

Theistic Evolution Denies Twelve Creation Events and Undermines Crucial Doctrines

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ETS, Nov.15, 2017, Providence, Rhode Island

[NOTE: This material is taken from my two chapters in the book *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, edited by JP Moreland, Stephen C Meyer, Christopher Shaw, Ann Gauger, and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017).]

[NOTE: A copy of this lecture outline is available on my website waynegrudem.com.]

Introduction

Current debate about theistic evolution (TE) is not merely a debate about whether Adam and Eve really existed (though it is about that);

- debate is primarily about the proper interpretation of the first three chapters of the Bible, chapters that provide the historical foundation for the rest of the Bible and for the entirety of the Christian faith.

In Genesis 1-3, Scripture teaches essential truths about

- activity of God in creation, - origin of the universe, - creation of plants and animals on the earth, - origin and unity of the human race, the creation of manhood and womanhood, - origin of marriage, - origin of human sin and human death, - man's need for redemption from sin.

→ Without the foundation laid down in these three chapters, the rest of the Bible would make no sense, and many of those doctrines would be undermined or lost.

→ The question: should we understand Genesis 1-3 as reliable historical narrative?

Reminder of previous two hours: -- no biblical scholars should feel "compelled by the scientific evidence" to interpret Genesis in a way that presupposes the truth of neo-Darwinian macro-evolutionary theory

A. What our book is not about

1. Age of the earth – take no position
2. Whether supporters of theistic evolution are genuine Christians
3. The book is about whether Genesis 1-3 should be understood as a historical narrative, in the sense of reporting events that the author wants readers to believe actually happened and not as figurative or allegorical literature

B. What is theistic evolution?

Definition used in our book, from multiple TE sources:

God created matter and after that did not guide or intervene or act directly to cause any empirically detectable change in the natural behavior of matter until all living things had evolved by purely natural processes.

Implications: we have descended from earlier ape-like creatures by virtue of random mutation and natural selection – and all living things have also come about not through direct creation by special activity of God, but by random mutation from previous, simpler life forms.

Additional implication: modern genetics claims – there was no "original couple" from whom all human beings descended; rather – 1000s of different apelike creatures in different parts of the world gradually developed different kinds of human characteristics - human race today-descended from about 10,000 early human beings

If there was a literal A & E – just 2 individuals God picked out of 10,000 humans on earth

C. Then what happens to Gen. 1-3?

1. Adam and Eve were not the first human beings (and perhaps Adam and Eve never existed)
2. Adam and Eve were not created without parents but were born from human parents
3. God did not act directly or specially to create Adam out of dust from the ground
4. God did not directly create Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side
5. Adam and Eve were never sinless human beings
6. Adam and Eve did not commit the first human sins, for human beings were doing morally evil things long before Adam and Eve
7. Human death did not begin as a result of Adam's sin, for human beings existed long before Adam and Eve and they were always subject to death
8. Not all human beings have descended from Adam and Eve, for there were thousands of other human beings on earth at the time that God chose two of them as Adam and Eve.

9. God did not directly act in the natural world to create different “kinds” of fish, birds, and land animals
10. God did not “rest” from his work of creation or stop any special creative activity after plants, animals, and human beings appeared on the earth
11. God never created an originally “very good” natural world in the sense of a world that was a safe environment, free of thorns and thistles and similar harmful things
12. After Adam and Eve sinned, God did not place any curse on the world that changed the workings of the natural world and made it more hostile to mankind

D. Result: not just reinterpreting 1 or 2 words/ verses.

1. → Theistic evolution claims that Genesis 1-3 is not a historical narrative that reports events that actually happened
 - sees Genesis 1-3 as figurative or allegorical literature, not factual history
 - BioLogos web site (the primary online location for thoughtful theistic evolution materials)
 - Denis Lamoureux: “Adam never existed,” and, “Holy Scripture makes statements about how God created living organisms that in fact never happened,”
 - Peter Enns: “Maybe Israel’s history happened first, and the Adam story was written to reflect that history. In other words, the Adam story is really an Israel story placed in primeval time.”
 - Francis Collins: Gen 1-3: “poetry and allegory,” Denis Alexander: “figurative and theological” literature.
 - John Walton: stories about “archetypes”
 - Walton: Bible makes “no claims” regarding “biological human origins,” for Genesis 2 “talks about the *nature of all* people, not the unique *material origins* of Adam and Eve.” In fact, he says that “the Bible does not really offer any information about material human origins.”
 - Result: Genesis 1-3 should not be understood as claiming to be a report of actual historical events
2. However: → This non-historical reading of Gen. 1-3 does not arise from factors in – text itself
Only adopted b/c prior commitment to supposed “fact” of evolution

E. Reasons why Gen. 1-3 must be understood as reliable historical narrative:

1. Evidence within Genesis 1-3 (→ John Currid presentation)

2. Inter-textual ties to later historical narratives in OT that affirm historicity of Genesis 1-3

a. Genealogies: When *Adam* had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. (**Genesis 5:1-5**); then: Seth – Enosh - - - Methuselah – Lamech – Noah – Shem, Ham, Japeth.

Gen. 11: from Shem descended Terah, father of Abraham

Gordon Wenham: If the later figures in the genealogies are real people – and they certainly behave in very human fashion – then *the earlier characters, the ancestors of Abraham, must also be viewed as real persons*

“Adam, Seth, Enosh ... Terah, Abram, that is, Abraham” (**1 Chron. 1:1, 27**); then 1 Chr. 2-3: 12 sons of Jacob ... then David, Solomon

→ if author of 1 Chronicles takes Jacob’s sons to be historical, and takes David and Solomon to be historical figures, then he also understands Adam to be historical.

James Hoffmeier: Genealogical texts in the ancient Near East, by their very nature, are treated seriously by scholars and not cavalierly dismissed as made-up or fictitious, even if such lists are truncated or selective The “family history” structuring of the book [of Genesis] indicates that *the narratives should be understood as historical*, focusing on the origins of Israel back to Adam and Eve, the first human couple and parents of all humanity *The narratives are dealing with real events involving historical figures* – and this includes Genesis 1-11.

b. Details about - intentional creation of specific animals: Affirmations that God intentionally and with specific wisdom created individual animals (depend on Gen. 1-2 historical narrative):

What is man that you are mindful of him You have given him dominion over *the works of your hands*; you have put all things under his feet, all *sheep* and *oxen*, and also the *beasts* of the field, the *birds* of the heavens, and the *fish* of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. (**Psalm 8:4-9**)

O Lord, how manifold are your works! *In wisdom have you made them all*; the earth is full of *your creatures*. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. (**Psalm 104:24-25**)

3. The macro-structure of Genesis

“These are the generations of” 11X in Gen. [intros to following narratives]

תולדות ה'אדם (Gen. 2:4, ESV, KJV, RSV, NRSV,)

(or: “This is the account of . . .” (so NASB, NIV, NET, NLT))

Genesis 2:4, 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2)

2:4 these are the generations of the heavens and the earth

αὕτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς (Gen. 2:4)

5:1 the book of the generations of Adam

αὕτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως ἀνθρώπων (Gen. 5:1)

6:9 these are the generations of Noah

10:1 these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth

11:10 these are the generations of Shem

11:27 these are the generations of Terah [father of Abraham]

25:19 these are the generations of Isaac

37:2 these are the generations of Jacob

Matthew 1:1 the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham

Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Matt. 1:1)

4. Ten NT books reaffirm - historicity of specific details in Genesis 1-3

1. **Matthew:** He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (**Matthew 19:4-5**); -- “Therefore” in Gen. 2:24 refers to creation of Eve from Adam’s rib

2. **Luke:** the son of Enos, the son of Seth, *the son of Adam, the son of God.* (**Luke 3:38**)

3. **Acts:** The God who made the world *and everything in it...*” (**Acts 17:24**)

And he made from *one man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth. (**Acts 17:26**)

4. **Romans:** Therefore, just as *sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin* For if many died through *one man's trespass*, For as *by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners*, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (**Rom. 5:12-19**)

5. **1 Corinthians:** For man was not made from woman, *but woman from man.* (**1 Cor. 11:8**)

For as *by a man came death*, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as *in Adam all die*, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (**1 Cor. 15:21-22**)

Thus it is written, “The *first man* Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (**1 Corinthians 15:45**)

The first man was from the earth, *a man of dust...*” (**1 Corinthians 15:47**)

6. **2 Corinthians:** But I am afraid that as *the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning*, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (**2 Cor. 11:3**)

7. **Colossians:** For by him *all things* were created, in heaven *and on earth*, visible and invisible...” (**Colossians 1:16**)

8. **1 Timothy:** For Adam was formed first, then Eve. (**1 Timothy 2:13**)

and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (**1 Tim. 2:14**)

9. **Hebrews:** For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And *God rested* on the seventh day from all his works” for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. (**Heb. 4:4, 10**)

10. **Revelation:** “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you *created all things*, and by your will they existed and were created.” (**Rev. 4:11**)

him who lives forever and ever, *who created* heaven and what is in it, *the earth and what is in it*, and *the sea and what is in it.* (**Rev. 10:6**)

F. Significant Christian doctrines that are undermined or denied by theistic evolution

1. The truthfulness of the Bible

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” (**2 Tim. 3:16**)

But: TE requires us to believe that passages in Matthew, Luke, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, Hebrews, and Revelation were all in error what they affirmed about Genesis 1-3.

--much deeper than a challenge to the historicity of one verse or another.

-- a challenge to truthfulness of the three foundational chapters of the entire Bible, and to the truthfulness of 10 of the 27 books of the New Testament

→ important to recognize what is actually happening here.

Proponents of theistic evolution are claiming, in essence, that there are whole areas of human knowledge about which they will not allow the Bible to speak with authority.

They will allow the Bible to speak to us about salvation, but not about the origin of all living things on the earth, the origin of human beings, the origin of moral evil in the human race, the origin of human death, the origin of natural evil in the world, the perfection of the natural world as God originally created it, and Christ's own personal involvement as the Creator of "all things . . . in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16).

→ These are massive areas of human knowledge, affecting our outlook on our entire lives.

Yet theistic evolution has decreed that these topics are the exclusive domain of modern naturalistic science, off-limits for God to speak to us about.

Objection: John Walton: this does not affect inerrancy.

Response: Chicago Statement (1978): We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance *on all matters of which the Bible authors were moved to speak and write.* (Article IX). *We deny that biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science.* (Article XII).

2. Direct creation by God's powerful words (Gen 1:11, 24)

The driving force that brings about mutations in living things is randomness, not God's command. The Bible's emphasis on the wonder of God's direct activity in creation, and the power of God's creative words, is lost.

3. Overwhelming evidence for God's existence in nature (Rom. 1:19-20)

4. Evidence in nature for moral accountability to God (Acts 17:24, 26, 31)

TE allows an unbeliever to think not, "There must be an all-powerful God who made such amazing creatures," but rather, "Matter is so wonderful that it produced these amazing living creatures *all by itself.* Wow!"

Then, "I don't see any evidence for a Creator who will hold me accountable for my actions. Wow!"

5. The wisdom of God (Ps. 104:24-25)

If inanimate matter, by itself, without any additional input from God, is responsible for all living things, then we ought to praise this remarkable matter that could accomplish such wonders without God's direction.

6. The goodness of God (responsible for world with disease, dangerous animals, natural disasters)

7. The moral justice of God: TE: - earliest human beings "created" by God's use of evolution were sinful; God never created sinless human beings who were able to obey him and not to sin.

8. Human equality: TE: some human beings evolved from one group of early humans, while others have evolved primarily from another group of early humans.

9. The atonement (Rom. 5:12, 19): If we deny that sin came into the world through Adam, and if we deny that all human beings have descended from Adam, then Paul's argument about the unity of the human race as represented by Adam does not work. And then the parallel with the unity of the redeemed who are represented by Christ does not work. In this way, theistic evolution significantly undermines the doctrine of the atonement.

(→ Guy Waters presentation)

10. The resurrection

For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor. 15:21-22)

But: → if we deny that death came into the world through Adam, and if we deny the unity of the human race as descending from Adam, then once again the parallel between Adam and Christ does not work.

11. The value of improving on nature

in hope that the creation itself will be *set free from its bondage to corruption* and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:21) (it was not created this way)

G. Conclusion

Because theistic evolution denies the historicity of twelve creation events, it also denies or undermines eleven significant Christian doctrines.

Belief in theistic evolution is incompatible with the truthfulness of the Bible and with several crucial doctrines of the Christian faith.