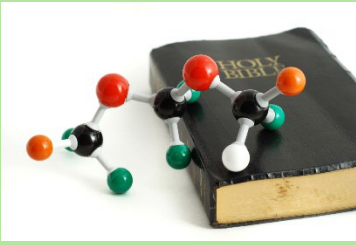


Can a Person Believe in both God and Evolution?



For this writing, I am talking about macroevolution, not changes within species (sometimes called microevolution). Macroevolution theory states that new species evolved from other species. This includes human beings who evolved from other primates. This idea was popularized by Charles Darwin in the 1800s and has gained a

large following since then.

Some people believe in both evolution and God. According to an old survey (1), a large portion of Buddhists and Hindus hold to both, though most of them see God's nature differently from most Christians. In my opinion, a person can be considered a Christian and accept evolution. What makes a person a Christian does not include rejection of evolution (see [How to become a born again Christian](#) in this website).

For the atheist, evolution has to be correct. Species have to evolve from other species for atheism to be true. That raises the question about how the first life forms started, but that's another subject. As far as evolution, any challenge to the idea that evolution creates new species threatens atheistic belief. This could be one reason why questioning of evolution often brings high emotional responses. Some people may say that no credible challenges exist to traditional evolutionary concepts, but I challenge this premise in other presentations on this site.

How can evolution be blended with the Bible?

1. God created the first life forms and then let natural forces create all the other species.
2. God created all the right materials and conditions for life to arise and for natural forces to create all the other species.
3. The general idea of 1 or 2 occurred, but God helped at times (ie. made conditions right for certain species to arise). These helps may go undetectable to researchers.

Many evolution researchers allow for the possibility of 1 and 2, but atheist researchers reject 3 because they don't think God is needed at all. This third position, though held by some people, is generally not considered when evolution researchers design and interpret their studies.

People holding positions 1-3 would agree with all but the end of a quote from evolutionary paleontologist Stephen J. Gould: "We are here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a 'higher answer'—but none exists" (2). Those who hold to positions 1-3 would say that God either arranged these coincidences, or knew they would occur.

Can any of the three scenarios fit with the kind of God described in the Bible?

Young earth or Genesis as allegory perspective. Some Christians interpret Genesis combined with other Bible books, as teaching a 6000 year old earth. I don't hold to this position for

reasons I will explain in a future writing on this site. But, if one holds this position, then evolution is immediately ruled out (there's not enough time). On the other extreme, some people consider the Genesis creation story, including the creating of Adam and Eve, as completely allegorical and not historical. This would be compatible with the 3 positions above. I personally don't think this Biblical interpretation can be held. The Apostle Paul viewed Adam and Eve as literal people (ie. 1 Corinthians 15:44-49). Furthermore, Jesus, though not naming Adam and Eve, refers in a literal fashion to the creation story of the first man and woman (Matthew 19:4-5).

Two other views of Genesis and evolution. Another view of Genesis is that the general ideas are historical, but the 7 creation days are used symbolically. I think this is a viable opinion since numbers and days are used symbolically elsewhere in the Bible. For example, the prophet Daniel received a revelation of future events that would happen after various periods of days. To my knowledge, all Bible scholars interpret these days to actually mean years.

A similar, but a little different viewpoint is the one I take. In this thinking, the Hebrew word translated as days just means a period of time. So, God created different things in sequential periods of time. These can be extremely long and don't have to be all the same. In one version of this view, God's perspective of these creation periods might be a moment in time, but the human perspective would consist of long periods of time ("With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day"-2 Peter 3:8).

Other viewpoints also exist, though they tend to overlap one of the views presented here.

For the young earth approach, or either of the two approaches of the last paragraph, Genesis communicates that God is responsible for creating all created things. We also hear that message in the Bible New Testament at the beginning of John's Gospel. Jesus, who John says is God in human form, is said to have created all things that were created. In my opinion, and I think in the opinion of most Bible scholars, Genesis and the rest of the Bible is not intended to spell out all scientific details for the how of creation (though some hows can be inferred). What Genesis and other Bible books do tell plainly are some specific traits of the creator. To me, these traits are not compatible with using evolution to make species including humans.

For starters, Genesis says in multiple places that God spoke and creation happened in detail. For instance, there is specific mention of God intentionally creating different kinds of plants and animals after their own kind. In addition, in Job 38-41, God is described as the one who has carefully designed life forms and how they fit in with the world. The same can be said for parts of Psalm 104. To me, this language does not give the impression of God just setting up conditions for life and then letting natural processes take over (with no or just a few further interventions by God).

Similarly, according to Genesis, God completes each creation of a segment of life by saying it is good. That doesn't sound like God just makes, and possibly occasionally tweaks, conditions for life forms to occur by undirected events. These events include mutations, which are essentially

mistakes that arise in genetic material. According to Darwin's theory, these mutations sometimes have fortuitous consequences that eventually lead to new species. In contrast to this, the God who said "it is good" shouldn't be counting on a lot of mistakes to make life species (including people). Similarly, Romans 1:20 says that creation reflects God's invisible traits. Throughout the Bible, God is displayed as a prime mover. The exception to this pattern is that God allows people to exercise free will. Yet, even there, God can intervene in response to prayer or in judgement. A prime mover God would not be a best fit for relying on evolution.

Going further, the Bible says that human beings, unlike other life forms, are created in God's image. I don't see this jiving with gradual evolution from other species. A former Catholic pope said that people could have evolved from other species, but God put a soul in humans. That may be possible, but Genesis doesn't say anything like that. In addition, both the Genesis author and Jesus in Mark 10:6 indicate that God created humans male and female. Genesis further says that the woman (Eve) was created from the man (Adam). Again, this sounds like a prime mover applying direct intervention, not evolution.

For these reasons, I don't think the God of the Bible meshes well with the idea of evolution as the producer of life forms including people.

Conclusion. One can buy into evolution and still be a Christian. However, for the reasons I gave, I don't think evolution meshes well with the God described in the Bible. If you don't agree, I encourage you to still consider the possibility that scientific evidences for evolution aren't as strong as generally postulated.

1. Pew Forum. Religious Groups: Opinions of Evolution. Conducted in 2007, released in 2008.
2. Stephen Gould. The Meaning of Life. Life Magazine. December 1988.