

## Evolution Op-Ed

By Senator Sam Brownback

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In our sound-bite political culture it is unrealistic to expect that every complicated issue will be addressed with the nuance or subtlety it deserves. So I suppose I should not have been surprised when, during the first presidential debate at the Reagan Library, the candidates on stage were asked to raise their hands if they did not “believe” in evolution.

As one of those who raised his hand, I think it would be helpful to address the issue in a bit more detail and with the seriousness it demands.

The premise behind the question seems to be that if one doesn’t unhesitatingly assert belief in evolution, then one must necessarily believe that God created the world and everything in it in six twenty-four hour days. But this premise needlessly simplifies a complex issue and creates a misleading dichotomy.

The heart of the issue is that we cannot drive a wedge between faith and reason. I believe whole-heartedly that there cannot be any contradiction between the two. Likewise, I take seriously the instruction of Scripture, “be ready to give reason for the hope that is in you.”

People of faith should be rational, using the gift of reason that God has given us. At the same time, reason itself cannot answer every question. Faith seeks to purify reason so that we might be able to see more clearly, not less. More than that, faith—not science—can have explanations for the breadth of human suffering or the depth of human love. Faith and science should go together, not be driven apart.

The question of evolution goes to the heart of this issue. If belief in evolution means simply assenting to microevolution, small changes over time within a species, I am happy to say, as I have in the past, that I believe it to be true. On the other hand, if it means assenting to an exclusively materialistic, deterministic vision of the world that holds no place for a guiding intelligence, then I certainly reject it.

There is no one single theory of evolution, as proponents of punctuated equilibrium and classical Darwinism continue to feud today. Many questions raised by evolutionary theory go beyond empirical science and are better addressed in the realm of philosophy or theology.

Yet many of the most passionate advocates of these theories offer a vision of man that limits him to being a kind of historical accident, nothing more the chance product of random mutations. That being the case, many believers—myself included—reject arguments for evolution that dismiss the possibility of divine causality.

Ultimately, on the question of the origins of the universe, I am happy to let the facts speak for themselves. While there are aspects of evolutionary biology that clearly reveal a great deal about the nature of the world, I believe, as do many biologists and people of faith, that the whole process of creation—and indeed life today—is sustained by the hand of God in a manner known fully only to him. It does not strike me as anti-science or anti-reason to question the philosophical presuppositions behind theories offered by scientists who venture far beyond their realm of empirical science.

While biologists will have their debates about man's origins, I maintain that people of faith can bring a great deal to the table. For this reason, I am totally against the exclusion of either faith or reason from the discussion. Any theory that seeks a monopoly on these questions is wrong-headed. As science continues to explore the details of man's origin, faith can do its part as well. The fundamental question for me is how these theories affect our understanding of the human person.

The unique and special place of each and every human person in creation is a fundamental truth that must be safeguarded. I am wary of any theory that seeks to undermine man's essential dignity and unique and intended place in the cosmos. I firmly believe that each human person, regardless of circumstance, was willed into being and made for a purpose.

While no stone should be left unturned in seeking to discover the nature of man's origins, we can say with conviction that we know with certainty at least part of the outcome. Man was not an accident and reflects an image and likeness unique in the created order. Those aspects of evolutionary theory compatible with this truth are a welcome addition to human knowledge. Aspects of these theories which undermine this truth, however, should be firmly rejected as an atheistic theology posing as science.

Without hesitation, I am happy to raise my hand to that.