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Günter Bechly: Explosions in the Fossil Record

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Knight & Rose Show - Wintery Knight and Desert Rose

Wintery Knight and Desert Rose welcome paleontologist Dr. Günter Bechly to discuss the fossil record. Günter explains why the fossil evidence is more consistent with intelligent design than Darwinian evolution. He explains why mutation and selection are inadequate mechanisms for generating the biological information needed for new body plans. Finally, he explains his journey from atheism to Christianity.

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Transcript

Welcome to the Knight & Rose Show, where we discuss practical ways of living out an authentic Christian worldview. I'm Wintery Knight. And I'm Desert Rose.

Welcome, Rose. So today, we're delighted to welcome a guest onto the show, Dr. Günter Bechly. Günter Bechly, PhD, is a German paleontologist, senior fellow with Discovery Institute's

Center for Science and Culture, and senior research scientist at Biologic Institute in Washington State.

He has written about 160 scientific publications, described over 180 new species, and has been an advisor for three BBC Nature documentaries. Welcome, Günter. Thanks for inviting me.

We're excited to have you here. We're excited about the show. I do want to just start with a quick note to our listeners.

We are going to be using the standard timelines for the age of the earth, which is millions of years. And so we just want to ask our listeners to be patient, stick with us, because we really think that you will appreciate what he can show about the world from the mainstream scientific evidence. So why don't we go ahead and get into the questions.

First of all, can you tell us, Günter, what does the Darwinian evolution model predict we will see in the fossil record? Sure. So like any scientific theory, should do, Darwinism makes certain empirical predictions that you can test. And one of these predictions, actually a core prediction, is gradualism.

And gradualism means that all changes come about by a successive addition of small changes over long periods of time. So there are no sudden jumps. And that is something that Darwin insisted on in his book.

And he cited this Latin sentence, *natura non facit saltus*, nature doesn't make jumps, I think even eight times in his book. And he insisted on this because he was quite aware that jumps would imply some kind of intervention, some kind of miraculous events. They cannot be explained naturalistically.

And he wanted to have a naturalistic explanation, and therefore he insisted on gradualism. And so that's an important prediction by Darwinism. And then you can, of course, look into the actual data of the fossil record if these predictions are fulfilled by the data or not.

Right. Okay. So yeah, and you've mentioned elsewhere that even Richard Dawkins has said that it is necessary if Darwinian evolution is true, it is necessary to see gradualism.

Is that correct? That that's right. He wrote in one of his best selling books that evolution as a matter of fact, it is not just gradual as a matter of fact, but it has to be gradual if it is to do any explanatory work. So if we could show that evolution did not happen or the history of life did not happen gradually, then this would be a major problem for Darwinism, because this would basically refute its explanatory power.

Okay. And so what do we actually see in the fossil records? Here we are 150 years post Darwin, and we have a lot more fossils, a lot more has been discovered. What do we actually see? Do we find gradualism? No, not really.

And Darwin was already aware of this. But of course, at his time, he appeared to this kind of incompleteness of the fossil record and hope that over time with increasing knowledge of the fossil record, this problem would disappear. But it didn't actually the problem got worse, the more we learned about the fossil record, and our knowledge has grown exponentially compared to the geological and paleontological knowledge at Darwin's time.

And so there are all major transitions in the history of life where new groups of body plans of new groups of organisms appear, they appear suddenly in the fossil record, they do not appear gradually by stepwise small changes where we can follow in the fossil record, how one form transitioned into another form, but they appear suddenly more or less fully formed than exist over a certain period of time. And sooner or later, either get extinct or some of them still exist until today. And so there are many event it starts basically with the origin of life and the origin of photosynthesis.

And then you have a lot of events in all periods of Earth history and all geographical regions in all groups of organisms, the famous Cambrian explosions where the animal body plans appear, and then the great order region biodegreccification event. And then there are many other events which lead up to later the appearance of flowering plants in the Cretaceous or the sudden appearance of modern birds in the tertiary which has been called the Big Bang of birds and the sudden appearance of placental mammal orders. And even the appearance of the of our own genus of Homo has been called the Big Bang theory of the origin of genus Homo.

And this tells us something that scientists call these events big bangs and revolutions and explosions. You don't call events this way when they would be gradual. So it's quite recognized by mainstream science that the fossil record is not gradual.

Yeah, I was reading one of your articles where you had a listing of about 15 of these biological big bangs. And I want you to go into detail about the Cambrian explosion because that's the most famous. But I had to laugh when I read about the appearance of dinosaurs, where the person who was writing the paper said something like, wow, it's such a sudden transition from no dinosaurs to all dinosaurs.

That's right. That was a quite recent paper where they looked into the Triassic and said, it's surprising how sudden the transition from no dinosaurs to all dinosaurs was, which is, of course, something which Darwinists don't like when we use these quotes, then you get quickly the accusation of quote mining. But hey, that's what they what they wrote in the actual paper and in the press release to the paper.

So don't blame us. The funniest part was the explanation that it must have been raining. It was raining a lot.

That sounds like a causally fully adequate explanation of the appearance of a new molecule. And I remember reading one article that you wrote on Evolution News where you were linking to a paper that said that the explosion in complexity in the Cambrian explosion might have been

due to the appearance of molecular oxygen and the atmosphere. Now, that might be less funny, but I, you know, not being an expert in this area, I laughed.

And do you think you could tell us a little bit more about what one of these explosions like the Cambrian explosion really consists of? You can go into timeline and body plans and stuff and really give us a picture, you know, of what is happening here. Because Cambrian explosion is, of course, the most famous of these events. And if you want to read more about it, I can highly recommend the book by my friend Steve Meyer, Darwin Stout, which elaborates on the Cambrian explosion and its consequences for Darwinian evolution and intelligent design.

So this event happened about 520 to 530 million years ago, according to the mainstream timeline. And what you find there is that suddenly in the fossil record, you find over 20 of the Cambrian animal body plans. That means of those animals that have this kind of left, right symmetry, like we do, where you can draw a line in the middle of the body and left and right are symmetrical.

And this includes all the animals you think of, usually mammals, birds, worms, mollusks, and so on. And you find representatives of all these different lineages of art reports of mollusks of echinoderms of even early vertebrates in the Cambrian in this timeline, 520 to 530 million years ago. And they appear suddenly without any precursors in the preceding geological layers.

And this was often explained away as an artifact. Maybe there were no suitable conditions for preservation of these fossils in the preceding geological periods. But this has been refuted.

We have meanwhile found many localities of the same preservational type as the famous Cambrian localities from the late Precambrian. And there is nothing there except algae and protists. And there are no complex animal body plans to be found there, no precursors of the Cambrian animal phyla.

And so it looks like, and that is something that even Richard Dawkins admitted, it looks like all these different types of animals were planted there without any evolutionary history leading up to them. Wow. So we just had American Thanksgiving here.

And I'm just thinking this would be like a case where you looked in all the cupboards the day before Thanksgiving, and they were all empty, you know, no flour, no butter, nothing in the fridge. And then you come back. Yeah, you come back the next day, and the table is set with turkey and stuffing and everything.

It's like, what brought that into being the normal way that we do that didn't happen? Well, it was raining this Thanksgiving, so. I'm just kidding. How do Darwinian evolutionists explain this unexpected data? There are different attempts, of course, to explain this.

So if we take the Cambrian explosion, usually there are two types of explanation. Either they propose some kind of intrinsic factor. So they say, maybe there was a higher mutation rate, or there were some evo devo mechanisms like reshuffling of some kind of gene regulatory

networks that could cause sudden changes, no gradualism.

So they postulate, there could be some long gradual evolutionary mechanisms. But if you really look into the details of these alternative suggestions, that would be suggestions that are evolutionary, but not necessarily Darwinian in the strict sense, and just random mutation, natural selection, then you find that either those mechanisms require Darwinism to explain themselves. So they have to come into being these gene regulatory networks, and you would require Darwinist processes to make these happens prior to they having the possibility to bring about more sudden changes.

But more importantly, most of these mechanisms are not capable of bringing about these changes. So for example, if you look at these gene regulatory networks, it has been shown that the changes in the early ontogeny of organisms always have only two results, either a dead organism or a significantly malformed and non viable organism. They don't produce the kind of changes that you would need to bring about new body plans.

So it simply doesn't work the earlier and on progenesis you you make these changes the more fatal they are. Another approach to explain away these non gradual empirical data from the fossil record is simply to deny that they are real and say, well, that's just an artifact of the incompleteness of the fossil record, the same explanation that Darwin proposed. But that's not longer viable, because we have statistical tests to look is the fossil record sufficiently complete, to say that certain sudden transition or gaps in the fossil record, are they real data or are they artifacts of under sampling of us not looking enough or because of incomplete preservation or preservation bias or something like this.

And the statistical test, one of them is the so called collector's curve, have shown in most groups of organisms that we have a sufficiently complete fossil record to really say that these discontinuities in the fossil record are actual data to be explained. And this is acknowledged by the real specialists in the field. So the real specialists on the Cambrian explosions, they don't say it's an artifact of under sampling, they acknowledge there's something strange happened in this time.

Can you tell us a little bit I read this in one of your articles about the collector's curve and this this illustration that Paul Nelson has for explaining it. Can you talk a little bit about that? Yeah, sure. Sure.

So the collector's curve is, for instance, a kind of theoretical statistical test where you plot the effort, you have to invest to find new stuff, let's say in the the horizontal axis of a diagram and then the vertical axis or the different forms of fossil organisms you find. And then if you plot this curve, then you find in the beginning, you don't have to invest a lot of time, money or whatever measure you want to use a number of man hours in digging fossils or something like that. And you have a steep curve.

So you only have to invest not too much energy and time to find new stuff. But then the curve

flattens and evens out and then you know that you have sampled enough to really know what is out there. And Paul Nelson gave a very nice analogy to understand this procedure.

He said, imagine you have a new hobby and the hobby is beach camping. And you walk along the shore and every day you look what the flood washes in and you find muscles and shells and driftwood and so on. And every day you find something new.

But the longer you do this, the more repetition sets in and you find stuff that you have already discovered some days earlier. And until you reach a certain stage where you only find stuff that you had already sampled a lot of times before, and then you know that you have sampled sufficiently to have found what is out there. And that is basically the underlying procedure that you do with this collector curve in polyontology.

Excellent. Yeah, that's a great analogy. That helped me to understand it.

All right. So let's go on to a different question. Do you think it's reasonable to extrapolate from micro-revolution to macro-revolution? And maybe you want to give like an illustration or a definition of what those terms mean.

Yeah. So maybe it's most interesting to start with this thought that many people get when they look in mainstream textbooks or what they learned in high school is that there are two lines of evidence that apparently heavily support Darwinian evolution. And one is coming from population genetics.

Think of the origin of drug resistance in germs in a petri dish, which you can observe in a laboratory. And that is called micro-evolution. So it's just the change of gene frequencies in populations of living organisms within a species.

And that is something you can empirically observe. There is no dispute about this. Even young earth creationists acknowledge that this happens, of course.

You can observe it. And then there is the fossil record. And the fossils, think of archaeopteryx or the horse series or something like this.

So it seems to establish common ancestry, long periods of time. So that would be called micro-evolution, the change of organisms, of body plans, of one form into the other. And then the assumption is if you just extrapolate the micro-evolution that you can observe in the lab over millions of years, then you have a sufficient explanation for micro-evolution.

And that's actually not the case. It sounds good. But if you really look into these fields, you find that if you combine them, then you come to fatal problems for Darwinian evolution.

So, for example, if you combine population genetics and the fossil record, and you do actual calculations, so are the windows of time that would be established by the fossil record according to the mainstream timeline, are they sufficient to accommodate the genetic changes

that you require to make a transition, let's say, from an ancestral, quadrupedal animal that looked like a pig, like *Pachycytus*, to a fully marine, dolphin-like, supposed whale ancestor like *Dorudon* or *Basilosaurus*. And there the fossil record establishes a window of time of, say, four and a half to five million years. And then you can do calculations.

You can do the real math. You don't have to speculate. The population genetics has a complete toolkit, a mathematical toolkit, where you can do the math.

And you can put in reasonable estimates of numbers, population size, generation times, mutation rates. Most of these numbers are either empirically known or they can easily be estimated, reasonable estimates. Of course, ancestral mammals will not have had the population size of bacteria, and it will have been in the range of similar large mammals of the present time.

And then you can do the math and can look at what is the result. And the result is consistently that the available window of time in the fossil record is orders of magnitude too short to accommodate the required genetic changes. And that's a fatal problem for Darwinism because it's basically the feasibility of this mechanism is mathematically shown to be impossible.

And so it's not really, not really, it doesn't really make sense to say microevolution can be extrapolated to macroevolution. All right. So just maybe given, I'm always trying to come up with illustrations where I can kind of paraphrase what you said for our audience to understand it.

So how about this? So suppose I'm a professor and I give my students an assignment to write a program that I know is going to require like 20 pages of code or something like that. And then one of the students, we have code commits in computer science where you have to commit code to a repository every day. So the student that has done nothing for a month.

And then right before the day that it's due, a whole bunch of very professional looking code is committed all at once. I would have a talk with that student and say, how come you didn't commit any code gradually? And then all in one day, you just dumped all this in and it's very professional, much different from the other stuff you're doing. So in the fossil record, we can look and say, I'm looking at the precursors to the camera explosion.

All we have are the Ediacara and Fauna and a few algae, very simple stuff. And then we have a five million year period where 21 different bloody body plans comes in at once. And I'm saying to the Darwinist, come on, you had help here.

You didn't do this all by the mechanisms you said. And they're like, no, no, we really did. But there just isn't the time available mathematically to dump that much code at once.

That's an excellent point you make because this example shows that this kind of intelligent design reasoning of design inference is quite uncontroversial in fields of detecting, let's say, fraud in a student's work or motor fraud or was COVID virus designed in the lab or did have a

natural origin. Nobody disputes the design inference there only if you apply evolution or cosmology, then suddenly it's a no go. So yeah, very true.

It's not just programming code. It's even writing a blog post writing an essay. Everybody understands what it takes to come up with a long sequence of symbols not being chosen by like, you know, by some kind of repetitive process, but being ordered a certain way in order to communicate.

If that's the effect that needs to be explained, everybody has the experience of doing this, whether it's coding or writing. So I got one more thing. So I have to highlight that you actually have a peer review publication on this problem, which is called the waiting time problem.

Can you tell us a little bit about that? Or is that? Yeah, so actually, it's true. And it's a third is in the making. So the first was a book on the mathematical underpinnings.

And it was published as a chapter in a book at Springer science, peer reviewed. And the second was a more detailed application to the evolutionary mechanism showing this waiting time problem with a mathematical model and a computer simulation. And this was published in the Journal of Theoretical Biology with my colleagues, Ola Hescher and Engager.

And I have to say the main work was done by Ola Hescher. He is a mathematician from the University of Stockholm. And the really heavy lifting was, of course, done by the mathematics, which is something that is beyond me.

It's really I like the math gene. So we're really thankful that Ola could do this. I could restrict myself.

And we have a third paper, which is currently on the way. It is submitted third time to a journal. And we're trying to get it into peer review.

The first two attempts failed because the editors rejected within hours and didn't even bother to send the paper to peer reviewers. So we hope we can place this third paper soon in a mainstream journal. And it's about application of this model to the example of whale origins and showing that coordinated mutations which play a big role in this waiting time argument are really necessary to make this transition and doing the calculations and showing that the time is insufficient.

So yeah, it's peer reviewed work is going going on. And there's also peer reviewed intelligent design work in many other fields. So it's not true that stuff like this is not published in mainstream journals.

It's difficult sometimes to get past the Darwinian thought police, but it happens. If you had to describe the waiting time problem in a few sentences, what would you say? I would just say it's just comparing the time that is available with a mathematical calculation, how much time would be necessary to get the the genetic changes? Because if you take a population, you need certain

mutations to make the transition and these mutations have to arise in the population. This is one waiting time.

How long do I have to wait to get the mutation and the population? And this happens, of course, sooner when you have a big population. But and it takes longer if you have a small population because you have less possibilities for mutations. But on the other hand, you also have a waiting time for these mutations to spread in the population and become, as it is called, fixed in the population, fixated.

And this is an opposite mechanism, because in a big population, it takes longer for the waiting time for the mutation to spread in a small population. It takes shorter. So these two waiting times, in a way, act against each other so that evolution doesn't have an easy way to pass around the waiting time problem by just, let's say, making the population bigger or smaller, you face the problem either way.

Right. I think I saw in one of your presentations, and we're going to link to all of these articles and presentations and even your debate, which I wanted to ask you about. But basically, I think you did something about whale evolution.

You had a list of all the body plan changes that would be needed. And it seemed like there wasn't even enough time to get one of them. And it was something like there was a hundred of them that were needed.

I just thought this is really, you know, not going to work in the time that's available. So if you just look at something like a pig-like ancestor and a dolphin-like descendant, that there is a lot of change necessary to make this body plan transition. It should be obvious even to lay people immediately.

Yeah. Yeah, definitely. All right.

Let me ask you another question here. So in one of your papers, you brought up a problem about whether these mechanisms of mutation and selection can generate the specified complexity, the information needed to have all of this biological diversity. And I was shocked.

Apparently, many even naturalist scientists are saying that the standard mechanisms that the Darwinian theory offers are recognized to not be capable of generating this. How is that? That's true. That's a little bit of dirty secret of modern evolutionary biology, because often you hear by the popular rises of Darwinism, like Richard Dawkins, that there is no debate and it's all settled and it's a fact and so on.

And that's far from the truth. So there is a hot debate going on in theoretical biology. And most theoretical biologists who really think about the theory of evolution and the underpinnings have come to the consensus that neo-Darwinism, which is this mechanism of natural selection acting on random mutation, is not sufficient to explain the origin of complexity and diversity.

And a famous example happened at a conference which I also attended in 2016 and was not an intelligent design conference. It was a mainstream conference called New Trends in Evolutionary Biology. And it was hosted at the prestigious Royal Society in London, which was co-founded by Newton in November 2016.

And the keynote was held by a world-famous evolutionary biologist, Professor Gerd Miller from Austria. And he held the keynote. And in his keynote, he showed a slide where he elaborated on the explanatory deficits of the modern synthesis.

And modern synthesis is just a synonym of neo-Darwinism. So explanatory deficits is double-speak for what the theory cannot explain. And what he listed among these explanatory deficits was phenotypic complexity, so complex new organs and body plans, phenotypic novelty, so new structures that appear without precursors, new formed organs, and so on, and non-gradual forms of transition, what we talked before, the sudden appearances in the fossil record.

And if the theory cannot explain this, then it basically has failed as an explanation for macroevolution. And all these evolutionary biologists, of course, they don't want to consider intelligent design as an alternative. That's a no-go.

So they are trying to find other naturalistic alternatives. And there's a whole school now that is called the Extended Synthesis. And they are really trying to find alternative mechanisms like niche construction and evo-devo and evolvability.

But none of these suggested processes has yet been shown to be capable to fill these explanatory deficits and explain the origin of complexity and novelty in the history of life. All right. I know that you have had to test your ideas with a debate on The Unbelievable Show, Justin Briarly's Unbelievable Show.

And you had a debate with Joshua Swamidoss, who, yeah, can you tell us both of both Rose and I have watched the debate and we love the debate and we're going to put it for all of our listeners to watch. But can you give us like a summary of how he responded to your argument, maybe you want to say which argument was, and then how he responded and was it successful? Did he defeat you? Well, that is of course something you shouldn't ask me, but decide for yourself. Actually, I was really struggling to really discover a response to my arguments and what he said.

And he's a nice guy, don't misunderstand me. I think he honestly said what he thought is a response to the design inference. But I didn't really recognize any addressing of the crucial arguments, which is of course, let's say the waiting time problem, the problem of the sudden appearances in the fossil record, the argument from specified complexity, the origin of new information in DNA and so on.

And he tried to appeal to some of these new ideas like neutral evolution or something in the

lines of the extended synthesis. And there was a kind of back and forth at this question where I showed him with quotes from the actual scientific literature on these subjects, that they don't solve the problem and that they are even considered by mainstream evolutionary biologists as insufficient to explain these problems. And yeah, I would say, at least I myself didn't find any kind of response that would satisfy me and say, well, yeah, there's something to think about that.

That could be a possible attempt to solving this problem without invoking an introduction of information from outside the system, which would be my most general definition of intelligent design. I wouldn't necessarily invoke miraculous interventions or something. I would say it's evidence for infusion of information from outside of the system to explain the sudden transitions and sudden changes and increases in information content.

Yeah, I sometimes like to put these debates on my desk at work to try to get my I'm a software engineer, I work in IT. And I like to put out these debates DVDs on my desk and people come by who are non theists and non Christians. And they look at them and go, you know, if I watch this, is there going to be a winner and a loser? And that's what that's what American Americans care about the score a lot of the time.

And I think in the case of your debate, yes, there's definitely a winner and a loser. Now, I know you won't say much about that. But my takeaway was very similar to what Gunter just described.

You know, he presented evidence after evidence after evidence and, you know, the response was things like, well, are you are you confrontational in your approach to the evidence? And Gunter's like, wait, am I what? What? What? Am I confident? I'm just sharing the evidence. Anyway, yeah, great. Love the evidence approach to apologetics and to all topics in general.

But I know that that you have, you know, you did not grow up in a Christian home. You weren't a committed Christian who was looking for a way to fit God into the scientific equation or anything like that. You kind of actually came to Christianity in quite the opposite way.

Can you tell us about some of the problems that you discovered in science and metaphysics that led you away from atheism in your youth? Yeah, sure. And maybe first, just as a little disclaimer, because most people think that first you come to give up on atheism and embrace theism, then you may be doubt evolution or Darwinism and embrace intelligent design. In my case, it was the opposite way.

When I became an intelligent design proponent, I was not a the I was no longer materialist, but I was not a Christian, not a theist. I flirted with ideas, like process philosophy, white head, and process thought and stuff like that. And so I was convinced by the the empirical arguments for intelligent design.

And that convinced me that that neo Darwinism is insufficient and there has to be some kind of

goal directed process. But it was for totally different reasons that I gave up on materialism and later embraced theism. And that happened in a probably quite unusual way, because I didn't have some kind of spiritual experience or life crisis or what usually is often quoted in these kind of conversion stories.

I had a kind of popular science level interest in modern physics and started to read books like Fabric of Reality by David Deutsch or all the books by Richard Feynman and Michio Kaku and John Griffin and Brian Greene and Stephen Hawking, Brief History of Time and so on. And so this kind of intersection of quantum mechanics, relativity theory was really fascinating me and then I soon encountered certain problems. So what is the nature of this relation between cause and effect? What happens there? What is transitioning from the cause to the effect? What explains this causality? Is it a mere correlation as it was suggested by David Hume? Or is there something going on? How can you explain this relation between mathematics, which is conceptual and the actual physical reality? How does an electron at the other end of the universe know how to behave according to certain mathematical laws and the same laws that they obey here? And what is the origin of the laws of nature at all? Or the nature of the laws of nature? What are they? Are they really things or are they just in our head? And if they are just in our head, how come that nature behaves according to certain ideas that we come up with? So I was more and more drawn into metaphysical question and tried to find a kind of explanation, soon realized that materialism cannot explain this.

And then went on a kind of worldview quest where I analyzed different metaphysical systems from non-eastern thought, non-dualism, this kind of Advaita, Vedanta stuff, to white hetian process theology and modern versions of idealism. And I always after entertaining these views for a while encountered certain inconsistencies, either internal inconsistencies or inconsistencies compared to empirical data and found out that basically all these views fail. And then the last man standing was theism.

I love it. I love this so much. Yeah.

That's so funny. So yeah, so what support for theism was the most convincing then? Well, I would say it is not a silver bullet. It's not that there is one key argument that convinced me.

It's a more or less a cumulative case and it's a negative case and a positive case. So one is of course, this kind of failing of all the alternatives, something that Fandil called the impossibility of the contrary. So all the other views failed.

And so you had this kind of last man standing. And on the other hand, there were these issues of, well, if you have this relation of mathematics to the natural realm and mathematical mathematics is conceptual, then you need a mind also for the laws of logic to host these kinds of concepts. And they are obviously not just in our mind, they are universal and they apply everywhere.

So it just should be a kind of omnipresent mind and they are valid now and million years before

and a trillion years in the future. The laws of logic will be the same. So it should be an atemporal or timeless or eternal mind.

And so these kinds of arguments more and more convinced me that only theism can really make sense of the world and all of reason and of mathematics, of logic and so on, which is in a way funny because I started as a complete empiricist. And until recently, I even would have called my approach to apologetics as a purely classical empirical approach, evidential approach. But of course, ultimately, if you look at the end reason and on mathematics, there are similarities that I realized with presuppositional apologetics as well, which of course give more security in the belief that theism is really true because it doesn't depend on the whim of is this empirical data still valid tomorrow or is it refuted because but there are philosophical arguments that will always be valid that point in the direction of theism.

Yeah, I mean, I think both Desi Rose and I are classical apologists, you know, with with more evidential sympathies. And I think what we get where we're getting the security as you say from is we think about the progress of science and the progress of history. So in our cases, we're observing the gaps, the getting larger between the evidence and naturalism.

So you start out with Brandon Carter's one example of fine tuning. And now we have like 40 examples of fine tuning. And there are none of that are going away.

And similarly, with the origin of the universe, you start out with Hubble's observations, and then you add to that cosmic micro background radiation. And biology as well, biology is much more complex than Darwin thought. So all these problems have become bigger and the support for theism has become bigger by modern science.

I was just reading yesterday more in depth about how mathematics is evidence for theism in its universal effectiveness, in its complexity and in its predictable power and in several of things that you mentioned. And yeah, there just seems to be more and more evidence, the more subjects you look into, whether it's history or math or science or beauty or anything. Yeah, that's probably a reason that many physicists seem to be much more likely to embrace some kind of non materialist approach and metaphysics and biologists because most biologists still tend to live in this kind of 19th century view of a clockwork universe, while physicists being acquainted with relativity theory and quantum mechanics have realized that this simple crude materialism of particles bumping against each other in the void that doesn't do the job.

Right, exactly. So after accepting theism, you eventually did become a Christian. What support for Christianity was convincing? Again, not a silver bullet, but a cumulative case.

So there were several lines of evidence. One, of course, was that I was quite surprised when I looked into the issue and I was first motivated to look into the issue when I embraced theism, of course, then to look at different religion and which of the theist religion has the best support, that the historicity of the resurrection and the historical reliability of the gospel is even if you just look at them on the from the viewpoint of a secular historian, then they are very well

supported. There's a resurrection as well supported event of the reliability of the gospel has a very good standing compared to most other ancient writings.

And this was surprising to me and convinced me and of course, also some some strange things. If you look at prophecy in the Old Testament, let's say Daniel nine, prophecy of the 70 weeks, which, of course, has to be translated then then into years for the arrival of the Messiah. And where we historically know from scripts that have been found that Daniel was written 200 years, at least prior to the birth of Jesus.

So that is something that influenced me. And but but also some theoretical consideration that that Christianity, I find very attractive, this this thing that God is not just some kind of remote watcher of suffering in the universe he created, but that he stepped into history and became human and suffered himself that that I find very unique and different to all the other theistic religions. Right.

Yeah, you've mentioned some of the objections to Christianity that you found difficult when you were seeking, including the problem of evil. I'm wondering, did that did that concept of God, not just being indifferent, but stepping into the world, sort of have anything to do with alleviating that issue or what? Because if you just look at the let's say theoretical few disease, let's say the free will defense or something, that is, of course, very ivory tower kind of approach if you're really confronted with with actual suffering in life. But but but this thing that that Jesus that God became man and suffered himself, that is something that makes making sense of this apparent contradiction between an all good God and all powerful God and the existence of evil and suffering, much easier.

And also, when I looked into certain problems, let's say alleged anachronisms in the Bible or alleged contradictions in Scripture, and I looked into the thing and for possible explanation, and I, in most cases found a convincing explanation which gave me growing confidence that in in the few cases where I didn't find solutions that this pattern would repeat and that all these anachronisms and contradictions can be resolved by careful study of Scripture and their historical context and proper interpretation in terms of the genre and so on. So I could resolve most of the problems, but of course, the problem of evil is the little nagging thing still in the background that I would consider as the most powerful objection to theism still. Right.

And of course, that problem is not unique to Christianity that everybody has a problem. Everybody has to explain evil to you. Even atheism cannot avoid the problem.

It cannot even raise the problem. Exactly. Just out of curiosity, did you ever find Hume's arguments against miracles persuasive? No, no.

But not because I came up with, let's say, a refutation of Hume by myself. But when I first really encountered the argument, it was in the context of response to Hume, and I immediately saw the counter argument. And so, no, I immediately, let's say, learned and realized that this is an inconvincing argument based on basically fallacious reasoning.

Right, right. Yeah. I've done quite a bit of work on the Old Testament violence as well that you mentioned, I think, in the article in Salvo magazine.

And on the face of it, it seems like that could be a real stumbling block for people as well. But as I've looked more and more into it, I've fallen in love with God's justice alongside his mercy and grace. Right.

And there are some new developments. I recently saw that there are some kind of convincing arguments that if you look at the conquest of the Canaanites, when you have this apparent call for extinction, that there is a relation between the Nephilim and the Old Testament and the giants among the Canaanites. It couldn't be not just displayed.

Oh, there were people called to extinguish other people. There could be something else going on on a much equal level. And so, I think these problems need a lot of research in terms of ancient Near Eastern history, cultural context, ancient language, and so on.

Absolutely. And are not apt for these crude internet atheist arguments. How could God allow this? That's misrepresenting, basically, what you find in Scripture.

Yeah. Well, we love your story. We love what God's done in your life.

We love the mind that he's given you and your commitment to seeking and finding the truth wherever it may lead, even though, as you mentioned, Christianity was probably your last choice if you were able to choose. So, as we start to wrap things up, do you have any final thoughts? And where can people find your work? Yeah. Most easy today by Google or even with the new AI search engines, just Google my name and you find a lot of stuff.

You find a lot of articles every week. I write an article called Fossil Friday for Evolution News and Views, which you'll find on the website of Discovery Institute Center for Science and Culture. There you find most of the articles I write.

And then you find a lot of my presentations and talks on YouTube. Also, the debate with Josh Swamitas is available on YouTube. And then I have a personal website, which is www.bechly.at for Austria.

And there you find a lot about my personal background and also lists of all publications and can download PDFs of publications and so on. Excellent. Excellent.

We also appreciate very much your chapter in the comprehensive guide to science and faith. That was it's short and yet packed with information. That's always the challenge to write what you want to write in just a limited number of words and pages.

But yeah, I hope it worked out. All right. Okay, so I think that's a good place for us to stop for today.

Thank you so much for coming on the show, Gunter. We really appreciate your perspective and

your experiences. Listeners, if you enjoyed the episode, please consider helping us out by sharing this podcast with your friends, writing us a five-star review on Apple or Spotify, subscribing and commenting on YouTube, and hitting the like button wherever you listen to the podcast.

We appreciate you taking the time to listen and we'll see you again in the next one.