TilledSoil.org
Steve Wilkinson
June 5, 2015

Creation vs Evolution
4 Views

Importance - who cares?
Why is the creation/evolution or faith/science conversation important?
- Christian apologetic (the 'why we believe' discipline) hot-point.
- Inside the Church (universal), it shouldn't divide the 'body.'
- Age of the earth isn't a core doctrine!
- Perception of relationship between faith and science is important.
- All truth is God's truth…
- Humanity… created or 'accident'?
- Flow of logic in Romans 5.

Divide - Should this issue divide?
- As Christians… sincere believers on all sides
- With secular society… yes, but in terms of convictions and not in a hostile manner.
- Don't miss the importance of this issue.

Worldview
- 'Lens' through which we view reality
- Shaped by religion, experience, education, values, culture, ethics, etc.
- Fit your knowledge into coherent system
- Everyone has one, but does it work/fit?
- Big points: how the data fits, and how it changes

Worldview as a chain
- Break a link and it's over
- Typically this means too focused on a small part
- Still, there can be foundational aspects (ie: Resurrection for Christians, or universe from nothing for atheists)

Worldview as a web
- A few crucial supports, but most broken strands are just mental discomfort
- Many problems needed before worldview falls (ie: change)

Our situation

Jury analogy (cf. J Warner Wallace)
- Aside from the biology experts, can the rest of us enter the discussion?
- Like a jury, we need to make a decision for our worldview with what we've got.
- We take information from expert witnesses and may be lead by a 'foreman.'
- As some of us learn, we can help equip others in the process.

Terms - Communication and clarity

It is crucial, for good communication and clarity, have a common understanding of terms.
- if not, then we're talking past one another.

faith
- a synonym would be trust
- Christian faith is not the common, 'wishful thinking' definition
- that said, there is an 'already… not yet' component to faith

science
- consider these two definitions:
- "systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment."
- "Science is a human activity of systematically **seeking natural explanations** for what we observe in the world around us."
- notice what happened in the second one? worldview snuck in and set the **outcome**

literal
- vs literalistic
- a literal reading includes context, genre, author's intent, etc.
- maybe better called a 'proper' reading

evolution
- change over time (biological) • micro or natural selection • macro or common descent?
- the term can mean any or all of the above, and each have different weights of evidence

theory
- hunch vs 'comprehensive explanation supported by a vast body of evidence'
- so, scientists mean much more than 'just a theory'…
- but, that doesn't necessarily mean it's an accurate theory either

random / selected / directed
- evolution isn't random, but selected (nature sets the boundaries)
- Christians believe directed (ie: goal oriented)

day or 'yom' (יום)
- just like English, broader meaning than 24-hour time period
- ex: sunrise to sunset; 24-hour period; indefinite (but not infinite) period of time, etc.
- Hebrew has no other terms (unlike English)
- context is the only way to figure out meaning

YEC - Young Earth Creation

Main characteristics:
- 7, 24-hour days
- ~ 6,000 year old earth (actually, all of creation) (derived from genealogies in Genesis)
- literal, historical Genesis
- famous proponent: Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis

+
- thwarts naturalistic evolution
- helps explain some possible science anomalies uncovered from time to time
- seems to match a natural reading of Genesis
- solves pre-fall problems with death and natural 'evil' (earthquakes, etc.)

-
- hard to square with mainstream science
- seems to call God's nature into question (would God trick us?)
- requires what might be a 'literalistic' reading of Genesis
- tends to create a major division between mainstream science and Christianity

Note:
- Genesis isn't the only creation related text in the Bible (ex: Job, Psalms)
Main contention point with OEC: Death before the fall and implications for God's character.

Resources:
Proslogion - Dr Jay Wile (http://blog.drwile.com)
ICR (http://www.icr.org)
AiG (https://answersingenesis.org)
Debating Darwin: Two Debates Is Darwinism True, and Does It Matter? by Graeme Finlay, Stephen Lloyd, Stephen Pattemore
The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications (5th Ed) by Dr. Henry Morris, Dr. John Whitcomb

OEC - Old Earth Creation (Progressive Creation)

Main characteristics:
- day = period of time
- earth billions of years old
- historical, but sometimes 'literary' Genesis
- famous proponent: Hugh Ross of Reasons to Believe

+
- allows for a historical reading of Genesis
- squares Scripture with much of mainstream science
- better covers the entire Biblical witness

-
- danger of tying scientific discovery too closely to a particular interpretation of Scripture
- disagreement over where the historical / metaphorical division lies
- requires what some see as interpretational gymnastics

Notes:
- might actually be a more literal reading of Genesis (ex: in one 24-hour day, Adam worked the garden, examined all the animals to see if any would make a suitable helper, named them all, underwent an operation, and then said (in the Hebrew), "at long last" upon seeing Eve)
Main contention point with TE: common ancestry & design

Resources:
- Dr. Hugh Ross (http://www.reasons.org)
- A Matter of Days (2nd Ed) by Hugh Ross
- many other books and material

TE - Theistic Evolution or Evolutionary Creation

Main characteristics:
- God is involved with the evolutionary process (how & to what extent varies greatly in this view)
- a metaphorical understanding of the first chapters of Genesis
- famous proponent: Francis Collins of BioLogos

+
- allows for complete (or at lest indisputable) agreement between mainstream science and
Scripture

-
- requires some theological gymnastics
- disagreement over where the historical / metaphorical divisions are

Notes:
- Genesis 1 teaches us nothing of scientific importance. The point is that God did it, not how.
- God is involved somehow (quantum mechanics, goal somehow 'baked in', etc.)
- possible problem with 'fall,' 'sin,' and maybe atonement
- is a physical lineage important for image of God? (Bible seems to think so.)
- But, on this view, I might be a descendent of Adam, and you might not.
Contention point with Naturalistic Evolution: God's involvement.

Resources:
- BioLogos (http://biologos.org)
- The Language of God by Francis Collins
- The Lost World of Genesis One by John Walton
- Origins by Deborah B. and Loren Haarsma
- http://www.premierchristianradio.com/Shows/Saturday/Unbelievable? (or Google
"Unbelievable radio") "Unbelievable? Have we misread the Adam and Eve story? John Walton vs
Stephen Lloyd" Saturday, March 28th, 2015

Naturalistic Evolution (neo-Darwinian)

Main characteristics:
- life came about by chance
- then was driven forward through natural selection
- God is irrelevant to the conversation
- famous proponent: Richard Dawkins

+
- for the naturalist, no need for god / super-natural
- is thought to allow pure 'science' with no dependencies on other disciplines such as philosophy, theology, etc.

-
- opens a 'can of worms' in many areas if the conclusion is that there is no God
- explaining evolutionary 'convergence' is a problem
- natural selection needs life to begin with
- contradicts Christian belief

Notes:
- certainly the prevalent or consensus view right now
- 'can of worms' - origin of universe, origin of life, appearance of design (both), consciousness, morality, determinism, etc.
Contention point: God, or at the very least, that science would in any way point to God
- but, what about Romans 1:19-20?

Resources:
- The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design by Richard Dawkins
- The Greatest Show on Earth: The Evidence for Evolution by Richard Dawkins

My Journey

YEC to OEC, but stopped before TE
- when I was growing up, YEC was the 'official' position of my church
- began to get pushed on this when starting in apologetics discussion
- discovered Hugh Ross' ministry and found it very compelling
- was **heavily** encouraged to switch to Theistic Evolution in seminary
- but, I found the arguments of RtB and ID folks more compelling
- and, was **really** disappointed that, at the time, the TE camp hadn't done their theology!

"Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." Richard Dawkins, The Blind Watchmaker, p4
- well, if it appears designed for a purpose… maybe it is!

"Junk DNA" -> ENCODE
- this was a major point that kept me in the OEC camp
- when I was in seminary (2007-2011), the top evidence used against my view was "Junk DNA"
- OEC models predicted a purpose would be found
- ENCODE project showed that over 80% had purpose
- So, in what direction are the research findings moving?
- What view is actually holding up science? (vs what view is accused of doing so)
- Tactics - Does the person who is correct need to suppress other views?

Consider:
Scopes trial in 1925, argument was given that there were over 180 vestigial organs and structures in the human body. Now, scientists are wary of talking about vestigial organs at all. (ex: tonsils, tail-bone, thyroid, appendix.)

Enter 'Junk DNA'
- what did major players in both TE and NE camps say?

Brown University evolutionary biologist Kenneth Miller argues that "the human genome is littered with pseudogenes, gene fragments, 'orphaned' genes, 'junk' DNA, and so many repeated copies of pointless DNA sequences that it cannot be attributed to anything that resembles intelligent design." Miller, "Life's Grand Design," 24-32.

"What pseudogenes are useful for is embarrassing creationists. It stretches even their creative ingenuity to make up a convincing reason why an intelligent designer should have created a pseudogene - a gene that does absolutely nothing and gives every appearance of being a superannuated version of a gene that used to do something -- unless he was deliberately setting out to fool us.

…

Leaving pseudogenes aside, it is a remarkable fact that the greater part (95 percent in the case of humans) of the genome might as well not be there, for all the difference it makes."
Dawkins 2009 book *The Greatest Show on Earth*

"Even more compelling evidence for a common ancestor comes from the study of what is known as ancient repetitive elements (AREs). ... Mammalian genomes are littered with such AREs, with roughly 45% of the human genome made up of such genetic flotsam and jetsam. ... Of course, some might argue that there are actually functional elements placed there by the Creator for a good reason, and our discounting them as 'junk DNA' just betrays our current level of ignorance."
Francis Collins, *The Language of God*, p135-136

The result:
"Although very catchy, the term 'junk DNA' repelled mainstream researchers from studying noncoding genetic material for many years. After all, who would like to dig through genomic garbage? Thankfully, though, there are some clochards who, at the risk of being ridiculed, explore unpopular territories."
Scientific American "What is junk DNA, and what is it worth?"

While I respect science, I'm not bothered by disagreeing with the current neo-Darwinian consensus.

Tips:
- Remember the 'web' of worldview.
- Try to look at all the data from all sides and draw your own conclusion.
- Pay attention to disciplines other than science too.