The Incompatibility of Creation and Evolution

Darwinism is alive and well in the 21st century. In just the past few years, several prominent atheists/evolutionists have released books that have remained on the New York Times bestseller list for weeks and months, not just days. Books like Richard Dawkins’ *The God Delusion* and Daniel Dennett’s *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea* have not only garnered academic and scientific praise, but popular acclaim as well. Because of this onslaught from naturalists and its increasingly popular appeal, Christians have sought to figure out how to deal with the apparent increased popularity of Darwinism and at the same time how it figures into the Bible, if at all. Organizations such as Answers in Genesis (AiG) have strived to uphold the Bible as the Word of God and to carefully, and even scientifically, explain the Bible, the world, and science in terms of the clearly defined Biblical account of creation in thousands, not millions, of years. AiG starts with the Bible, assumes it is truth, then uses science to explain what we see in terms of God’s word. They have done an admirable job.

Others, however, start with science, and all of its naturalistic and evolutionary assumptions, and then try and make the Bible and God fit this scheme of thought. In the first paragraph of an article in *The Christian Century* magazine entitled “God in Evolution: The Nature of Divine Power,” Amy Frykholm states, “While controversies over evolution continue to arise in some sectors of American Christianity, most mainline Christians have made their peace with Darwin. We may not grasp all the nuances of the scientific debate, but we have concluded that evolutionary theory is good science and therefore must be compatible with good theology. Darwin's name doesn't send chills up our spines. We are theistic evolutionists: we believe that
natural selection is evidently part of God's method of shaping the natural world.\textsuperscript{1} She and others have made peace with Darwin, but what exactly does that mean? How do Christians in fact make peace with Darwin, hold to the naturalistic evolutionary process, and at the same time believe in the God of the Bible who created the universe and plays an active role in its sustainment?

They don’t. Frykholm reveals as much when she states in her article, “When theology faces off against the account of the world set forth by evolutionary biology, God's goodness and power and God's plans for the future seem to be called into question with new force.”\textsuperscript{2} How do they, then, reconcile the two belief systems? She states that “substantial interaction between Christian theology and evolutionary biology is prompting new metaphors and new ways of thinking about God.”\textsuperscript{3} She looks at briefly two ways. One is the notion that the cosmos is contained \textit{in} God. She states, “Holding to this conception of God, one can view natural selection not as a process separate from God but as a process that takes place in God.”\textsuperscript{4} This formula suggests that God may not oversee creation as much as work through it. This belief system is similar to pantheism, in which everything is of God or in God, and God is in and of everything. It blurs the distinction of the Creator and creation in order to make sense of the evolutionary processes. This is clearly not Biblical Christianity.

Another notion she uses to help explain the compatibility between God/theology and evolutionary science is one of a God of possibilities. Frykholm states, “Still, evolutionary biology makes it hard to discern purpose or direction in creation. For some theologians, facing a universe that includes randomness and chance may require a shift in thinking about how God

\begin{footnotes}
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
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works. John Haught, Catholic theologian and professor of theology at Georgetown University, suggests that we think in terms of a God who offers ‘a wide range of possibilities that the world can realize, a universe of innumerable possibilities.’ Realization of any one possibility happens amid the play between God and creatures.”5 This Catholic theologian has briefly defined a Christian heresy called “Open Theism,” in which God does not know the future and has not decreed the future. The future in open theism depends on the interaction and decisions between God and the creatures. God is a God of the possible, but not the actual. This is a different God that that described in Isaiah 46:9 – 10, “I am God, and there is none like me,10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose….’”

This is but one current example of the attempt to reconcile the two belief systems, worldviews, of Biblical Christianity and naturalistic evolution. The purpose of this paper will be to briefly demonstrate that Biblical Christianity and naturalistic evolution are incompatible as belief systems or worldviews. One may claim to be both a Christian and an evolutionist, but that individual is ultimately confused about Christianity, evolution, or both. I would like to show specifically that the creation account in Genesis 1 is incompatible with the order of evolutionary beginnings, and that created beings reproduce after their own kind, unlike what ultimately happens in evolutionary biology. In addition, death takes on two completely incompatible meanings in both worldviews. Finally, the very nature of both worldviews contains assumptions that are not reconcilable. Ultimately, naturalistic evolution assumes everything happens without the need for God, while Biblical Christianity assumes everything happens because of God.

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
Before diving into the heart of this paper, some assumptions need to be made and defined in order to establish a solid foundation for comparison. For the purposes of this paper, and to provide a solid yet simple definition for us to follow, Biblical Christianity is defined by The Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, dated April 20, 1996 and available at the website Monergism.com, at http://www.monergism.com/The%20Cambridge%20Declaration.pdf. This is a simple yet comprehensive definition that embraces the essential truths of Christianity as those were defined by the great ecumenical councils of the church and the “solas” of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation. Definitions of “evolution” are almost as difficult to find and nail down as the definition of “evangelical.” However, I would not like to use the term “evolution” in this paper exclusively, because usually that term is defined as biological evolution. In a much broader sense, scientific naturalism is a more accurate term, and encompasses biological evolution. As defined by philosopher Paul Draper, naturalism is “the hypothesis that the physical world is a ‘closed system’ in the sense that nothing that is neither a part nor a product of it can affect it.” More simply, it is the denial of the existence of supernatural causes. In rejecting the reality of supernatural events, forces, or entities, naturalism is the antithesis of supernaturalism.\(^6\) While the differences may seem obvious, Frykholm and others have sought to make peace with these two worldviews. I would like to show that it is just not possible.

One of the simplest and most obvious ways to demonstrate the incompatibility of Christianity and naturalism is the Genesis account. I am not going to try and prove that Genesis is accurate history; Biblical Christians already believe that. The Genesis account of the creation of the universe, as defined by the activities of the days of creation and the order of the steps, is

\[^6\] “Naturalism.” Infidels.org website, http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/nontheism/naturalism/. Accessed March 15, 2008. This is essentially the same definition that is posed by various authors such as Dawkins and
irreconcilably different that the order of events posed by the naturalists. The following table shows the difference between the two narratives of creation.\(^7\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Creation (Genesis)</th>
<th>Naturalistic evolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verse 2 – earth created, covered in water</td>
<td>Big bang, matter and subatomic particles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse 3 – light created</td>
<td>Subatomic particles coalesce and photons can now be “seen” as light</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse 6 – the expanse, atmosphere</td>
<td>Stars, galaxies, and planets formed from other matter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse 9 – dry land</td>
<td>Planets begin as molten land masses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse 11 – seed bearing plants and fruit trees</td>
<td>Planets solidify and atmosphere forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse 14 – sun, moon, and stars shining in the sky</td>
<td>Oceans form on planets (Earth)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse 20 – sea creatures and birds</td>
<td>Single-celled organisms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse 24 – land animals and man</td>
<td>Marine life form before land plants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Land plants</td>
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<td>Reptiles form before birds</td>
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<td>Birds from flying reptiles</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Land animals</td>
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<td>Man</td>
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From this table you can see the irreconcilable differences between the Creation order and the Evolutionary order. Examples include (relative to creation) stars before earth, planets starting out as molten rather than solid with water, sea creatures before land plants, and a number of others. There are obvious discrepancies, and both cannot be right. Morris states, “Evolutionary theory says that marine organisms evolved first, then land plants, later birds. Genesis says that land plants came first, then marine creatures and birds simultaneously. Furthermore, if anything,

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the largest sea animals were the first, again contrary to evolutionary theory.” Biblical creation according to the order of events cannot be reconciled or merged with the evolutionary order of events. Peace with Darwin cannot be made at this level of detail.

Genesis 1:11-12, 21, and 25 all specifically state that God created plants and living creatures of all kinds, according to their own kind. In other words, God created creatures and plants that reproduce after their own kind. While creation allows for variation within kinds, popularly defined as microevolution or natural selection, according to the creation account, apple trees produce apple trees, dogs mate and produce dogs, and humans mate and produce humans. Morris in his book *Scientific Creationism* explains that, “Even though there may be uncertainty as to what is meant by ‘kind’ (Hebrew min), it is obvious that the word does have a definite and fixed meaning. One ‘kind’ could not transform itself into another ‘kind.’ There is certainly no thought here of an evolutionary continuity of all forms of life, but rather one of definite and distinct categories.” According to Genesis, God created, and He created plant life distinct from animal life and animal life from human life.

The naturalistic evolutionary account is a different view. One biology textbook states that “evolution is biology’s core theme.” Naturalistic evolution teaches that all life began as a

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single-celled organism in a pool of chemicals nearly 3.5 billion years ago. All life began from one life form that spontaneously acquired life. The chart below, from the National Academy of Sciences book, *Science, Evolution, and Creationism*, pictographically explains the thesis of naturalistic evolution:

Over millions of years, this single-celled organism changed, mutated, and morphed into what we now see as various four-legged creatures. All of these creatures, from reptiles, birds, and mammals, including man, derived their form and life from a common ancestor.

The difference in the two alternatives of Biblical Creationism and naturalistic evolution cannot be more striking. Biblical creationism teaches that God created the universe, and all life in it. He created the plants, animals, and man. In Genesis 1:20 – 25, God creates living creatures, meaning He is the author of life. In Genesis 1:26 – 31, God makes man in His own image, meaning that man can communicate with God and with each other, and has thought, intellect, and reasoning capabilities. Man is separate from the other living creatures, and is unique among all of God’s creation.

Naturalistic evolution teaches that all life started from nonlife, and has progressed up an evolutionary chain, changed and formed into different species, all without God or any supernatural impetus. In the naturalistic world, man is no different from any of the other animals from which he has evolved. He somehow gained the capacity for thought and intellectual reasoning, and has developed an idea of right and wrong. Multiple changes over a period of many millions of years have all contributed to the development of man as a thinking and rational animal.

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Theistic evolutionists and progressive creationists strive to somehow combine or reconcile the two views of origins to make peace with so-called science and God. However, it seems clear that there is no logical way to blend an active God of creation with a view that requires, even prohibits, any supernatural intervention or mechanism whatsoever. These two views of life and the universe are by definition incompatible. John MacArthur sums it up best in his explanation of the Genesis text:

The inescapable message of this passage is that God created all the various birds and sea creatures with all their unique features in place, with all the diversity of species already established, and with the ability to reproduce “according to their kind” (v. 21). Those who imagine that all these different species emerged by evolution from a common source have simply rejected the clear meaning of this text.

Notice that expression, “according to its kind,” which appears twice in verse 21, twice in verse 24, three times in verse 25, and once each in verses 11 and 12. It is used every time procreation is mentioned in the Genesis account. It underscores the very truth evolution denies: that when living creatures reproduce, they can produce only creatures similar to themselves. Apes do not give birth to humans.¹²

Another point of contention between the two views of life is, ironically, that of death. Ken Ham writes, “Belief in evolution and/or millions of years necessitates that death has been a part of history since life first appeared on this planet. The fossil layers (containing billions of dead things) supposedly represent the history of life over millions of years. As Carl Sagan is

reported to have said, ‘The secrets of evolution are time and death.’”  

In order for one single-celled living organism to have evolved into present-day man, it would have to reproduce many millions of times, with mutations and changes occurring over billions of years. Those organisms that were not fit to survive, or that contracted a less-than-useful gene, died off, making way for those organisms with the ability to survive. Charles Darwin, in his book *Origin of Species*, stated in his conclusion, “Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows.”

Death is an integral part of the evolution of life as we know it today.

However, from a Biblical perspective, death is not to be seen as an integral part of life. Death is a punishment for the sin of Adam as a consequence of his disobedience to God and trust in himself. Genesis 2:16 – 17 states, And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Paul, writing in Romans 5:12, explains, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—.” Again, Paul writes in Romans 5:17, “For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:26 refers to death as the last enemy to be defeated by Christ. Death was not part of the original creation, and is considered an enemy of God and of man. At the consummation of all things, God will wipe away death. In Revelation 21:4 John writes, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be

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no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Death in Biblical Christianity is not a means of progress, but a curse. It is the punishment for rebellion against a holy and righteous God through the disobedience of the first man Adam.

Again, it is clear that the two views of life are in stark contrast. Answers in Genesis has a clever cartoon depicting the two alternative worldviews:

These two views of death are incompatible.

While it becomes apparent when looking even superficially at the details of naturalistic evolution and Biblical Creationism that the two views are diametrically opposed, this has not stopped many denominations from attempting to reconcile the two, or hold that evolution does not contradict the Bible. For instance, the results from a Presbyterian Church USA November 1998 Presbyterian Panel survey on “Science, Technology, and the Christian Faith” is unfortunately enlightening. While most of those surveyed would agree that God created the universe, “very few Presbyterians are creationists to the extent that they subscribe to literal interpretations of the Genesis accounts that place the beginning of time only a few millennia in the past. When asked the age of the universe, only 5 percent of members, 4 percent of elders, 3
percent of pastors, and 2 percent of specialized clergy make estimates of less than 10,000 years.” What is even more interesting is that the survey concluded, “Most Presbyterians are open to the possibility of evolution, at least in a general way. Overall, majorities in every Panel sample, ranging from 91 percent of specialized clergy and 85 percent of pastors to 67 percent of elders and 61 percent of members, agree that ‘evolutionary theory is compatible with the idea of God as Creator.’” In short, the survey stated that PCUSA clergy, elders, and members “see no inherent incompatibility between science and faith.”

In another example, called the Clergy Letter Project, over 11,000 churches have signed on to a statement that declares that both the Bible and evolution can coexist. The letter, in its entirety, states:

Within the community of Christian believers there are areas of dispute and disagreement, including the proper way to interpret Holy Scripture. While virtually all Christians take the Bible seriously and hold it to be authoritative in matters of faith and practice, the overwhelming majority do not read the Bible literally, as they would a science textbook. Many of the beloved stories found in the Bible – the Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the ark – convey timeless truths about God, human beings, and the proper relationship between Creator and creation expressed in the only form capable of transmitting these truths from generation to generation. Religious truth is of a different order from scientific truth. Its purpose is not to convey scientific information but to transform hearts.

We the undersigned, Christian clergy from many different traditions, believe that the timeless truths of the Bible and the discoveries of modern science may comfortably

coexist. We believe that the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth, one that has stood up to rigorous scrutiny and upon which much of human knowledge and achievement rests. To reject this truth or to treat it as “one theory among others” is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and transmit such ignorance to our children. We believe that among God’s good gifts are human minds capable of critical thought and that the failure to fully employ this gift is a rejection of the will of our Creator. To argue that God’s loving plan of salvation for humanity precludes the full employment of the God-given faculty of reason is to attempt to limit God, an act of hubris. We urge school board members to preserve the integrity of the science curriculum by affirming the teaching of the theory of evolution as a core component of human knowledge. We ask that science remain science and that religion remain religion, two very different, but complementary, forms of truth.\(^\text{16}\)

Over 11,000 churches have signed a statement declaring that most Christians do not read the Bible literally, and that they believe naturalistic evolution and Christianity are compatible. The statement also reflects the confusion about truth, and what can be called truth.

In conclusion, the differences between Biblical Creationism and naturalistic evolution come down to simply belief in God and the veracity of His word, or not. Naturalism is not really about science, but about origins without the supernatural. Biblical Christianity is never at odds with real, verifiable scientific investigation. Natural selection, a component of naturalism, easily explains the variation in species. This is observable, verifiable, and repeatable. However, the development of life and the origins of the universe cannot be tested and proven scientifically by any experiments or hypotheses. Naturalistic evolution attempts to explain and institutionalize a

view of origins that is not scientific, but mere speculation, and is in fact outside of the bounds of
science.

Naturalistic evolution is simply a contrary view of origins that, regardless of supposed
scientific proof, is really a means of explaining the world and the universe without God. It is so
diametrically opposed to the Bible that there is no way to reconcile the two views. However,
Biblical Christians must be fully dedicated to the truth of the Word of God, on all issues of faith
and life, including origins. Compromising on the Genesis account of creation is not a means of
reconciliation between God and Darwin. It is an appeasement to the powers of Satan that
attempts to discredit the Bible as God’s Word and put man’s fallible truth in place of God’s
infallible truth. If Christians compromise on the doctrine of creation, which runs contrary to
science, then how can Christians believe a God that would become incarnate, live among us, and
die for our sins, only to be resurrected three days later? If Biblical Creation causes Christians to
be embarrassed because Genesis does not correspond with apparent scientific discoveries, how
can the account of the resurrection of Lazarus or Christ be any different? If the supernaturalism
of creation is removed from the Bible, then how can the supernaturalism of the incarnation, death
and resurrection of Christ, or the miracles of the Exodus be believed? The first four words of the
Bible tell all: In the beginning, God…