

Critical Issues Commentary

A monthly commentary on Biblical concerns that impact you

Evolution and Man

written by Bob DeWaay

“When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?” (Psalm 8:3,4)

As we approach another presidential election in America, it seems the chasm that separates the beliefs and attitudes between groups of people is deeper and wider than ever. The emotions and convictions are just as fervent on both sides of various issues, with speakers expressing their opinions with the zeal of religious conviction. Apparently no reconciliation is possible.

Consider the debate over abortion. A couple of years ago the Supreme Court decided a case that gave some modest hope to those who would limit abortions. A Justice writing the minority (opposing) opinion on the case said “a chill wind is blowing in America.” With, at that time, over 25 million abortions having already happened, and the prospect of millions more to come, the ominous cloud this man saw on the horizon was that there might be a slight slowdown in the constant flow of abortions on demand. Abortion rights speakers warn of the horrible injustice that is facing us if any legal impediments are placed in the way of the continued destruction of unborn babies.

Simultaneously, some who oppose abortions are willing to risk prison to save just one baby from the abortionist. Emotional speeches at political conventions rally the party faithful in the continued fight to stop abortion. Both sides show religious zeal; both sides see themselves as defenders of

justice. Both sides know that there is no middle ground.

Other issues ignite similar emotional fires. The battle concerning the legitimacy of homosexuality is another prime example. It is a hot issue in politics this year. Another issue that is simmering, sure to get hotter, is animal rights. The use of a baboon's liver to save the life of a human aroused demonstrators; they were incensed at the injustice done to the baboon. It has gotten so strange that it would not seem incongruous if two sides of the same placard read, “Save the whales; Kill the babies.” Christian young people attending public school are bombarded with relentless absurdities (to

“If man is merely animal, then what is the meaning of art, culture, comedy, compassion, justice, joy, sorrow,

our way of thinking). Public schools have driven out Christmas and Easter (and any sort of prayer) with the fervency of an exorcism while celebrating demons, witches, and other assorted evils on Halloween as good, innocent fun. Is something wrong with this picture?

Creation

What we are witnessing are the fruits of a generation that has grown up lacking certain beliefs which are fundamental to the Biblical understanding of man. The lack of these beliefs allows (one might say logically compels) conclusions that are incompatible with Judeo-Christian precepts. The first of these is **creation**. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (**Genesis 1:1**). God created the universe. The difference between the Creator and creation is of the very essence of things and the realization of

this difference is essential for learning truth. **Proverbs 1:7** says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” With no fear of God, no willing, worshipful submission to the Creator, true wisdom is not possible. With no fear of God, life is futile and one is in the condition of “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (**2Timothy 3:7**).

If there is no Creator, then there is no real creation, just a physical universe that is self-existent. This self-existent universe must then somehow within itself contain meaning and purpose. The greatest mystery of a non-created universe is that man is in it and capable of self-consciousness and contemplating the meaning of things. The theory of evolution says that the nature of things is that man came forth from an accidental chain of events which stretches back billions of years to an unknown beginning. If this is true, how would one answer David's question - “What is man”?

Evolved Man

The answer to this question in America has itself “evolved.” In a mechanistic view of things, man is a highly evolved machine. Atoms and molecules somehow, with no intelligent, outside interference, became arranged in a highly ordered state, causing the human body to function. These particles of mass and energy are all that man is. Thinking, in such a case, is merely an electro-chemical reaction in the human brain. We suppose that our thoughts and feelings mean something, but actually the electrons and molecules in our brains are only doing what comes naturally to them. It is easy to see how any sort of immorality could be excused with this view of man. According to this belief, chemical impulses predetermine every action, leaving a person accountable to no one for his behavior. This mechanistic model of man is too bleak to appeal to any but the most avid nihilist (one who believes that there is no meaning or purpose in existence).

It was the contemplation of this coupled with scientific evidence that

caused me to reject evolution and accept the truth of creation and the Creator. In March of 1971 I was a student at Iowa State University in chemical engineering. As I sat in a large lecture hall with several hundred students waiting for a professor to begin a lecture on organic chemistry, the professor was filling a chalk board with the scientific symbols for a large molecule. He surrounded an Iron atom (Fe) with multiple carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, etc. atoms, connecting the carbon atoms with various electronic bonds. As he drew, he gave no explanation of why he was drawing, nor what it was.

When completed, he stated, “this is a heme molecule that allows blood to carry oxygen to the cells of our bodies. If one of the electronic bonds in this molecule were different, we would all be dead, life would not be possible.” He said no more and went on with the day’s lecture (on a different topic). I vividly remember the lecture hall, the seat in which I sat, and more importantly the impact that the heme molecule had on me that day. I decided that evolution was a lie and that God created man. No one could convince me that one tiny part of the human anatomy, that intricate and necessary, could have happened by chance. In July of that summer I believed upon Jesus Christ for salvation.

There is another way to interpret life from an evolutionary perspective; man is an animal. A highly evolved animal is more than a machine in that it feels, functions, and reproduces itself on the earth. An animal seems to make choices; but these “decisions” are not really meaningful because instinct determines them. However, if man is viewed as a highly evolved animal, then the distinctions between humans and animals are superficial. There would be no real means of determining that human life had more value and significance than the life of a beast. Animal rights advocates use the hypothetical example of space aliens more “evolved” than us who might come and kill us simply because they could do so and considered their beings as more valuable than ours. Since this idea is abhorrent to us, they reason, then we ought not to kill animals.

This increasingly popular thinking leaves serious questions unanswered. If

man is merely animal, then what is the meaning of art, culture, comedy, compassion, justice, joy, sorrow, virtue, or hope? Is it not obvious that man has so much more to him than a baboon? Can evolution account for such things? Since behavior would be instinctive in the evolved animal scheme of things, moral precepts lose their validity. This is not a very ennobling picture of humankind.

There is now a very appealing third way of seeing evolution: man is a god! Why not incorporate the old lie of the Devil and keep evolution too? Perhaps man is making a “quantum leap” in the evolutionary process and realizing godhood. Eastern religion can be easily imported and combined with western scientific ideas to the satisfaction of many Americans who have not acknowledged their Creator. Meaning and purpose can be infused into a dreary old evolutionary view, energizing it as never before. Spiritual reality can be considered an integral part of a non-created universe just as well as atoms and molecules. Perhaps this spiritual energy can be harnessed and released in ways never before imagined. With a little dose of reincarnation, the universe takes on a new meaning. Rather than being evolved machines or instinctive beasts, we can be the masters of the universe with spiritual mind powers yet only partially harnessed.

The Immoral god-men

It is easy to see how this notion, often called the New Age, has grown so rapidly. How much more appealing it is to be a god than a machine or an animal. How much more hope and purpose it gives us. Rather than a Creator and a creation, the creation is a self-existing “god” in its own right. We are merely extensions of the cosmic consciousness of the entire creation. Who knows what wonderful bliss the next phase of evolution will bring? There is a major problem with the New Age: **it is a lie**. The Bible calls it **the lie**. Paul wrote,

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteous-

ness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them . . . For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie [lit. “the lie”], and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (**Romans 1:18,19,25**)

This lie leads to immorality, since fallen man imagines himself to be autonomous and sets out to justify his own base desires. Paul continues, “For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness. . .” (**Romans 1:26-29a**)

This brings us to the chasm mentioned at the beginning of this article. The doers of what the Bible calls “evil,” feel passionately that they have the right to decide for themselves what is proper and what is not without reference to a Creator or revealed truth. The desires that are now considered “natural” (though Paul said that they are not) are also considered “good.” Christians consult the Creator, who has revealed Himself and spoken to us through His Incarnate Son, to determine what is good and acceptable belief and practice. Those with no acknowledged Creator, who imagine themselves to be self-ruling gods with spiritual powers, decide for themselves what is true, good, moral and beneficial.

The Bible reveals another important fact about man without the understanding of which we cannot properly understand human nature. The human race, though created in the image of God, is fallen. Genesis 3 describes the rebellion of Adam and Eve and the subsequent consequences. They became separated from God. Death is not obliteration but separation. The body dies when it is separated from the soul, the soul “dies” (though it continues to

exist) when it is separated from the Creator.

The Fall (Rebellion)

They did not immediately physically die, but they were immediately separated from the presence of God. From the close communion with God of Genesis 2, they went to the situation described in **Genesis 3:8**: “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” This spiritual alienation from God became the nature of fallen man. The doctrine of the sin nature of man causes some confusion for certain people (some deny it and claim that man is born sinless). **Genesis 5:1-3** may help: “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created. When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.” Simply put, human beings are born in the likeness of Adam after the fall. This means that they are born without the indwelling Holy Spirit, alienated from God, and needing to be born again (**John 3:3**). **1 Corinthians 15:22** says, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.” Sin is both a state (spiritual alienation from God), and an act (purposeful rebellion against God's law). Sin is “missing the mark,” being and doing that which is contrary to God's standard for humankind.

Creation in God's image, followed by the Fall (the Rebellion would be a better description since “fall” sounds like an accident; but I will stick with common usage here) explains two things that can be commonly observed about the human race: 1) good, kind, creative actions and attitudes & 2) evil, hateful, destructive actions and attitudes. The Fall means that the tendency is to evil, and that constant restraint is necessary to keep us from doing wrong and constant motivation is necessary to get us to do good.

In his book on this topic, Offense to Reason, The Theology of Sin, Bernard Ramm states,

The historic Christian doctrine of sin professes to be able to account for the miserable history of humanity from the most violent personal sins to international war. Because the human race deviated from the rule of its Creator, it opened itself to every kind of depravity. However, at the time of the Enlightenment the doctrine of the Fall along with Original Sin and Total Depravity were rejected.¹

Those who have rejected belief in a Creator and embrace evolution have also rejected the Fall. They consider man a sort of “god,” good in his own right. If there is no sin nature, there are no naturally evil impulses to be restrained or resisted. That evil exists is admitted, but it must find another explanation than that it is part of the very nature of man. One theory is that evil parents who are the product of an evil society corrupt good individuals later in life. How an aggregation of all good individuals come together to create an evil society never seems to need an explanation for those whose faith is in the goodness of mankind.

Ignorance is one popular explanation for this when one is elicited. Man is good (or a “god”) but does not know it. Not knowing enough about his own glorious goodness, he ends up doing wrong. Consequently, we do not have a moral problem but an intellectual one. Modern faith in education and the innate goodness of man seems impervious to contrary evidence. Millions of dollars are spent on anti-drug education, anti-smoking education, “safe” sex education, etc. in America, yet the problems accelerate. How many eighteen year olds in America today **do not know** that drugs are harmful? Some have not only heard from parents, teachers, TV stars, and sports heroes that drugs are wrong, they have seen their own peers killed or seriously harmed by drugs. They still take drugs! Lack of information is not the problem.

Those who have rejected the Biblical account of the Fall cannot believe that a properly nurtured and educated person could do heinous evil. All of human history stands as evidence to the contrary. Many advanced, educated cultures (ancient Greece, Rome and

Hitler's Germany stand out as examples) have perpetrated horrendous evil.

I read a quotation attributed to G. K. Chesterton that said, “the only Biblical doctrine for which there is overwhelming empirical evidence is the doctrine of the sin nature.” I do not know if I am crediting the right author for the quotation or if I would not include other doctrines (such as creation) in the category of having overwhelming empirical evidence; but clearly the sin nature fits the category. History books are mostly compilations of the evil people do to each other. Ramm writes about Edward O. Wilson, who he says sees genetics as the prime cause of human emotion and behavior, “In his book he observes that the human species (as far as recorded history is concerned) is at war forty-eight percent of the time.”² Sinful man seems bent on finding a workable theory that says that he is not in fact “sinful.” It is a struggle against a continual stream of evidence to the contrary.

Some are now attending New Age consciousness raising seminars seeking to get in touch with the “inner child.” It is imagined that the sinless, perfect little child that came into the world was eventually ruined through having to develop an “outer self” to present to the rest of the world to satisfy the expectations of the “performance oriented” people around them. This outer self does all sorts of evil (“acting out” it's called) out of frustration in trying but failing to please parents and others. However, inside is waiting a perfect, innocent, beautiful, intelligent, “wonder child,” unsullied by the environment, waiting to be rediscovered. This and other theories deceive some Christians, who perhaps do not realize that they are a direct rejection of essential Biblical teachings.

We come into this world full of selfishness, lost, and needing constant restraint, training and correction. Any “inner child” is probably a self-centered little brat! “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him” (**Proverbs 22:15**). “Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching” (**Proverbs 1:8**). Wisdom and knowledge are to be found outside one's self. Discipline and restraint are necessary because the Bible teaches that we came into this world with

a twisted human nature (see Romans 3:9-19).

Rejecting the truth of the Fall and the doctrine of sin causes continued wrong courses of action, foolish legislation, misguided psychological theories, failure to restrain evil, and ultimately the warning of Isaiah becomes applicable, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (**Isaiah 5:20**). This explains the reason those who have a Biblical view of man find themselves so often at odds with the prevailing winds of popular thought. The truth and what is now popular are not compatible.

A Plan of Redemption

Genesis reveals another essential truth that affects how we view life. The created but fallen human race needs and has been offered a God initiated plan of redemption. Salvation is necessary and only God can remedy the lostness of humanity. With the curses that came upon man and woman because of rebellion there was given to the women a promise which anticipates a coming redemption. God said, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel" (**Genesis 3:15**).

If it were not for God's plan of salvation (the Greek word for salvation in the New Testament means "to be rescued from serious peril"), the Biblical doctrine of sin and the fall could only accentuate our hopelessness and despair. Man does not have within himself the means for his own salvation. The problem is sin and death. This death is spiritual (separation from the Holy Spirit), eventually physical (the soul's separation from the body), and ultimately eternal (final separation from God, called "the second death" - Revelation 20:12-15) if there is no Divine intervention.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, died a substitutionary death on the cross, paying the penalty for sins. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1Peter 3:18). The term "salvation" can become an Evangelical buzz word, not correctly compre-

hended by those outside our circles. It needs explanation so that its meaning is not misunderstood.

The problem is that those who recognize neither a Creator or a Fall have a different concept of their own need. Perhaps they hear Christians speaking of salvation and associate it merely with "getting religion" as some call it. They assume that Christians had some personal psychological need which is somehow being met through religious experience and that is fine with them - **for us**. The Bible is clear that the problem is sin, rebellion against our Creator, and the consequence is death. To say that we have been saved is to say that God rescued us from slavery to sin and its eternal consequences.

Spiritual death is remedied through regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Lost sinners, alienated from God, are reborn when they believe the message of the cross (Christ crucified and raised on the third day for our justification). Physical death still faces Christians who "fall asleep" as Paul says it before the Lord returns. This is remedied through the resurrection of the dead. Eternal death is remedied through the gift of eternal life with the Lord. Salvation involves God's redemption, His rescue and deliverance of those "who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (**Hebrews 2:15b**). The gift of the Holy Spirit is the earnest, the guarantee of all that is promised (**2Corinthians 5:5**).

If creation and the fall are rejected, so is the plan of salvation. If man's problem is poverty, money can save him; if it is ignorance, knowledge can save him; if it is loneliness, friendship can save him; if it is boredom, entertainment can save him. If however, the problem is actually much deeper as the Bible asserts, then nothing on this earth can save man. The evidence shows that this is the case. This generation of Americans has had more money, more knowledge, more social opportunities, more travel and entertainment, etc. that any generation in history. In the face of this, dissatisfaction and despair is at flood stage. What is amiss? The Lord Himself spoke through the prophet Jeremiah words which could not be more timely and pertinent:

Thus says the Lord, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes, . . . Blessed is the

man who trusts in the Lord And whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, That extends its roots by a stream And will not fear when the heat comes;. . . Nor cease to yield fruit. The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds." (**Jeremiah 17:5-10**)

There is a Creator who offers to deliver us from the results of our sin through salvation in Christ Jesus. We see things entirely differently if we believe and accept this. If we acknowledge no Creator, and trust in man as he supposedly evolved, we are left with man as he is to save us. This is what is so discouraging for so many. Let us present to them the evidence God has given that He is the Creator and that Jesus is the Messiah. Jeremiah's response to the Lord's word as quoted above is the response that is desperately needed in this day: "Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; Save me and I will be saved, For Thou art my praise" (**Jeremiah 17:14**).

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End Notes

1. Offense to Reason, The Theology of Sin; Bernard Ramm, Harper & Row, 1985; page 10.
2. *ibid.* page 24.

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