



## Why Theistic Evolution is So Popular

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*This is a reprint of a much older article. Darrel Kautz went home to the Lord in 1993.*

**A** theistic evolutionist, unlike an atheistic evolutionist, places God into the heart of the evolutionary process. He holds that God created the cosmos, life, living things, and human beings through the process of evolution. It was God, an intelligent Being, Who devised and controlled the whole process of evolution. Both theistic and atheistic evolutionists assume the same framework of evolutionary history and the same evolutionary mechanisms. Thus theistic evolution is an attempt to reconcile biblical creation with atheistic evolution; it is a compromising position in respect to origins.

The theistic-evolution approach to ultimate origins is immensely popular; it abounds in most mainline Protestant churches and in the Roman Catholic Church. Ever since the rise of the Documentary Hypothesis in Protestant circles over two hundred years ago as a naturalistic way for accounting for the origin of the first five books of the Bible, there has been a pronounced tendency to understand the Genesis creation account as a purely human portrayal of how the world came into existence.

The following statement by Jaroslav Pelikan reflects the thinking of many theistic evolutionists. "Although the story of how God originally fashioned the world and all that is in it comes first in the sequence of the biblical narratives as we now have them, it is a mistake to interpret this story as the foundation for all the subsequent narratives. Indeed, literary analysis of the creation stories suggests that they come rather late in the history of the development of the Old Testament . . . The story or stories of creation in Genesis are not chiefly cosmogony but the preface to the history that begins with the calling of Abraham. Genesis is not world history but the history of the covenant people of God. And as the Book of Exodus is interested in Pharaoh only for his part in the Exodus of Israel and otherwise cares so little about him that the Pharaoh of the Exodus is still difficult to identify historically, so the Book of Genesis is interested in 'the heavens and the earth' as the stage for the essentially historical, rather than cosmic, drama it sets out to recount." **1**

In Roman Catholic circles theistic evolution entered that church body in a big way through Father Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit paleontologist and biologist who lived from 1881-1955. Malachi Martin states that Teilhard's "starting point was Darwinian Evolution — he always 'personalized' the word [Evolution] with a capital letter — which he took to be fact, not theory." **2** In speaking of Teilhard, Prof. Wilder-Smith says that he "so extended evolutionary doctrine as to include the view that matter possesses a built-in force which causes it to automatically surge upward, slowly and irresistibly (to use Teilhard's expressions), to more and higher complexity, ending in psychic pressure build-ups (Teilhard), cephalization and Point Omega. That is, God so constructed matter that it had to evolve. Many academically trained persons are willing to believe this type of theory and apply it to their religious beliefs." **3**

Although the papal encyclical *Humani Generis* (Origin of Man) issued by Pope Pius XII in 1950 warns Catholics against teaching evolution as fact, it does condone the teaching of this view of origins in Catholic institutions with the understanding, however, that all theistic evolutionists must believe that the souls of people are created by God. In 1986 Pope John Paul II stated, "So long as we do not exclude divine causality as the explanation for creation, we can hold that Genesis is not opposed to the theory of natural evolution."**4** According to current Catholic theology, God the Creator intervened at some specific moment in the evolutionary process, and infused a spiritual/immortal soul into what had already become a highly developed "higher animal."

Among the factors which contributed to the widespread acceptance of theistic evolution are the following:

1. The entrenchment of various forms of Darwinism in the academic circles of Europe and America ever since the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species*.
2. The unrelenting flow of evolutionary propaganda from textbooks, newspapers, periodicals (including *National Geographic*), museum displays, books, national news commentators, and TV programs. Man's natural disposition of enmity towards God and to sin renders each person a potential victim of evolutionary propaganda.
3. Fear on the part of some Bible-believing persons of being marked as anti-intellectual. One is not really an intellectual person, say some people, until one rises above legends about origins, and discovers for oneself the truth about ultimate origins.
4. The influences of coworkers and friends (peer pressure) which intimidate those who express confidence in the truthfulness of Genesis 1-2.
5. The necessity of educators and scientists, in particular, of accepting the evolutionary view of origins to remain in good standing and eligible for promotions (job security).
6. The prevalence of the existential philosophy of life with its stress on subjectivity, individual experience, unlimited freedom, and on what is important for a person in his life right now. The existentialist asks, "Why am I here?" not "From where did I come?" or "To Whom am I ultimately responsible?" Matters such as ultimate origins, the distant past, and objective truth are not primary concerns.
7. Persistence in the view that passages of the Bible do not have one intended meaning, but can mean whatever a person thinks they mean — one of the characteristics of existential thinking.
8. The denial of divine revelation in the sense of God's conveying specific information to man. The loss of the conviction that the Bible is God's inspired Word, an accurate and trustworthy record of His redemptive involvement in the world from creation to the end of New Testament times.
9. The assumption that the first five books of the Bible came into existence after the time of King David (the Documentary Hypothesis), and that they do not record historical events in the normal sense of the word "history." Correlated with this is the use of the historical-critical method of interpreting Genesis and other biblical books — a method which assumes that the Documentary Hypothesis is correct. It is to be noted that this hypothesis is itself based upon the theory of evolution; for religion, in general, and the Old Testament in particular, are assumed to be products of man's evolutionary development.
10. The assumption that when interpreting the Bible, greater weight is to be given to the context (historical, cultural, and literary factors) in which the Bible developed than to the text itself — especially when interpreting the first books of the Bible. It is the context, it is claimed, which is the key to unlocking the meaning of the books of the Bible for people living in our times, not adherence to the biblical text. **5**
11. The training of pastors in many seminaries to accept macroevolution as an explanation of origins superior to Genesis 1, because Genesis is assumed to be a prescientific view of how the world came into existence — a view not worth serious consideration in our advanced scientific age.
12. The lack of knowledge on the part of pastors and Christians generally that the facts of science correlate well with Genesis 1-2, but do not correlate with macroevolution.

It is evident that macroevolution is without a solid scientific basis. The same can be said of theistic evolution; for all the scientific information which is so devastating to atheistic evolution is equally devastating to theistic evolution.

The era in which theistic evolutionists can be comfortable with both the Bible and with macroevolution appears to be drawing to a close. Just as the evolutionist Michael Denton, in his book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, exposed the vulnerability of macroevolution on the basis of molecular biology, so the time is approaching when some perceptive theistic evolutionist will likely write a book which could be entitled, *Theistic Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*.

The former atheistic evolutionist Michael Pitman, in his book *Adam and Evolution*, writes as follows about the incredibility of both atheistic and theistic evolution. "Adam and Evolution should be controversial. The many issues it raises cannot all be dealt with, let alone in depth, in a single sweep. But the direction of the argument is clear — there has been neither chemical evolution nor macro-evolution. Nor, as some twentieth century churchmen biologically accept, did God involve chance mutations in 'creation by evolution'. No intelligent creator would leave matters to chance; on the contrary, his purpose would be to realize, in plan and in practice, his ideas. Pressing the logic to its conclusion, this book advocates a grand and full-blooded creation. The implications of this view necessitate a reappraisal of ourselves and of the whole world of organisms around us." 6 LSI

#### References

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