

Deconstructing Theistic Evolution

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (II Cor. 6:14–16).

Modern Times

Darwinism or, more accurately, neo-Darwinism is taught in our schools and universities, we hear it on the radio and television, and more worryingly in many of the ‘churches’ of our day. Reformed believers who attend university are often for the first time (especially if they have had the privilege of Christian schooling) forced to defend their beliefs, debating and discussing with ungodly professors and peers. Dr. Gary Parker, a former evolutionary biologist who (by the grace of God) turned to the biblical creationist perspective, described Darwinism as a “world and life view, an alternate religion, a substitute for God” and hence was something he taught passionately, considering it his role to “help his students rid themselves completely of old, ‘pre-scientific’ superstitions, such as Christianity” (2006:11). The tears he claims to have caused on the faces of his students are an evidence and a reminder, not only of the distress such vigour in teaching can cause, but of the contempt with which much of the scientific world treats biblical creationism.

With evolution so widely proclaimed in secular society, hearing it within academia is something we as Christians have come to expect. More saddening and ultimately more shocking, especially for those of us who have been brought up in the truths of the Reformed faith, is that many in our day come to expect this in “churches” that claim to profess the name of Christ. Alan Colburn and Laura Henriques, two social scientists, carried out research into the views of clergy from various denominations. Although much can be said about the sentiments that run throughout the paper, one statement they made struck me as particularly unbelievable:

The concept of theistic evolution deserves special mention here because almost all the clergy we interviewed probably held beliefs that we would characterize within this category...Almost all the clergy we interviewed subscribed to the truth of evolution and natural selection as scientific explanation and description (2006:435).

The “church” (and I use the term in a secular sense) has become rotten, as it seeks to marry the truth of the Scriptures with worldly humanism. “Almost all” the clergy

interviewed subscribed to the “truth” of evolution, as summed up by Colburn and Henriques.

Further evidence of such teaching is not hard to find. The Archbishop of Canterbury, whilst conducting an interview with the Guardian newspaper, is quoted as saying “my worry is creationism can end up reducing the doctrine of creation rather than enhancing it.” One must be tempted to ask how the Scriptures, given by inspiration of God, fail to do themselves justice? When has God ever failed to put his glory first (Col. 1:16-18; Rom. 11:36)? Is the Archbishop suggesting that the inventions of (foolish) men (Ps. 14:1; Ps. 53:1) better enhance the doctrine of creation? “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God” (Rom. 9: 20)! II Sam. 6: 6-7 serves as a poignant reminder to those who feel that the Lord requires the aid of totally depraved men to heighten his glory. God in his anger struck Uzzah dead, and so God strikes today. His Holy Spirit is grieved by the lies proclaimed from the pulpits of these churches, and so, withdraws. Ironically, the inventions of men, used to bring people into their churches, are the very tools God uses to make them depart, giving the earthly seed over to the lusts of the flesh and the sinful inclinations of the heart (Rom. 1:28).

The specific invention spoken of in this circumstance is the lie of “theistic evolution.” Essentially, theistic evolution is a man made doctrine that asserts there is a “creator” God, yet at the same time adheres to scientific humanism, maintaining the compatibility of the creation “story” with modern scientific thinking on Darwinian evolution. In essence, it is a marriage of convenience that has arisen due to conflict between the literal biblical creation narrative and modern day evolutionary thinking. As Parker (2008) describes evolution as a process of “time, chance, struggle and death,” I will endeavour to deconstruct theistic evolution according to this brief synopsis, in highlighting its fundamental flaws, according to the creation narrative as found in Genesis 1.

Time

We are all creatures of time. Genesis 1:1 begins with “In the beginning God....” This teaches that God’s omnipotence is the cause of all things; he is the foundation from which all was, is and is to come. God is eternal, he has no beginning or no end, but as for the creation, it clearly happened in time “the beginning.” Man is regarded (by evolutionists) as the highest step in the evolutionary chain, yet according to Genesis 1, man was created in the beginning. Christ reinforces this in Matthew 19:4, stating man was created male and female, “at the beginning.” This conflicts with evolutionary and hence theistic evolutionary notions, given that man arrived approximately 5 billion years after the beginning. If this was the case, then how could Christ possibly say that

man was created from the beginning and still be regarded as the spotless lamb of God?

The biblical narrative as penned in the inspired scriptures clearly teaches a literal six days of creation (see Laning, 2010). References to time are emphasized repeatedly through use of “evening and the morning” (Gen. 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Verse 14 is also clear in relation to the idea of time. Here we see the creation of days for the purpose of “signs,” “seasons,” “days” and “years.” Would it not be absurd to suggest million year old days, given that they were created for a specific purpose? I.e., the identity of the seasons and the timing of years.

The genealogies, as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, require a young earth. On the other hand, evolutionary thinking according to modern science requires billions of years in order to account for multiple, complex and ultimately impossible mutations to take place. We can see that the time scales afforded by young earth creationists and evolutionists are diametrically opposed. Undeterred by this, theistic evolutionists marry the two, suggesting that days, as recorded in Genesis, refer to billions of years, thus giving “time” for evolution to take place. Ham (2006) suggests that the Genesis narrative is the only place in the Bible where the meaning of the word “day” is contested. This contestation does not arise from within the Scriptures, where the historical narrative infers literal 24 hour days, but instead, and crucially, arises as a result of man’s looking outside of the Scriptures and endeavouring then, to add his theories to them.

Chance

Chance may be defined as “a possibility due to a favourable number of circumstances.” Chance is also a fundamental part of modern day evolutionism, even more so today according to neo-Darwinian theory than it was in Darwin’s. Yet just as the time scales afforded by both creationists and evolutionists are diametrically opposed, so the evolutionary idea of “chance” is opposed to the creationist view of God’s command and design in creation. God commanded, and “it was so” (Gen. 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30). When God commanded, it happened instantly, according to his plan and design (Ps. 33:9; Ps. 148:5). In this way, he created the firmament, the solar system, flora, fauna, man and gathered the land mass together so that it stood in the water and through the water (Ps. 33:3-9; II Peter 3:5). There is no compromise between “chance” and “plan and design.” Theistic evolution however suggests that God paradoxically used “chance” to create. This idea is fundamentally flawed, especially when we consider the methods (struggle and death) they claim God used.

Struggle and Death

Struggle and death have been highlighted as key concepts in evolutionary theory. Theistic evolutionists transfer these, as methods that God used in “creating by chance.” As reformed believers however, we wholly reject this error.

Struggle and death are unnatural, they are not natural. The bible teaches us that struggle and death entered the world as a result of sin (Gen. 3:16-19 and Rom. 5:12; 6:23). Before sin however, there was no death, ‘it was good’ (Gen. 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) or “very good” (Gen. 1:31). The logical conclusion that we draw here, is that in a world without death (as the pre-fall world was), there can be no evolution. Likewise, in a world without evolution, there is only “In the beginning, God.” Paul the apostle clearly warns us in saying, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8). We do wisely to take heed.

Wider Implications

Not only does this get to the heart of the issue, but it highlights the tragedy that is theistic evolution. Evolution ousts the need for God and completely denies him, giving “atheism credibility” (according to Richard Dawkins). Theistic evolution attempts to compromise, by bridging the man-made gap between the Genesis account and Darwinian evolution. It makes this attempt to soften the truth of the gospel, to make the church seem more contemporary and compatible with secular thinking. Its acceptance however has not led to an increase, but rather, a falling away, as the truth of the gospel is diminished and scoffed at.

Denial of “death by sin” is an outright attack on the very truth of the infallibility of Holy Scripture. If the Genesis account of creation is false, then perhaps so is the virgin birth—perhaps Christ did not suffer and die—and even if he did come once, then perhaps he will not come again! II Peter 3:3 warns us of such scoffers. Theistic evolution opens the door to them and, in doing so, attacks the very hope of the child of God.

Worse still, theistic evolution logically must conclude that Christ is an ineligible sacrifice, wholly incapable of bearing our sin. The Heidelberg Catechism states that “one who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others” (Q. & A. 16). Likewise, the revelation of Holy Scriptures testifies to the truth of a literal interpretation of Genesis (Matt. 19:4, Mark 10:6; I Cor. 11:9). If these interpretations are given to us by Christ and the Apostle Paul (through whom Christ speaks), then surely this makes Christ a liar. Can a liar satisfy for the sins of God’s people? Theistic evolution completely removes the hope of the Christian, marrying the light with the darkness, in an unholy union. What fellowship has the light with darkness (II Cor. 6:14-16). “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23).

Thankfully, despite the apostasy that we see in this evil day, God is a merciful and loving God, and so preserves his true church, a remnant, adopted into his family by grace and preserved by his power. As our sure record, we have the Scriptures, God's special revelation to us (II Tim. 3:16). And so, let us marvel at the beauty and wonder of the creation. May it (as Bavinck, 1999 points out) strengthen our faith, confirm our trust in God, be a source of consolation in our suffering, inspire praise and thanksgiving and induce humility and meekness in us, his people. Praise be to God.

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