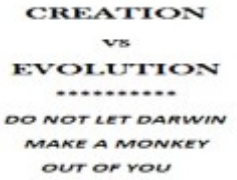
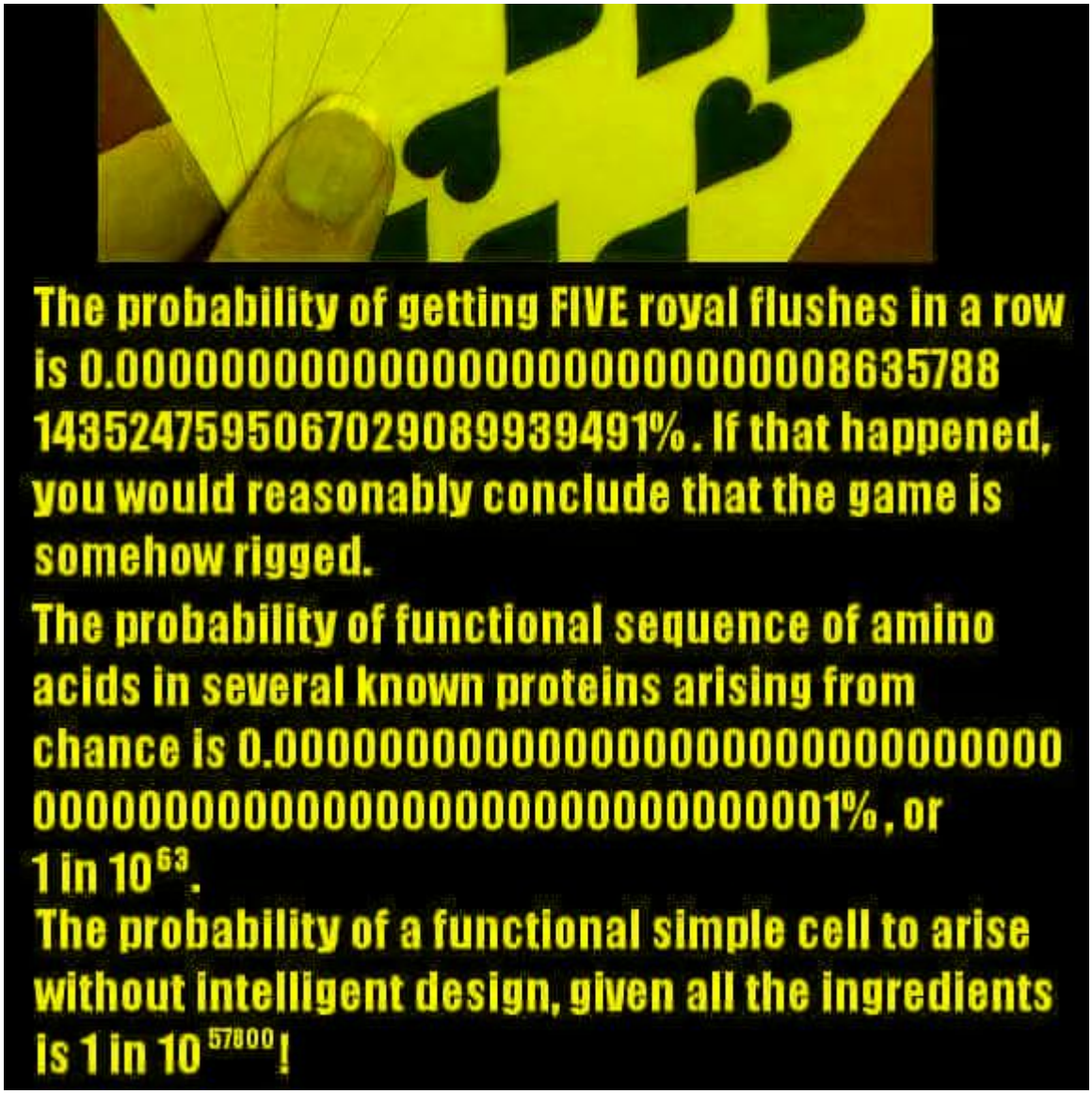
Liberalism: Its Cause And Cure – Chapter Three: The Mainline Churches And Evolution



It's very interesting to me that Darwin's theory of Evolution was embraced by scientists in the 19th century, but as science progressed, however, and more was learned about the human cell and its great number of components and chemical operations and the immense complexity of genetic code, scientists who are Bible-believing followers of Jesus Christ today have many reasons that show that Darwin's evolution is not real science, it's a mere popular belief that is accepted without evidence.

I once met a Japanese university professor with a doctorate in mathematics and told him I think numbers must be the language of God. He smiled at that. I asked him about the probability of life being created by chance. He told me the probability of chance is extremely low, but not zero. I think he might have changed his mind if I had shown him the following meme. Science today tells us the number of particles in the known universe are 10 to the 80th power, meaning a number with 80 zeros in it. Even that number is unimaginable let alone a number with 57,800 zeros in it!



I told the math professor about a scene in a film when a man asks a girl he likes what his chances are with her. “Are they one in a hundred?” He asks. “One in a million” she replied. He was elated to hear that and said, “You mean I have a chance?” LOL! I asked the professor, “Does he have a chance? “No” replied the professor, “not in real life.” But professor, we *are* talking about real life!

This is the continuation from Liberalism: Its Cause And Cure – Chapter Two Merger Mania

Chapter Three:
The Mainline Churches And Evolution

Although many people assume that the greatest change in theology developed in the last 25 years, the great divide actually opened up in the 19th century. One is tempted to find a single cause, whether it is a growing acceptance of evolution or the historical-critical study of the Bible. However, the influences cannot be completely separated. One influence feeds on another. Increasing doubts about the Bible in the 1870s led to increasing faith in science and the new technology. The devastation of the Civil War in America

gave way to optimism about the progress of man. The United States began a period of economic and geographical expansion which did not abate until the reunification of Vietnam in l975.

In the last century, a gushy attitude toward science, combined with an optimism untainted by world war, caused intellectual leaders to embrace the theory of evolution with more enthusiasm and certainty than Charles Darwin displayed in proposing it. Although the theory of evolution had been put forward in various forms before Darwin, the 1859 publication of *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, based upon Darwin's 1831 voyage on the Beagle, caused a sensation which continues to this day. Briefly, the theory of evolution assumes gradual and beneficial changes in organisms over a vast period of time. Some theorists claim that everything came about by chance and natural mechanisms, while others argue for some role by God in evolution.

The Social Gospel movement thrived in the same environment as evolution, promoting the same uncritical attitude about the potential of man and the same critical attitude toward the Scriptures. In some cases, evolutionary thought and Social Gospel enthusiasm coalesced. Washington Gladden (1836-1918), an early Social Gospel leader who ministered in Columbus, Ohio, popularized the new attitude toward the Bible in *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 1894. According to Richard Hofstadter, intellectual historian:

The rise of biblical criticism and comparative religion the general relaxation of fundamentalist faith encouraged by the liberal clergy, prepared many Americans for the acceptance of Darwinism. James Freeman Clarke's *Ten Great Religions*, a liberal study of world creeds, ran through twenty-two editions in the fifteen years after its first appearance in 1871.[1]

Some religious leaders resisted the new enthusiasm for evolution. J. B. Reimensnyder, a Lutheran seminary professor, wrote *The Six Days of Creation; the Fall; and the Deluge* in 1886. Reimensnyder declared in his preface:

The first chapter of the Bible—the sublimest ever penned—in such few words settling the greatest questions respecting God, Creation, the World, and Man, has of late been made the special target for skeptical attacks. These assaults, sometimes from an open infidel, and sometimes from a Judas in ministerial garb, have been clothed in popular form and sensational dress, and circulated far and wide, sowing the seeds of incalculable moral mischief.[2]

Theodore Graebner (1876-1950), professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, published *Essays on Evolution* in 1925 in the wake of the sensational Scopes Monkey trial in Dayton, Tennessee, where teacher John Scopes went on trial for violating the Tennessee Anti-Evolution Law, was found guilty, but was fined only $100. Graebner wrote that the Associated Press, after the trial ended, falsely reported a Lutheran being excommunicated in Kendallville, Indiana, for growing hybrid gladioli, a violation of the divine plan. The excommunicated Lutheran was not a Lutheran, not a member of the church in question, and not a resident of the neighborhood for at least 18 years.[3] Such were the passions kindled 65 years after the publication of *The Origin of the*

Species.

Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, known for theological leadership among the mainline denominations, prepared the way for Darwin's acceptance in America. The 1869 appointment of Charles William Elliot, a chemist, as president of Harvard, marked the beginning of an emphasis on science and a new tolerance for unorthodox thought. At Yale, President Noah Porter accommodated himself to evolution in 1877, impressed by the fossil collection of Yale Professor Marsh at the campus's Peabody Museum. At Princeton, President James McCosh gave a qualified endorsement of Darwinism already in 1871, long before the Fundamentalist controversy of the 1920s.[4]

Thomas Huxley, called "Darwin's Bulldog," was invited to address the 1876 opening of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, an institution that has remained in the forefront of scientific research. The British scientist found himself lionized by the American press but lambasted by the clergy. Clearly, evolution was the newest trend of the new scientific age, with a vast and continuing influence on American thought. Henry Adams wrote about himself in the aftermath of the Civil War:

He felt, like nine men in ten, an instinctive belief in Evolution… Natural Selection led back to Natural Evolution, and at last to Natural Uniformity. This was a vast stride. Unbroken Evolution under uniform conditions pleased everyone except curates and bishops; it was the very best substitute for religion; a safe, conservative, practical, thoroughly Common-Law deity.[5]

Many found it easy to identify evolution with the best and brightest in America, the promise of tomorrow, while connecting creation with the oppressive and stultifying forces of the past.

Henry Ward Beecher and his successor, Lyman Abbott, supported evolution. Both exerted considerable influence upon American thought. Beecher called himself a "cordial Christian evolutionist."[6] Abbott wrote *The Theology of an Evolutionist* in 1897. The "scientific" study of the Bible was embraced by a growing body of European professors, who trained many of the leading American theology professors, like Walter Rauschenbusch. The Industrial Revolution, unleashed by the new technology, built up a record of gross abuses of human rights in that century. Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer provided a philosophy which appealed not only to the wealthy, but also to social reformers and to Karl Marx.

Thus, the mainline attitude toward evolution and Genesis was determined already in the 19th century. The Social Gospel movement grew and spread during the last decades of the 19th century, closely allied with liberal, optimistic theology and the new biblical criticism from Europe. By 1900 Yale Divinity School was teaching the historical-critical method. It was very appealing, in the name of scientific study of the Bible, to think that Genesis was the work of several inconsistent authors, that the mighty acts of God were in fact myths conveying universal truths.

Leaders of the Social Gospel movement were Washington Gladden ("O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee"), Frank Mason North ("Where Cross the Crowded Ways of

Life"), Harry Emerson Fosdick, and Walter Rauschenbusch (*A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 1917). North helped write the Social Creed of the Methodist Church, 1908.

The Federal Council of Churches was formed as the institutional wing of the Social Gospel movement and used virtually the same creed. The National Council of Churches is a direct descendant of the Federal Council. Rauschenbusch had the greatest impact in the group both as writer and teacher, with phenomenal popular success during his lifetime and continued appeal thereafter. The Social Gospel movement spread through the dedicated work of The Brotherhood of the Kingdom, an elite group which met year after year to promote a revolution in the church.[7]

The new theology of that era is easy to describe, even easier to learn. Nothing divine in the Bible can be taken at face value. All the miracles have natural explanations, including the virgin birth of Christ. Jesus was simply an outstanding rabbi who taught the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. Somehow Paul and the others imagined that Jesus was the Son of God and in all good faith invented appropriate myths about him. The real truth of Christianity, they argued, was that men should bring about the Kingdom of God (a key term for all Social Gospel leaders) through social reforms: child labor legislation, laws to legalize unions, old age pensions, pure food and drug regulation, and peace agreements.

The old doctrinal terms were maintained, but the meaning of those terms was distorted to convey the substance of liberal, man- centered optimism. Rauschenbusch's *Theology for the Social Gospel* is an excellent example of this approach, similar in many respects to Adolph Harnack's *What is Christianity?*, 1901.

Rauschenbusch penned these lines in Christianizing the Social Order, showing the same schoolboy enthusiasm for evolution as Henry Adams did in his autobiography:

Translate the evolutionary theories into religious faith, and you have the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. This combination with scientific evolutionary thought has freed the kingdom ideal of its catastrophic setting and its background of demonism, and so adapted it to the climate of the modern world.[8]

One can hardly convey the childish enthusiasm with which these leaders greeted the newest insights of European scholars. They felt liberated, enlightened, propelled by inexorable Fate toward a man-made paradise. Mainline church leaders were joined by industrial giants in the New Faith. After reading Darwin and Spencer, Andrew Carnegie, the steel monopolist, intoned:

I remember that light came as in a flood and all was clear. Not only had I got rid of theology and the supernatural, but I had found the truth of evolution. 'All is well since all grows better,' became my motto, my true source of comfort. Man was not created with an instinct for his own degradation, but from the lower he had risen to the higher forms. Nor is

there any conceivable end to his march to perfection. His face is turned to the light; he stands in the sun and looks upward.[9]

Looking at his old domain, Carnegie would now see the Rust Bowl, a symbol of the steel industry's continuing endurance and progress.

Another person with enormous influence and bottomless pockets for exerting power was oil baron John D. Rockefeller. His efforts to create a liberal Protestant cartel through the Interchurch Movement collapsed in 1920, but the building still serves Social Gospel heirs as headquarters for the National Council of Churches and the American branch of the World Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York City.

Rockefeller rescued Harry Emerson Fosdick from possible unemployment and installed him at the Rockefeller-funded Riverside Church in New York City. Fosdick published the famous article, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" in 1922 in *Christian Century*, leading to his position at Riverside Church. He was decidedly in favor of evolution.[10] Considering the impact of Carnegie and Rockefeller funding, the leadership of Fosdick, Rauschenbusch, and their heirs, the marvel is that anyone in Christendom accepts the biblical account of creation as revealed in the Word of God.

The Catholic Church has been influenced through the paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., in *The Phenomenon of Man*, an evolutionist tract once banned by the Vatican. In 1895, Father John Zahm of Notre Dame wrote a book in favor of evolution, banned at the time by the Vatican. Etienne Gilson, a highly regarded Aquinas scholar, and Karl Rahner, a prolific author, have both made evolution more acceptable to Catholics. The New Baltimore Catechism allowed for theistic evolution, just as Protestant apologists allowed for biblical accounts subordinated to current theories. Teaching a modified form of evolution was allowed by the papal encyclical *Humani generis*, 1950. According to one evolutionist author, the effect of Rome's stringent measures against modernism was "to delay the Church's accommodation to evolutionary biology and biblical scholarship."[11]

When there are court cases about allowing the theory of evolution to be criticized in public school, the mainline churches file briefs along with the American Civil Liberties Union against the teaching of creation. Mainline church leaders do not consider opposing the biblical account of creation a matter of censorship but an issue of protecting innocent children from the imposition of religious views. For others, the Bible remains completely true, able to withstand the hammer blows of the most savage attacks. A Lutheran would rather stand on one Word of the Bible than join the world in attacking it.

Another Approach to Evolution

"Darwin" is carved over the west portal of Riverside Church, the symbol of mainline religion and the influence of the Social Gospel movement. For some believers, Darwin is the very symbol of the Antichrist, the source of everything evil in society today. In their zeal to defend the faith, they have often tried to portray Darwin as a poor scientist with no

qualifications. Or they have shown how absurd the early statements about evolution appear to the average Christian of today, forgetting that equally foolish statements from Christians in the past do not constitute a devastating argument against the Word of God. If Darwin's reputation were destroyed tomorrow, his influence would remain.

Many of us find ourselves in a peculiar situation today, able to see the basic flaws in evolution, but lacking the scientific training to examine closely the claims of science. As Dr. Paul Boehlke of Dr. Martin Luther College has written, if we place our trust in a particular proof of scriptural truth, such as Noah's Ark, or the Shroud, or human footprints among dinosaur tracks, we will be devastated when the evidence evaporates. Using reason to assist the claims of the Word of God is clearly a Reformed approach to the Scriptures, one which threatens the gospel itself, even though the motives seem worthwhile.[12]

Furthermore, the typical layman or pastor cannot discuss evolution on the same level as a scientist with a Ph.D. and years of research, whose journals and textbooks assume evolution. A frontal attack might be met with such questions as this: "And where did you read this?" or "Have you earned a degree in biology, chemistry, or physics?" The authors who defend creation are not taken seriously by scientists, who may not wish to have their concept of reality challenged by a dabbler in the field. Many scientists understand such confrontations to be reminiscent of the Dark Ages, when teaching the earth to be the center of the universe was a measure of one's orthodoxy. Galileo (1564-1642), they remember from History of Science 101, was forced by the Vatican to recant his theories, which were correct.

Darwin, Theologian and Scientist

The popular image of Charles Darwin as a fire-breathing revolutionary is hardly fair. He grew up well-to-do as the child of a physician, showing a great deal of interest in insects as a child. Medical school at Edinburgh did not hold his interest, so his father sent him to Cambridge to study theology. One religious television expert, who tried to claim that Darwin's only formal training was in theology, evidently did not realize that the Cambridge student befriended two of the dominant men of science in Britain at the time, engaging them in long conversations. One can hardly fault Darwin as having lack of training in science or even as being prejudiced against creation. His professors belonged to the old which did not assume an antagonism between science and faith.

When Darwin left Cambridge, he still believed in the "strict and literal truth of every word in the Bible…"[13]

The effect of Darwin's theory was a natural eroding of religious faith, since human reason made "natural causes" more appealing to the new scientific mind than the hand of God. Darwin's wife touched upon the issue in a letter to him which still expresses today what many believers would say about evolution:

It seems to me also that the line of your pursuits may have led you to view chiefly the difficulties on one side, and that you have not had time to

consider and study the chain of difficulties on the other; but I believe you do not consider your opinion as formed.
May not the habit in scientific pursuits of believing nothing till it is proved, influence your mind too much in other things which cannot be proved in the same way, and which if true, are likely to be above our comprehension?

Darwin wrote at the end of this letter: "When I am dead, know that many times I have kissed and cried over this. C. D."[14]

The Earthworm, Darwin's Nemesis

Shortly after his voyage on the Beagle was over, Darwin began a study of earthworms which continued until 1881, when he published *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms With Observations on their Habits*. Darwin died in 1882.

Darwin's earthworm book is so thorough in its observations that no one has ventured to improve upon it.

The *Earthworm Book* stated:

Darwin is remembered chiefly for his classic works, The Origin of Species and The Descent of Man, two books that have never ceased to stir controversy, particularly in religious circles. Yet in its importance to agriculture and human nutrition—and thus human welfare—his modest volume on earthworms may well, in the final analysis, be his greatest work.[15]

Although Darwin neglected the application of his research for agriculture, his observations, combined with our new appreciation for the environment, point us toward the opposite conclusion of his first research. For that reason, the earthworm, the object of 44 years of observation, is Darwin's nemesis.

Purpose

A scientist can observe, measure, and propose theories, but he cannot answer one basic question: that of purpose.

The beginning may fascinate everyone. How did this come about? But the ultimate question still revolves around purpose. We all know that the bee needs the blossom, and the blossom the bee. But why do they work together, toward what end?

If we look at the interdependence of nature, something we can observe in our own backyards, we can see a multitude of relationships, not only between one creature and another, but among all the creatures and plants together, along with the ever-changing elements of the weather and soil. While man-made businesses fail and powerful empires collapse, in spite of their power, energy, and efficiency, the natural world thrives without the wisdom of man, and suffers because of it. If one can envision an empire and build it, as did Alexander, Ghengis Khan, and Stalin, then one vast creative power must be the source of the organization of the natural world.

For some people, science is intimidating. They think of giant telescopes silently following the stars, taking measurements which only astrophysicists can discuss. They picture analytical chemistry labs, filled with mass spectrometers, gas chromatograms, electron microscopes, and nuclear reactors. They consider the light-speed calculations of computers and conclude, “I could never be a scientist.”

Not knowing how awesome science might become, Solomon wrote, through the Holy Spirit, on the basis of his backyard observations:

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. (Proverbs 6:6-8; KJV)

In the same way, we can look at one small corner of the universe and draw conclusions, without elaborate and expensive instruments, government grants, or graduate assistants. Our own backyards are a natural science laboratory.

Earthworms belong to the phylum of invertebrates known as Annelida, named for the rings of muscles (annellus, Latin for ring) which characterize them. The bristles that help propel earthworms through the soil earn them the title of Oligochaeta, or those bristle-footed worms with only a few bristles. Most earthworms belong to the genus *Lumbricus* and are called lumbricids. About 1800 species of earthworms are known to exist. The most common in the backyard are the nightcrawler (L. terrestris), the manure worm (*Eisenia foetida*), the red wiggler (L. *rubellus*), and the field worm (*Allolobophora caliginosa*). The Australians have a species of earthworm which is over four feet long.

The worm has been so much a symbol of lowliness that hymns stressing humility are called vermicular, from the Latin word for worm. The Bible calls man a worm in Job 25:6, and the Savior is compared to a worm in Psalm 22:6. But some hymns went too far:

Oh, may Thy powerful Word inspire this feeble worm.
To rush into Thy kingdom, Lord, and take it as by storm.
And…
Worms, strike your harps, your voices tune,
And warble forth your lays;
Leap from the earth with pious mirth
To trumpet forth your praise.[16]

First of all, the earthworm is a creature of the soil, tunneling through all varieties with the greatest of ease, a talent we take for granted until the benefits of this tunneling becomes more obvious to us. The earthworm is nothing more than a tiny hydraulic drill, using its hard, pointed prostomium to probe through soil, its mouth to swallow whatever cannot be pushed aside, its bristles and rings of muscles and intestinal pressure to worm its way through the toughest barriers. One woman put asphalt around her garage to promote drainage, only to find the tar riddled with worm holes, time after time.

The burrowing of the earthworm has a number of positive effects on the soil. The first and most obvious benefit is mixing the soil. Darwin has shown that earthworms bring soil up to the surface in their castings (excrement). All layers of soil are mixed gradually, though not completely. Many high-tech gardeners scoff at the tiny bit of soil moved by an earthworm in one day, about equal to its body weight. Unlike the gardener, though, the earthworm works continuously, without any tools, being careful to leave plants and delicate roots undisturbed The loosening effect promotes plant growth, because plants do not grow in soil but between soil particles. The most certain way to eliminate all plant growth is to walk on it daily. Soil compaction will quickly kill the roots. Footpaths are killing zones for earthworms and plant roots.

Compacted soil will not recover quickly, unless an organic covering is provided to entice earthworms back to that area. A layer of dead grass, leaves, or manure on a compacted footpath will promote earthworm activity, make the soil springy again, and promote growth.

Earthworms work in the upper twelve inches of the soil, where almost all plant life sends its roots. Even trees do most of their feeding in the top layer, called the rhizozone. Tunneling provides a number of other benefits worth considering, all essential to productive soil: aeration of the soil, infiltration of water, humification, and fertilization.

Soil without air is called a bog, noted for its bad smell and exotic plants. But unless one raises skunk cabbages, which grow only in a bog, unaerated soil is not desirable. The earthworm constantly opens up channels for air to penetrate the soil, encouraging healthy bacteria and molds to grow, promoting the constant decaying process which feeds all living things.

Infiltration of water increases as earthworms open up channels for water to penetrate. People with clay soil will see round worm holes dotting the surface. Earthworms decrease erosion by making the soil more sponge like. Instead of holding the water on the surface, the channels let the water percolate down rather than wash away with the finest and best soil particles. The more earthworms, the greater the rate of percolation. Clay soil supports a greater number of earthworms than sandy soil. Clay also needs the percolating effect of the tunnels.

The tunneling habits of earthworms improve the soil in two other ways mentioned above. First of all, worms pull organic material down into the tunnels for food. Secondly, they leave their castings in the tunnels and on the soil surface. Both habits, to be treated subsequently, add to the fertility and water retention of the soil. No gardener could improve so much soil with such meticulous care. God can and does renew the soil in time, but man in his haste to produce has often destroyed the virgin land which once produced so abundantly without him.

The earthworm excels in the arena of feeding. Not only is the feeding itself valuable, since it removes dead organic material from the surface of the soil, but the final product of feeding, the cast, is also valuable. The earthworm itself is little more than mouth, stomach, and intestine. Food,

which can be soil or humus material (leaves, manure, dead grass), enters the earthworm through the prostomium at the anterior. In the pharynx, food starts to break down through mixing, moistening, and secretions (amylase, and from the calciferous glands, calcium carbonate). The calciferous glands seem to regulate pH for the earthworm, which cannot abide acid soil. The earthworms neutralize acid soil for their own benefit and thereby increase soil productivity. This liming or sweetening effect releases other soil chemicals for plants to use.[17]

The crop of the earthworm stores food until it is ground up in the muscular gizzard. Soil particles and very small bits of stone serve as abrasive material to grind up tough materials. In the process, soil particles and small stones are ground finer than before, as Darwin pointed out. Fine particles are easily lost through water and wind erosion, so they need to be replaced. Food leaves the gizzard and enters the intestine, which continues the digestive process. The earthworm excretes solid material castings from its anus and nitrogenous liquid through its nephridia (a simple form of kidneys). Earthworm mucus adds nitrogen to the soil.

The end result of earthworm feeding makes the soil better, for a number of reasons. The earthworm is a “colloid mill,” a small chemical plant which produces an array of chemicals, and concentrates other chemicals in its castings, mucus, and nephridia excretions. It increases the bacterial count in the soil and breaks down humus material in its castings. Earthworms may seem insignificant, weighing only 1/30 of an ounce, but they are the most abundant, active, and beneficial of the higher soil creatures. Ants tunnel, aerate, and even humify the soil to a great degree; they are indeed the hardworking undertakers of the insect world, carrying off corpses in solemn processions. Still, earthworms are never harmful pests, as ants often are, and earthworms do not have the disgusting trait of protecting and caring for other pests (as ants do for aphids). Nor do earthworms get into the house.

The final benefit of the earthworm’s contribution is realized when the creature dies. The earthworm’s dry weight is 72% protein, which is largely nitrogen, an essential component of all plant life. According to Lawrence and Millar, 70% of worm protein is available to plants two weeks after the creature’s death. The slow release of nitrogen, advertised in commercial fertilizer, is the earthworm’s life and death, for free.

A British minister noted once that earthworms “are much addicted to venery,” so we can count on them to increase and multiply. They thrive in moist conditions, so spring and autumn rains boost their population. Lawns and gardens support a large population of earthworms, and the earthworms support a large population of robins, who thrive on worms.

Likewise, rabbits devour high nitrogen food, such as grass and clover, leaving copious droppings high in nitrogen, which feed the earthworm population, which promote the growth of high nitrogen plants, such as grass and clover.

Compost

If the earthworm alone seems to be a marvel of simple complexity, then the compost pile is a global corporation involving millions of clients. Once again, the earthworm plays a role. The compost pile is an ancient concept which was adapted by Sir Albert Howard for use in India, then imported to America through the influence of organic gardening methods. The compost pile (or pit) is made up of layers of soil and organic material. The piles are kept moist, shaded, and aerated. National Geographic offers an excellent photo expedition into "The Wild World of Compost," by Cecil Johnson.[18]

This is how one compost pile progressed. Wire fencing was formed into a circle five feet in diameter in the shade of three trees. The base was bare soil, allowing easy access to earthworms, who rush in at the end to celebrate the finish of composting. Grass clippings, leaves, weeds, and soil were placed in layers in the pile, about four feet high. The wire fence allowed air to reach the pile. The pile was hosed down every week and stirred somewhat for several months. All extra weeds and grass clipping were added to the top. Some rabbit manure was also added.

Composting requires high nitrogen materials, grass as opposed to tree leaves, to create the first stage of the rotting process. Thermophilic or heat-loving bacteria act first, releasing heat as they attack organic material high in nitrogen. The temperature of the pile may reach 170 degrees Fahrenheit. Even a bag of grass clippings left alone will heat up. Earthworms would melt during this stage of decomposition, so they stay away.

When the pile cools down, many things happen at once. Fungus starts to form, attacking plant structures with their filaments. Bacteria continue to work, joined by the earthy-smelling actinomycetes in the soil. Millions and millions of springtails, a tiny insect, feed upon fungi and organic matter. Mites, millipedes, centipedes, and sowbugs join the corporate effort. The higher level creatures feed on the lower level creatures, the biomass teeming with life and death, reproduction and destruction. No matter where the pile is formed, if the raw materials are present, the decomposition team will arrive and reduce the pile to the basic elements needed by plant life, shrinking it in the process.

When the compost has been recycled through millions of creatures, the earthworm begins a steady trip to the top of the heap. Shunning heat and light, the earthworm will invade no pile before its time. As the most complex of the processing units, the earthworm requires that much of the work be done first. Some of the workers will gladly dine on earthworms, but the earthworms consume only the semi- rotted material, making it even more useful for plants.

Like any other creature when given ideal conditions, the earthworm will reproduce with wild abandon in the dark moistness of compost. The egg capsules they form as the result of their mating provide a fairly strong vehicle for even more earthworms when the compost is distributed. The pile of weeds, clippings, and garbage is converted into the richest form of soil, soil chemicals stabilized in the forms most usable to plants, unborn

earthworms in egg capsules poised for work at the first rain.

The rotting process binds sandy soil together, loosens clay, and breaks down humus to be used again in a new crop. Compost holds water better than a sponge. Disease pathogens are killed by the various battles within the pile. John Greenleaf Whittier even wrote a poem about the sanitizing effect of the soil's natural process.

The compost pile seems to be a banquet for the entire animal kingdom. Birds gather to snatch fat bugs and worms from the top of the pile. Moles burrow underneath to reach the riotous mass of earthworms working their way upward through the pile. Cats and hawks gather to dine on the birds. Rabbits nibble at the greens fed by the compost pile. The chickaree squirrel curses at everyone, angry and never tired of loudly displaying his ill humor.

To test the benefits of compost, the author dug a pit four feet deep, six feet long, and four feet wide. Truthfully, neighborhood children dug the pit, fueled by promises of all the ice cream they could hold. The pit was filled for the winter with newsprint, the Christmas tree, brush, garbage, grass clippings, manure, soil, and weeds. In the spring the area was planted with Silver Queen corn, Kentucky Wonder pole beans (which climbed up the corn stalks), and Atlantic Giant pumpkins. Gourds volunteered from the compost.

An agriculture expert from Dow Chemical, who loved to raise corn, visited the plot, to see whose Silver Queen was higher. His face filled with awe as he followed the green stalks up to the peak of the garage, which first hid them from his view. "Silver Queen is a short variety. It isn't supposed to grow nine feet tall!" He expressed the fear or hope that the giant ears were overgrown and bad tasting, only to be disappointed. The corn brought its share of critters, from the birds looking for earthworms to the neighbors whose conversation gravitated consistently to the good old days when they grew sweet corn and ate it fresh. Since the earthworm and his friends did almost all the work, the garden easily fed the neighborhood, provided for Halloween, put gourds on many tables, and offered fresh beans for children to snack on.

Why?

People who have tried to organize an event with volunteers know how difficult it can be to find a group of people who will work together for a common purpose and accomplish a task successfully in a given amount of time. If the compost pile got attacked the way most human problems are solved, human life would not survive the ensuing chaos in nature. Not only is each creature uniquely suited to his role, but all living things work together toward improving the environment. No one is late. No one is too proud to do the most disgusting and lowly work. No one gets tired or bored. No one lords it over the rest, but all work together in humble servitude.

Since intelligent life has so much trouble getting through the routine tasks, the interdependence of all life, with man at the apex, forces the question of purpose. Our poor designs and flawed execution compel us to say of each and every creature, "I see the hand of the Creator in every aspect of nature."

For the believer who confronts the unbelieving scientist, the solution is not in proving to him that the compost pile works better than the United Nations, but in asking him why it is so. The interdependence requires design rather than random chance, and the question of purpose transcends the normal scientific quest.

For the Believer

The Christian has only one miracle to grasp, one continuing wonder—that God became man. No one can explain the mystery, which is revealed through faith. That God's own Son died on the cross for the sins of the world must be a part of the continuing wonder. The cross and God becoming man are the same theme, a unity which places in perspective all other wonders in the universe, each of which reflects the light of the Word Incarnate.

A Lutheran pastor, who could not believe that God created the world in six days, posed an enigma for himself. He believed the Bible is completely true, without any errors or contradictions. He accepted the Lutheran confessions as genuine interpretations of Scripture. Therefore, he had to believe that God became man, and what truth is more difficult to continue to hold in this age of man becoming god? Therefore, if God became man and lived among us, full of grace and truth, then what weakness did He once have, which prevented him from creating the universe in six days rather than six billion years? Or walking on water? Or changing water into wine? Or feeding us with his body and blood until the day of his coming?

Mainline Malaise

The catastrophic decline of the mainline churches has been preceded by a retreat from the revealed doctrine of creation. Mainline malaise did not begin with doubting the divinity of Christ but with qualifying the creation and the historicity of Adam and Eve. At first, already in the 19th century, Christian leaders who might be called conservative today started accommodating themselves to the theory of evolution. Their mistake was manifold. First of all, they chose a current mode of thought over an eternal truth in the interest of being part of the current trend. The science of each era soon becomes obsolete, even comical. Some remember being taught that the universe consisted of one galaxy, ours, and that we lived in the middle of it. Now thousands of galaxies are clearly recorded on photographic film. Larger telescopes changed astrophysics, but not the Word of God.

Another error of accommodation manifested itself years later. The spirit of trendiness replaced a "Christian evolution" with evolution itself, effectively denying purpose for man and the universe, giving aid and comfort to the Enemy by undermining all the doctrines of the Word of God.

The subtlest error of accommodation is still being practiced today, by those who believe they oppose compromise. By offering a reasonable explanation for revealed doctrine which transcends reason, something which even Darwin's wife doubted possible, they are setting the stage for new accommodation. While it is a service to describe the chemical complexities of the bombardier beetle, believers are hardly served by scientists clamoring to prove an article of

faith with physical evidence. This is the spirit of rationalism, a thirst which will not be sated by more brine.

Creation

The explanation for the First Article of the Creed in Luther's Small Catechism is rather simple:

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my limbs, my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them; in addition thereto, clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and homestead, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He provides me richly and daily with all that I need to support this body and life, protects me from all danger, and guards me and preserves me from all evil.

Luther was able to answer why this has taken place:

All this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I owe it to Him to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

Rather than pontificate about the "god-like ability of the mind to refashion the world," a popular concept in current self-help courses and cults, Luther taught the centrality of God's mercy and love, not only in providing for us, but also in saving us. Our purpose is to love and serve, thank, praise, and obey him.

The spirit of enthusiasm has been with us from the beginning, ever since Adam and Eve trusted their feelings instead of the Word of God. That same spirit of enthusiasm permeates the leadership of mainline churches, who upon forsaking the genuine Redeemer, have pursued the goal of redeeming the world for themselves. The recent Lutheran Book of Worship even contains a prayer for each setting of Holy Communion where the people pledge themselves to the redemption of the world. The spirit of enthusiasm, therefore, is man-centered rather than God-centered. Evolution has fueled this unwarranted optimism, not only in the Social Gospel movement, but also in the social sciences which have been allies in activism: social work, psychology, and education.[19]

The results of evolutionary thought on our society can be found in every area of social concern, from the destruction of helpless unborn babies to the health and wealth messages of pseudo-Christian teachers. Thinking it odd and humiliating to "bend the knee, while we own the mystery," man instead worships his own progress, his own goals, and his own body.

God reveals himself in nature only to a limited degree, showing his infinite power, architectural genius, and organizational skill.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto

them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Romans 1:18-21; KJV)

Against the me-centered message favored by men, Paul placed the Christ-centered message of the gospel.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-18; KJV)

Because God has done all this for us, apart from any merit or virtue on our part, our thankfulness is expressed in deeds of kindness for our neighbor.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10; KJV)

Such a message is quite the opposite in origin and purpose of the once popular self-help gospel: “Every day in every way I am getting better and better.”

Devolution

Darwin began his lifelong study of earthworms to understand how boulders and ancient buildings slowly disappeared beneath the level of the soil. He concluded his study with this statement: “It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world, as have these lowly organized creatures.”20 His study showed that all the monuments of man’s ingenuity, no matter how great, would inevitably be covered up by the relentless tunneling of worms, who add 1/4 inch of soil each year.

For those who have seen the power of God, whether in the fierce and glowing magma of the volcano or the tender love of the mother robin, the earthworm’s purpose is clearly part of God’s plan to care for us. The Christian life is often described most eloquently in great hymns:

Yea, Lord, ’twas thy rich bounty gave
My body, soul, and all I have
In this poor life of labor.
Lord, grant that I in every place
May glorify Thy lavish grace
And serve and help my neighbor.
Let no false doctrine me beguile,
Let Satan not my soul defile.
Give strength and patience unto me

To bear my cross and follow Thee.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, My God and Lord,
In death Thy comfort still afford.
(*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 429)

But there is no Christian life without returning to the Author of Life, who guides and nourishes us with His Word and sacrament.

NOTES

1. Social Darwinism in American Thought, Boston: Beacon Press, 1955, pp. 14f.

2. Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, p. iii.

3. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 5.

4. Hofstadter, op. cit, p. 19.

5. Ibid, pp. 15f; citing The Education of Henry Adams, New York: Modern Library, 1931, pp. 225-6.

6. Ibid, p. 29.

7. Frederic M. Hudson, “The Reign of the New Humanity: A Study of the Background, History and Influence of the Brotherhood of the Kingdom.” Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1968.

8. Christianizing the Social Order, p. 9. Cited in: Hofstadter, op. cit. p.108.

9. Andrew Carnegie, Autobiography, Boston, 1920, quoted in Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 45.

10. Fosdick is listed as a modern-day prophet in the text of the Lutheran Church in America’s Word and Witness program. The author of the chapter, Philadelphia Seminary professor John Reumann, was on the Commission for a New Lutheran Church. A Seminex contribution to the debate over evolution is William A. Schmeling, Creation versus Evolution? NOT REALLY! St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1976.

11. John C. Green, Darwin and the Modern World View, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), p. 17. Darwinism and Divinity, ed. by John Durant; Basil Blackwell, London, 1985. A popular treatment of the scientific problems involved in evolution can be found in Luther D. Sunderland, Darwin’s Enigma: Fossils and Other Problems, Santee, California: Master Book Publishers, 1988.

12. Paul R. Boehlke, “The Bible and Science,” unpublished paper delivered at Concordia College, River Forest, Illinois, June, 1980. “The Nature and Teaching of Science in Lutheran Schools,” unpublished paper delivered at New Ulm, Minnesota, March, 1989.

13. F. Darwin, (1888) ed. The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, 3 vols., London: John Murray, I, p. 146. Cited in Michael Denton, Evolution: A Theory in Crisis, Bethesda: Adler and Adler, 1985, p. 25.

14. N. Barlow, (1958) Autobiography of Charles Darwin, London: Collins, pp. 235- 7; cited in Denton, op. cit., pp. 54f.

15. Jerry Minnich, The Earthworm Book, How to Raise and Use Earthworms for Your Farm and Garden, Emmaus: Rodale Press, 1977, p. 68.

16. W. G. Polack, The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1975, p. 121.

17. C. A. Edwards and J. R. Loty, Biology of Earthworms, Ontario, California: Bookworm Publishing, 1972.

18. Vol. 158, number 2, August, 1980, pp. 273-284.

19. Henry Morris, “The Influence of Evolution”, in The Twilight of Evolution, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963, pp. 13-28.

20. Charles Darwin, The Formation of Vegetable Mould, Ontario, California: Bookworm Publishing Company, 1976, p. 148.

Continued in Chapter Four: Charismatics Are Liberals

All chapters of Liberalism: Its Cause And Cure