

Theistic Evolution and Genesis

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There are many in the religious world, and a few in the New Testament church, who think that Genesis can and must be harmonized with evolution. They are theistic evolutionists who maintain that evolution was God's method of creation. Can Genesis be harmonized with theistic evolution?

No Reason to Make the Attempt

The writer is convinced that what Genesis teaches harmonizes with any and every truth concerning the matter of origins. There have been conflicts between what some have thought about Genesis, and what some have thought about science. However, sometimes there is a vast difference between what some have said about the Bible and what the Bible actually teaches. There may also be a vast difference between a scientist's interpretation of the facts and the facts themselves. T. H. Huxley, the evolutionist and agnostic, well said that before one can prove a conflict between Genesis and science, one must know what Genesis teaches and what science has proved. This may not always be as easy to ascertain as some people casually assume.

Science has not proved any hypothesis of evolution, nor has it established the fact of evolution. We are using the term evolution to refer to the origin of our solar system — and the universe, too — and all of life.

Although there are some scientists who have maintained that evolution is as firmly established as the rotundity of the earth, they have made such a claim because of their prejudices or because of their profound ignorance. Evolution is an hypothesis which is founded on another hypothesis. The hypothesis on which it is founded is that everything must be explained naturally. This is sometimes called the doctrine of uniformity. It says that all past processes are uniform with, in so far as cause is concerned, processes which work now. It is also called the doctrine of continuity. In other words, present day processes are all continuous with the processes of the past. Nothing in the past has happened due to any causes other than the causes which continue to work even until now. Dr. Robert T. Clark and I have dealt with this in our book on *Why Scientists Accept Evolution*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House). However, the fact is that the uniformitarians assume a contradiction, i.e. that past processes accomplished results which no one can prove they are in the process of accomplishing today. They attribute unknown results to known causes.

If one assumes that everything must be explained naturally, the only thing left for him to do is to search for laws in nature today which he thinks capable of produc-

ing all which we see today. He has automatically ruled out God and the supernatural, and ruled that all must be viewed naturally. Although several hypotheses are set forth by different evolutionists, they do not agree with one another except on the point that evolution had to take place. What natural processes explain it is a matter on which they disagree.

In the very nature of the case, evolution cannot be proved. No human being was there to observe and to report the evolution of our solar system, of our earth, and of life. Unless God, who was there, revealed what took place we could have no ground for a positive position concerning origins. Furthermore, no one can reproduce the conditions of the past and reproduce experimentally the creation of our solar system, earth, and life.

Science, as we have brought out in a manuscript (which we hope to get published before long) on *Evolution and the Scientific Method*, cannot prove evolution scientifically. When pressed, the evolutionists themselves will admit, sooner or later, that it has not been proved scientifically. Why, then, should we even try to harmonize Genesis with the hypothesis — the hypothesis of uniformity? Furthermore, each hypothesis of evolution involves several hypotheses which have not, and which cannot, be proved scientifically.

To say that God created through evolution does not prove evolution scientifically.

Unacceptable

Although some have accepted theistic evolution in an effort to harmonize what they consider to be science with the Bible, the consistent evolutionists view the theistic evolutionist inconsistent. Evolution is based on the assumption that one must explain all things naturally. It is inconsistent to bring in God at the very beginning of the process, or anywhere along the line. If one calls on God to perform a miracle to put the spirit — the image of God — in an evolved body, this is just as much a miracle as if the body had been created directly by God. To maintain that God revealed Himself to man after man evolved, involves a miracle which the consistent evolutionist will reject just as certainly as he rejects the miracle of the creation of the body of man. The theistic evolutionist who believes that God miraculously put the image of God in an animal body and made man, will be looked down upon as being as ignorant and prejudiced as the man who says that the body of man also was miraculously created. In fact, some of them will have greater scorn for the theistic evolutionist because he is supposed to know that evolu-

tion did take place, but he refuses to accept the logical consequences of the hypothesis.

They are just as inconsistent as Darwin was when he closed *Origin of Species* with the statement that:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.

Other statements of Darwin, however, indicate that he was convinced that the explanation of life's origin was natural, not supernatural.

If one brings God, and the miraculous, in at any place why not in all the places which are indicated in the Bible? The introduction at any place of God and the miraculous destroys scientific explanations, because by the very definition of terms a scientific explanation is a natural explanation which can be proved experimentally.

The Earth Brought Forth

Evolutionists may point out that Genesis teaches that the earth brought forth grass and trees (Gen. 1:11-12). This is true, but the earth did it at the command of God — being enabled by God, and not due to natural forces which reside in non-living matter. Genesis did not say how God enabled the earth to bring forth plants and trees, so we do not know how He did it. Scientists cannot prove how He did it; so they cannot know, either. If other passages indicated that God did it through a' process of evolution, I would accept it, but neither Genesis nor other passages so teach. Furthermore, Genesis teaches that plants and trees and animals bring forth after their own kind. Evolution teaches that over a long period of time one kind produced another kind.

Man Evolve?

Evolutionists are just as positive that man evolved as they are that plant and animal life evolved. Consistent evolutionism cannot accept the natural evolution of plants and animals, and the supernatural creation of man. Genesis, however, is very clear that man is not the product of evolution. **First**, evolution teaches that animalkind produced mankind, but Genesis teaches that animals produce after their own kind (Gen. 1:24-25). God did not take an animal and out of it fashion man; instead, He fashioned man out of the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). It may be replied that sometimes the Bible skips certain steps without denying their existence. For example, Gen. 1:27-28 might seem to imply that man and woman were created at the same time, but Genesis two shows that woman was created sometime after man was created. Therefore, it may be that there were intermediate steps between the animals and man but the Bible simply omitted them without

denying their existence. Our next point, we are convinced, shows that such is not the case.

Second, not only does the Bible not teach that animalkind brought forth after another kind — mankind, but it also shows that the transition, in the creation of man, was from the non-living to the living. The creation involved the nonliving dust, which was formed into the body of man, and God's breathing into this physical frame the breath of life, and man became, what he was not before, a living soul. The term soul is sometimes used of the spiritual part of man's nature (Matt. 10:28). and sometimes of the entire person (1 Pet. 3:20-21). In some other cases it refers to the principle of life of a physical body, and in this sense it is used both of animals and of man. Men and animals have the principle of the life of a physical body, but only man is made in God's image. Genesis 1:30 speaks of the animals "wherein there is life," and the margin says: "a living soul." If God took a living animal body, it was already a "living soul" in the sense of possessing the principle of the life of the physical body. The transition, in such a case, would not have been from the dust (non-living soul) to a living soul but from living soul to living soul. Genesis teaches, however, it was from dust (the non-living) to the living (Gen 2:7).

Third, when we say that man became a living soul and that animals were also living souls (Gen. 1:30; 2:7), we are not saying that men and animals are alike in everything. Animals are made of the dust of the earth, and so are men. Animals have the principle of the life of the physical body, and so do men. However, men are made in the image of God but animals are not so made (Gen. 1:26-27). The distinction between man and animals in Genesis 1:27 and 2:7 is that, although both are living souls, man only is in God's image. To be consistent evolutionists, theistic evolutionists must maintain that the image of God, in man, was evolved. If they call on God and a miracle to get the image of God in man, why so hesitant to call on God and a miracle for the giving of the life of the body to a physical body formed of the dust of the earth? Their non-theistic evolutionistic colleagues will not find the creation of the image of God in man anymore acceptable than the creation of the body of man. What do theistic evolutionists affirm of the origin of the image of God?

Fourth, the creation of woman cannot be explained by evolution. (1) Woman was created AFTER man was created. Evolution maintains that woman evolved along with man. If she was evolved long after man was evolved, man would have died before he produced after his own kind. (2) Genesis teaches that woman was made from something taken from man, so that she was bone of man's bone and flesh of man's flesh (Gen. 2:21-23). Evolution does not teach that woman evolved from man. (3) Genesis expressly teaches that woman was not from the animal world. It was made clear to man that no help suitable for

him, no mate, was to be found in the animal world. Woman was not only made from man, but she was not taken from the animal world and made into a woman (Gen. 2:18-20).

Fifth, Genesis teaches that God made man upright. Man was good in the beginning. Evolution teaches that man was originally a beast who could not be said to be a righteous or moral being.

Sixth, Genesis teaches that man fell through an act of disobedience. Evolution teaches that instead of a fall, an animal climbed upward until it became a man with moral and spiritual qualities. Instead of a fallen man, he is a progressive animal.

Seventh, Genesis and the rest of the Bible teach that man was created a moral being who is under moral law which is based on the will of God. Evolution teaches that morality evolved and that it is still in a process of progressive evolution. Consistent evolutionism repudiates the idea of moral LAW and maintains that all is in a state of flux and flaw, and we gradually outgrow the morals of the past. Ask theistic evolutionists if morality is the product of evolution.

Eighth, Genesis teaches that in the beginning God revealed Himself to man. The religion set forth in the Bible is not the product of evolution but of revelation. Evolution teaches that religion evolved through various stages as a result of man's reflection on his own experiences and the increasing refinement of his own uninspired insights. Ask evolutionists if all religion, including that set forth in the Bible, is the product of naturalistic evolution? If they answer that it is, they deny the Bible. Although God made an increasingly full revelation of His will, which has culminated in Christ and His covenant, this was not the product of evolution, but of revelation. If evolutionists say that the religion in the Bible is the product of divine revelation, they have denied consistent evolutionism. Consistent evolutionism maintains that not man's body, but also all of his ideas and institutions are the product of natural causes.

Ninth, Genesis teaches that man was in communion with God from the very beginning, but evolution teaches that at first man had no awareness of God but gradually developed such an awareness.

Tenth, Genesis teaches that monotheistic faith — faith in one God — existed in the beginning, but evolution maintains that it is a very late stage which is the result of a long process of evolutionary development including animism and polytheism as two of the preliminary stages.

Eleventh, Genesis teaches that man was created to live eternally, while evolution teaches that man has no possibility before him except mortality. Genesis, contrary to evolution, teaches that man was not at first under the sentence of death.

Twelfth, consistent evolutionists have maintained that evolution is still going on. In saying that evolution

had taken place, Darwin also said in his close of the *Origin of Species*, that "from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved." Genesis does not deny variation within the "kind" but it does tell us that with the work of the sixth day, and the creation of man, God ceased his work of creation. To be consistent in their evolution, theistic evolutionists must contradict Genesis and claim that God is still creating through the process of evolution.

Thirteenth, evolution explains Jesus Christ naturally, while the Bible explains Him supernaturally. It is strange that some people accept the miracle of Jesus, and look forward to the miracle of the second coming, but deny the miracle of creation.

There are other things which could be said, but the basic difference between evolution and Genesis is that Genesis invokes the supernatural while evolution invokes the natural. Out of this basic difference the other differences arise.

If more brethren do not do more thinking and teaching, concerning evolution, and its influence, the tide of evolution will sweep over us as it did over much of the religious world — and with the same disastrous consequences. First, some will accept evolution for Genesis one and two, and, then, others will go on from there and accept the evolutionistic explanation — or explanations — for the rest of the Bible. And man will end up viewing themselves as animals without any word from God. Don't say it cannot happen. It has happened to others, and it is starting to happen in the New Testament church.

Note by Ferrell Jenkins: Dr. James D. Bales (1915-1995) was for many years Professor of Christian Doctrine at Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas. He was a prolific writer on many subjects and was especially interested in Christian Evidences or Apologetics. For a time he edited a journal entitled *The Thinking Christian*. My contacts with Dr. Bales were few in number but they were always pleasant and helpful to me. When I edited *Evidence Quarterly* (1960-1962) he gave me permission to publish some of his material. After I began to teach a course in Evidences at Florida College he was kind enough to send me some material which he used, along with copies of exams he was using. In 1977 when I visited in his home in Searcy, Arkansas, he gave me an inscribed copy of his book, *Forty Two Years on the Firing Line*.

This article on "Theistic Evolution and Genesis" was one of many published in a small (conservative Lutheran) religious newspaper, *Christian News*, Dec. 22, 1969. I think that he would be pleased to know that the article is receiving further circulation. This subject is discussed briefly in my *Introduction to Christian Evidences*.

Ferrell Jenkins. Feb. 1, 2000.

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