

## A Dramatic Wag Challenges Darwin's Worldview

An unsuspecting passerby might naturally have been startled by the somewhat unnatural (and almost eerie!) sights and sounds that filled an ordinary classroom in Nicholson Hall earlier this semester. For a Victorian-clad lecturer, equipped with an enchanting British accent and the charming wit of a turn-of-the-century satirist, held a standing-room-only crowd mesmerized for nearly an hour as he critiqued Darwinian evolutionary theory. But this was no eccentric peddler of intellectual curiosities or fringe science. Rather, it was (from all appearances) the quick-witted verbal pugilist and popular Catholic apologist of bygone days, G.K. Chesterton! Or was it?

In an unusual blend of dramatic monologue and academic lecture, Dr. Chuck Chalberg (a Chesterton impersonator) brought back to life for one night only the quick-witted Chesterton and his penetrating critique of Darwinian evolution. In a presentation approximating something like time travel for the audience, Chalberg/Chesterton mounted an intellectual offensive against the time-honored theories of Darwin with all the argumentative vigor (and color!) that Chesterton devotees have come to expect from the great Catholic thinker. Employing his characteristic spunk, he mounted his criticisms of Darwin's widely accepted biological "findings" in the form of four rhetorical questions.

First, can Darwinism adequately explain what we find around us: the existence of the natural order? True, Chesterton reminded us, evolutionary theory posits the existence of "gradualistic" mechanisms behind the varied phenomena of natural reality. And it assures us that such gradual processes, if given enough time, could account for all that we see. But, he noted, even this "slow, soothing, and gradual word" (i.e., evolution) fails to explain what it claims. For it only claims to describe how "something became something else." But it covers its mouth ("in shame or at least silence") when asked to enlighten us as to how "nothing became something." As such, Chesterton argued, Darwinism falls prey to the "materialistic fallacy" in its attempts to serve as an explanatory theory for existence itself. But the problems grow even larger, he claimed, with Darwin's inability to answer his second question.

Can Darwinism adequately explain what we find within us: exceptions to the natural order? That is, how can the purely deterministic, impersonal and random force(s) of natural selection account for the presence of freedom, personality and intentionality in at least one species, namely, humanity? No, Chesterton argued, "man is a *revolution in* not a *product of* evolution." As such, we represent "exceptions" to the normal patterns of nature. We create art ("even if living in caves!"). We yearn. We choose. And, as Chesterton noted, even our resemblance to other species proves our difference. Why? Because "we alone recognize our resemblance." And this, he claimed, "is exceptional." But how can we account for this exceptional nature of humanity? As Chesterton contended, the Darwinist cannot. But again, the problems do not end even here.

So Chesterton asked: Can Darwinism adequately explain what we find before us: evidence for the natural order? In other words, the fossil records available to us,

Chesterton argued, seem to support not Darwinian evolution but a large measure of "species integrity." And this, if so, leaves the Darwinist with a void in his/her attempts to explain "species diversification." As Chesterton quipped, "the evidence for the missing link is itself missing." Consequently, the "leap of faith made by the Darwinist is too great" for those "feeble-faithed folks" like him who "like a little mixture of evidence in the batter of their beliefs." The "creeds of Christianity" seem more plausible, he argued.

But perhaps the most troubling question left unanswered by the Darwinian system is Chesterton's fourth. Can Darwinianism adequately explain what we find in spite of us: evil in the natural order? In the inescapable determinism of a Darwinian worldview, Chesterton observed, "what is right." In other words, if matter is all that matters, then it ultimately doesn't matter how we deal with any matter. But, he noted, the careful observer of history will see that it is the great transcendent traditions of thought (like Christianity) that have empowered humanity to "evolve" from barbarism to civilization. "But, in a peculiar turn of events," he quipped, "Darwinianism, by 'freeing us from such traditions,' is now allowing us to evolve from civilization back to barbarism." In large part, he argued, this stems from the system's inherent inability to identify (and thus oppose) evil. But surely, he concluded, this is "sheer insanity and not sound science."

By evening's end, G.K. Chesterton had slipped back into the shadows of recent history. But his ideas and sardonic wit had somehow worked their way into the minds of most of his auditors. And who knows? If "popular demand" has any authority over the grave, perhaps the clever ol' chap will soon pay us another visit.