

A Southern Baptist Replies

Dear Dr. Wilson:

Thank you for your beautiful and heartfelt [letter regarding the Creation](#) and why we all must consider how to work together to save it. We have many common interests and grounds to respect one another. Like you, I was raised in the Southern Baptist but also Pentecostal and Presbyterian religious traditions. I have worked as a scientist for nearly 40 years. Whether we have actually met or not, we can be, and have been, friends.

Even for those of us who accept the Bible as the word of God, there are a number of reasons to consider intermediate points of view regarding whether creation and natural selection/evolution are incompatible. Many Bible-believing Christians have a hard time accepting six 24-hour days as the amount of time it took to create the universe and all the diversity of life on earth. We must acknowledge that the Bible uses allegories, poetry, parables, dreams, and many other traditional ways of teaching.

If God created "all things," then He created not only the animals, plants, forests, oceans, mountains, and sky, but also the processes by which they interact and function, including the fact that natural forces can result in anatomic and behavioral variation within a species (natural selection). The results of natural selection can be observed in relatively short time frames. We can't and shouldn't deny what we can see.

The problem between Christians and evolutionary scientists arises in what we can't see: in interpretation of the fossil record and when natural selection is invoked to explain huge changes in morphology, for which there are few if any real "missing links," and the rise of new species. In a word, evolution. From its first consideration evolution has been shouted down as blasphemy, a challenge and insult to God.

Now we have spent the better part of two centuries fighting over this. How sad. I say sad because, if natural selection does lead to evolution and the origin of species, then it too is a process created by God, at least from a Christian viewpoint. In the end, perhaps God will let us know whether natural selection leads to evolution or not.

In the meantime, as you have noted, Dr. Wilson, we seem to be facing an unparalleled crisis of our own making. Although there may be some room to disagree whether the looming extinction crisis will seriously impact half the species of plants and animals on earth, anything even close to that is a violation of our responsibility to God. In Revelations 7:3 God tells us quite clearly, "Hurt not the earth, neither the seas, nor the trees." The Bible teaches Christians to love, care for, husband and steward the earth and all the life that God has given us. Although there is plenty of blame to go around, this extinction crisis is happening primarily as a result of greed, selfishness, and self-deception. So, I would hope all Christians would agree that this is one life-and-death issue where we must find a common purpose with all our neighbors and colleagues.

The defense of living Nature is a universal value. Most of the world's other great religions contain similar teachings regarding the stewardship of the Creation. Perhaps it is time to reach out to all of them, to try to unite behind saving the diversity of the Creation and life on earth.

Your brother, colleague, and friend,
DAVID A. JESSUP