

What Lutherans Believe

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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Creation vs. Evolution

- Macro vs. Micro: is there a difference?
- The Biblical account: Genesis 1 & 2, Psalm 139:13-15
- How long is a “day” (Hebrew *yom*) anyway?
- What about “Theistic Evolution”? Job 38:1 - 42:6
- Is the “Intelligent Design” debate a concern for LC-MS Lutherans?
- Theological problems with Macro Evolution
 - Reason over scripture?
 - The origins of... sin!



Young Earth creationism

Young Earth creationism is the belief that the Earth was created by God (probably within the last 10,000 years), literally as described in Genesis, within the approximate timeframe of biblical genealogies (detailed for example in the Ussher chronology). Young Earth creationists often believe that the Universe has a similar age as the Earth. This belief generally has a basis in a literal and inerrant interpretation of the Bible.

Old Earth creationism

Old Earth creationism holds that the physical universe was created by God, but that the creation event of Genesis is not to be taken strictly literally. This group generally believes that the age of the Universe and the age of the Earth are as described by astronomers and geologists, but that details of the evolutionary theory are questionable. Old Earth creationists interpret the creation accounts of Genesis in a number of ways, that each differ from the six, consecutive, 24-hour day creation of the literalist Young Earth Creationist view.

Neo-Creationism (a.k.a. The Intelligent Design Movement)

Neo-Creationists intentionally distance themselves from other forms of creationism, preferring to be known as wholly separate from creationism as a philosophy. Their goal is to restate creationism in terms more likely to be well received by the public, education policy makers and the scientific community. It aims to re-frame the debate over the origins of life in non-religious terms and without appeals to scripture, and to bring the debate before the public. Neo-creationists may be either Young Earth or Old Earth Creationists, and hold a range of underlying theological viewpoints (e.g. on the interpretation of the Bible).

Theistic evolution

Theistic evolution is the general view that, instead of faith being in opposition to biological evolution, some or all classical religious teachings about God and creation are compatible with some or all of modern scientific theory, including, specifically, evolution. Most adherents consider that the first chapters of Genesis should not be interpreted as a "literal" description, but rather as a literary framework or allegory.

Naturalistic evolution

Naturalistic evolution is the position of acceptance of biological evolution and of metaphysical naturalism (and thus rejection of theism and theistic evolution).

Is XXXXXXX Really a Champion of the Gospel and Mission?
By Pastor Paul A. Bartz

One of the primary issues facing Synod this convention is whether we will be a Gospel and mission-minded church. Some would portray those who are concerned about the faithful expression of doctrine as not as concerned about missions and outreach as they ought to be. However, a proposal circulated by "XXXXXXX" has demonstrated the vital truth and importance of the message of those who advocate that our doctrine needs to be faithful to Scripture before we do outreach, both activities at which we should be excelling after more than 150 years in existence.

The very troubling suggestion circulated by "XXXXXXX" refers to recommendations concerning Resolution 2-08, which will be considered shortly by the convention. It reads as follows:

"2-08 Should be amended. While the Scriptures clearly attribute the existence of the world to God's creative activity, the exact method or means (one of which might be theistic evolution) is not clearly revealed. I suggest substituting for the first 'resolved' the following:

"Resolved, That we acknowledge and affirm that the Scriptures in many places emphasize that God is the creator of all that exists; however, we recognize that the means that God employed in calling the world into being remains a mystery...."

This proposal suggests that the method or means of God's creation of the universe should be left open, as a mystery for interpretation, perhaps even that God used evolution ("theistic evolution"), to produce the creation we know.

This proposal ignores the clear use of the Hebrew word "Yom," which is used to refer to the 6 days of creation in Genesis, as well as many other Scriptural passages. "Yom" is used over 1,000 times in the Old Testament. A careful study of "Yom" in context usages indicates that where ever "Yom" is used with a number, or with the phrase "evening and morning," or "dark and light" (there are a number of translation variations, but these are the two main themes), in a narrative, the narrative falls apart into nonsense unless the days are literal, approximately 24-hour days. Review Genesis 1 and you will find that both rules (the number, and the phrase "evening and morning"), appear at the end of each day, thus defining "day."

But this does not sound to many as if it has anything to do with the Gospel. However, it totally destroys the Gospel, and those who promote evolution in the atheist community have long known this.

For if the days of creation are not literal days, and after the sixth of them, man and the creation weren't still perfect, and therefore evolution, with or without God may explain mankind today, then death is not a result of man's sin. Even if, as "XXXXXXX" suggests God may have used evolution, there were millions of years of death before the first man came along to sin.

Therefore all the statements of Scripture linking sin and death are in error. Christ's dying on the cross to pay for our sins with His death was useless if death predates man.

To Encourage Preaching and Teaching Creation

RESOLUTION 2-08

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 21
 22
 23 Overtures 2-24-25, 5-43-45 (CW, pp. 151-152, 237)
 24
 25 WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach that God is the creator of all that exists and is therefore the author and
 26 giver of Life; and
 27
 28 WHEREAS, The theories of evolution, including theistic evolution, undercut this support for the honoring of
 29 life as a gift of God; and
 30
 31 WHEREAS, Advocating theories of evolution, including theistic evolution, is unacceptable and incompatible
 32 with the clear account of creation in Gen. 1-3; and
 33
 34 WHEREAS, It is the church's duty to produce followers of Christ who not only know the fundamentals of
 35 the Christian faith, but also are "prepared to give an answer . . . for the hope that you have" (1 Pet. 3:15); therefore
 36 be it
 37
 38 *Resolved*, That all educational agencies and institutions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod,
 39 including early childhood programs, elementary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries include
 40 as part of their curriculum studies in creation from both a biblical and scientific perspective; and be it further
 41
 42 *Resolved*, That no educational agency or institution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod tolerate the
 43 teaching of evolution as the explanation for the origin of the world; and be it finally
 44
 45 *Resolved*, That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention remind its pastors and teachers to give
 46 greater emphasis to the doctrine of God as the creator and author of life in their preaching and teaching.

From <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5559>

Last action of convention affirms preaching, teaching creation

ST. LOUIS — In the final action before the close of the 62nd Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod July 15, delegates commended “preaching and teaching creation.”

This is not the first time that the Synod has spoken on the matter. A 1971 document of its Commission on Theology and Church Relations affirms creation as God's work.

“The Scriptures teach that God is the creator of all that exists and is therefore the author and giver of life,” today's resolution states. “The hypotheses of macro, organic and Darwinian evolution, including theistic evolution, or any other model denying special, immediate and miraculous creation undercut this support for the honoring of life as a gift of God,” it continues.

The convention resolved that all Synod schools — from preschools to universities and seminaries — “continue to teach creation from the Biblical perspective,” that no school “tolerate any teaching that contradicts the teachings of divine creation,” that schools “properly distinguish between micro and macro evolution” and affirm the Scriptural teaching on creation, and that all pastors and teachers be reminded to “increase emphasis to the doctrine of God as the creator and author of life in their preaching and teaching.”

The resolution was offered by Rev. Alfonso O. Espinosa of The Woodlands, Texas.

Posted July 15, 2004

From an Email Exchange

Original Statement:

- > *Personally, I could give a hoot about the correct answer.... to me,*
- > *the correct answer is that God created the earth, the universe, and*
- > *all its inhabitants. To know the "pure" truth of how long it took and*
- > *what form it took is not necessary for my salvation.*

A Lutheran Pastor's Response:

To the contrary, (*name*). I commend you for your honesty and straightforwardness in your post, but your conclusion that it is not necessary for your salvation is to misunderstand the purpose of all of Scripture, including the account of creation, which is to make one wise unto salvation. For generations the devil has convinced weak Christians that Genesis is far removed from the Gospels. Yet, even many leading promoters of evolution understand this truth more clearly than many Christians. Let me quote one such promoter of evolution, G. Richard Bozarth, writing as editor of *The Secular Humanist*, with whom, on this point I utterly agree:

"Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble, you will find the sorry remains of the son of God. Take away the meaning of His death. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing." ("Religiosity and Powerlessness," *The Humanist*, May-June 1977)

In his writings, Bozarth well understood what evolution means to the Gospel, and he stated the Gospel (while always rejecting it), many times in quite clear language. He was not ignorant of the Gospel, simply unbelieving, but he understood how evolution impacts the Gospel.



Creation vs Evolution

Q. Why doesn't it make sense to consider that man could have slowly evolved over centuries, rather than in an "instant" of creativity by God? Just how long was a day--or a person's "life"--in the beginning? Could not the sixth "day" actually have been thousands or millions of years?

A. All that we as Christians know about the origin of the creation has been revealed to us in the Scriptures, and most specifically, in the Genesis texts. While these texts do not answer (nor were they written to answer) all of the various scientific questions that we as moderns might wish to bring to them, they are very clear about the instantaneous creation out of nothing of man as a creature fully and completely in the image of his Creator. There is not even the slightest hint that an evolutionary process was a work. On the basis of the biblical texts, there is no reason to believe that the term for "day" means anything else than the regular days we know (the burden of proof rests with those who think otherwise, and on the basis of clear textual evidence). However much science may claim to know what really took place "in the beginning," no eyewitnesses among them were there in the beginning to testify to what or how it all happened. Given the assumption of science that empirical verification is needed before one can claim something to be "true," it is understandable how those who proceed in this way would discount the biblical revelation. But for us as Christians, who are content to believe what God has revealed to us (Who was indeed there!) in His Word, the miracle of creation and the accounts of it are cause for praise to Him.

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