

CAN GENESIS BE HARMONISED WITH A SCIENTIFIC ACCOUNT OF ORIGINS?

1. PRELIMINARY POINTS

- 'All Christians are, by definition, creationists' (Denis Alexander, *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* p. 15)
- I would never dream of using the pulpit to say, "This is what you *should* believe."

2. THREE QUESTIONS

Reference: Tim Keller, Six-part series on *Creation, Evolution, and Christian Laypeople* (Biologos, Feb-Mar 2012)

Keller's conclusion:

Christians who are seeking to correlate Scripture and science must be a "bigger tent" than either the anti-scientific religionists or the anti-religious scientists. Even though in this paper I argue for the importance of belief in a literal Adam and Eve, I have shown here that there are several ways to hold that and still believe in God using [evolutionary biological processes].

When Derek Kidner concluded his account of human origins, he said that his view was an "exploratory suggestion...only tentative, and it is a personal view. It invites correction and a better synthesis." That is the right attitude for all of us working in this area.

QUESTION ONE: If God used evolution to create, then we can't take Genesis 1 literally, and if we can't do that, why take any other part of the Bible literally?

Answer: The way to respect the authority of the Biblical writers is to take them as they want to be taken. Sometimes they want to be taken literally, sometimes they don't. We must listen to them, not impose our thinking and agenda on them.

Walter Brueggemann on Genesis 3:

The Bible is not an answer book to all of the curious questions we may ask. ... It is, rather, the summons of this calling God for us to be his creatures, to live in his world on his terms.' (*Genesis* [Interpretation series], p. 44)

QUESTION TWO: If biological evolution is true—does that mean that we are just animals driven by our genes, and everything about us can be explained by natural selection?

Answer: No. Belief in evolution as a biological process is not the same as belief in evolution as a world-view.

QUESTION THREE: If biological evolution is true and there was no historical Adam and Eve how can we know where sin and suffering came from?

Answer: Belief in evolution can be compatible with a belief in an historical fall and a literal Adam and Eve. There are many unanswered questions around this issue and so Christians who believe God used evolution must be open to one another's views.

3. HUMAN ORIGINS AND THE ORIGIN OF SIN: DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE THIRD OF KELLER'S QUESTIONS

Reference: Denis Alexander, *Creation or Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?*, pp. 234-43, 254-56

	MODEL A	MODEL B	MODEL C	MODEL D	MODEL E
Relationship with modern science	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent in parts	Inconsistent
Main features	Genesis 1-3 has no connection with history.	Evolutionary creationism. Theological literature that corresponds with historical events. Speaks of humanity's growing awareness of God and understanding of moral responsibility	Evolutionary creationism. Theological literature that corresponds with historical events. Speaks of God choosing to reveal himself to a particular couple of Neolithic farmers in the ancient Near East.	Old-earth creationism. Adam created directly by God, <i>not</i> by an evolutionary process.	Young-earth creationism. Adam created directly by God on the sixth day.
Who was Adam?	Adam is everyman and everywoman.	Represents the first humans to turn to their creator. Not a particular individual.	Historical figure who lived perhaps 6,000-8,000 years ago. A product of an evolutionary process, like all other humans.	Historical figure who lived perhaps 6,000-8,000 years ago. A special creation of God.	Historical figure who lived perhaps 6,000-8,000 years ago. A special creation of God.
What about the Fall?	Not a particular event in history. The timeless story of everyman and everywoman.	Not rooted in a particular event, but does describe a historical reality. As humanity grew in its awareness of God, it also began to consciously reject God, resulting in alienation from him.	A particular event in history. General view: While there was death before the fall, Adam and Eve's sin introduces spiritual death of humans into the world.	A particular event in history. General view: Adam and Eve's sin introduces death – both spiritual <i>and</i> physical – of humans into the world.	A particular event in history. General view: Adam and Eve's sin introduces spiritual and physical death of all humans, and physical death of other living creatures.
Outstanding issues/questions					

4. CONCLUSIONS?

Written in **pencil**:

Written in **ink**:

Written in **blood**: