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Creation vs. Evolution — The New Shape of the Debate

This is the new shape of the debate over evolution. We now face the undeniable truth that the most basic and fundamental questions of biblical authority and gospel integrity are at stake. Are you ready for this debate?

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The debate over Darwinism rages on, with almost every week bringing a new salvo in the Great Controversy. The reason for this is simple and straightforward — naturalistic evolution is the great intellectual rival to Christianity in the Western world. It is the creation myth of the secular elites and their intellectual weapon of choice in public debate.

In some sense, this has been true ever since Darwin. When Charles Darwin developed and published his theory of natural selection, the most obvious question to appear to informed minds was this: Can the theory of evolution be reconciled with the Christian faith?

The emergence of evolution as a theory of origins and the existence of life forms presented a clear challenge to the account of creation offered within the Bible, especially in the opening chapters of Genesis. At face value, these accounts seem irreconcilable.

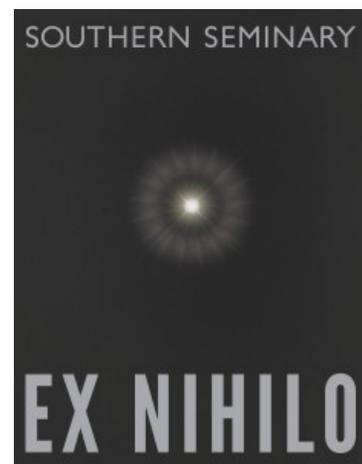
There were a good many intrepid and honest souls in the nineteenth century who understood the reality that, if evolution is true, the Bible must be radically reinterpreted. Others went further and, like the New Atheists in our time, seized upon evolution as an intellectual weapon to be used against Christianity.

There were others who attempted to mediate between evolution and Christianity. In the most common form of the argument, they asserted that the Bible tells the story of the *who* and the *why* of creation, but not the *how*. The *how* was left to empirical science and its theory of evolution.

In more recent years, this argument has been made from the evolutionary side of the argument by the late Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard University, who proposed that the worlds of science and religious faith were completely separate, constituting “non-overlapping magisteria.” In effect, he argued that religion and science *cannot* conflict, since they do not address the same questions.

The problem with this argument is obvious: Darwinism and Genesis *do* clearly overlap. The Bible does not merely speak of the *who* and the *why*. It also makes explicit claims concerning the *how*. Likewise, even a cursory review of the evolutionary literature indicates that evolutionary scientists routinely make assertions concerning the *who* and *why* questions. It is just not intellectually honest to argue that evolutionary theory deals only with the mechanisms of the existence of the Cosmos and that the Bible deals only with the meaning of creation.

Another approach had been taken by some Christian theologians in the nineteenth century. In their own way, even some among the honored and orthodox “Princeton Theologians” attempted to argue that there was no necessary conflict between Genesis and Darwin. They were so convinced of the power of empirical science and of the authority of Scripture that they were absolutely sure that the progress of science would eventually prove the truthfulness of the Bible.



What these theologians did not recognize was the naturalistic bent of modern science. The framers of modern evolutionary theory did not move toward an acknowledgment of divine causality. To the contrary, Darwin's central defenders today oppose even the idea known as "Intelligent Design." Their worldview is that of a sterile box filled only with naturalistic precepts.

From the beginning of this conflict, there have been those who have attempted some form of accommodation with Darwinism. In its most common form, this amounts to some version of "theistic evolution" — the idea that the evolutionary process is guided by God in order to accomplish his divine purposes.

Given the stakes in this public controversy, the attractiveness of theistic evolution becomes clear. The creation of a middle ground between Christianity and evolution would resolve a great cultural and intellectual conflict. Yet, in the process of attempting to negotiate this new middle ground, it is the Bible and the entirety of Christian theology that gives way, not evolutionary theory. Theistic evolution is a biblical and theological disaster.

The mainstream doctrine of evolution held by the scientific establishment and tenaciously defended by its advocates does not even allow for the possibility of a divinely implanted meaning in the Cosmos, much less for any divine guidance of the evolutionary process. There has been an unrelenting push of evolutionary theory deeper and deeper into purely naturalistic assumptions and an ever-increasing hostility to Christian truth claims.

On the other side of the equation, the injury to Christian convictions is incalculable. At the very least, the acceptance of evolutionary theory requires that the first two chapters of Genesis be read merely as a literary rendering that offers no historical data. But, of course, the injury does not end there.

If evolution is true, then the entire narrative of the Bible has to be revised and reinterpreted. The evolutionary account is not only incompatible with any historical affirmation of Genesis, but it is also incompatible with the claim that all humanity is descended from Adam and the claim that in Adam all humanity fell into sin and guilt. The Bible's account of the Fall and its consequences is utterly incompatible with evolutionary theory. The third chapter of Genesis is as problematic for evolutionary theory as the first two.

The naturalistic evolutionists are now pressing their case in moral as well as intellectual terms. Increasingly, they are arguing that a refusal to accept evolution represents a thought crime of sorts. They are using all the tools and arguments at their disposal to discredit any denial of evolution and to marginalize voices who question the dogma of Darwinism. They are working hard to establish unquestioned belief in evolution as the only right-minded and publicly acceptable position. They have already succeeded among the intellectual elites. Their main project now is the projection of this victory throughout popular culture.

Among the theistic evolutionists, the issues are becoming clearer almost every day that passes. Proponents of theistic evolution are now engaged in the public rejection of biblical inerrancy — with some calling the affirmation of the Bible's inerrancy as an intellectual disaster and "intellectual cul-de-sac." Others now openly assert that we must forfeit belief in an historical Adam, an historical Fall, and a universal Flood.

Thus, the vise of evolutionary theory is now revealing the fault lines of the current debate. There can be no question but that the authority of the Bible and the truthfulness of the Gospel are now clearly at stake. The New Testament clearly establishes the Gospel of Jesus Christ upon the foundation of the Bible's account of creation. If there was no historical Adam and no historical Fall, the Gospel is no longer understood in biblical terms.

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I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler.

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