

What Lutherans Believe

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

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Creation vs. Evolution

- Macro-evolution vs. Micro-evolution (adaptation): is there a difference?
- Where do we stand on “young Earth” vs. “old Earth” views?
- The Biblical account:
Genesis 1 & 2,
Psalm 139:13-15
- How long is a “day” (Hebrew יום, “yôm”) in the Bible?
- What about
“Theistic Evolution”?
Job 38:1 - 42:6
- Is the “Intelligent Design” debate a concern for LC-MS Lutherans?
- Theological questions/problems concerning Macro Evolution
 - Reason over scripture?
 - What is the root cause of death?



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).

Atheistic evolution

Atheistic evolution is the position of acceptance of biological evolution only with no consideration for spirituality or metaphysics.



What About . . .

Creation and Evolution

Evolution: fact or theory? Many people assume it is simply a fact. Christians who by faith accept the truth of God's Word about Creation, as it is recorded for us in Genesis and elsewhere in the Scriptures, sometimes wonder how they can help others consider the possibility that there is a Creator. The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide a starting point from which to evaluate the claims made by advocates of Evolution.

What is the point of Evolution?

In 1859, Charles Darwin, in his book, *On The Origin of Species*, proposed a theory that the various species of animals resulted from a process of "natural selection," with the "favored races" being preserved in the "struggle for life." Is this merely a scientific theory, or is there more?

"Darwin was fully aware that his idea was a frontal assault on the very notion of an intelligent Designer behind the world. In fact, he might very well have formulated it precisely for that purpose. The idea of a spiritual realm apart from matter seems to have been anathema to him as a young man already. The primary inspiration for his theory of natural selection did not come from observation of nature. Perhaps not incidentally, his writings also reveal glimpses of specific antipathy to the God of the Bible, especially concerning His right to judge unbelievers in eternity." (Wieland).

What challenge to Darwin is found in the details of life?

Evolutionary theory proposes that life forms start out at a very simple level and then, by natural selection, eventually become more and more complex as changes occur. However, biochemical and molecular biological research continues to gather convincing evidence that the living cell is totally useless unless, and until, it reaches its final form, and then, having reached that form, any change at all actually destroys, not enhances, its function. Darwin's greatest challenge comes from the question of how the individual cell developed. Scientists studying this issue have described the living cell as "irreducibly complex."

More and more scientists are reaching the conclusion that living organisms, even the most "simple," show clear evidence of a creator because of their incredible complexity at even the most fundamental levels. The scientific literature is

strangely silent when it comes to the question of how these molecular structures, the basis of life, developed. How could all this have evolved?

Has science accepted Intelligent Design?

Proponents of Intelligent Design have made great headway in recent years. Their findings have added muscle to the long-held Creationist arguments on the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which, simply put, says that the way of all things, both living and non-living, is to go from a state of order to various states of increasing disorder, not the other way around.

Other arguments being put forward are based on dubious dating-methods used by evolutionists, and on the fossil record—the latter still showing no conclusive transitional stages in types or kinds (one would think every fossil would show a transitional stage). Together, these evidences, along with many others, form a convincing case for the idea of Creation and Intelligent Design.

What stands in the way of Intelligent Design?

Evolutionists appear unwilling to address the findings of biochemistry and other related fields. They are quick to say they are defending science, yet when confronted by an Intelligent Design paradigm that explains the data better than their own (such as on the human eye, a bird's wing or the processes of blood-clotting), they offer no scientific defense at all. Instead, they lash out, ridiculing the Intelligent Design paradigm as nothing more than "religious."

What is happening in the scientific community?

Those who prefer the Creation and Intelligent Design explanation for life cannot be conveniently stereotyped as backward, ignorant, flat-earth fanatics. To the contrary, believers in special Creation and Intelligent Design are discerning, rational people—tens of millions of them—who, upon weighing the evidence, have dismissed evolutionary theory as untenable. And these millions are being joined by growing numbers of biologists, geologists, paleontologists, physicists, medical doctors, mathematicians and other professionals in the pure and applied sciences.

A molecular biologist explains that evolutionary theory

What About Creation and Evolution?

has an influence “far removed from biology” and is one of the “most spectacular examples in history of how a highly speculative idea for which there is no really hard scientific evidence can come to fashion the thinking of a whole society and dominate the outlook of an age” (Denton, p. 358).

As one biochemist puts it, “To a person who does not feel obligated to restrict his search to unintelligent causes, the straightforward conclusion is that many biochemical systems were designed. They were designed not by the law of nature, not by chance and necessity; rather, they were planned. Their designer knew what the systems would look like when they were completed, then took steps to bring the systems about. Life on earth at its most fundamental level, in its most critical components, is the product of intelligent activity” (Behe, p. 193).

Is there room for Intelligent Design?

As much compelling evidence as there is for a young earth and a worldwide hydraulic cataclysm (the Noahic Flood, which explains much about our planet’s geology and paleontology), Intelligent Design, on its own merits, can be argued effectively without a single reference to the Scriptures. This natural knowledge of a Creator is not the same as advancing a set of specific theological and doctrinal beliefs about that Creator.

If evolutionists persist in saying that creation cannot be divorced from religion, then they themselves must be prepared to admit that their orthodoxy—that life in all its beauty, organization and complexity arose from random mutations and other Darwinian speculations—is just as dogmatic, just as much a religion, really, as what they scorn. If Creation is theistic, calling for an intelligent, purposeful Author of Life, then naturalistic Evolution is atheistic, denying the existence of that Author and any supernatural acts wrought by His hand.

For generations, Evolution, with all its weaknesses and unexplained gaps, has reigned unchallenged in American public life in our zoos, science centers, museums and mass media, and yes, perhaps most clearly in our schools. The theory of Evolution is simply handed down as fact. Only now, finally, is Evolution being contested on its own terms: objective science.

On the blackboards of America’s public-school science classrooms, and in the pages and on the screens of the media, the time has come for the words “Evolution,” “naturalism” and “neo-Darwinism” to make room for “Intelligent Design.” Anything less, based on the evidence, would be intellectually dishonest.

Can we “baptize” evolutionary theory?

It would be a mistake on our part to think that simply by presenting the evidence for Intelligent Design, a person will become a Christian. Believing that God is our loving heavenly Father who created the heavens and the earth is an article of faith. Believing that there is an intelligent designer is a far cry from believing that we are sinful human beings in need of a Savior and then trusting in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is our Savior from sin, death and the power of Satan. Such a living hope is a gift of God, given by the Holy Spirit. It is not a matter of scientific study or analysis. Faith is as miraculous an event in our life as is God’s work of Creation in the world. In fact, it is no accident that those who are in Christ are called “new creations” (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod believes, teaches and confesses that Adam and Eve were real historic individuals and that the Genesis account of Creation is true and factual, not merely a “myth” or a “story” made up to explain the origin of all things.

We would also be making a very serious error simply to accept the theories of science without question. Many aspects of evolutionary theory are directly contradictory to God’s Word. Evolution cannot be “baptized” to make it compatible with the Christian faith. Those who attempt inevitably wind up watering down the teachings of the Bible. Christians have no need to fear the findings of science, nor do they have any reason to give “science” more credence than they give the Word of God.

As scientists continue to study and explore the wonders of God’s creation we join the ancient Psalmist in saying, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:14).

For Further Study:

Michael Behe, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

William Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Chevy Chase, Md.: Adler & Adler, 1985).

Carl Wieland, “Darwin’s Real Message, Have You Missed It?” *Creation Ex Nihilo* (14(4):16-19, Sept.-Nov. 1992).

— Dr. A. L. Barry

President

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

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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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

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.