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Why Theistic Evolution Is The Place To Be by Glenn R. Morton

I believe the Bible is historically true and teaches evolution.

Let's begin by looking at the evidence in favor of evolution. The geologic record of earth history consists of a sequence of rock layers, one above another. These layers have been joined into formations, which are a recognizable layer cake sequence which can be followed for some distance. Formations have been arranged into Groups, which also are a layer cake sequence which can be followed for some distance.

The formations and groups are lithologic in nature. But there is a temporal relationship to the rocks which is expressed in terms of geologic ages. These time divisions are based upon the very simple concept that a rock layer lying below another is older than the layer above. This follows from the very simple concept that sedimentation is a process whereby particles of sand, shale, and so forth come from above the ocean floor, not from beneath it. Older particles are buried by later particles. Thus, we can impose a temporal order onto the rocks and the form of that order is the standard geologic ages. From top (youngest) to bottom (oldest) these are: Holocene, Pleistocene, Pliocene, Miocene, Oligocene, Eocene, Paleocene, Cretaceous, Jurassic, Triassic, Permian, Pennsylvanian, Mississippian, Devonian, Silurian, Ordovician, Cambrian and Precambrian..

It was necessary to outline the nature of the geologic column in that simple fashion so that one can understand the distribution of fossils contained in the geologic column. In the shallowest layers, Holocene, Pleistocene, Pliocene and Miocene, we find fossils of modern, living animals. Their proportion drops precipitously as one goes deeper (older) with each passing geologic age. For instance, according to one count, there are 4,631 mammalian species alive today. We find only 282 of them represented in the fossils of the Pleistocene. Of these, we find only 67 alive in the Pliocene and only 2 living species are found as a fossils in the Miocene. But if one counts extinct species, we see

the opposite pattern. There are 786 species in the Pleistocene which are not found in the Holocene. There are 1,119 extinct species in the Pliocene which are not found alive today and 2,988 extinct species found in the Miocene which are not found alive today. Not a single living mammalian species is found in rocks lower than the Miocene and all mammal fossils found in those rocks are different in morphology. They are similar in some respects but different enough to be classified as distinct species from modern ones. This illustrates the fact that as one goes back in time, to older (deeper) rocks, the life forms found there are totally different than those we find alive today. The fact is: all life has changed. Modern forms are not found in the oldest rocks.

This fact totally violates the young-earth conception of a global flood. If the fossils are the remains of a biosphere whose representatives got on the ark, one must believe that a different set of animals got off the ark. For the old earth creationist, like Hugh Ross, who believes that God created each species, the details of the pattern seen in the rocks show a god who must create over and over again animals which were only slightly different than the animals which went extinct. It creates the concept of a bumbling god who can't get it right the first time or is incapable of designing a system which could bring the variety about. It means that God must create each individual form. Evolution explains the change we see in the fossil record.

The next question is: Does the Bible rule out evolution? Contrary to what both literalists and modernists believe, the Bible, as written, does not rule out evolution. Indeed, I believe that the Bible actually teaches evolution. No where in the Bible is there a verse which says: "Animals (subject) reproduce(verb) animals(object) after their kind." If there were, then the Bible would rule out evolution. The grammar of Genesis 1:24 is that God ordered the earth(subject) to bring forth(verb) animals(object) after their kind (or according to their kind). That is quite a different sentence from one where animals are ordered to bring forth animals after their kind. Even the Hebrew verbs in Genesis 1:24 and 1:11 are in the Hiphil tense, which implies that God told the earth to cause to bring forth—an even stronger statement of indirect causation. It was this which made the 13th-

century Jewish Rabbi Nachmanides say:

“He decreed that there be among the products of the earth a force which grows and bears seed so that the species should exist forever. It is possible that the name ‘earth’ mentioned in the first verse already contains a hint that a force which causes things to grow should spring up from the earth, and it was from this force that the foundations of all vegetations according to their kinds emanated.”

That force is evolution.

Having shown that evolution is necessary and shown that evolution is probably taught by Scripture, how can one demonstrate that evolution is theistic? Unfortunately, there are no qualitative or quantitative distinctions between evolution guided by God and naturalistic evolution. Thus, the naturalist will claim that theism is merely an useless add-on to evolution. But this ignores the amazing fine-tuning we see in the universe both cosmically but also biologically. Lee Smolin has placed the odds of the laws of physics being what they are one chance in 10^{229} . The usual solution for this naturalistic problem is to make our universe one of an infinite ensemble of universes—Smolin views the universe darwinistically with universes reproducing via black holes. But such constructs can't be observed and it still avoids the question of how such a system came to be in the first place. If one restricts himself to what we can actually observe, the parameters for the universe appear to be finely chosen to allow for our existence.

Even in biology there is a type of fine tuning. The anti-evolutionists are correct, when we calculate the probabilities for a single protein sequence, the odds against it forming by chance are greater than one chance in 10^{100} . Some, like Dembski, note that a search for such a low probability event could not be successful given the age of the universe. Once again, the universe provides a solution. Most specified biological functionalities can be found experimentally in randomly made proteins at rates of one chance in 10^{11} rather than the anti-evolutionary and erroneous calculations. Build one protein per second and in 3200 years you have found a workable protein.

To conclude, we can demonstrate to a high probability that evolution is true. We cannot demonstrate that that evolution is theistic without taking the broader view of nature and noting that this world appears amazingly tuned for our existence, both in the realm of physics as well as in the realm of biology. Someone, or something rigged the universe to enable us to come about via evolution.

About The Author

Glenn Morton works as geophysicist in the oil industry and has been involved in the creation/evolution debate for over 30 years.

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