

Evolution and Creation: Explaining the Great Leap—Part One

Why is there so much controversy about the origin of human life? Why are there so many different views about how humanity came to be on earth? In the Christian world, the answers to these questions often come down to what is said in the book of Genesis. In the scientific community, the answers to these questions often come down to the facts presented by research and discovery.

When Christopher Columbus arrived in the New World in the year 1492, he discovered something that would challenge a long-held belief about the book of Genesis. He discovered an unknown people on a then uncharted landmass far from the continent of Europe.

When he returned to Europe in 1493, Columbus wrote a letter to King Ferdinand of Spain about the people he had discovered. He assured the king that these people were a well-formed people and not some strange type of humans as some had supposed. In fact, many people were curious about the Amerindians that Columbus had brought with him on his return trip.

But there was a problem.

There was a perplexing question that needed to be answered.

How could their existence be explained?

Because the traditional view at that time was guided by biblical interpretation and a misunderstanding of what had happened to Noah and his family. Some had interpreted the biblical account to mean that Noah and his family were the only peoples who had survived the Flood.

Consequently, Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham and Japheth—were considered the ancestors of three races, which were thought to inhabit three areas of the world. But, in actuality, the issue of race, and the origins of the different races, are not addressed in the story of Noah and the Flood. (It is supposed incorrectly that the Flood covered the globe, making the earth like a ball of water, but the biblical account doesn't present this conclusion.)

However, Columbus' discovery showed people who did not fit the description of western civilization's then current understanding of the world, and the creation of that world.

This, of course, sent a wave of uncertainty through the populace of the “faithful” and the monasteries of the Catholic church.

Some few years later, Pope Julius II summoned the Fifth Lateran Council and, among many other things, issued a declaration that American Indians were true descendants of Adam and Eve. Because they were not able to account for these people in the biblical record, it was assumed by some that they were Babylonians from the Old World who had survived the Flood. This conclusion appeased, at least for a time, the clergy of the church.

Nevertheless, the discovery of a peoples in the New World was just one of the challenges that would pose a threat to people’s interpretation of the Genesis account, and the biblical explanation of the origins of humankind.

The most well-known challenge in this modern age is the theory of evolution.

Notably, not many years after Columbus discovered the New World a change began to take place in the way people saw the world. In reaction to what the theologians had been saying for many years, a movement began to gain ground that became known as Humanism. It paved the way for people to challenge the longstanding beliefs perpetuated by some theologians, and

inspired people to take a look at the facts presented to them by a world of discoveries, which has continued to propel the humanist philosophical approach to explain the origins of life and the gradual development of humankind. The basic tenet of the theory of evolution is that life has gradually evolved from the simple to the complex, and it is this theory in particular that has sparked a combative situation between evolutionists and creationists.

Now, the traditional view of the creation vs. evolution issue that is held by a good many Christians is commonly found (with many variations) in Christian-based works that attempt to address the issue of evolution. Sometimes we find that Christian writers have used their efforts to refute the theory of evolution only to show that they also have not really studied the issues of creation as presented in the Bible. On the other hand, some Christians simply assume that what has been discovered through scientific inquiry is wrong in its entirety, without ever questioning and examining the evidence as compared to the biblical account of creation.

Consequently, when thinking of creation, people’s minds usually go back to the story found in the book of Genesis. Seldom, it seems, do people allow their minds to go back farther in time. It doesn’t seem relevant for some to consider the periods of the dinosaurs, or the possible periods of time before their

existence. But, if people believe that they were created, and they hold the Genesis account to be valid, then they must accept the fact that the creation of matter—and life—began before humans came on the scene.

In the biblical account it says that the Lord God, “formed man of the dust of the ground.” This statement alone makes the reader acknowledge an existence of matter prior to Adam’s creation. Showing also that God did not create all things from “nothingness,” or in the absence of his other creations, and the biblical account states in simple terms the nature of the origin of human life.

Notably though the biblical account does not describe how long this process took, but a reader may reasonably conclude from the way it is written that it happened instantaneously. One could use certain known facts about the human body to explain the reasonable necessity for an immediate creation.

This would give statements such as “dust of the ground,” and “breath of life,” a more figurative sense compared to the actual way God did it. In other words, these statements would be just another way to express the fact that Adam was made from existing matter, and so we have the recorded instance in the Bible of when God caused the living to appear from the non-living matter of this earth.

Meaning that even in the biblical account of Adam’s beginning we see a great leap is acknowledged and an explanation is made as to how human life came to be on earth. Thus, the biblical account explains the existence of a power and a life that was able to make a great leap from the non-living to the living in order to form the first individual human—Adam.

However, there are those who would consider this story to be myth and they would pay little attention to it because it is not a scientific explanation of the origin of human life. But it should be pointed out that simply because the Bible uses such phrases as “dust of the earth,” and “breath of life,” does not negate the truthfulness of these statements. A person can write in general principles, concepts and ideas, or in an actual or figurative sense. A person can also write using techniques such as metaphor or analogy and still convey it truthfully.

We need to keep in mind that the Bible is not describing molecular changes, or the complexities of cellular development, but rather the concept of where Adam’s life began in the overall scope of God’s wider creation. Adam’s life is linked to the earth from which he came, and to the earth to which he will return, and the same can be said of all of us as well.

It is also worth noting that Genesis was not written by a naturalist, biologist or geneticist. Neither was it written by a biblical scholar, historian or theologian. It is written much like a family history, which contains a family heritage.

So, instead of just viewing the Genesis account as a story of the family of man, perhaps it ought also to be seen as the story of one man's family—the family of Adam.

With this premise in mind, we might find that there is probably more common ground to be found between the die-hard creationist and the adamant evolutionist than either would care to admit. Both the creationist and the evolutionist stand at the edge of a great gulf, and both are staring into the same unfathomable gap. It is what each sees in this gap that raises so much controversy about the origin of life by trying to explain the great leap that is made from the simple to the complex, and from the non-living to the living.

Oddly enough, it is Scripture that first acknowledges the existence of this gap in the Genesis account, but we would also have to say that the scientific community has by discovery and methodical research exposed the vastness and complexity of this gap to the modern world.

What is this gap?

What is it the evolutionist and creationist see in this vast gulf?

When Adam was formed from the “dust of the ground,” according to the biblical account, whether actually or figuratively or both, a gap was created, a threshold was crossed, and a leap was made from the non-living to the living.

This becomes obvious when we consider that the composition of Adam's body, as a new being, would not have been composed of “earth,” but of trillions of living cells just as we are today. This means that there was a tremendous transition between what Adam was composed from and what he finally became—a living being. And because Adam was not created from complete nothingness, but from existing matter, there was a moment of time when a change took place.


So, no matter how quickly or slowly this happened, and no matter how this was accomplished, there was a gap, and a great leap was made from the non-living to the living. This may well have been an indiscernible gap of time and change, if there were any human present to witness the event. But the amount of time and change doesn't really matter.

All that matters is that one existed.

The creationist faces this issue in the story found in Genesis.

The evolutionist faces this issue in the facts of scientific discoveries.

Something that the evolutionist and creationist both cannot deny.

Therefore, the evolutionist and creationist are brought to examine the same issue, and it is an issue not overlooked by the scientific data or the Scripture. It is how the issue of the simple to complex, and the great leap from living to non-living, is explained that sets the creationist and evolutionist apart. It is what both are looking for when they look into the vast gulf between the time when humankind did not exist and the moment when humankind did exist. Bringing us then to examine the comparative conclusion made by both the evolutionist and the creationist. 

(Continued in part two of this series.)