

The Ethics of Evolution

Much is written about the question of origin and development in the creation versus the evolution debate. The focus is on the natural sciences, like biology and astronomy. But the theory of evolution is more than a way of interpreting the origin and development of the world; it is the dominant world and life view of the secular West. Evolution is opposed to the belief that the universe and its parts have been the same since they were created. And disbelief influences every area of thought and behavior. It disallows any possible reality to be found in spirituality. The presuppositions, which govern public centers of learning are devoid of eternal values. Evolutionism has left society without absolutes and without moral direction. A society without Christian spirituality has lost such vital virtues as austerity, temperance and self-denial. God has been dethroned. The creature has taken place of the Creator. Our society has re-enshrined the oldest form of idolatry: the worship of man himself. "Here is man then," says Jaques Maritain, "the center of the world."

Evolutionism is not a uniform theory. It has many disagreements about the origin, character and causes of the evolutionary processes. And this theory is not a modern phenomena. Ever since Adam and Eve's fall, man has become blind to the truth – his mind darkened by sin. He has been forced to ask three vital questions. First, where do I come from? Second, why am I here? Third, where am I going? The Christian finds his answers in God's Scriptured revelation – the Bible. The non-Christian searches elsewhere.

Evolutionary ideas can be found in ancient history. They are largely mythical in content. Confucius (551-479 BC), for example, is said to have held the view that "things originated from a single, simple source through gradual unfolding and branching." In early Indian thought, one of the Buddhist sects affirmed, "that nature... is a unitary entity which evolves into varying forms, including minds (here regarded as the state from underlying souls.)" Evolutionary doctrines predominated in early Greek thought. They were largely detached from mystical elements, unlike Chinese and Indian views. The world order was believed to have come into existence by virtue of the generative power of nature. Anaxinander (610-547 BC) taught that living things were generated spontaneously by the action of the sun's warmth on a primordial moist element. He also thought that man first developed inside a fish-like creature. The Greek philosopher, Plato (428-348 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 B C) brought an abrupt halt to the evolutionary thought. Aristotle, for example, found it inconceivable that one species of animal would slowly change into another species just as it would have been inconceivable that the complex hierarchy of nature could have gradually developed from a simple being. When Christianity became a major religion in Europe, creationism became the predominant world and life view. Man and his world had their origin in God. God had created an orderly universe. Each kind of creature had his own proper place. Man didn't have an animal ancestry. He was a crown of God's creation, His image bearer, and steward of the earth. God had a plan for the world and history would unfold it. This view prevailed for many years.

The 17th century saw the rebirth of evolutionism. The Western world began to slide toward pagan thought. The uniformitarian theory replaced the Biblical story of the Flood. The Flood account teaches that the earth's surface had been subject to a catastrophic upheaval. Sir Charles Lyell (1707-1875) did much to popularize the theory of uniformism. Lyell taught that the changes in the surface features of the earth through the ages are the result of physical forces whose operation was gradual and broadly constant. His book, *Principles of Geology* had a profound influence upon Charles Darwin. By the beginning of the 19th century, the young earth doctrine was replaced by the Old Earth theory. The age of the earth was now estimated in millions rather than in thousands of years.

During the 18th century, evolutionary ideas in the biological sciences made their impact felt. A new model of nature was developed as a self-organizing system functioning in accordance with inner dynamic forces. The French naturalist, Buffon (1707-1788), devoted his life to the story *Historie Naturelle* (44 Vols 1749-1804). He stated explicitly the hypothesis of organic evolution, without actively espousing it. He even suggested "that man and ape have a common origin; that, in fact, all the families among plants as well as animals, have come from common stock." Erasmus Darwin (1744-1829), the grandfather of Charles Darwin (1809-1883) and the French naturalist Lamarck (1744-1829) accepted the idea of a broad historical advance of living things from the simple to the complex. They believed that living things, by virtue of an internal vital power, respond to the changing environment in such a way as to satisfy their wants and needs. Though Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck paved the way for the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin, they were deists. They believed that God so designed the universe that evolution is the means by which His plan is carried out without any miraculous intervention. God was not active in His world. In 19th century thought, evolution was identified with progress, not only in biology, but also other disciplines.

Charles Darwin's name is synonymous with the theory of evolution. Evolutionism is often called Darwinism. Darwin, however, didn't profess originality. What made him different from previous evolutionists was his attempt to interpret his scientific discoveries from the evolutionary perspective. The book that set forth his views was his soon famous *Origin of Species* (1859). Thomas A. Goudge notes, "what he did was to make evolutionism for the first time a testable theory and to offer a powerful body of evidence in its support. Consequently, before long it was accepted by the whole scientific community. There was indeed a 'triumph of the Darwinian method'."

Within a year, the *Origin of Species* had a decisive influence in many nations. The Church's resistance was weak. Many churchmen began to embrace evolutionism. Ideas which had been generally accepted were now turned upside down. Man was no longer a unique creature. The doctrine of original sin was also rejected on account of the light of "modern" thought. The consequences of Darwinism were inescapable. God slowly faded away into the shadows. And gradually the shadows turned into darkness. The supernatural was gone; nothing was real, other than the natural.

The new so-called scientific outlook was altogether different from the Christian or any other spiritual presupposition. H.D. McDonald comments, "The doctrine of evolution practically began its reign with the theory of natural selection. It was crowned with shouts of 'Down with Christianity! Long live Materialism!'"

Theories of Revelation – An Historical Study 1860-1960

It is amazing how quickly the Darwinian theory gained ground. Its impact soon went beyond the natural sciences to include every realm of life and thought. The social sciences, for example, became strictly evolutionary. The word "evolution" began to appear in titles of works by anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, historians of moral, legal, and political institutions, and so on. Sir Gavin de Beer observed, "...it was not long before the lesson of evolution filtered through to all fields of human endeavour, including literature, art, music, and the history of ideas in general." As early as the year 1863, Charles Kingsley wrote to F.D. Maurice to the effect that "Darwin is conquering everywhere."

In the late 19th century, Darwinism was welcomed with open arms to support the system of laissez-faire capitalism, which had become so predominant during the industrial revolution. Those who favoured laissez-faire capitalism taught that Darwinism shows that the struggle for existence results in the survival of the fittest. The rich are simply better adapted than the poor to make it in life. Competition was the name of the game. Government intervention in economic affairs, trade unions, and the rising tide of socialism were opposed – all that in the name of Darwinism. Powerful American industrialists saw the absorption of smaller companies as illustration of evolutionary laws.

James Hill, fighting to get the railways under his control, openly proclaimed that "the fortunes of railroad companies are determined by the law of the survival of the fittest." Andrew Carnegie believed that "the law of competition was biological." "It is here," said Carnegie, "we cannot evade it... While the law may sometimes be hard for the individual, it is best for the race." J.D. Rockefeller, who accumulated fabulous wealth by devious and often inhumane methods, defended his conduct the same way. In a Sunday School address he is reported have said, "The growth of large business is merely the survival of the fittest... The American Beauty rose can be produced in the splendour and fragrance which bring cheer to its beholder only by sacrificing the early buds which grow up around it. This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working out of the a law of nature and a law of God." The law of nature was the evolutionary principle of the survival of the fittest.

I have given this thumbnail sketch of evolutionary thought to show that our Western culture has returned to its pagan origins. Ideas have consequences. Because of the tremendous inroads of evolutionism, our society no longer accepts supernatural

authority for moral values. If you use the Bible, for example, in a public debate to support your views on moral issues, you are laughed right out of court. The laws which were once presented as the decrees of God are now merely commands made by fallible men. Holy-days have given way to holidays. Places of entertainment are attended on Sundays, while churches are half empty or are closing down. We are left with only confused and structureless ideas.

Evolutionists believe that forces at work within the natural process produce values from which we can derive morals. Morals are "rooted in human needs and human inclinations." This leads, of course, to relativism. Whatever the individual accepts as true is right for him/her. As circumstances change, so do moral standards. Antony Flew, author of *Evolutionary Ethics*, notes, "All morals, ideas, and ideals have originated in the world; and that, having thus in the past been subject to change, they will presumably in the future too, for better or for worse, continue to evolve." If this is so, where can we draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour? David Tribe, editor of the British humanist weekly *Freethinker* and for 8 years president of the Natural Secular Society, made this revealing statement, "Secularism found it easier to take the moral blinkers of the religious than to give moral spectacles to the irreligious." In other words, secularists have nothing to give to those who have lost their faith. Tribe says that man is no more than a social animal. Morality springs from the social situation and our experience of it, from the felt needs within ourselves and the observed needs of others. Since man is his own standard, anything goes. Tribe says that "some liberals go so far as to say that 'premarital sexual experience need not necessarily be wrong.' What they should say is that for many people – probably most, it is a jolly good thing, part of the normal experimentation of life, whether it be auto-, homo- or hetero-erotic. For while sex is usually a part of marriage, marriage need not be a part of sex."

The values of our secular society, infiltrated by the evolutionary thought, may be seen every weekday, from noon to late afternoon, in the domestic dramas we laughingly call soap operas. Bruce Lockerbie comments. "The soap opera heroine – and by extension her daily, real-life companions – inhabits a totally secularized environment. Yet it is an environment grown arid and stale. The very titles of the series say so: 'The Young and the Restless', 'Search for Tomorrow', 'Days of Our Lives', 'Another World', 'One Life to Live.' There is no God in Soap Opera America; no one bothers to ask the source of the Guiding Light or where one may find the still point of the turning world."

The Cosmic Center – The Supremacy of Christ in a Secular Wasteland

Evolutionism dehumanizes. The sanctity of life has gone. Exaggerated? Not at all! Pediatric surgeon, C. Everett Koop, former surgeon-general of the United States, has charged that increasingly the medical profession is purposely inflicting death on some classes of people – the very young, very old and the disabled by withholding care. Herbert Schlossberg states that a study done at the Yale medical school found that of 299 deaths in a special care nursery, 14 percent occurred after care was deliberately withheld. Early death became a "management option."

Idols for Destruction – Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society

The spirit of the age is powerful. We are involved in a spiritual battle of immense proportion. But we should not forget that the spirit of the age has always opposed the Spirit of Christ. Our secular culture is a challenge for the Christian mind. Only the presence of the Christian mind, combined with a church renewed and empowered by the sovereign Holy Spirit, can challenge our morally bankrupt culture. The Gospel alone presents the cure for the moral failures of our time. God freely pardons sinners by means of the redeeming death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And it presents the highest ethical standard available anywhere – Jesus Christ – the sinless Son of God, who exemplified on earth what He taught.

New Age Ethics

Fundamental to the New Age Movement (NAM) is its total rejection of Christian and Jewish traditions. It is a reaction to secularism and modern technocracy. NAM: some say it began in 1967; others claim it began in the first decennia after 2000. Usually 2016 is mentioned. And it will last until 4296. It is influenced by Hinduism, Taoism, Astrology and evolutionism. This new age, once hidden, is now revealed in human potentiality.

1. Pantheism, Pancosmism, Holism

God is identified with the universe. God is an endless stream which flows throughout the whole universe. Every human being, animal and tree is partly god. No distinction between the Creator and the creation. The word to remember is monism.

2. Deification of Man

To deify yourself is to know God within yourself and to know yourself as God. We must become what we are in God. NAM is a religion without a living God.

3. Karma and Reincarnation

Karma and reincarnation involves a mechanistic cause and effect of behaviour. There is good and bad karma. In the caste system in India, the handicapped invalids, holocaust victims and sick are looked on as having bad karma.

Critique: Because mankind wants to become divine, it does not want to recognize the total brokenness of our life, and the total need for forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

4. Meditation

Eastern thought often leads to quietism and inaction. To be is not to do. Picture Buddha under the Bo tree.

Evaluation

If self is king, why worry about ethics? The king can do no wrong. If the self is satisfied, that is sufficient. Life is cheap.

"Nothing of value perishes; everything of value is eternal. This may explain the remark Westerners often make about the cheapness of life in the East. Individuals, embodiments of life, this man, that man, you, me are of no value. But in essence they are all of infinite value: for in essence they are infinite," says the New Ager. Within NAM there is no room for the individual. Moral standards are impossible. You cannot make a distinction between cruelty and non-cruelty everything flows (the good and the bad) from the one source of impersonal being – the all mind.

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