

THEISTIC EVOLUTION—CURSE OF THE CHURCH

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Apologetics Press, Inc.
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117 U.S.A.
334/272-8558
800/234-8558



www.ApologeticsPress.org

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of origins is admittedly a thorny and controversial topic that has been the center of many a discussion, many a debate, and many a written polemic. On the one hand there is the concept of organic evolution, which affirms that man is the result of random, mechanistic, uniformitarian forces operating in nature. Atheists rejoice in the theory and defend it eagerly, while conservative Christians view it as an all-out attack on the existence of God. On the other hand there is the concept of special creation, which states that the God created the Universe and all that it contains exactly as the Bible states (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11, et al.). Bible believers ardently defend special creation as the only true viewpoint on origins, and are quick to point out that it fits the facts of science (e.g.: Law of Causality, Law of Biogenesis, Laws of Thermodynamics, etc.) while the theory of evolution does not.

Oddly enough, however, amidst all the discussion concerning evolution and creation, there has arisen a group of people which believes that both evolution and creation are true. These people advocate a concept known as “theistic evolution” (also called “religious evolution” or “mitigated evolution”) that allows them to identify with rank and file evolutionists while simultaneously permitting them to consider themselves as Bible believers.

THEISTIC EVOLUTION DEFINED

The word “theistic” comes from the Greek word *theos*, which means God. Therefore, when one claims to be a “theistic” evolutionist, he is claiming to believe in both God and evolution at the same time. A brief review of the literature reveals the following definitions of theistic evolution:

1. “ ‘Theistic evolution’ states that God did create and develop the universe and its components, but that He did it by evolutionary processes” (Jennings, n.d., p. 3).
2. “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” (Bales, 1974, p. 52).

3. “Theistic evolution is the teaching that plants, animals, and man gradually evolved from lower forms, but that God supervised the process. The theistic evolutionist is a nominal Christian who says, ‘I believe that evolution is a fact, but that God did it’ ” (Culp, 1975, p. 148).

4. “Those who hold the view called ‘theistic evolution’ are those who claim to believe in God (Theistic instead of Atheistic) but very definitely believe in evolution. They believe God is responsible for life, but that He used evolution to bring it into existence” (Tarbet, n.d., pp. 8-9).

5. “Basically, theistic evolution contends that abiogenesis (the spontaneous formation of life from chemicals) and evolution (amoeba to man through eons have occurred, but a creator was instrumental in forming the initial matter and laws, and more or less guided the whole process” (Wysong, 1976, p. 63).

Theistic evolutionists believe evolution was simply “the way God did it” as He brought the Universe and its contents into existence.

IS THEISTIC EVOLUTION POPULAR?

Is theistic evolution popular? Indeed it is. Many people today take it as “a way out” of having to make a decision in favor of either evolution or creation. It has become the “middle of the road” position that so many Christians already have taken on a myriad of other issues (e.g.: biblical inspiration, the virgin birth, miracles, etc.). As R.L. Wysong noted:

Theistic evolution has been advocated in the past by men like Augustine and Aquinas. Today it is vogue. It is downright hard to find anyone who does not believe in evolution in one form or another, and it is also difficult to find anyone who does not believe in a creator in one form or another. This hybrid belief has given reprieve to those not wishing to make a total commitment to either side (1976, p. 63).

People accept theistic evolution for any number of reasons. One of the justifications often given by theistic evolutionists for their defense of this position is that they believe it is not only not contradictory to the Bible, but is, in fact, compatible with the Divine Record. Neal Buffaloe, for example, stated that “the concept of evolution is neither degrading to man, detrimental to human dignity, nor in conflict with the Bible” (1969, pp. 17,20-21). Speaking of the concept of theistic evolution in his *Notes on Genesis*, Albertus Pieters wrote: “In such a conception there is nothing contrary to the Bible” (as quoted in Ramm, 1954, p. 201). Many people believe in theistic evolution because they are convinced the evidence for evolution simply is too strong to be ignored. Nobel laureate George W. Beadle put it this way: “One must accept all of evolution or none. And the evidence for organic evolution is overwhelmingly convincing...belief in evolution, including the spontaneous origin of life from nonliving antecedents, need in no way conflict with religion” (as quoted in Buffaloe, 1969, p. 17,20-21). In his book, *The Source*, John Clayton stated:

“If we look carefully at the issues about which we are talking, however, we can find that evolution and the Bible show amazing agreement on almost all issues and that one is not mutually exclusive of the other” (1977, p. 130). Still others believe in theistic evolution because they feel it simply does not matter all that much. Buffaloe asked: “What do we care that man the animal is a product of evolution as long as man the spirit is begotten of God?” (1969, pp. 17,20-21). No doubt there are numerous other reasons why people prefer a belief in theistic evolution.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEISTIC EVOLUTION?

Is theistic evolution biblical, and therefore acceptable? No, it is not. It is one of the most dangerous compromises ever to befall the Bible believer. Compromise on the matter of origins will lead inevitably to compromise on other biblical matters. If the first chapter of the Bible is unreliable, why should we think the other chapters of the book are any different? Theistic evolution is an unscriptural position that should be rejected for the following reasons.

1. **There is no theistic statement that shows theistic evolution to be true.** God never said He used evolution to create man. In fact, He said just the opposite.

...God could have accomplished the origin of life in any way He chose, by evolution or by creation, but an admission that there is a God and that He made such an accomplishment in any way, means that we are totally dependent upon His revelation to determine which way. His revelation declares creation, not evolution (Camp, 1972, pp. 205-206).

The texts throughout the Bible (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11; Exodus 31:17; Nehemiah 9:6, et al.) plainly teach **fiat** creation, and do not even hint of any kind of evolutionary process.

2. **Theistic evolution is wrong because evolution implies atheism.** Charles Smith, former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, said it best when he said wrote: “Evolution is atheism” (as quoted in Klingman, 1929, p. 115) Evolution is, by definition, “a” (without) “theism” (God)—i.e., by its very nature it is atheistic. Woolsey Teller said, “The God idea cannot be reconciled with our knowledge of evolution” (as quoted in West, 1974, p. 4). Straton put it this way: “Those who try to reconcile these theories [of evolution—BT] with the Christian system of truth assert that such is not the case...yet the definitions given...prove that God is of necessity ruled out, and that in favor of chance”

(1956, 2:1048-1049). As much as theistic evolutionists do not like to have to admit it, evolution is founded on atheism. The two systems (theism/atheism) cannot be combined without becoming contradictory. They are mutually exclusive.

3. Theistic evolution is wrong because it cannot explain where man acquired his soul.

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 any more acceptable than the creation of the body of man. What do theistic evolutionists affirm of the origin of the image of God? (Bales, 1974, p. 53).

This problem, of course, has plagued theistic evolutionists for centuries. Because of it, the fallacious doctrines of “progressive creationism” and “threshold evolution” were invented—yet without success. The Bible plainly states that God created man “in his image” and instilled in him a soul. Did that soul evolve along with all the other parts of man? How will the theistic evolutionist get a soul into man?

4. Theistic evolution is wrong because it cannot explain Eve. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that God put Adam to sleep and took from his side material from which He made woman (Genesis 2:21-23; cf. 1 Timothy 2:13 where Paul referred to Eve by name as a real, historical character). Yet evolution says that the sexes evolved, simultaneously, in the same geographical region, with one being male and one being female. There is nothing similar in the two incidents. How will the theistic evolutionist explain the problem of Eve? Most theistic evolutionists, when faced with this problem, attempt to evade the contradiction by making the first eleven chapters of Genesis mythological or allegorical—anything but literal history. Yet this attempted explanation has far-reaching consequences. For example, Abraham, father of the Hebrew race, is mentioned first in chapter 11 of Genesis. Was Abraham mythical? What about the flood of Noah in Genesis 6-9? Was it mythical? Peter did not think so; he referred to it in 2 Peter 3:1-13 as being a historical event. Was the tower of Babel figurative or allegorical? If so, whence the origin of languages? Furthermore, Paul mentioned Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45 and compared him to the “last Adam” (Jesus). If the first Adam was mythical, is the last? Are proponents of theistic evolution ready to accept such a conclusion?

5. **Theistic evolution is wrong because the Bible states that Adam was the first man.** Paul (and Moses, Genesis 1-2) made it perfectly clear that Adam was the first man! Not so, says evolution. *Homo erectus* or *Homo habilis* or *Australopithecus afarensis* was the first man. Which will the theistic evolutionist accept?

6. **Theistic evolution is wrong because the Bible states that the heavens, the Earth, the seas, and their contents were created in six days.** Evolution theory, of course, says that evolution took place over multiplied billions of years. Exodus 20:11 and Exodus 31:17 (as well as Nehemiah 9:6) state just the opposite. Genesis 1 even tells us that each day of creation consisted of an “evening and a morning” so that there would be no doubt about the length of these creation days.

7. **Theistic evolution is wrong because the Bible states that God created a fully grown and fully developed man and woman within one day.** Genesis 1:27ff. describes the creation of man and woman—in one literal day. They were fully grown, ready to go about doing the things God had commanded them to do. Yet evolution says, first, that there were no Adam and Eve, and second, that the first human pair on the Earth had to evolve slowly over long periods of geological time. There is nothing similar in the two accounts. Which will the theistic evolutionist accept?

8. **Theistic evolution is wrong because it logically denies the fall of man (Genesis 3).** The Bible makes it abundantly clear that man started out in a covenant relationship with his Creator. Evolution says that man did not start at the top and fall to the bottom, but instead started at the bottom as some primordial slime, and through eons of geological time has “risen.” Which is true? Did man start at the top, or did he start at the bottom?

9. **Theistic evolution is wrong because the Bible teaches catastrophism; evolution teaches uniformitarianism.** Time and again the Bible speaks of catastrophic events (the Flood of Genesis 6-9, the plagues of Egypt in Exodus 7ff., etc.) The miraculous is an intrinsic part of the Bible. On the other hand, evolution requires uniformitarianism with its trite phrase “the present is the key to the past” as its watchword. Evolution states emphatically that all things are going on today just like they always have, and al-

ways will. The Bible denies this. The resurrection of Christ is enough to send evolution to its grave once and for all.

10. **Theistic evolution is wrong because it makes a liar out of Jesus Christ.** Jesus stated in Mark 10:6 (cf. Matthew 19:4): “But from the beginning of the creation male and female made He them.” Jesus affirmed that Adam and Eve had been on Earth “from the beginning of the creation.” Paul affirmed in Romans 1:20-21 the things that God had made were being “perceived” even “since the creation of the world.” Who was there to “perceive” these things “since the creation of the world”? Moses told us. Paul told us. Adam and Eve were their names. Jesus affirmed their status on the Earth “from the beginning of the creation.” If evolutionists are correct and man has been on Earth some 3-4 million years or so, it does not take very much intelligence to figure out that 3-4 million years out of an alleged Earth history of 4.5 billion years is not, by any stretch of the imagination, “from the beginning.” Rather, it is “from the end.” The choice is this: either Jesus lied and evolutionists are correct, or Jesus told the truth and evolution is wrong. To accept any part of evolution makes Jesus Christ a liar (not to mention Paul and Moses).

CONCLUSION

What is it about this ugly, degrading anti-biblical system that makes it appealing to so many? It is nothing but a serious compromise that turns the inspired writers into liars and charlatans. What is wrong with the way God said He did it? Or isn't His word on the matter good enough for us anymore?

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