

Objections Against Theistic Evolution

By Rev. Ronald Cammenga

In the last issue of The Reformed Witness pamphlet, we discussed the teaching known as theistic evolution. We would encourage you to re-read that article. We saw then that the theistic evolutionist professes to believe in God and to receive God's Word. He readily admits that it was God who created all things in the beginning. God created the very first and most basic forms of life. But after that, God allowed all things to develop by means of an evolutionary process. Although God is ultimately the creator, says the theistic evolutionist, scientific research has determined that the method by which God created all things was the method of evolution.

We also saw last time that in order to make Genesis 1 harmonize with their evolutionary views, theistic evolutionists have gone to work to reinterpret the creation account. In particular, they have propounded two views to make Genesis 1 fit in with the theory of evolution. Some theistic evolutionists have propounded the "gap theory," the theory that between the 6 days of creation there were long periods of time during which the evolutionary process was at work. Other theistic evolutionists have held to the "period theory," the theory that the "days" of Genesis 1 were not literal, 24-hour days, but were in reality long periods of time.

In this issue of The Reformed Witness pamphlet we want to begin an evaluation of the teaching of theistic evolution. We want to lodge against these views serious objections. We want to show that this view does violence to the plain teaching of Genesis 1, not only, but that this view is incompatible with the Christian faith.

First of all, we object to theistic evolution because it is a teaching that arose not out of the Scriptures themselves, but out of the attempt to harmonize the "findings" of science with the teaching of the Word of God. It must be admitted that the view of theistic evolution is a view only recently advanced. It must also be admitted, and is simply a historical fact, that the men who developed this view were guilty of seeking to make the Scriptures conform to their theories and ideas, rather than conform their ideas and theories to the Word of God. The historical view of creation had to be set aside, not because it was found to conflict with the teaching of the Word of God. But the historical view of creation had to be set aside because men were unable to harmonize this view with their alleged scientific discoveries. Scripture was no longer the "lamp and light" upon the pathway. But now the Scriptures needed a lamp and light, the lamp and light of "science falsely so-called."

Secondly, we would again point out that any theory of evolution, be that atheistic evolution or theistic evolution, is explicitly denied by Scripture to be the way in which the universe obtained its existence. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews could not have stated it more clearly: "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear," Heb. 11:3. This is also the plain teaching of Genesis 1 itself. Repeatedly it is mentioned in this chapter that God created all things "after their kind" and that the living creatures were given by God the power to reproduce "after their kind." One kind did not produce another kind, which is precisely the teaching of theistic evolution.

Thirdly, over against those who hold to the period theory, we would maintain that it is impossible to make the "days" of Genesis 1 refer to anything other than literal, 24-hour days. When "day" in the Bible does not refer to a literal, 24-hour day, the context, something in the passage itself, always shows this. This is not shown by something outside of the Bible, such as an alleged scientific discovery.

Besides, it's significant to note that the various days mentioned in Genesis 1 are differentiated by numerals: the "first" day, the "second" day, the "third" day, etc. In every other instance in Scripture where a numeral precedes the word "day" the reference is always to an ordinary day of 24 hours. You can check this for yourself by using a concordance. Look up the word "day". Wherever the word "day" is qualified by a numeral the reference is invariably to a literal, 24-hour day.

We could add to this the fact that each day in Genesis 1 is marked by an evening and a morning. In every instance in Scripture where a day is limited by evening and morning the reference is to an ordinary day of 24 hours. You can also check this for yourself by using a concordance.

In the fourth place, we would point out that the view of theistic evolution implies the presence of death in the world before the time of the fall of man into sin. Necessarily involved in the process of evolution is death. Over long periods of time, with the passing of generations, new and higher forms of life arise. Lower forms of life necessarily pass out of existence. The fit survive, the less fit and mis-fits die.

The view of the theistic evolutionist that there was death in the creation before the fall is a view that is in flat contradiction with the word of God. Genesis 2:17 contains God's threat of death to man if he should violate the command of God and eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Death did not enter paradise until Adam willfully disobeyed God's command and ate of the tree. Then and only then did the creation become subject to death. God did not bring death into the creation in the form of an evolutionary process. God made the creation good and perfect. But man is to be blamed for the entrance of death. This is also the plain teaching of a passage like Romans 5:12, where the apostle Paul teaches that death entered the world through the sin of the first man, Adam.

In the fifth place, the theistic evolutionist overlooks the fact that when God created the universe in the beginning, God created a mature universe. The theistic evolutionist readily accepts the age placed on the universe by modern science and modern scientific dating. The age of rocks and fossils is determined to be millions of years. Therefore, the evolutionist concludes, the origin of the earth is millions of years ago. But what these men fail to take into account is that God created the universe with age built into it. That's plain from the account of Genesis 1. God did not make a baby, but God made a man, a full-grown, mature man. God did not create minnows, but God made fish. God did not plant seeds, but He created mature, fully developed trees, plants, and flowers. The earth was created with age. It was not an undeveloped mass that developed and matured over a period of millions of years. But it was a mature universe. The theistic evolutionist overlooks this significant fact.

In the sixth place, we would also hold that the view of theistic evolution is inconsistent with God's purposefulness. If God's purpose was His own glory through the creation and redemption of man, as theistic evolutionists presumably believe, it seems foolish that God would waste billions of years in aimless evolutionary meandering before getting to the point. Surely such a conception is at odds with the Biblical teaching concerning God's wisdom and purposefulness.

Finally, we would point out that the view of theistic evolution is a denial of the sovereignty of God. There is no truth more clearly taught in Scripture, no truth dearer to the heart of a Reformed man, than the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God. The teaching of theistic evolution is inconsistent with a confession of God's sovereignty. All that God does, He does sovereignly. This was true of the creation of the world in the beginning. This is made plain when the Apostle Paul says in Romans 4:17 concerning God's act of creation that He "callesth those things which be not as though they were." God didn't call the things that were not and they began to be, only to assume the final form God had in mind millions of years later. No, He called them into existence, and "they were." This is also the teaching of the Psalmist in Psalm 33:9, "For He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." When God spake in the beginning, He spake as the sovereign Lord God. When He spake, things didn't take billions of years to come into existence and stand fast. But He spake and immediately, by the power of the very word which He had spoken, all things came into being and stood fast. Only this explanation does justice to God's sovereignty.

These are some of the objections which we are compelled to lodge against the teaching of theistic evolution. On account of these objections we are compelled to reject this teaching and to warn our children and young people against it. In our next pamphlet, we hope to examine theistic evolution in relation to the Reformed view of the perspicuity of Holy Scripture.