

Could God have used evolution?

12 things to think about

Many professing Christians think that God used evolution to create all things, a compromise which they assume harmonises Scripture and science. Arguing about evolution is divisive, they say, so avoid it and just serve the poor and preach the Gospel.

But is it as simple as that? Do the facts about our origin matter? What if we're wrong? Scripture warns us to beware of deception. In the spirit of the Berean Jews (Acts 17:11) we invite readers to consider the issues around theistic evolution, the idea that God used evolution to create. Here are some brief thoughts and questions.

1. *'All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.'* (John 1:3). John's Gospel was written *'..so that you should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.'* (John 20:30-31). John's Gospel tells the Good News about forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. The Apostle, who beheld the glorified Christ, affirms Him as Creator at the start

of chapter 1. Wherever we go in this conversation, we must honour Christ as King of Creation, also see Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:2-3. When people say *'Forget about creation and just preach the Gospel'* may we ask *'Whose Gospel?'*

2. *'Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.'* (Genesis 1:31). The first pages of the Bible insist that the original creation was 'very good'. If the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16) intended the creation account to be read as poetry, surely it would make sense as poetry? If the original creation was 'very good', how do we reconcile this, even as poetry or metaphor, with the ugly and painful processes by which evolution is said to have occurred? This leads into the next point.

3. Charles Darwin wrote *'What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering low and horridly cruel works of nature!'*¹. One reason Darwin rejected Biblical Creation was the suffering he saw in nature.

Evolution, we are told, progresses by a gradual process of random mutations and the survival of the most violent and acquisitive. In evolution, the strong kill and displace the weak. Richard Dawkins took up this theme in his book *'A Devil's Chaplain.'* If God created through an uncertain and wasteful process involving undeserved suffering over millions of years, serious questions are raised about His power and goodness. Why would the Creator use evolution if He could have created in a way more in keeping with the divine goodness and omnipotence? This takes us to the next point.

4. How does God ordinarily create?

Jesus said *'He who has seen Me has seen the Father.'* (John 14:9). If we want to know God, we look to Jesus. In His first sign at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2: 1-11) He instantaneously created a large amount of excellent wine. The other miracles recorded in the New Testament, including multiplying food, repairing

eyes and nerves, stopping storms, walking on water and restoring life to the dead happened within seconds or at most minutes. When Jesus raised Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, He simply said *'Lazarus, come forth!'* and he did, immediately (John 11:38-44). The matter and energy which God spoke into being obeys its Maker's word (e.g. Mark 4:41, *'Who is this that even the wind and sea obey Him?'*). God in Christ appears to have no difficulty speaking things immediately into being, in a perfect and mature form. So why would He use what Darwin called a *'..clumsy, wasteful, blundering and cruel..'* process over millions of years? It makes no sense. But some ask, isn't it superstitious and ignorant to appeal to miracles since we have science? However,

5. Christianity without miracles is a waste of time. At the centre of our faith is a man, Jesus of Nazareth, who after a brutal execution and three days buried, returned to life in a supernaturally transformed body which can never die again. Amazingly, God has promised that believers will be raised with the same kind of glorified body! (1 John 3:2, Phil. 3:21). Must we point out that resurrection of the dead - from dust and ashes - is scientifically impossible? But the God who made all things including the laws of nature is not limited by those laws. If He can't raise us from the dead, then as Paul suggests in 1 Cor. 15 we may as well put our Bibles in the recycle bin, close down our churches and live just for pleasure. Creation in six days is no more or less miraculous than



Richard Dawkins in 2006. Image: M. Asgeirsson, Wikipedia (from Flickr), goo.gl/VhHLNE, under licence CC BY-SA 2.0.

resurrection of the dead. And this takes us to the next point...

6. Why accept miraculous Resurrection but deny miraculous Creation?

Heretics like the American Episcopalian bishop John Shelby Spong begin by rejecting Biblical Creation, and end by rejecting Biblical Resurrection. In his book *'Resurrection: Myth or Reality?'* Spong asserted that the body of Jesus rotted to dust in a common grave. He claims to believe in some kind of resurrection, but not a raising of the body. Similar views were expressed by his Anglican counterpart the late bishop David Jenkins. These modern bishops criticise those who insist that Genesis is written as history. They believe that 'modern scholarship' and 'science' explains away passages like Genesis 1-2 and miracles in general. Such men think themselves wise, but the Bible tells us that *'There is a way that seems right to a man, but it ends in death.'* (Prov. 14:12). Once you start re-interpreting Bible miracles as myth, where do you stop? C. S. Lewis deliciously explored this 'modernist' idea of a Christianity without miracles in the tale of a heretic bishop in his speculative fantasy *'The Great Divorce'*. But what about the science? Don't all the scientists accept evolution?

7. How settled is the science of evolution?

God can't have created through evolution if it never happened. In fact, evolution (beyond trivial variations within species) has never been observed. Its central mechanism (natural selection acting on random mutations) fails catastrophically because random mutations are generally harmful, often

fatally so, and never create the useful new information which evolution requires.

Most of the 'classical' evidences of evolution including the Miller-Urey experiment, sickle cell disease, peppered moths, vestigial organs, Haeckel's embryo drawings, Darwin's finches and the horse toe series have been solidly debunked. The fossil record shows sudden appearance of fully formed plants and animals without ancestors or intermediate forms, giving no support to Darwin's speculative hypothesis, as he was forced to acknowledge. And while extinctions are commonplace, new species are not seen to arise. Evidence for a young creation (soft tissue in dinosaur fossils, carbon 14 in diamonds,



John Shelby Spong in 2006. Spong has stated: 'Christianity is, I believe, about expanded life, heightened consciousness and achieving a new humanity. It is not about closed minds, supernatural interventions, a fallen creation, guilt, original sin or divine rescue.' Image: S. Griessel, Wikipedia (from Flickr), goo.gl/G214B, under licence CC BY-SA 2.0.

Flood geology etc) is suppressed. As C. S. Lewis wrote about evolution, *'Imagination runs ahead of scientific evidence'*. He also wrote that evolution was accepted not because it had been proven, but because men were determined not to consider divine creation². Sadly, men suppress the truth because they refuse to acknowledge their Creator - see Rom. 1:18-23.

8. Have you noticed how atheists love evolution? You can tell a lot about a man by the company he keeps. In the history of ideas which shaped the modern world, Charles Darwin has always kept close company with Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, atheist philosophers who openly admired Darwin and used his ideas. Both men hated Christianity. Marx and Engels sought to replace Biblical views in the realm of family, social, political and economic life while Freud sought to overthrow Biblical sexual ethics, the concept of sin and the idea of people having souls. While training as a doctor, Freud spent two years studying animals in a zoo because of his Darwinian belief that we were only evolved apes. Marx's godless ideas gave us communism with its tyranny and poverty, Freud's gave us the disastrous sexual revolution and the failed pseudoscience of psychoanalysis. Both men's ideas, developed from materialistic and evolutionary thinking, have caused incalculable harm. Also look up Richard Weikart's book *'From Darwin to Hitler'* which traces the link between Darwin's 'survival of the fittest' and the Nazis' progressive ideas about improving humanity by selective breeding and eliminating the unfit. Jesus

said that false prophets and teachers would lead many astray and be known by their fruits. So if evolution is of God, why did it inspire some of the most anti-Christian ideologies and movements in history?

9. 'I agree that God created, evolution tells us HOW He did it.' But the Bible already told us how God created - by divine wisdom and power, and by His word. See points 4 and 5 above. The admittedly sparse Genesis account is amplified by passages in Psalms, Proverbs and Job, the latter book including the memorable question God asked Job *'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world?'* (Job 38:4). Why do we demand or presume to know more about God's work in creation than Job was told? If God had created through evolution, then why doesn't the Bible say so, even in a veiled form subject to fuller enlightenment later? There is a precedent for this in the Messianic prophecies (see Eph. 3:1-11). Many Scriptures that were obscure in earlier times were later fulfilled and explained, such as Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 and the whole 'spotless lamb' thread of the Old Testament. Jesus in Luke 24:27 explained that the prophets and the Law were all about Him. There are no comparable prophecies about a supposed evolutionary creation, not a hint. The evolutionary narrative is in no way forthtold in Genesis, however you mangle the Scripture.

10. What about death before sin? That great evangelist Paul wrote in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 that death entered the world through the sin of one man, Adam, the first father of us all. Prior to

Adam's inexcusable act of defiance and ingratitude toward his Maker, there was no sin or death, according to Paul. Death came into the world either through sin, or else because God thought it was *'very good'*. But could a good God choose to use death as a creative mechanism? If death is good, why did I train as a doctor? More to the point, why is it described as *'the last enemy'*? (1 Cor. 15:26). If there was death before sin then why did God tell Adam that he would die if he ate the forbidden fruit? If Adam had come from thousands of generations of ancestors, he would have known he was going to die anyway, whether or not he obeyed God. And what does *'As in Adam all die, so in Christ all are made alive'* (1 Cor. 15:22) mean? Fudging these issues to avoid divisions may be well meaning but under sceptical examination breaks down as an unsatisfactory compromise. In his poem *'The Respectable Burgher on the Higher Criticism'* Thomas Hardy resolves the contradictions between Christianity and Darwinism by rejecting Christianity. In the end, an historical view of the Creation, Fall and Redemption narrative is inconsistent with common descent over millions of years. Attempts to reconcile the two positions are doomed to fail. You can't please everyone, sometimes you have to choose. Which brings us to another issue worthy of consideration.

11. *'Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake'*. Matthew 5:11. Christians are warned to avoid the broad and easy way. If we say *'I don't have a problem with God using*

evolution', is it because we have honestly resolved all the difficult issues, or are we afraid of people calling us names? The Christian life involves hard choices and separating ourselves from a world which as we read *'...lies in the power of the evil one.'* (1 John 5:19). You will attract insults and may lose friends for holding a Biblical view of creation, try it and see! Let us not make ourselves unpopular for the wrong reasons, but accept our fair share of suffering as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 4:15-16, 2 Tim. 2:3). Finally,

12. *What are the eternal consequences of being wrong on either side of this debate?* For the sake of argument, let us imagine two believers who took differing views on creation/evolution arriving in Heaven. Forgiveness of sins, adoption into God's family and everlasting joy will be theirs, by God's grace, but they must both stand before the judgment seat of Christ (see 1 Cor. 3:10-18 and 2 Cor. 5:10 on this sobering point.) Dare we imagine what the Righteous Judge might say to the young earth creationist if (and I speak as a madman) in fact He had created by evolution, despite omitting to mention this in His Word. Will he be rebuked for reading the Bible - including the genealogies in Matthew and Luke - as a child, taking the plain meaning as the true meaning, and distrusting Richard Dawkins and other jeering atheists? I suggest not. On the other hand, if as CSM affirms evolution isn't true, what sort of 'feedback' will the theistic evolutionist get? Maybe questions like *'So you didn't notice the connection between Darwinism and atheism?'* or perhaps *'So*

you thought Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 1 and 2 were obscure passages?'. All other things being equal, I know in whose shoes I'd rather be.

Caution: Salvation is by grace through faith. Believers with imperfect doctrine and life (is there any other kind?) will get to Heaven by God's grace. But those who finally reject Christ's free offer of salvation won't. Many reject Him because they believe that '*science has replaced religion*'. At the heart of that false proposition stands Charles Darwin's 'theory' (actually a philosophy, see Col. 2:8) of evolution. Please consider whether by accepting the evolutionary worldview of men like Bertrand Russell, T. E. and Aldous Huxley, Josef Stalin³, Chairman Mao, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Brian Cox who have opposed and mocked our faith, are we more likely to advance or hinder the Gospel?

When the Apostle Paul preached to pagan idolaters and philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:24-29), he began his presentation by emphatically

proclaiming Creation, telling his hearers that they should stop worshipping the works of their own hands and turn to the God he proclaimed, as He was their creator and would be their judge. Paul preached creation first, then judgment and only then the Gospel. This is logical, because if there is no Creator, then there is no Lawgiver or Judge, so we don't need a Saviour.

Do we know better than Paul?

Stephen Hayes

References

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