

LUTHER'S RESPONSES ON CREATION AND THEISTIC EVOLUTION

The beauty of the earth, in all its intricacies, is a gift of the creator to us. And its value is not practical ethical, but is given to us simply to delight us even as God delights in it. And it is powerful.

N.T. Wright notes that beauty, whether in God's creation or in human art, "**is sometimes so powerful that it evokes our deepest feelings of wonder, gratitude and reverence**" Beauty blossoms into appreciation for God's creation and love of the creator.

This beauty and powerful god's creation is under attacks by (The snake) Charles Darwin the Englishman who popularized the theory of evolution. Why? Because, in order to deceive Eve, the Bible says the devil used the most subtle of all the creatures, the serpent (Gen 3:1). Therefore, it should not surprise us that, also today the devil's most subtle and most effective deception is theistic evolution.

Theistic evolution is the devil's popular lie, for it blends together Darwin's evolutionary theory of how the world came into existence with God's own explanation of His creation. We all see the devil knows that many who claim to be Christian find Darwin's theory of evolution very appealing to their reason and logic.

Therefore, when the devil deceptively says we can believe both evolution and creation at the same time, just like he lied to Eve he is lying to us; in spite of this many join Eve in doubting God's Word and fall for the devil's **subtle** lie.

How thrilled the devil must have been when in 1966, newspapers around the world carried the Pope's news release from the Vatican in Rome, that the Roman Catholic Church has always accommodated theistic evolution. This accommodation is also expressed in its latest catechism published in 1994.

Theistic evolution is not new. It was well known in Luther's day. His response was : ***" It is not true, as several heretics and other persons allege, that God created everything in the beginning and then let nature takes its own independent course, so that all things now spring into being of their own power thereby they put God on level with a shoemaker or a tailor. This not only contradicts Scripture, but it runs counter to experience"*** Furthermore, Luther states, ***" Just as no creature was able to contribute towards its own creation at the beginning, so it has not been able to work towards its preservation perpetuation of its kind. Thus, as we human beings did not create ourselves, so we can do nothing to keep ourselves alive for a single moment by our own power."***

Luther's words, rejecting chance and mechanistically guided processes to explain man, are as specific and as clear as if he had read Darwin.

In his comments on Genesis 1:6 Luther states: ***" Here we are taught about the beginnings of man, that the first man did not come into existence by a process of generation as reason had deceived Aristotle and the philosophers into imagining."***

Luther's clear rejection of any and all chance processes to explain the world came from his observation that Scripture has clearly ruled out

these explanation. ***“Ungodly and wicked men, who suppose that everything happens by chance, understand nothing in the Holy Scriptures and creatures of God.”*** There can be little doubt that Luther was familiar with the classic basics of evolution. ***And there can be no doubt that he thoroughly rejected them!***

Luther did not consider that true science should be at odds with Scripture. Rather than fear science, he felt that true science, where it touched a subject revealed in Scripture, could be expected to complement it. Science that was at odds with Scripture was therefore false science. While science deals only with that part of the creation that can be apprehended by the senses, Scripture deals with major aspects for both the visible and invisible parts of creation. Scripture is therefore a greater authority than science, Luther argued.

Martin Luther’s grasp of the science method was far ahead of his time. He noted that, in astrology, only the prediction that did not fail was published, while the others were forgotten. He did not believe ***“that from such partial observations a science can be established.”*** Luther was advocating the basic scientific method of complete and repeatable observation, and falsifiability.

The heart of Luther’s objections to evolution can be found in his commitment to the Gospel. Man was specially made by God for fellowship with Him. Through God’s grace, the Gospel restores that fellowship to fallen man- a fellowship that includes God’s daily and personal interaction in our individual lives. He is not the kind of God who would turn us over to His created laws. Such a thought was an attack upon grace itself!

For this reason, Luther considered the biblical teaching on creation part of the biblical Christology. Citing the apostle John, Luther said, ***“If Christ is not true and natural God born of the Father in eternity and Creator of all creatures, we are doomed.”*** In other word talking about creation without Christ’s intimate involvement of discussing creation as a superfluous doctrine is a subtle but effective form of taking Christ away from Christianity.

Luther rejected the idea that creation continues after the sixth day in the conception of new generations. He said” ***In God’s sight I was begotten and multiplied immediately when the world began, because this word and God said ‘Let us make man’, created me too. Whatever God wanted to create, that He created then when He spoke.***

In his comments on the first two verses of the Gospel of John, Luther stated that these verses clearly tie Christ, His divinity and the Genesis creation account together for all time. One, he said, cannot be unraveled without unraveling the other. Luther’s concern for right faith on creation was therefore concern for salvation. He put it this way: ***“If faith is impaired or injured even in the least, we are lost. And if Christ is divested of His divinity there remains no help against God’s wrath and no rescue from His judgment.”*** But ***“Having been made a Christian, then he is one who should serve his Creator. Outside of these resources of ours, there is nothing. We have not created, formed and made ourselves, but we have everything from God,”*** as St. Paul says, ***“What do you have that you did not receive?”*** (1Cor 4:7)

For Luther, creation was very much an issue. He was fully aware of the subtle temptation of the devil, especially regarding theistic evolution.

He rejected the evolutionary beliefs of the ancient and the theistic evolution of the then **modern** theologians before him. To Luther, the biblical teaching on creation is the clearest of teachings to be understood literally, and to be grasped as a crucial part of the biblical teachings on the person and work of CHRIST.

CONCLUSION

It is like saying that God created everything from A to Z. The early church drew from these statements the teaching that God created everything *ex nihilo* (Latin, "out of nothing").

Luther echoes the explanation of the creative power of God's Word in his discussion of Psalm 19: ***"When God speaks a word, the thing expressed by the word immediately jumps into existence"***

Thank you.

God bless you all.

Rev. Charles Edwards

Pastor

National Lutheran Church of Myanmar

Endnotes: N.T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*. New York, HarperOne 2006. Pg 44