

## **Nothing barring coexistence of evolution and religion**

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Over 150 years ago Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace through their scientific research independently came up with parallel ideas on the theory of evolution. Presently, most evolutionary biologists such as the renowned Edward O. Wilson accept evolution as a valid explanation of the development of the present day variety of plant and animal species.

When doctors prescribe antibiotics such as beta lactams (penicillin family) patients are instructed to complete the entire prescribed dosage rather than stopping part way through so that harmful bacteria will not evolve to be resistant to a mild amount of antibiotics. Later the same bacteria may rapidly evolve further to be completely resistant to larger amounts of similar antibiotics. This medical procedure is an example of modern day acknowledgement that evolution is presently at work in our everyday world. Evolution is not just a phenomenon in ancient development of plants and animals. Evolution is an ongoing reality in all life forms now and will continue on into the future.

Those who deny evolution frequently emphasize the process as “only a theory” rather than an established fact. There are many invisible processes that are known in the world of science. For example, gravity, electric current, germs, sound waves, and magnetic attraction are invisible to the naked eye, but they are all theories that can be demonstrated and proven and their results can be felt in very real ways. For example, atomic bombs manifest the destructive power developed from atomic theory. In science good theory leads to testable hypotheses.

Biblical literalists have been convinced that all biblical writing should be regarded as absolutely true despite any modern evidence to the contrary. Fortunately, most liberal religious adherents today realize that early myths and allegories of the bible were written by writers long ago who did the best they could in a prescientific era to explain phenomenon and mysteries of their world.

Some common misinterpretations about evolution are partly responsible for creating deniers rather than believers in the evolutionary process. While many enlightened religious adherents believe in God they also accept Darwinian evolution rather than the creation stories of Genesis, unlike the fundamentalists literalists who remain avid creationists. The latter mistakenly think one cannot be both religious and believe in evolution at the same time. Another error in thinking about evolution is that evolutionary belief holds the view that the survival of the fittest means the same as survival of the strongest. A more accurate view of survival of the fittest is that plant and animal life that best “fits” the environment is most likely to survive. For example, ants which work within colonies of thousands of cooperative members are relatively weak. On the other hand dinosaurs, which were quite physically strong have long since expired.

Another mistaken notion about evolution is that some people who deny evolution believe that they would have to agree that humans originally descended from monkeys. While it’s true that humans and chimpanzees share 98 % of similar DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) it seems that both monkeys and humans share a common primate ancestor having branched out to become separate genetic species.

Healthy plants and animals have the ability to reproduce their cell structure, but sometimes mutations occur in the process. Most cell reproduction works well but sometimes cell reproduction goes amok. These mutations usually have a negative effect on an otherwise healthy process. In some cases such as the development of mutant cancer cells, the results lead to sickness or to death. On the other hand, mutations are occasionally beneficial when they help an organism survive better and in a healthier manner. That is, they often assist organisms to “fit” better into their environment and result in the “survival of the fittest”. Nature will select those favorable mutations and adaptations that help species to survive. Darwin called this process natural selection.

Today, acceptance of Darwinian evolution through natural selection is stronger than ever in the scientific community. Darwin is now hailed along with the likes of Sir Isaac Newton as one of the greatest scientists of all time. There is no reason why liberal religious people should feel uncomfortable accepting evolution as

opposed to biblical creationism. Religious beliefs and scientific truths differ, but need not be antithetical.