) or in macroevolution, too?
- If your friends do believe in the full Darwinian view (macroevolution), it's *still* important to find out if, in their minds, that excludes God. If not, then it's probably better to focus your energy on helping them to see that this God, regardless of how he got it done, must be incredibly wise, powerful, and creative—to cause the universe and life in all its complexity.
- If your friends say that evolution rules out the existence of God, ask them to explain why—and while they're at it, ask them how the universe got started on its own, how life began independently, and how the information in DNA came into existence without any intelligence behind it. If they can answer those questions, they're ahead of the scientific community as a whole!

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Why do people tend to separate God and science as if the two cannot coexist?

2. The theory of evolution is just that—a *theory* that has never been proven in all its claims. Why, then, do so many people treat it as fact?

3. Some have said that it takes more faith to believe that there *isn't* an intelligent designer than to believe that there *is* one. What information from the chapter would support this statement?

4. This chapter describes three "missing elements" that have to be in place for Darwin's theory to even be a theoretical possibility: the origin of the universe (and all matter), the origin of the first living organism, and the encoding of information in DNA. Which of these could you best use to point your friends to God?

5. React to the statement, "Our goal . . . is to lead friends to faith—not to initially change their minds about every conceivable question or topic we might discuss with them." What other social or scientific topics might this relate to? In what ways can Christians focus on Jesus and salvation first?

6. Briefly describe the differences between Young Earth Creationism, Old Earth Creationism, and Theistic Evolution.

How can we move past these differences when we talk to our friends who don't know Christ?

7. How would you describe the problems in the fossil record related to evolution?