

The Doctrinal Conclusions of Evolution

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The year 1809 suggests no special importance to us; and, no doubt, the year 1859 is equally without significance to most of us. The former is the year a man was born whose thinking and speculations were to affect almost every field of human endeavor. The latter date was when he published his book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

The man was Charles Darwin, born in England in 1809. For three years he studied theology in preparation for the ministry, but his first love remained biology and botany. At the age of 22 years, he temporarily discontinued his theological studies to sail aboard the H.M.S. Beagle as a government naturalist. The following five-year voyage to the South Seas was to have a profound affect upon his life. Darwin's observations on this trip and the time for thinking it afforded him led him to the formulation of a theory of evolution by natural selection.

It took more time and the urging of his friends before he was ready to publish his theory for the benefit of others—1859 was the year. Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* set forth this basic theory: species of life are not fixed; but all living things have developed from one or at most a few original forms, and by means of natural selection the most necessary and desirable characteristics of one species are preserved and transferred to another.

Darwin's book hit the public like a bombshell. The entire first printing of 1250 copies was sold on the day of publication. In the next 17 years, more than 16,000 copies were sold—a remarkable achievement in that day.

But Charles Darwin was not the first to propose an evolutionary origin for man and the universe. As far back as 700 BC the Greek philosophers were suggesting similar theories. Among others, Thales of Miletus (640-546 BC) spoke of a cycle of development; Anaximander of Ionia (611-547 BC) proposed the existence of a primordial mass developing into life. The great Aristotle (384-322 BC) suggested that everything in nature is the result of intelligent design and direction which created a primordial mass from which life developed—a type of theistic evolution. The Roman poet, Lucretius (98-55 BC), theorized that the earth was created by the chance collision of atoms and that life then developed from the earth. Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus (1731-1802), suggested that "the whole is one family of one parent" with desirable characteristics acquired by heredity. He, in fact, was one of the first to apply the term "evolution" to the theory. A contemporary of Darwin's, the noted French zoologist Lamarck (1744-1829), spoke of evolution as the general process embracing every form of life in a single historical process.

With so many predecessors advocating a type of evolution in one form or another without lasting success, why was Darwin's theory so eagerly and widely accepted? The answer: conditions in the scientific, philosophical, and religious world at Darwin's time were right for accepting such a theory.

The effects of the long period of Scholasticism and its offspring, Rationalism, were very pronounced. Back in the 13th century Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) stated that all good Catholics should turn to the Church for religious truth and study Aristotle for natural truth and not waste time seeking knowledge elsewhere. The first result was the attempt to keep separate the spheres of religion and philosophy, faith and reason. But as the Church more and more sought to control all scholarship, the second result came: the attempt to blend reason and revelation into a harmonious relationship.

This newly acquired status of reason spawned Rationalism which held out that reason alone is the source of all knowledge and is superior to and independent of established proof and experiential knowledge. Rationalism taught that the supernatural could be explained only by reason and that man must rely upon reason to establish religious truth.

The Church did not take too kindly to these conclusions of Rationalism, but neither did the philosophers and scientists of the day take too kindly to the position of the Church. Many felt that the role of reason had been established beyond question, even if it ran counter to the teachings of the Faith; and besides, it had been clearly demonstrated that some of the Church's dogmatic views on matters of science were grossly erroneous, e.g., that the earth was flat, that it was the center of the solar system. The result was a growing loss of confidence in the Church and in the Scriptures.

The biologist Thomas Huxley (1825-1895) stated well the frustration scientists and philosophers felt in being allowed no alternative to creation by the Church and the relief provided by Darwin's theory. He wrote: "We wanted not to pin our faith to that [creation] or any other speculation but to get hold of clear and definite conceptions, which could be brought face to face with facts and have their validity tested. *The Origin* provided us with the working hypothesis we sought. Moreover, it did us the immense service of freeing us forever from the dilemma—refuse to accept the Creation hypothesis and what have you to propose that can be accepted by any cautious reasoner." (p.21) The playwright George Bernard Shaw once wrote: "If you can realize how insufferably the world was oppressed by the notion that everything that happened was an arbitrary personal act of any arbitrary personal God of dangerous, jealous and cruel personal character, you will understand how the world jumped at Darwin." (p.22)

To this must be added the observation that at Darwin's time the world was enjoying a heightened interest in the success of the physical and biological sciences, medicine, and the progress of industry. The useful application of the steam engine, the advances in health care and medicine, among others, gave people reason to believe that the scientific method can not be all bad and that maybe science does have something to offer on the origin of man and the universe. Thus, it seems that Charles Darwin arrived on the scene with his theory of evolution when all systems were "Go" – when the world in general was ready to accept such a theory. He then happened to put together all the previous evolutionary theories in a single presentation, clothing it in a hypothesis that seemed adequate to explain the marvelous adaptation of living things by the mere action of natural force without the necessity of divine intervention.

Darwinian evolution has since been debated, modified, and re-modified; it has been challenged and defended, rejected and denied; but its influence upon almost all fields of human endeavor cannot be denied. E. G. Bewkes writes: "There is not a single field of

scientific and academic study which has not been greatly modified by the concept of evolution. It provided a new approach to astronomy, geology, philosophy, ethics, religion, and the history of social institutions.” (p.169) We are primarily concerned with the influence of Darwinism upon religious truth, and we shall touch upon its effect in other areas during the main body of this essay. Before we do, however, we feel it is important to mention some of the effects Darwinian evolution has had upon social history.

From the theory that mankind is constantly evolving upward toward a higher degree of perfection has developed the premise that “history is a continuous progressive unity and that individuals, races, and nations are gradually groping toward a universal harmony.” (p.193) What a preposterous presupposition in the face of two major world conflicts and an ever-increasing rate in the rumors and threatenings of war. The Darwinian doctrine that only the fit survive has become the mainstay of those advocating nationalism, imperialism, militarism, racism, and communism. Karl Marx (1818-1883) clearly attributed a main philosophy of his communism to Darwin when he wrote: “Darwin’s book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the struggle in history.” According to Marxist philosophy, “the progress of the human race is marked by a gradual process of evolution and punctuated now and then by the quickening pulse of revolution.” (p.194) In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler asserted that men rose from animals by fighting and that this struggle wherein the stronger feeds on the blood of the weaker has continued from time immemorial and must continue until the most advanced branch of humanity dominates the earth. (p.196)

Surely, these effects of Darwinism must cause more than a casual raising of the eyebrow by Christian and non-Christian alike. But as we now direct our attention to the effect of Darwinian evolution upon the field of religious truth, our reaction can only be that of alarmed astonishment and thoughtful gratitude which cries out, “But for the grace of God, we would have no true religion today.”

What, then, are *THE DOCTRINAL CONCLUSIONS OF EVOLUTION*? If evolution were true, if people—even so-called Christians—persist in accepting it as true, what are its logical conclusions for the main body of Christian doctrine? They are the following:

1. There is no God.

There can be no God—a creating, triune God or otherwise—if evolution is correct when it asserts that this universe came into being by some chance collision of dust clouds billions and billions of years ago—that from the primordial ooze produced on the earth a molecule of life developed and gradually evolved into a more complex form of life from which all forms of plant and animal life (including human) have evolved and are continuing to evolve. All this is to have happened without the hand of divine intervention.

This means that Genesis 1:1 is a lie: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This means that there is no creating God who in six days “made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is.” (Ex. 20:11) This means that there is no personal triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost who said, “Let us make man in our image.” (Gen. 1:26) If the process of evolution is continuing today, then there is no omnipotent, beneficent God who upholds all things in our life with the right hand of His righteousness

(Is. 41:10), and we are left to take our chances of surviving with the fittest—small comfort in this degenerating vale of tears.

2. There Is no divine revelation of truth.

There are those who reject the evolutionists' absolute denial of the existence of God and insist they believe there is a God but that He made use of the process of evolution to bring man and the universe into being. Those who hold to this position are called theistic evolutionists. But what they in effect are saying is no better than the atheistic evolutionists, and that is—the Bible is one big lie! If evolution is correct, then the 75 passages in the Old and New Testaments that speak of God's creative work are lies. This means that the rest of His Word is also untrustworthy, for who can know what is truth and what is not?

Thus, some evolutionists regard the Bible as the product of natural evolution, as a collection of books displaying man's progressive understanding of God. (p. 173) Harry Emerson Fosdick writes in his book, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, "We know that every idea in the Bible started from primitive and childlike origins and, with however many setbacks and delays, grew in scope and height toward the culmination of Christ's Gospel." (quoted p. 174)

Because the Bible is to be regarded as man's word about God, it is fallible and must be subjected to advanced and enlightened human reason to determine its truth. This is the approach used by the Modernists and the proponents of Higher Criticism who reject all miracles as myths passed on by a religiously and intellectually inferior people somewhere down the branches of the evolutionary tree.

If there is no divine revelation, then Scripture can be broken (Jo. 10:35), then God's Word is no longer truth in any of its parts (Jo. 17:17), then we can take no comfort whatsoever in "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16: 16), or in any of the countless other beautiful promises of God's Word. There can be no true religion if there is no divine truth—and that is precisely what the evolutionists want!

3. There is no sin.

In His Word God teaches clearly that He created man in His own image as a moral creature, perfectly capable of understanding and obeying God's commandments. After man disobeyed God in the Garden and lost that image of holiness, God gave His Ten Commandments in written form that all men might know what is right and wrong in His sight. God expects all men to conform to His Moral Law in thoughts, words, and deeds. But because of the Fall, all men are born with an Old Adam so that by nature no one can fulfill the Moral Law. Thus, all men are under the condemnation of their original and actual sins and are damned eternally unless forgiven by the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

But Darwinian evolution teaches that all men have evolved from beasts with neither the knowledge of nor inclination toward right or wrong; that is, he is basically good. And, since evolution ever leads man to a higher degree of perfection, he is becoming better and

better, also in a moral sense. There is, then, an evolution of morality according to Darwin, as he states in his second major book, *The Descent of Man* (1871): “The first foundation or origin of the moral sense lies in the social instincts, including sympathy; and these instincts no doubt were primarily gained, as in the case of lower animals, through natural selection.” (quoted p. ix)

According to evolution, then, there is no sin because there is no God and no divine morality to which man is held accountable. Moreover, morality itself is a social conduct with no absolute standards of right and wrong, but is subject to the changing customs and demands of a changing society.

Do we not see here the basis for Modern Morality? Is not the no-moral-sin approach of evolution behind much of the breakdown of law and order in our country? When it is contended that man is not accountable for the wrongness of his actions—after all, he is but an animal—then why punish him? Why follow a primitive and barbarian law of capital punishment when the murderer can successfully be rehabilitated as a useful and productive member of society?

The increasing rise of permissiveness throughout our society can find an easy base of operations in Darwinian evolution. And nowhere is it more apparent than in the field of education. The progressive education advocated by John Dewey (1859-1952) holds out premises such as these: “Evolution is the tool or instrument of thought and understanding by means of which we can alone see present and past relationships in proper perspective” (quoted p. 182). Or, since a child is basically good, education must stress individual freedom and grant the child every chance to develop through self-expression and self-discovery without the restraints of self-repression and social discipline. That this approach is counter to the Scripture’s directives of using the rod of the Law to curb the Old Adam in training and disciplining the child is evident. That it leads to the self-righteous attitude of being able to do your thing before God by your own moral development is not so evident, and yet that is the logical conclusion of permissiveness.

4. There is no soul in man.

It must be obvious from the foregoing that, if there is not God, no divine morality, no sin, the logic of evolution must declare that man has no soul. Furthermore, the basic theory of evolution does not allow man to have a soul. He is an animal with a physical body and a life-system differing only in degree from the original unicellular life-form from which he evolved.

How this theory of man’s nature cheapens the highest form of life God created! “Let us create man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over” everything on the earth. (Gen. 1:26-28) The almighty triune God truly made man the highest form of life on earth, “a little lower than the angels” (Ps. 8:5), by creating him in His holy image, by giving him an immortal soul-life distinct from the natural life-system of animals and by placing him in a position of superiority over all other creatures.

When evolution denies the existence of man’s immortal soul, that does not leave him much of a prospect even for this life. And most psychologists recognize this. They

would agree with Charles H. Judd in his book, *Educational Psychology*,: “If ... psychology is to gain a complete understanding of human nature, it must take into account the findings of the science of biology, which traces man’s bodily structures and some of his traits back to remote origins in the lower forms of animal life.” (quoted p. 183-184) In other words, happiness is understanding the animal behavior of man and directing it to a useful and harmonious relationship with other man-animals.

This low regard of the evolutionists for human life must be given more than passing credit for the mass murders of Hitler, Russia, and China, for the increasing abomination of infanticide, abortion, and for the emotional justification of mercy-killing. Surely, human life is expendable and even violent death not so heinous if man is but a soul-less animal, whose demise merely indicates another minute step has been taken in the evolutionary ladder toward perfection.

5. There is no eternity.

It is but the next logical conclusion of Darwinian evolution that there can be no eternity if man has no soul to live on after death and there is no God for him to meet after death; no hell, because man has no sin for which to be punished eternally; no heaven, because the evolution of life goes on here on earth, or will continue later on some other planet.

This brings up the goal of evolution. As illogical as its origin, so is its end; for it claimed that the rate of evolutionary change is constant and therefore its end is infinity—not a new and better life away from this vale of tears, but an increasingly better life here and now. Man holds the key to his own future by controlling his evolution through the application of science, medicine, and technology.

This conclusion of Darwinism leads to the philosophy of naturalism, that is, the ultimate explanation of all reality is to be found in nature. And this godless thinking finds its practical expression in the emphasis upon materialism, seeking satisfaction in an abundance of this world’s goods and being content to find heaven on earth by making it a better place in which to live.

The evolutionist’s concern for this life finds a ready pulpit in those churches committed to the social gospel. When the stress is away from the life to come, when the emphasis is off the spiritual life of man, and when churches are concerned with helping man in some way, then they can do no more than seek to alleviate human suffering and woe in this life, thereby offering man a sugar-coated pill for the symptoms but leaving the cause of sin completely untouched. Indeed, “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26)

6. There is no Savior.

The doctrinal conclusions of evolution discussed thus far must by their very nature lead to this last and most devastating of all to the body of Christian faith. To put it simply, if

Jesus Christ the Savior is wiped out, so is man, and there is nothing left for him in this life or in the life to come.

But the evolutionists really could not care less. There is no need of a divine Savior because there is no God, no sin, no soul, no eternity. Man, the living organism risen from the depths of primordial ooze, is ever evolving toward ultimate perfection and thus is his own savior through evolution.

What this premise does to Christianity and the uniqueness of Christ is obvious and should be more than fair warning for all Christians to stay clear of evolution in any of its many variations. The vicarious atonement of sinful man by the God/Man Christ Jesus, the renewal of man's lost image of God through faith in Christ's redemption, the Christian's moral life of sanctification resulting from his faith in the Savior, his comfort and strength loathe precious Means of Grace, his ultimate joy in living face to face with Jesus in heaven—all this the evolutionists would deny to man, the sinner, when they deny both the need for and the existence of Jesus Christ, the Savior.

But some evolutionists do admit the existence of Jesus Christ, the man. The Modernists stress the great teacher He was, the fine example of ethical living, the unselfish humanitarian He was. But He is no more; He died just like all human beings. His miracles must be judged as myths and folklore, no more, and that includes His greatest miracle—His victorious resurrection from the dead. Well did the Apostle write for our warning: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (1 Cor. 15:17)

If the conclusion of evolution to emasculate Christianity by denying Christ the Savior be allowed, then its conclusion on the non-Christian religions must be allowed. And that is, all religions are the product of evolutionary thought and no one religion can be considered better than another. All have something to offer to man's social progress and as such are to be tolerated and encouraged. Darwinian evolution simply will not allow Christianity's claim to being the only true religion, the only one offering true salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Social progress, ethical living, humanitarianism, the alleviating of human ills—what a sop to hold out to a world desperately crying for salvation from its sin!

Do we not have here much of the rationalization behind the ecumenical movement of today? Churches are told to forget their doctrinal differences and to unite into one worldwide church communion. The purpose: to pool their activities into a joint effort that can more efficiently meet the humanitarian and social needs of mankind.

What a sad commentary on that which goes under the name of church! But is it unexpected? When man leaves the solid mooring of God's infallible word, the ship of his life is bound to flounder in the seas of his own reason. If Christ is no longer the only name given under heaven whereby man may be saved (Acts 4:12), then man can look only to a hopefully improved life on this earth. This small token of happiness he would like to look forward to before he, too, goes the way of all flesh. But all the time his conscience is accusing him and he knows that what is to come after death can only be hell!

[Conclusion]

The status of Darwinian evolution today may be judged from the fact that there are as many theories on the subject as there are evolutionists. In spite of all the debate—and there has been plenty, for not all scientists accept evolution, in spite of countless books written on it, the theory of evolution remains just that—a theory without proof, a theory that can never be proven because it is a theory without proof, a theory that can never be proven because it is contrary to the clear Word of almighty God.

The June 1972 issue of *The Reader's Digest* contains this story under its “Laughter, the Best Medicine” column: “Hundreds of top scientists worked together to build the ultimate computer—a master brain with the intellect to answer all questions and solve all the mysteries of the world. Finally it was completed and ready for its first question. With trembling hands, one of the scientists fed in the query: ‘How did the world start?’ Lights flashed, wheels whirred, tumblers clicked. Then the machine answered: ‘See Genesis.’” The story may be funny, but it does declare the truth about creation and the untruth about evolution.

Dr. George Gallup, noted for his public opinion polls, has stated: “I could prove God statistically. Take the human body alone—the chance that all the functions of the individual would just happen is a statistical monstrosity.” (quoted p. 112) Indeed, it requires more faith to accept the theory of evolution than the doctrine of creation because the former requires faith in matter and blind chance, while the latter requires faith in an omnipotent God and divine purpose.

Some Christians are nonetheless influenced in part by evolution. We have already mentioned the theistic evolution espoused by many churches. Actually, this brand of evolution is more dangerous to Christian faith than atheistic evolution because it works with Satan's first weapon of offence—the half-truth. The neo-orthodox theologians are well known for their regarding creation as a primitive myth, and from this starting point they set out to demythologize all of Scripture. They claim that only by seeing through the myths of the miracles can one eventually get to know the real Christ of the Bible. How the devil has deluded them through their misguided reason!

Even such a well-known Lutheran scholar as the biologist John W. Kotz of River Forest begins to hedge when he remarks, “The fossils ... together with the age of the earth ... pose a very real problem for those who are not ready to accept the theory of evolution.” (quoted p. 140-141) But when it is realized that evolution must lead to the complete elimination of God and His Word and of anything spiritual, that it must lead to sinful, atheistic materialism, then one will realize why he must reject evolution in all its forms and shapes. For “Darwinism has caused many to lose faith in God because it has substituted for a personal God ‘an infinite and eternal Energy,’ a concept without moral qualities and positive attributes.” (Raymond F. Surburg, quoted p. 202)

Let us, then, firmly and unequivocally reject Darwinian evolution in whatever guise or theory it is taught. It is the language of fools, for “the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”. (Ps. 14:1). It is the “profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called” (I Tim. 6:20) which our God through His Apostle warns us to avoid. It is the voice of man, the creature, sitting in judgment over God, the Creator, and detracting from the glory and honor that alone is His: “O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is full of Thy riches.” (Ps. 104:24)

May God in His grace and mercy ever spare us and our children from imbibing the least bit of the devil's doctrine of evolution; and may He ever preserve us in the true faith that we may confess with heart and lips:

“I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; marvelous are Thy works;
and that my soul knoweth right well.”

Ps 138:14

(all quotations from *Darwin, Evolution, and Creation*, edited by Paul A. Zimmermann)