



CREATION AND EVOLUTION

We are fearfully and wonderfully made

Julie Robb

My first degree is in Biochemistry. I loved the subject and found it fascinating. Subsequently, I studied for a postgraduate diploma in dietetics and worked in the NHS for some years. I also have a PhD in theology. What does it mean for me as a Christian who wants to stand-up for biblical truth and, at the same time, acknowledge that science has taught us things about the world that the Bible simply does not tell us?

As a first year undergraduate, in my introductory lecture in Biochemistry, I remember the lecturer saying confidently that life could be created in a test-tube. All that was needed was the basic building blocks of life (amino acids and so on) and with the addition of the correct amount of energy, life would be created (or at least a simple bacterium or virus). I remember thinking, 'that might be true, but to give "breath" and "animate" a living being requires so much more'. In actual fact, as I spent three years with the subject, I grew more and more amazed and could only marvel at the biochemical intricacy of nature and, in particular, of humans. We are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' (Ps 139:14). It only takes one base to be wrong in our DNA sequence, for example, and all kinds of problems, in some cases tragic problems, result.

However, I also have to acknowledge that micro-evolution occurs. One of the problems for hospitals is the ongoing fight against MRSA infections. Bacteria have developed resistance to antibiotics, making them difficult to treat, as bacteria have "evolved" in response to our pharmaceutical armoury. It would be foolish to deny this. However, they still remain bacteria. But this is true of more complex organisms including humans too – micro-evolution might not change the nature of the organism but certain features may become more prominent, others less so, because of environment. But accepting micro-evolution does not mean that we have to accept everything about macro-evolution (evolution between species). One of the questions, of course, I would want to put to the scientists is why 'macro-evolution' stopped at humans. Why have we not continued evolving into something different?

So where does all this leave me when I consider science and theology? I think the starting point is to acknowledge that there is a difference between theology and science and that we need to recognise the limits of each. Problems arise when either discipline tries to move into areas beyond its competency. This, for me, is part of the problem with Richard Dawkins book, *The God Delusion* (London: Random House, 2006). Clearly, Professor Dawkins is a brilliant scientist, and I would not want to deny that, but when he strays into the area of theology and biblical studies, he demonstrates his ignorance. At the same time, as Christians and theologians we must beware trying to make the Bible and, in particular, the creation accounts, into a scientific account of the

world. In the end the "how" of creation in terms of the science remains an unanswered question biblically. The Bible affirms God as creator and creation as good, ordered, lavish and beautiful, but we must beware of anachronistically reading our 21st century questions into the text.

In the end, science and theology are not mutually exclusive; only when each stays entrenched in certain "presuppositions" do problems arise as dialogue becomes impossible. Let it not be said of us that we are never open to development, on the theological level as we listen to God and read his Word, and on the scientific level as we dialogue with the science and change our views if the evidence demands it.

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