

range of their literary talents in a truly human way that necessarily leaves them open to ordinary human errors.

Outstanding Questions about Creation

- A. Despite the remarkable progress made by scientists in studying the nature of the universe, many critical questions remain unanswered. This does not mean that answers will not be found in the future, but nevertheless, these questions remain intriguing, particularly these two:

**How did life emerge from lifeless particles and chemicals?
How did human consciousness occur?**

- B. Another aspect of theological reflection that has interested me for a long time is the implications of discovering alien intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. One can say that there is a need for a '*Theology of the Alien*'. If such life exists, then according to our beliefs God must have created it also. Where do such aliens stand in God's divine plan? Where they tested and found wanting, like 'Adam'? If so, what did God do to provide salvation for them? If you think that such questions are speculative and irrelevant, consider the angels. Is it not Christian belief that angels were created before humans, that some rebelled against God and were expelled from His presence? Maybe God's plan is infinitely more complicated than we can imagine and there be many more examples in the universe of God creating intelligent life and testing it, as he has done with us and the angels, for His own divine purpose.



- C. A further issue of importance is the emergence of *Quantum Mechanics*, the study of what exists far below the size of atoms, not just protons, neutrons and electrons, but particles even smaller. This science has shown that the laws of physics that apply to the visible universe do not apply to this realm of the unbelievably small. In fact, the latter is a world where, believe it or not, real contradictions do occur, where objects can be in two places at once!

Such questions should give us all humility in recognising the complexity of the creative process. For Christians, something innate within us, reinforced by our Faith, makes us recognise God as the focal point for the initial creative act and for our own ongoing existence. This is what Genesis 1 & 2 reveals, and why they are such important chapters of the Bible.

Understanding The Bible and Our Faith

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Evolution or Creation?

Did we evolve or were we uniquely created ?

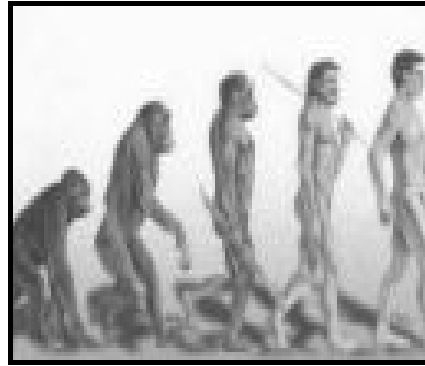


Questions to Consider?

1. Haven't Catholics got to believe in Adam and Eve and discard evolutionary theory?
2. Why are there differences in the stories of creation in Genesis chapters 1 & 2?
3. Why has God created us?
4. What is really meant when Genesis says we are made in the image of God?

What is Meant by Evolution?

In one sense, evolution may be used in the context of creatures developing from embryo to adulthood. However, this type of evolution is more accurately termed growth. In science, evolution is not just change over time; it is reproduction with critical modification. A more direct way to express this is to say that a species can somehow become another species. If we go backwards in time, the central idea of biological evolution is that all life shares a common ancestor.



What is the Theory of Evolution?

The vast majority of scientists today accept that humans evolved to their present state of intelligence and consciousness from some primeval ape-like creature. But this acceptance has really only come about following the work of Charles Darwin in the 19th century and the publication of his book, *On The Origin of Species*. A few other scientists, like Lamarck in the 18th century, had previously proposed evolutionary ideas, albeit proposing different mechanisms for how this came about, but none had the dramatic impact of Darwin's ideas. The central tenet of Darwin's theory is that the main mode of evolution was by gradual stages of natural selection, that is, those who continued to survive were those most capable of modifying themselves to suit their circumstances and environment (more commonly described as the 'survival of the fittest'). However, even now there is by no means universal acceptance amongst scientist that natural selection is the key component. Nevertheless, all such scientists still consider themselves Darwinists as they accept that one species can evolve into another.

What Difference Does It Make to Christians?

Why is Darwin's Theory of Evolution so contentious for many Christians? In the USA it has become a bitter battle, particularly in the Mid-West, over what should be taught in schools: a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 & 2 or a more scientific based theory of human evolution? Essentially, the concern is that evolutionary theory somehow contravenes the Bible as the Word of God and the inference made in Genesis that humans are a special species, as we are made in God's image and likeness. But is this concern justified?

Interpreting Genesis 1 & 2

Genesis 1 describes God creating the universe, the world and all life, culminating in humankind, in 6 days and resting on the seventh. Genesis 2 is specific story about the creation of the first Man and Woman but seems more a primitive account than Genesis 1. There are those (e.g. in the USA) who accept a literal interpretation of these chapters. You can, of course, do this if you like but from what we have previously discussed about the nature of the Word of God it will prove far more beneficial to distinguish and recognise the revelation itself from the method or genre of writing chosen to present it. There are, though, major problems in accepting a literal view:

If God took 6 days to create, although this is a great achievement, does it not restrict God's power? Couldn't a greater God do it in 3 days? Couldn't a still greater God do it with a single thought? If God had to rest on the 7th day, doesn't this fact also somehow restrict His power and show him to have human limitations, needing relaxation? Also, both chapters can not be correct about the order in which birds/animals and humans were created - were animals created before or after Adam?



Really, though, to read these chapters in a literal way, and to try and analyse this kind of contradiction, is to misinterpret their purpose. Genesis 2 may be better understood as a story that tries to explain the innate feeling most of us have that we are a special species. It does this in the context of another inner awareness: that there is a supernatural Being overseeing all creation. Such stories are termed myths. The correct use of the word myth does not imply anything essentially false: it is a recognised style (genre) of ancient writing that is used to present a spiritual truth that can not otherwise be fully expressed.

What are the truths that Genesis reveals? Both chapters recognise that there is a God, but this is not presented as a new truth but the restatement of a fact. The ancient world, unlike today, automatically accepted the existence of the divine. What Genesis provides is a creation story, similar to the creation stories that abounded in other ancient civilisations, but differing in the way it recognises a unique creator God and provides a central connection between us and that God. In both Genesis stories, Humans are a special creation of God and are given a central role in nature.

But Have We Been Uniquely Created by God?

The short answer is yes, we have been uniquely created by God, but that doesn't mean we haven't evolved either. Both can be, and are probably, true.

A good way to look at evolution is to understand it as the tool used by God to deliver a variety and profundity of living creatures, and ultimately ourselves. The emergence of microscopic particles, elements and matter as a result of the 'Big Bang' event that initiated the universe, together with the organisation and design capabilities that accompanied this creative process, gave rise over vast expanses of time to the conditions necessary for life. At some relatively recent point in this process, the creature that is our species, *Homo Sapiens*, evolved as a separate species. At one moment there literally wasn't a single human person, in the next a creature was born that was, our *unique ancestor* from whom all humankind was subsequently descended.

Evolution is not an insurmountable obstacle for Christians. It will only be so for those who insist on interpreting the Bible in a literal way and for those who fail to appreciate how God has used its authors to deliver eternal truths about Himself, about the nature of Creation and about Salvation, whilst still allowing these authors to exercise the full