

THE INFLUENCE OF EVOLUTION UPON RELIGION

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When Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* issued from the presses (November 24, 1859), it marked a history-changing event. And the world has not been the same since—unfortunately.

The theory of evolution has wielded its malevolent influence over the past century and a half in a host of ways. “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” (Bewkes, et al., 1940, p. 549). In this article, I would like to survey briefly some of the ways evolutionary theory has affected the way many people view the Bible.

First, it is alleged that just as biological organisms have evolved across the ages, even so religious ideas have evolved. It is common to assert, for example, that man's initial religious impulses were polytheistic personifications of nature's forces. Later (c. 8th century B.C.), it is alleged, Israel evolved the concept of a personal God. This notion is without support. It contradicts basic Bible information, and is at variance with the historical and archaeological research of men like Max Mueller and Sir William Ramsay.

Second, it has been argued that ethical and theological concepts have developed progressively across the centuries of biblical literature. Harry Emerson Fosdick contended that every idea in the Bible “started from primitive and childlike origins” (1924, p. 11). In terms of ethics, for instance, it is alleged that humans initially “mated” like animals, with marriage evolving only later. The Bible is supposed to have endorsed polygamy early on, before monogamy became the norm. Yet nothing could be farther from the truth. Though polygamy was tolerated during the era of the Old Testament, Christ taught that it never was the divine ideal. The marriage arrangement of the Christian system is, in fact, a restoration of that which was initiated by God in Eden (Matthew 19:8-9; cf. Vincent, 1972, p. 65).

Liberal theologians, highly influenced by the evolution concept, claim that human sacrifice, common among primitive peoples, is at the root of the New Testament doctrine of the atoning work of Christ. Again, the theory has no basis in fact. The Old Testament condemned human sacrifice (Deuteronomy 18:10). Moreover, the vicarious death of Jesus was in the mind of God long before there were paganistic sacrificial rites (Genesis 3:15; cf. 1 Peter 1:19-20).

Third, in the latter half of the 18th century a philosophy of destructive criticism became vogue, and the so-called Documentary Hypothesis was born. Based upon the notion that Israel's religion had evolved, the various books of the Old Testament were supposed to have resulted from a variety of literary sources. These sources were dated in accordance with the “development” theory (see Allis, 1974, pp. 259-269). For example, it is argued that Moses did not author the Pentateuch; instead, there were four primary sources, known as J, E, P, and D. We cannot enumerate the fallacies of this theory here, but simply will observe the following with professor Kitchen of the University of Liver-

pool: “Even the most ardent advocate of the documentary theory must admit that we have as yet **no single scrap** of external, objective (**i.e., tangible**) evidence for either the existence or the history of ‘J’, ‘E’, or any other alleged source-document” (1966, p. 23, emp. in orig.).

Finally, we must mention that the assertion that vast ages of time are needed to accommodate evolutionary development certainly has influenced the way many view the chronology of the Bible. Rather than accepting the statements of Scripture that humanity has existed since the beginning of the creation (cf. Mark 10:6, Romans 1:20), the biblical text is manipulated to facilitate eons of time. This is seen in the promulgation of such notions as: (a) the Gap Theory—billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2; (b) the Multiple-Gap Theory—long ages between the days of the creation week; and (c) the Day-Age Theory—each “day” of the initial week representing millions of years.

These concepts are false. Some, however, who have accepted them—in part or in whole—perhaps are unaware of the influences that ultimately spawned them.

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