

According to Their Kinds

GENESIS I:11-13

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And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so (Gen. 1:11).

As we continue to study Genesis 1, we have covered enough ground that we should take the time to recap. We have noted the vast significance of Genesis 1:1 to the Christian worldview. "In the beginning, God created" identifies God as eternal, transcendent, and separate from the things he has made. It tells us that there is a purpose to history that comes from its Maker, who can be relied upon to rule all that he created by his mere word. Genesis 1:1 notes our accountability as creatures to the Creator and our dependence on him for all things.

We saw in Genesis 1:2 that God looks on the creation in terms of the home he is providing and the people who will inhabit it. By verse 3, we have encountered God in his triune persons: the Father ordaining and speaking, the Spirit hovering and empowering, and the Son achieving as the Divine Word. Beginning the six creation days, we noted that Genesis 1 reads as an historical narrative that recounts actual though unique events. On days one and two, God began ordering his creation by separating. We have observed that creation involves binary complements – heaven and earth, light and darkness, sea and land, etc. – which God places each in its proper category.

On day three, God has already separated the sea from the land, and in Genesis 1:11-13 he fills the ground with plant life. The key point in these verses involves the principle of reproduction as God made it. Here, the biblical doctrine of creation collides with the secular theory

of evolution. Did God create the various creatures, causing them to reproduce within their kinds? Or did the various organisms arise through a random process of gradual evolution?

Sprouting with Vegetation

The third day concludes with God's creation of plant life: "And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.' And it was so" (Gen. 1:11). Here we have God covering the ground which earlier that day he had gathered amidst the waters of earth.

Genesis says that God caused the earth to sprout vegetation of two kinds: one with the seed on the plant and the other with seed inside fruit (see also Gen. 1:29). John Currid writes: "These two terms represent all agricultural and horticultural plant life" on earth.¹

Apparently, the plants and trees arose from the ground whole. When the perennial question is asked, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" or in this case, "the plant or the seed?" the Bible's answer is the plant (and thus the chicken). God made the plants with seed. The emphasis is therefore placed on the reproductive capacity that God built into plant life: "The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind" (Gen. 1:12). The point of seed, whether in or out of fruit, is the plants' ability to reproduce themselves by what would now be a natural process. God in this way "grants the means of self-perpetuation to various species and orders of creation."² This same principle will be extended to animal life and then humans. Once God created life with a capacity to reproduce, each kind of being then has both a supernatural and natural origin. Plants come from seed, but ultimately Psalm 147:8 is right to say that it is God who "makes grass grow on the hills."

In the context of Genesis 1, everything is created with a purpose. God made the earth so that plants could grow on it. He then made

¹ John Currid, *Genesis: Volume 1, Genesis 1:1-25:18* (Darlington: UK: Evangelical Press, 2003), 71.

² Victor Hamilton, *The Books of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 126.

plants so that animals and humans would have food (Gen. 1:29-30). He created the animals for the dominion of man. And God created mankind – male and female – in order to bear his own image on the earth. The various kinds of plants therefore find a divine purpose in the service that they provide to higher beings and ultimately in the contribution that they make to the glory of God.

As before, the language of creation emphasizes God's own will and word, resulting in his personal approval. "And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation'" (Gen. 1:11). Here, the Bible expressly refutes the idea of "Mother Earth," as if the capacity for life was generated by nature itself. True, the earth produces plant life, but only at God's will and command, however natural the process may seem in its repetitions. The bounty of the earth is a cause not merely to rejoice in the wonder of nature but also to glory in the goodness of God. No wonder that God looked upon his work of the third day, which completed his preparation of the earth for the inhabitants to come, seeing "that it was good" (Gen. 1:12).

Assessing Scientific Claims for Evolution

Over the last 150 years, an alternative to biblical creation has arisen in the form of the secular theory of evolution. Evolution denies that the various creatures appeared by God's creative design and act. Instead, each species gradually developed from lower forms by a random process of natural selection. Ever since the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* in 1859, evolution has served primarily as a scientific justification for the removal of God. As Phillip Johnson has written, once evolution is accepted as a "fact," this means "that all living things are the produce of mindless material forces such as chemical laws, natural selection, and random variation. So God is totally out of the picture."³ Julian Huxley, a leading evolution proponent, cited this as evolution's great virtue:

In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created: it evolved. So did

³ Phillip E. Johnson, "The Church of Darwin," *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 16, 1999. Accessed on-line at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB934759227734378961>.

all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion.⁴

Given the blatant opposition of evolution to biblical creation, it may seem surprising that some Christians seek to accommodate evolution into their faith. The reason for this is the claim that evolution has been “proven” as a “fact,” and the cultural shame that is attached to any who would deny it. In avoiding this contradictory position, it is helpful to know that evolution is far from proved as being true, despite sensational media reports to that effect.

Consider the 2010 report from the University of California at San Francisco that humans and chimpanzees share 99% of their DNA. The implication is made that mankind is only very slightly different from chimps and that we obviously arose from a common ancestry. This kind of evidence is intimidating to Christians, who find it intellectually difficult to hold a biblical view in the face of such claims. Before abandoning the Bible, however, Christians are wise to investigate the actual study being cited. What the media report did not say is that the 99% figure was arrived at only after large portions of the DNA were excluded from the study, on the grounds that they were so fundamentally different. It turns out that no less than 28% of the total DNA was excluded from the study on this basis, so that with this and other factors included, a more accurate figure would state that humans and chimpanzees share 68% of their DNA.⁵

This example highlights a characteristic feature of scientific claims in support of evolution: the reported results are manufactured by the way that data is selected and organized. Another important matter is the prominent role of presuppositions in interpreting the data. Today’s science operates on the assumption of the gradual evolution of species. So if humans and apes have shared DNA, the assumption is made that the common DNA is evidence of a shared past development. But the DNA proves nothing of the sort: it is the assumption that is producing the conclusion. The Bible provides another explanation for why humans and lower animals share DNA: because God made them with similarities. It turns out that the great

⁴ Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Humanist* (London: Penguin, 1964, reprint 1969), 82-83.

⁵ Cited from Vern Poythress, *Did Adam Exist?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014), 5-7.

majority of the DNA shared by humans and chimps has to do with the basic chemical machinery within cells, proving merely that humans and chimpanzees are both mammals. This claim is no threat to the Bible, which describes both animals and humans as “living creatures” (Gen. 1:24; 2:7). Moreover, there are biblical reasons why God made mankind with biological similarities to the lower animals. Vern Poythress writes: “Man made in the image of God is supreme over the animals (Gen. 1:28), but he also has a definite solidarity with them.”⁶ Thus God created the animals to have considerable biological similarity with the human race so they could work together.

Upon examination, it turns out, a scientific finding reported as proving the evolution of mankind from apes provides no basis for that finding at all. The same might be said for other human genome studies that claim mankind is hundreds of thousands of years old or that human DNA could not have emerged from a single set of parents. It is typical of these studies, as of all scientific studies, that decisions made regarding the inclusion or exclusion of data determine the results and that assumptions often having little to do with science govern the conclusions.⁷

The Bible and Evolution

The question that Christians must ask is how the theory of evolution squares with the Bible’s account of creation. There are several lines of argument that show the two approaches to be fundamentally and irreconcilably opposed.

First, notice that while evolution ascribes the origin of species to a purposeless biological process, the Bible declares God as the Creator who personally made all things according to his will. Some will counter that God may have chosen to create the species by means of evolution. The problem with this assertion is the account of Genesis 1. This is why some scholars argue against the historical validity of Genesis 1, describing it as poetic literature that teaches theology but not historical truth. We have previously refuted this claim, noting that both at the level of grammar and literary type, Genesis 1 is

⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁷ Ibid., 19-28.

standard Old Testament historical narrative. If the truth claims of Genesis 1 may be dismissed by simply declaring its theology as non-historical, there is no chapter in the Bible that cannot be similarly dismissed when it conflicts with secular dogma.

A particular problem in accommodating Genesis 1 to evolution is the specific emphasis given in verses 11 and 12 to the manner of reproduction as God designed it. God called forth the vegetation, both fruit and non-fruit-bearing plants, “each according to its kind.” It is probably too narrow a definition to say that the “kinds” of Genesis 1 correspond to what scientists define today as “species.” More broadly, the kinds approximate the *genus*, major families in which related species exist. For instance, *canis* is the genus for the dog family, including *canis lupus*, containing wolves and domestic dogs, and *canis latrans*, which is the coyote. Within a genus there is often the ability to mate and reproduce, which is the case between wolves and coyotes. However, between the genres the different genetic structures makes it impossible for, say, dogs to mate with cats.

Evolution states that the species developed gradually from lower to higher by means of genetic adaptation. But Genesis 1:11 says that God made the plants and trees “each according to its kind.” This distinction pertains explicitly to reproduction: the plants yield “seed according to their kinds” (Gen. 1:12). A tomato plant yields tomato seeds, which sprouts tomato plants. H. C. Leupold comments: “Nature itself here is seen to have definite limits fixed which appear as constant laws or as insurmountable barriers.”⁸

In a non-technical sense, the term “evolution” is often used to describe how species adapt to their environments. This is sometimes called “micro-evolution” and poses no conflict to Scripture. There is no doubt that creatures experience variation within their genus and species by means of natural selection. But in its proper sense, “evolution” means the creation of new and *different* kinds of organisms that emerge by natural selection. This is sometimes called “macro-evolution.” It is this that the Bible denies in its teaching that God created the various kinds of plants and animals. Thousands of

⁸ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis, Volume 1: Chapters 1-19* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1942), 68.

years of careful breeding – not random mutations but intentional genetic manipulation – have produced the wide variety of dogs that we enjoy today. There are considerable differences between a Chihuahua and a Great Dane, showing that there can be changes and variations within a species. But all of this intentional genetic intervention with dogs – not random selection but careful breeding – has never produced anything but a dog. The reason is given by Genesis 1, which says that God made the kinds to reproduce within the boundaries he has fixed.

In contrast to the chaos and flux anticipated by evolution, the divine pattern of creation reflects the order and consistency that flows from God's character. Evolutionary science is frustrated by its inability to find proof of natural selection resulting in new kinds of species.⁹ It would do better by replacing naturalistic presuppositions with the account of our origins provided by the Creator himself in Genesis 1.

Evolution's Effect on Christianity

Christians should reject evolution because it is not proven and, more importantly, because the testimony of Scripture stands squarely against it. Moreover, we should realize that evolution logically requires the radical revision of essential Christian doctrines. Peter Enns, an Old Testament scholar and evolution advocate, is honest to admit that “evolution cannot simply be grafted onto evangelical Christian faith as an add-on.”¹⁰ Rather, to accept the claims of evolution requires the recasting of our entire theology.

The first topic that requires revision under evolution is the doctrine of *Scripture*. We have observed the fundamental contradiction between the biblical account of creation and the evolutionary account of origins. Because of this clear conflict, Christian proponents of evolution must subordinate the authority of God's Word to that of secularist dogma and scientific theory, the result of which is the undermining of the Bible's teaching as a whole.

⁹ For more evidence of this scientific failure, see Douglas F. Kelly, *Creation and Change* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1997), 195-199.

¹⁰ Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam, ?*

A second casualty of evolution must be the biblical doctrine of *man*. Under evolution, man's unique standing as God's special image-bearer is shaken: he is not above the animals, but rather is one of them. For Christians to embrace evolution would thus be a singular disaster in a culture where the emptiness of secularism has ravaged people with despair and self-loathing. To tell people that they are slightly higher versions of apes is to direct them to a bestial approach to life.

Moreover, the teaching of Adam and Eve as our first created parents is the basis for the unity of the human race and the brotherhood of mankind. Evolution describes our fellow men and women as competitors, so that our hopes for survival require the violent subjugation of those who might threaten our DNA. Evolution is a theory compatible with racism. We are but many strands of humanity, some higher and some lower, so that the weak may be dominated by the strong for the evolutionary good of mankind. The value of human life lies only in its utility, rather than man's unique standing as image-bearers of God. Therefore, deformed or weak babies may be justly eliminated and the aged and infirmed may be put to an early end. Under evolution, the value of human life is based on the quality of the genes it passes on and its perceived utility to the world. It is a theory that has already produced the very barbarism that is increasingly evident in our post-Christian society.

Under evolution, the Bible's teaching on *sin* must be replaced. No longer is sin traced to the historical event of the Fall in Genesis 3. Instead, evolution points to defects in man's primitive state which are being corrected by natural selection. Christians thus must renounce the Bible's analysis for the problem of the world, replacing the grand narrative of creation, fall, and redemption with the secularist religion of evolutionary progress. Many pro-evolution Christians will object, insisting that they believe the Bible's teaching on sin. The problem is that they no longer accept the biblical basis for the doctrine of sin, namely, the historical reality of Adam and Eve, their fall into depravity through disobedience, and God's response in justly casting them from paradise.

Along with the abandonment of sin, evolution requires its believers to recast their attitude towards *death*. The Bible ascribes the entry of

death to God's judgement on sin (Rom. 5:12). Under evolution, mankind ended up as the species it is because death eliminated more inferior alternatives via natural selection. If one still believes in God after embracing evolution, he is a God who wields death as a chief means of bringing about what the Bible describes as creation. When God said, "And it was good" in Genesis 1, he was thus describing a process governed by death and in which death is central to that which God approves. This of course calls into question the very goodness of God, so that the mythical image of the Grim Reaper must now be considered one of his primary metaphors. It is hard to imagine a doctrine more offensive to the theology of the Bible than evolution. Under evolution, Christians must abandon in principle our position as people of life and join the secularist culture with its callous embrace of the fundamental necessity and virtue of death.

As an extension of evolution's swath through biblical doctrine, Christian *salvation* must be wholly reorganized. The Christian doctrine of salvation is that the second Adam, Jesus Christ, has overcome the failure of the first Adam by his life of perfect righteousness and sin-atonement death. Paul summarized: "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 under evolution, this gospel addresses a sin problem that is mythical, not historically real. If creation and fall are myths, then the Christian gospel cannot escape that same assessment.

The theory of evolution thus assaults the person and work of *Christ*. What does it mean that Jesus was true and perfect man, able on this basis to make an atoning sacrifice for sin? Under evolution, Jesus was an inferior past member of our race, upon whom we now long down from our slightly superior evolutionary perch. Moreover, if Jesus was just one of the many disconnected branches of *homo sapiens*, he could not have taken up our own flesh as kinsman redeemer. Just as the person of Christ is diminished under evolution, his saving work is rendered incomprehensible. The doctrines of penal substitutionary atonement and imputed righteousness find their origin in Genesis chapter 3, which evolution can only consider metaphorical at best. Having rejected the historical basis for creation and sin, those who

embrace evolution find themselves with no historical relevance for either the life or death of Jesus Christ.

Finally, evolution requires the eventual overthrow of Christian *ethics and morality*. Peter Enns has written: “Some behaviors that Christians have thought of as sinful are understood in an evolutionary scheme as means of ensuring survival—for example, the aggression and dominance associated with ‘survival of the fittest’ and sexual promiscuity to perpetuate one’s gene pool.”¹¹ Enns is right and his candor should be appreciated. Evolution cannot be grafted onto the structure of biblical Christianity but replaces it with a different structure, a different story of salvation, a different ethic, and a different religion altogether.

Evolution: Small Gain and Great Loss

Given this price tag, we may rightly wonder why any Christian would be attracted to the secularist dogma of evolution. Not only is its scientific basis unproven, but its conflict with Bible teaching and the entirety of Christian doctrine is obvious. The answer is that by at least tolerating evolution, Christians may dramatically tone down our conflict with the secular culture. No longer would Christians have to be considered a cult of obscurantists who refuse to accept what everyone else knows. No longer would our scholars be categorically excluded from the market square of secular academia. No longer would we argue about matters that seem far removed from the good news of forgiveness. With the credibility gained by our tolerance toward evolution, we would gain an opportunity to bear testimony to Jesus as the loving Savior.

Do we realize the folly of this reasoning? Let us consider that it may be true that by embracing evolution we may gain an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus Christ. But then we must revert to the very biblical narrative, beginning in Genesis 1-3, which we abandoned in embracing evolution. By the folly of seeking to escape the stigma of a world that does not tolerate God’s Word we will have ourselves abandoned the history taught in the Bible, which alone can support

¹¹ Enns, *Evolution of Adam*.

the story of the Christian message, the gospel of Jesus as the Savior for our sins.

How little is the gain and how catastrophic must be the loss to a Christianity that capitulates to a narrative that is designed to replace the teaching of God's Word. But what is the alternative, asks the anguished evangelical, facing the world's demand that we conform or be excluded from society? The biblical alternative was given by Paul: "Let God be true though every one were a liar" (Rom. 3:4). We must decide that the Bible is God's Word and therefore the highest authority on every matter to which it speaks. We must be faithful to God by remaining steadfast to his Word. But how can we expect to reach and redeem a world if our teaching results in such an offense that we are deemed a cult of intellectual outrages unwilling to face the truths of modern science? We do it in the same way that the apostles and the Christians of the early church did, by the sovereign power of God at work to save through his gospel.

Can Christianity prevail in the face of scientific opposition and cultural ridicule? The Bible answers with its message of a supernatural God of grace, whose redeeming power overcomes sin through the achievement of his Son, Jesus. But how will Christianity go forward and how will the church prevail through history? This question, raised in the Bible's first book is answered by its last book, in Revelation 12:11: "they have conquered... by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death" (Rev. 12:11).