

WitnessKit 2

God And Creation

Class 26

Which Tree of Life?

The Subtext of Contempt,
The Beginning and End of Reason,
Talking Past Each Other

Two trees of life

The Bible has the concept of the tree of life—a tree that brings healing and longevity, and which cannot be accessed in a sinful state, but only in a perfected state—Genesis 3:22 to Revelation 22:2. The Bible's tree of life is an important gift from God, related to eternal life.

Darwin had a different tree of life. His tree was a picture of changes in species over time, due to descent with modification. It has something to do with eternal life, too. It is an intellectual barrier to eternal life.

Two trees of life

Darwin's tree trunk began with simple, one-celled organisms, and branched into Kingdoms then into the separate phyla, then with further branches into all the taxonomic divisions.

Classification follows this set of categories, from broad to narrow: Kingdom, Phyla, Class, Order, Family, Genera or Genus, Species.

Darwin's tree had a basic difference from previous classification ideas. Darwin's tree assumed no Creator was involved in the changes.

Two trees of life

Taxonomy is in transition at present, with various changes in category designation. There are changing numbers of kingdoms, for instance, with the number changing from two to five over the course of the last 250 years. Some biologists have added an additional set of categories called Superkingdoms, where the Eukaryotae, whose cells have membrane bounded organelles, are separate from Prokaryotae, without membrane-bounded organelles.

Two trees of life

- Darwin had a problem with his own tree. He believed that the fossil record was not adequately detailed to support it. He hoped that future discoveries would fill in the branches of the tree. A new book, called *Darwin's Dilemma*, by Dr. Stephen Meyer, describes this problem.
- The fossil record certainly holds a great many new discoveries since Darwin's time.

Two trees of life

- But the fossil record has not solved Darwin's problem. The data have a huge anomaly called the Cambrian Explosion. The Cambrian explosion comprises 1.7% of geologic time for animal life. Yet of the 29 phyla in the fossil record, only 4 appear earlier than the Cambrian (Simple things like bacteria and sponges), and 19 new ones appear in that 1.7% Cambrian interval.

Two trees of life

- The Cambrian ones include Chordata, sometimes called Vertebrata but with a few extras like sea squirts—a category at the top of the supposed tree of life which includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish, but which makes up only 3% of living animals.
- An additional 6 phyla appear later in geologic time. Twelve phyla live today that have no fossils at all.—Discovery Institute’s “An Analysis of the Testimony of Professor David Hillis before the Texas State Board of Education on January 21, 2009.

For Darwin's tree of life to be the correct one,

Several things would have to be true. First, the fossil record would have to be a reasonable facsimile of the tree. Second, the genetic code in the various organisms would have to match the branching of the same tree. It should be possible to construct the same tree from taxonomy, the fossils, and the genetic code.

However, that has not happened. The people working on the genetic tree are called *systematists*.

Contradictions in the Idea of the Tree of Life

“For a long time the holy grail was to build a tree of life,” said Eric Baptiste, an evolutionary biologist at the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris, France. *A few years ago it looked as though the grail was within reach. But today the project lies in tatters, torn to pieces by an onslaught of negative evidence. Many biologists now argue that the tree concept is obsolete and needs to be discarded. “We have no evidence at all that the tree of life is reality.”*—www.discovery.org/a/9941,—from “An Analysis of the Expert Testimony of Prof. David Hillis before the State Board of Education on January 21, 2009

Once the Systematists began Unraveling the Genetic Code

And trying to create a tree of life from the genes rather than from morphology, they ran into a big problem. About 2000 genes are common to diverse forms of animal life, from humans, to frogs, to sea squirts, sea urchins, fruit flies, and nematodes. If systematists looked at one gene and its diverse forms, they could draw a tree of life. If they looked at another gene and its diverse forms, they had to draw a different tree. Different genes told contradictory evolutionary stories.

Carl Woese, the father of evolutionary molecular systematics

Said the problems extend well beyond the base of the tree of life. *“Phylo-genetic incongruities can be seen everywhere in the universal tree, from its roots to the major branchings within and among various taxa to the makeup of the primary groupings themselves.”*

Another paper reported that researchers omitted 35% of the single genes from their data matrix, because they produced phylogenies at odds with conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom is the tree of life predicted based on morphology.

The Fossils are no help for drawing the tree, either, because they are too separated from each other.

- In PALEOBIOLOGY, in January, 1980, Steven Jay Gould, advocate of punctuated equilibrium, wrote, *“The absence of fossil evidence for intermediary stages between major transitions in organic design, indeed our inability, even in our imagination, to construct functional intermediates in many cases, has been a persistent and nagging problem for gradualistic accounts of evolution.”*

Reiterating: The Cambrian Explosion

Represents 1.7 % of evolutionary time for living entities, yet suddenly, 19 of 28 phyla appear then. Only 3 phyla appear earlier, or possibly 4 if a new one is defined. Only 6 appear later. An additional 12 phyla are known as living animals, but have no fossils at all. The last fact demonstrates that more of the phyla could have been present earlier, and just not have been fossilized.

Another Quote from S. J. Gould...

“The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils.”—
“Evolution’s Erratic Pace,” NATURAL HISTORY, May 1977.

The Quotes We Just Heard...

www.discovery.org/a/9941...from "An Analysis of the Expert Testimony of Prof. David Hillis before the State Board of Education on January 21, 2009

*Tell us that evolutionary theory is based more on inference than fact. We have looked at the options for the beginning of the universe and the implications they have for science. **Either** science is a process of impartial investigation and testing, where the gaps in the data matter for estimating uncertainty in explanations, **or** it is a process of adherence to naturalism and a closed system of cause and effect, where the gaps in the data do not matter.*

In the First Case, If science is a process of investigation and testing,

Either ultimate origin could be considered possible—a Personal Beginning, or an impersonal beginning. The mathematical tools of Intelligent Design allow tests for the first option. Math is not theology.

If only the second option is allowed, science becomes the pursuit of a closed circle, and a closed circle that encompasses a lie because God exists.

So how is it working out in academia?

The **closed circle** holds the power in academia, and it has produced **the subtext of contempt**. We saw some of that on the DVD *Expelled, No Intelligence Allowed*. Any whiff of an attempt to open the closed circle can result in someone's job loss, if they do not already have tenure. Afterward, academia is closed to them. Careers are on the line.

Phillip Johnson has analyzed this problem from a legal standpoint.

We can see that the closed view of the universe has created closed minds,

Elements in
the Subtext
of
Contempt

so that Theists are treated according to The Subtext of Contempt.

1. Viewpoint Discrimination
2. Religion as causing apprehension
3. Prestige as motivation

Viewpoint Discrimination

Dr. Johnson gives examples of two scientists who, on their own time, presented evidence for their faith to students who wished to attend an after-class meeting. The administration silenced one professor. He took the matter to court, alleging **viewpoint discrimination**. The district court agreed, citing evidence that **only religious viewpoints were silenced** while other viewpoints were allowed. Even **in the religion department**, the professors were not allowed to give their opinions, where in other subjects they were allowed.

Viewpoint Discrimination

- The appeals court overturned the district court, on the basis that the professor's religious opinion "might cause apprehension."
- When one considers the outlandish ideas taught in universities today, this reason has NO MERIT. Instead, it is another expression of the subtext of contempt.

Religion as causing apprehension: the subtext of contempt

Religion as causing apprehension can be a factor in several ways, but the reality is that our constitutional order was founded upon the idea of **religious liberty**. That includes the liberty of **religious speech**. The constitution has a clause in the First Amendment whereby the congress is not allowed to prohibit free exercise of religion. It does **not** have a clause *prohibiting offending someone by saying something religious.*

Religion as causing apprehension

The legal rationale for silencing the professor about evidence for his faith, is that it would cause apprehension, like listening to a bigot. First, this is an **unconstitutional rationale**.

Secondly, by divorcing religion from reason, our nation's leaders have inadvertently turned our society into "**paralyzed voices,**" afraid to voice an opinion, and that has caused **a loss of civilized respect for other people's points of view**. It is perfectly possible to apply reason to religion, and that **SHOULD** be part of the public discussion.

Religion as causing apprehension

- One of the strengths of our republic has been the free flow of ideas by way of freedom of speech and freedom of religion. It made the experiment in American liberty unique in all the world, flexible, and accepting of differences. That strength is being drained away by the fear of offending someone with religious speech.
- The courts have been instigators of this weakness, in defiance of the Constitution.
- Each generation the problem becomes more severe.

Prestige as motivation

The real motivator, in the marginalizing of the professor by the university, was **prestige for the institution.**

A high prestige professor was never challenged for similar actions in a different university, since he brought prestige to his university for other reasons.

The professor who was silenced was perceived as harming the prestige at his university.

That is not a very good reason to throw away such basic principles as free speech and religious liberty.

Religion is viewed with contempt.



The first amendment is losing its protective power **because** religion is viewed with contempt.
Religion is viewed with contempt because of the **dominance** of materialistic naturalism.
Religious persons have become second-class citizens.

Religion is viewed with contempt.



The universities are filled with Marxists touting failed ideologies, and libertines touting amoral lifestyles. Yet it is only the Christian professors who are silenced. The libertines view the Christians as a threat to their freedoms, yet the Biblical worldview gave them their **equality before the law**, and the freedoms to protest for their **rights**.

We can understand why the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

Reason depends on the fear of the Lord.

by understanding the Beginning and End of Reason.

1. The beginning of reason.
2. The end of reason.

The Beginning of Reason

Reason is a gift from God. Our minds work, with thoughts that can effectively reach to the farthest distance of the galaxies and to the tiniest particles within the atoms, because God gave us reason. Reason is not *“just the superfluous accumulation of neurons beyond those needed for gathering food in a primitive environment.”*

Reason by itself is not enough. Reason needs a true starting point. We have to start with true premises to reach true conclusions.

We can use reason to search for true premises.

Schaeffer's method, of (1) looking at all the possibilities, then (2) analyzing the possibilities, and (3) narrowing the search to the best possibilities, allows us to use reason to search for true premises. A true premise will work in the real world and will have supporting evidence from many different directions.

If we abandon God



We also lose reason. Without God, we have no source for universals. Without universals, we cannot share the same systems of thought. We are fragmented into language groups that are closed to outsiders. Everything dissolves into power struggles, without an umpire. We have no reason to think our thoughts match reality, or that reason works.

Without God, reason reaches an endpoint, and it is a place of fragmentation.

End can also mean Purpose.

The **purpose** of reason is ultimately **God's purpose** for reason. “Come let us reason together, says the LORD.” He gave us reason **to help us find Him.**

So we can reject God, and embrace the end of reason, or we can search for God, and embrace the reason for reason.

“Seek the LORD while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.”—Isaiah 55.

When people have different worldviews,

- Reasoning together becomes more difficult. Unspoken different assumptions get in the way of communication. People talk past each other.
- This is very true in the origins debate.
- To understand each other, it is helpful to see how the various sides talk past each other.

We can understand more about how the other side thinks

How Each Side Views 4 Positions Regarding the State of Science

if we study Phillip Johnson's Examples of Talking Past Each Other.

Position A: Orthodox Darwinism

Position B: Macro-mutational Change or some form of saltation for new body plans

Position C: Irreducible Information present in nature

Position D: Common ancestry in question

Position A: Orthodox Darwinism

Materialistic Naturalists view Orthodox Darwinism as a **reasonable and satisfactory explanation** for the history of life. The theory appears to them to be in good shape—or even to be a **fact**.

Theistic Realists see materialistic Darwinism as an extension of the **assumption of a closed universe**, without adequate support from data. It is hypothesis, not fact. None of the data cited by Materialistic Naturalists actually proves their case.

Position B: Macro-mutational Changes or some form of saltation for new body plans

Materialistic Naturalists see Punctuated Equilibrium, Position B, as **not very different** from Position A. Both positions accept macroevolution. The argument is “just” about mechanism.

Theistic Realists see Position B as **very different** from Position A, and as beginning to address the problems of the **data's failure to support Position A.**

Position C: Irreducible Information present in nature

Materialistic Naturalists see this as just an argument that there are **gaps in our knowledge and understanding of evolution**. Even if science has not found an explanation yet of information in nature, this does not deny macroevolution.

Theistic Realists see Position C as **plausible, testable, and falsifiable**. Intelligent causation is acceptable in science for human intelligence, and even for alien intelligence, so the possibility of an ultimate Mind's existence should be allowed into the discussion **where evidence warrants it**.

Position D: Common ancestry is in question

To the materialistic naturalist, this is like arguing for a flat earth. It is hard to believe anyone could seriously deny common ancestry.

- To the Theistic Realist, this is a **legitimate possibility**, and one which cannot logically be excluded because the data for common ancestry are so shaky.

Bias

Phillip Johnson says, *“Everybody has a viewpoint. The negative word **bias** is appropriate for viewpoints that unduly constrict the possibilities that the mind may consider.... Science always has to fight the prevalent bias of the age if it is to be free to follow the evidence where it leads. In the past geology had to free itself from religious bias so that it could consider possibilities like an old earth or the occurrence of ice ages rather than a worldwide flood. ...*

Bias

*...That job (of opening up possibilities) was accomplished long ago, and **now scientific thought is restricted by naturalistic bias.** Methodological naturalism is a bias in the sense that it constricts the mind, by limiting the possibilities open to serious consideration. Theistic realism opens the mind to additional possibilities, without preventing the acceptance of anything that really is convincingly demonstrated by empirical evidence.”*

Bias is reduced by having open assumptions rather than closed assumptions.



Open assumptions look at all the options rather than closing investigation to a single option from the beginning.

In order to avoid talking past each other, both sides need to see what all the options are, and their implications.

At that point...

- It becomes possible to use reason to search for the best explanation.
- We have seen, in the course of our studies, that God is the best explanation... The GOOD God as described in the Bible.

Today we have discussed

1. Recognizing and revealing the subtext of contempt,
2. The beginning and end of reason,
3. And understanding how the other side thinks.

Where do we go from here? What are the implications of our studies? How can we pray differently, practice citizenship differently, practice friendship differently, and practice church membership differently, in the light of our studies?

Here is a point of difficulty:

The subject matter is challenging. It takes time to mull over the concepts and make them part of our thinking. It takes hard work, as well.

Everyone who must work as adults in our culture needs these concepts. Yet the need for the studies is not recognized.

I do not think a sound bite here and a sound bite there will do the job. (Although they would help!) Effort is required.

Pray for ways to build many bridges, so that many people can find the answers they need.

Proverbs 30:5

Every word of God is tested. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, But his delight is in the law of the LORD and in His law does he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season. Its leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he does will prosper.

Homework

In 3 Sets

Homework Class 16 Set 1

- Read II Corinthians 6:1-18. When is the acceptable time to receive God's salvation if you have not yet received it?
- Jesus calls us to follow Him, to learn from Him, to be willing to make His purpose for our lives our purpose. He calls us to allow Him to transform us. He calls us to allow Him to set the priorities for our life. He calls us to moral purity. He calls us to moral courage. He calls us to place our thoughts under His Lordship. He calls us to a commitment to His leadership out of love – both His love for us, and our love for Him.

Homework Class 16 Set 1

- The commitment is belief in His identity and trust in His goodness and power and wisdom. We receive the gift of eternal life when we receive Him into our lives, because He is eternal. We make the initial commitment in prayer, and we renew the commitment in daily prayer.
- If you have doubts about your depth of commitment in the past, it is perfectly appropriate to renew that commitment today with all the depth of your understanding today. Jesus gives us real peace when we are really committed to Him.

Homework Class 16 Set 1

- What do 2Corinthians6:14-18 have to do with salvation from sins?
- How are *repentance* and *separation from partnership with evil* related?
- How does Bible study fit into the idea of separation from evil?
- Read REASON IN THE BALANCE chapter nine. What did Exercise Physiology Professor Phillip Bishop do at the University of Alabama that the university ordered him to cease doing?

Homework Class 16 Set 1

- What reasons did the lower court give to uphold Bishop's right to do those things?
- What reasons did the appeals court give to overturn the lower court decision?
- What is the subtext of contempt?
- What did Chemistry Professor Henry F. Schaefer do that was comparable to Bishop's actions?
- Why was Professor Schaefer never ordered to stop?

Homework Class 16 Set 1

- How does a relativistic view of truth lead to a loss of common ground for discussion?
- What steps does Johnson suggest for ending the divisiveness?

Homework Class 16 Set 2

- When we make an initial commitment to trust Jesus Christ with our eternal future, we begin the Christian life. Read Romans 12:1-21. The same kind of commitment occurs on a day by day basis if we want to follow God's good and perfect and acceptable will for our lives. God's will presents itself through the spiritual gifts He gives us, as a motivation for some particular kind of service, and in proportion with our faith. List the steps, in verses 1-3, that are part of daily commitment to Him.

Homework Class 16 Set 2

- List the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us for serving God, in verses 6-8, remembering that the word exhortation may be translated “encouragement” and that prophecy may be translated “proclaiming God’s truth.” In current vocabulary, *proclaiming* would be a better word to use than prophecy.
- Read the list of skills that God wants to develop in the way we use those gifts, according to verses 9-20. What is the overarching goal in verse 21?

Homework Class 16 Set 2

- Read REASON IN THE BALANCE chapter ten. Phillip Johnson describes Veritas Forum as an example of an organization that is addressing real issues on college campuses.
- One of their goals is to use reason to determine first principles that will help us communicate across worldviews.
- How does the definition of science as the search for naturalistic explanations, coupled with the view that science is about facts while religion is about subjectivity, affect the search for first principles?

Homework Class 16 Set 2

- Phillip Johnson contrasts naturalism with theism in terms of two kinds of stories. What are they?
- How should looking at the evidence affect the discussion?

Homework Class 16 Set 3

- Read Acts 17:21-32. What first principles did the Apostle Paul use as a bridge to introduce the Athenians to Jesus Christ?
- Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to help us, and in particular to help us when we interact with the world. What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do, according to John 16:8-13?
- Which of these concepts did Paul address with the Athenians?

Homework Class 16 Set 3

- Read REASON IN THE BALANCE Appendix. How does Phillip Johnson demonstrate that a belief in atheism is “part and parcel of evolutionary theory as it is understood by mainstream scientists?”
- What are MN and TR, and how are they defined?
- How do proponents of MN and TR view the appearance of design in nature?

Homework Class 16 Set 3

- This Appendix gives an excellent set of examples of the way people with differing worldviews talk past each other, without realizing what the other party means. What are Position A, Position B, Position C, and Position D?
- How do Theistic Realists see A, B, C, and D?
- How do Materialistic Naturalists see A, B, C, and D?

Homework Class 16 Set 3

- Everybody has a viewpoint. However, the extrapolation from microevolution to macroevolution is a logical fallacy called the fallacy of composition.
- The **fallacy of composition** says that something true for a part **must** be true for the whole.
- Microevolution within kinds occurs. Therefore, it must be the mechanism for all change in speciation over all time.

Homework Class 16 Set 3

- “Science” commits the fallacy of composition because it excludes the possibility of any outside entity. If that outside entity exists, the exclusion compounds the fallacy.
- Thus, the more open assumption of TR is the better starting point for real science, if science wants to address reality rather than restricting its operations within bounds of a fallacy.
- Try to explain the fallacy of composition in your own words, as it applies to evolutionary theory.