**Origin of Life**

**Evolution, Creation Science, & Christian Beliefs**

**Belief systems about the origin of life & the development of species**

Debates on the Internet, within religious groups, and in the media about the origins and development of species of plant and animal life on Earth were often presented as a life and death struggle between two competing beliefs: naturalistic evolution and creation science.

This was not a particularly accurate description. There were in reality three main belief systems being promoted by individuals and organizations in North America. Within these three main systems there were many variations.

The three main belief systems:

Hundreds of religions around the world taught creation stories which accounted for the diversity of life on Earth. The theory of evolution was also a popular belief, particularly among scientists, secularists, and religious liberals.

In North America, beliefs regarding the origins of the origins of species of plant and animal life mostly fell into three general categories. Starting with the most popular:

* Creation science: God created the universe during 6 consecutive, 24-hour days less than 10,000 years ago, precisely as a one of the literal interpretations of the Biblical book of Genesis would indicated. All of the various “kinds” of plants and animals that currently existed (and that once existed but are now extinct) on earth were descendants of the original life forms that God created during the single week of creation. However, within these original kinds of animals, microevolution had resulted in similar species developing. For example, God created a deer “kind” which had developed into a variety of deer. This was the most popular belief system among the general public. It was the least popular among earth and biological scientists. Over 99% of such scientists believed that a literal translation of Genesis did not represent reality, and thus that creation science was false.
* Theistic evolution view: The universe was about 14 billion years old. The earth’s crust developed about 4.5 billion years ago. Some believers in this option suggested that God created the first cell; others suggest that the first cell happened as a result of natural processes through abiogenesis. Subsequently, God used evolution as a tool to guide the development of each new species. By steering evolution over time, God eventually produced human beings.
* Scientific view: Evolution was driven by blind, unguided natural forces without a goal. Darwin’s belief that naturally occurring differences among offspring lead to evolution of the species through natural selection was the main -- or perhaps the only -- driving principle behind evolution. If God existed, he played no part in the processes. If all life were to be wiped off of the face of the Earth -- not that remote a possibility with the Earth’s current levels of religious hatred and supply of nuclear weapons -- and life were to start over, there was absolutely no certainty that intelligent beings would evolve. If they did, there was no certainty that they would look much like homo sapiens.

Those who believed in the inerrancy of the Bible attempted to follow eternal Biblical truths. However, they seemed to have great difficulty in settling on a single understanding of the origins and development of plant and animal species. They had ended up with many different conflicting theories which could not be harmonized. Meanwhile, the scientific community had arrived at an almost complete consensus in the theory of evolution. As new evidence was found, some details of the evolution of species were occasionally modified. Yet supporters of naturalistic evolution long ago reached a consensus on the overall evolutionary process.