

Calvin College Biology Department

Perspectives on Evolution

February 4, 2011

Biology Department Faculty, Calvin College

Overview

We believe in God, we affirm God's promises as presented in the inspired Scriptures, and we joyfully worship God by embracing our calling as Christian biologists. While we understand that the term "evolution" can mean different things to different people, we accept the biological theory of evolution (descent with modification over time) to be the best explanation for understanding the diversity and commonality seen among all living creatures on Earth. We find the evidence in support of this theory to be convincing, and we reject any notion that suggests the acceptance of this scientific theory precludes God's existence and creative activity.

1. We affirm that human beings are able to learn about God by studying the creation and by studying the Scriptures.

We believe in one Creator God who is made known to humankind through two means - general revelation of creation and special revelation of Scripture (Belgic Confession, Article 2). Though our human condition limits our ability to read both revelations with full clarity, we believe the best way to learn about God is by integrating these two sources of truth. As scientists who work within the framework of Christian faith, we humbly strive to integrate our faith into all aspects of our scholarship. We do not avoid the difficult questions that may present themselves, but proceed with careful confidence because we believe that these two revelations make known the one true God.

2. As Christian biologists we oppose any use of scientific theories that attempt to deny the Creator God.

Science is a human activity that describes and investigates the functions, processes, and history of the physical world. We believe that questions concerning the meaning, purpose, and governance of the cosmos cannot be fully explained by the natural sciences alone. Evolutionary biology does not undermine faith in an everlasting, all-powerful, yet personal Creator God upon whom the very existence of the creation depends. Those who elevate any scientific theory to this level of explanatory power, we believe, are overstepping the limits of scientific inquiry.

3. We teach evolutionary theory as the best scientific explanation for the dynamic diversity of life on Earth.

The theory of evolution is one of biology's key unifying principles. It integrates and explains observations in all areas of biology, including the DNA sequences in genomes of creatures past and present, the emergence of resistant strains of disease, similarity of molecules in widely divergent lineages, hybridization events between different species, elegant camouflage coloration in insects, and the uniqueness of species on tropical islands. We believe God brings forth the creation through evolutionary means. While no biological theory is ever beyond revision, we affirm the scientific consensus that life has existed on Earth for billions of years and that it has changed, and continues to change over time.

4. While being sensitive to the diverse faith backgrounds of our students, we teach biology from an evolutionary paradigm.

We embrace the opportunities and challenges offered by the diverse faith backgrounds of our students. We work to promote an atmosphere in our classrooms where students with various perspectives on evolutionary theory are welcome. We are compelled to present the best science available, pastorally guiding open discussions in ways that are scientifically accurate and that promote intellectual and spiritual growth. To proceed in any other way, we believe, would be disingenuous and would result in a disservice to our vocational calling as Christian biologists.

To discuss this statement further, please contact any biology faculty member.
This statement aligns with the Acts of Synod of the Christian Reformed Church.