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SOME INFORMAL NOTES ON WHY EVANGELICALS SHOULD
REJECT THEISTIC EVOLUTION - BY DAN WONDERLY, 1983

The acceptance of theistic evolution seems now to be popular among evangelicals as an "escape" from the embarrassing naivete and obscurantism of young-earth creationism. However, this capitulation to evolutionary theory is both unnecessary and unscientific--besides the fact that it demands an allegorizing of the first 3 chapters of Genesis, a procedure which definitely violates the principles of biblical hermeneutics. (See Edward J. Young, Studies in Genesis One, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1964.)

At the present time many evangelicals are reacting to the extreme creationists so strongly that they embrace theistic evolution as what they think is the only dignified alternative to young-earth creationism. When they do this they are ignoring the fact that many outstanding, conservative theologians and scientists of the past 120 years have maintained a belief in special creation and the reliability of the Bible without rejecting scientific evidences or practicing poor scholarship. Furthermore, those who adopt theistic evolution nearly always do so in as "blind" a manner as is used by the extreme creationists. Both are adopting positions which they have not really examined. Christians who adopt theistic evolution hardly ever find time to really study biological evolution or the principles upon which it is based. If they would enroll in a college course in the biological principles of evolution they would learn that there is good evidence for limited speciation (development of new species within limited groups), but that there never has been real concrete evidence for macroevolution.

It is ironic that not only these evangelicals, but also at least 90% of the completely secular scientists who uphold macroevolution have not really examined the evidences for or against it, and are keeping quiet about the good scientists who point out the serious weaknesses (almost nonexistence of) any evidences for abiogenesis and macroevolution. These good scientists which I just now mentioned are men of great achievement in fields directly involving the so-called evidences for evolution, and who earned high recognition in the scientific community. This group includes at least 3 in the latter half of the 19th century and a considerable number in our own generation. The 3 of which I speak are Hugh Miller, J. W. Dawson, and Louis Agassiz. You may be somewhat familiar with these men, though you may not know how high they stood--and even still stand--in scientific circles. Hugh Miller was, during the latter part of his life, probably the most respected and influential geologist and paleontologist in the British Isles, and of course one can write hundreds of pages on the fabulous works of Louis Agassiz. In fact, in the 1960's the AAAS (which is the largest scientific organization in the world) regularly featured Agassiz's picture and a brief about his work along with the account of how he was the main founder of the AAAS. (They always excuse his strong stand against evolution by various means--though that problem was not mentioned in their promotional literature of course.) Agassiz's primary fields of achievement were zoology, paleontology, and geology.

Concerning recent scientists I mentioned, there are several who

have really "shaken up" the world of biology and paleontology by asserting publicly that most evolution is pure theory, not supported by any appreciable amount of scientific evidence (but have not embraced any kind of creation doctrine themselves). The first of these was G. A. Kerkut, the well-known invertebrate biologist of England who did the 4th edition of the standard invertebrate biology text The Invertebrata (originally done by Borradaile and Potts). One year before this 4th edition was published, Kerkut's The Implications of Evolution was published by Pergamon Press. This work did a thorough job of pointing an accusing finger at all scientists who claim that they have strong evidences for evolution. (You should read at least the first chapter or two of it even yet.) Kerkut was not banished from the ranks of respected biologists for doing this. Various prominent paleontologists and biologists have since that time pointed out this same lack of evidence. For example David Raup, the present curator of the paleontology section of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, and author of the paleontology text used most in my paleontology course at I. U. in 1972, wrote in the January 1979 Field Museum Bulletin that "ironically, we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we had in Darwin's time," and then goes on to point out that several of the supposed classic examples have turned out not to be real examples of evolutionary transition. Then in November 1981 Colin Patterson, a leading paleontologist of the British Museum spoke to a large group of taxonomists at the American Museum of Natural History in New York and scolded them for claiming that they have real evidences for evolution. One of the statements of his whole, shocking presentation was, "can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing, any one thing that is true?" He made similar lectures at other institutions in the U. S. on that speaking tour, just shocking everybody. And of course the thing that really "hurt" his hearers was that they knew he was mainly correct. (He let them know of course that he was not at all a part of the modern creationist fad.)

So, what now? You may or may not be familiar with S. J. Gould's and Niles Eldredge's support of a "punctuated equilibrium", sudden-progression hypothesis. Because there is good evidence in the paleontological record for extensive speciation only within bounds (e.g., in one or more classes of Phylum Mollusca and Phylum Bryozoa) but not for evolution "out of" those order or class limits, there has been a strong trend to adopt Gould and Eldredge as a "way out." This, in spite of the fact that these two "high priests of theory" admit that there is no real evidence for their hypothesis yet. This lack of evidence infuriated a lot of the biologists and paleontologists who met in a major conference in Chicago in 1980 to try to evaluate the situation, and even Newsweek (Nov. 3, 1980) reported this fact. Newsweek's article of course showed an approval of the supposed "new" support for evolution, but they were honest enough to admit--as did other reporters--that there were many biologists and paleontologists who were worried about the absence of evidence--which Gould and Eldredge hope might sometime (they don't propose when) be corrected. After all, almost this same identical view was proposed and set forth elaborately by the geneticist Richard B. Goldschmidt about 1940 and was rejected by nearly the whole scientific community. (When I was in the U. S. Army in California in 1943 I went to the public library and read a good amount of Goldschmidt's Material Basis of Evolution which was his major work on this subject--a large book, published by Yale University Press in 1940.)

At this point we need to comment briefly on the evidence for limited evolution which does exist. We recognize this evidence, and do not try to assert that the animal and plant species have remained the same since the time of creation (an idea called "the fixity of species" which some of the earlier theologians tried to maintain). Genesis, Chapter 1 refers repeatedly to the creation of separate "kinds," each of which reproduced within its own kind or group. These "kinds" were groups which we today might call families, orders, or classes. There is much paleontological (fossil) evidence for the development of new species (a process called "speciation") within these groups. But there is no real paleontological evidence for an evolutionary transition from one group to another. Such transition has been prevented by the genetic dissimilarities ("barriers") of the groups. Thus we recognize that new species of snails, cephalopods, bryozoans, insects, bony fishes, etc. have developed--and often become extinct--through time, but not that any of these groups gave rise to "higher" forms of life outside their own category. This is essentially the position which was held for many years at Wheaton College (Illinois), until finally a considerable number of the faculty seems to have quietly adopted a more evolutionary belief. However, Dr. Pattle Pun, of the Department of Biology there, strongly upholds the earlier Wheaton position. He is relatively young in age and is a well-informed molecular biologist. There is an article "a Critical Evaluation of Evolution" by him in the Jour. of the Amer. Scientific Affiliation of June 1977, p. 84-91. He also has written a book, Evolution: Nature and Scripture in Conflict?, published by Zondervan in 1982.

May I here "throw in" my own testimony concerning evolutionary belief? After having completed an A.B. in anthropology at Wheaton College and my seminary degrees, and after teaching 3 years in a Bible college, the Lord--much to my surprise, and satisfaction--led me back into science, which I had greatly loved in earlier years. This resulted in my enrolling in Ohio U. in 1958 to take an M.S. in biology. I remember very clearly of thinking about how I would probably face much stronger evidences of evolution in this training than I had ever encountered before, and of wondering just what the outcome would be. But, to my surprise and relief, those "strong evidences" just were not there--even though my major advisor and professor of Vertebrate Zoology was a very strong evolutionist. I then came to see more clearly how and why people who had not been trained in biology could, and so often have been, allured into accepting macroevolution and abiogenesis on the basis of the surface similarities between living organisms, without realizing (a) the unbelievable complexity of life, (b) the strong genetic barriers between groups, and (c) the utter impossibility of molecular and cellular order arising spontaneously out of non-living material (abiogenesis). Darwin's admission that the vertebrate eye troubled him because of its marvelous function and structure--with no way to account for its origin by naturalistic means--is often quoted. Well, we now have at least 100 times more knowledge of far more complex features of life than were known in Darwin's day, and still man in his desire to be independent of God refuses to believe the plain and specifically stated Biblical record that God did create separate "kinds," each reproducing after its own kind, and then created a human pair to begin the human race. Unfortunately, many well-meaning Christian theologians and scientists who have not had opportunity to formally study evolutionary biology

One further point that should have been made is that if we do not recognize Adam and Eve as a human pair, and the historical and actual parents of the human race, then we are rejecting the biblical doctrine of the unity of the human race, and of the origin of sin in Adam. The Bible, especially in Romans 5:12, makes it very clear that it was "one man" who passed this characteristic on to all mankind. To reject this truth is intolerable for an evangelical Christian.

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