

# ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

Dr. James P. Eckman, President  
Grace University, Omaha, Nebraska  
9-10 July 2011

## PERSPECTIVE NUMBER ONE

### *Charles Darwin Does Matter*

The debate within our culture about origins continues, and the legacy of Charles Darwin in this debate is immense and profound. We tend to forget that Darwin's ideas were truly revolutionary and their impact continues throughout western civilization. Better than any other example, Darwin's hypothesis about natural selection proves the point that ideas do indeed have consequences. Two primary thoughts for this *Perspective*:

- First is a focus on theistic evolution and its implications. Marvin Olasky of *World* magazine writes correctly that "Today, the overwhelming majority of American kids receive a Darwinian or neo-Darwinian education. They learn at schools and then colleges that they are just matter, the result of occasional mutations and survival of the fittest." Because his ideas are so pervasive, is it possible to merge some of Darwin's ideas with biblical Christianity? Until very recently, theistic evolution (TE) has been resisted by most people who embrace biblical Christianity. It was really not until the late 1990s that TE gained some legitimacy. Hugh Ross of Reasons to Believe and especially Francis Collins, genome pioneer, director of the National Institutes of Health, and author of the book, *The Language of God*, helped TE gain traction among those who embrace an evangelical worldview. But as Marvin Olasky has shown, it has been the financial support of the Templeton Foundation that has made the greatest impact in legitimizing TE. Olasky has shown that the Templeton Foundation has promoted a rather systematic attack on Creationism and also on the intelligent design movement. His evidence is compelling. So, the two-pronged advocacy of the Templeton Foundation and of Francis Collins has resulted in a significant number of books and articles supporting TE as the only real choice for Christians. But, as Olasky has argued, "The problem, though, is that many theistic evolutionists should rightly be called deistic evolutionists, since they believe that God created the first life-form and then left the rest to standard Darwinian processes. Theoretically a theistic evolutionist could also believe in God's creation of each of the trillions and quadrillions of mutations that led to today's world, but that would also be rewriting the Bible—and we're still left with the issue of Adam and Eve's direct creation." As mathematician Bill Dembski contends, "Theistic evolution takes the Darwinian picture of the biological world and baptizes it." Two recent books have challenged the argument of TE: (1) *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?*, edited by British medical geneticist, Norman Nevin, contains a series of significant theological essays, as well as important scientific essays. Perhaps most important are the essays that challenge some of the contentions of TE. One especially challenges rather compellingly the contention that genome mapping leads to the conclusion, irrefutably, that man and the great ape share common ancestors. There is also an important essay by Nevin on the Cambrian explosion, when many animal forms and body plans (of new phyla, subphyla and classes) arise in a brief

geological period, with no proof that they branched off from common ancestors. (2) *God and Evolution* by R.T. Kendall is equally valuable because it challenges many of the hypotheses of TE with scientific evidence and reasonable logic. One of the most important weaknesses of TE is the literal and direct creation of Adam and Eve. Typically, most TE advocates are skeptical about the literalness of Genesis 1 and 2. The special creation of our first parents is doubtful, most TE advocates argue. Michael Reeves, one of the essay writers in the Nevins book, argues that it is biblically and theologically necessary for Christians to believe in Adam as first, a historical person who second, fathered the entire human race. This is a critical belief because much of the New Testament affirms the validity of Genesis 1 and 2. For example, Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6 refer to the creation of Adam and Eve as real historical events. Luke's genealogy of Christ in chapter 3 assigns a father to everyone except Adam, whom Luke calls "the son of God." Acts 17:26 has Paul arguing strongly that from "one man He made all the nations." Romans 5:12-21 has Paul referring to the sin "of one man, Adam" and the sinlessness of one man, Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 refers to Eve's special creation. Finally, 1 Corinthians 15:22 treats Adam as a historical person, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." The Bible treats Adam and Eve as literal, historical human beings, directly created by God and then ties that truth to salvation in Jesus Christ. The Bible does not permit us to see Adam and Eve as symbolic figures.

- Second, the Darwinian hypothesis has had an impact on almost every other discipline of human knowledge. The historian and *World* magazine editor, Marvin Olasky, has compiled a helpful set of influences discernible from Darwin:
  1. Woodrow Wilson was perhaps most decisive in embracing a Darwinian view of government. He argued that government should "be accountable to Darwin, not to Newton. It is modified by its environment, necessitated by its tasks, shaped to its functions by the sheer pressure of life. . . Living political constitutions must be Darwinian in structure and in practice." As a result, Wilson began significant expansion of governmental power, from which we have never retreated.
  2. A significant number of historical works have linked Darwin's thinking to Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-tung and Hitler. "Darwin is obviously not responsible for the atrocities committed in his name, but evolutionary theory plus the musings about superior and inferior races provided a logical justification for anti-Semites and racists."
  3. Alfred Kinsey's controversial studies of human sexuality in the late 1940s and early 1950s contended that adultery is normal and homosexual experiences not uncommon, for "the mammalian backgrounds of human behavior [made it] difficult to explain why each and every individual is not involved in every type of sexual history."
  4. Darwinian thinking was instrumental in justifying abortion because the human life, according to Darwin, has no intrinsic value. Early advocates of abortion connected the thought of evolutionary progress with the unborn child's development and argued that babies in the womb are sub-human and of little or no value.
  5. Peter Singer, Princeton University ethicist, has defended infanticide in a Darwinian manner: "All we are doing is catching up with Darwin. He showed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that we are simply animals. Humans had imagined we were a separate part of Creation, that there was some magical line between Us and Them. Darwin's theory undermined

the foundations of that entire Western way of thinking about the place of our species in the universe.”

Ideas do indeed have consequences, but perhaps the most pernicious of recent history is the Darwinian hypothesis that explains the emergence of life (including human life) by random chance, plus an impersonal force [natural selection], plus vast amounts of time. In such a model, even the TE one, there is little or no room for God. But there is no room for this hypothesis in a genuine biblical worldview.

See Marvin Olasky in *World* (2 July 2011), pp. 37-41, 96.

## **PERSPECTIVE NUMBER TWO**

### ***The Gay Revolution in Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective***

Recently, I received in my office at Grace University a single sheet entitled “The Heartland Proclamation” by the Heartland Clergy for Inclusion. In part, this sheet read, “As Christian clergy we proclaim the Good News concerning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) persons and publically apologize where we have been silent. As disciples of Jesus, who assures us that truth sets us free, we recognize that the debate is over. The verdict is in. Homosexuality is not a sickness, not a choice, and not a sin. We find no rational biblical or theological basis to condemn or deny the rights of any person based on sexual orientation. . . In repentance and obedient to the Holy Spirit, we stand in solidarity as those who are committed to work and pray for full acceptance and inclusion of LGBT persons in our churches and in our world. . . The Holy Spirit compels us:

- To affirm that the essence of Christian life is not focused on sexual orientation, but how one lives by grace in relationship with God, with compassion toward humanity;
- To embrace the full inclusion of our LGBT brothers and sisters in all areas of church life, including leadership;
- To declare that the violence must stop.
- To celebrate the prophetic witness of all people who have refused to let the voice of intolerance and violence speak for Christianity, especially LGBT persons, who have met hatred with love.

Therefore, we call for an end to all religious and civil discrimination against any person based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. All laws must include and protect the freedoms, rights, and equal legal standing of all persons, in and outside the church.” The back side of the sheet contains the names of clergy (3 and ½ columns) who have presumably signed this statement. Most of the signers are clergy from Nebraska, Iowa and other Midwestern states. How should we think about this?

The western church, but especially the evangelical church of North America, is facing a veritable challenge that is shaking it at its very foundation: It is a moral and ethical revolution in human sexuality, and at its heart is homosexuality. Recently, theologian Albert Mohler has written, “In less than a single generation, homosexuality has gone from something almost universally

understood to be sinful, to something now declared to be the moral equivalent of heterosexuality — and deserving of both legal protection and public encouragement.” Mohler also explains why the liberal churches and denominations (all represented in The Heartland Proclamation, for example) have no problems accommodating to this moral and ethical revolution: “They simply accommodate themselves to the new moral reality. By now the pattern is clear: These churches debate the issue, with conservatives arguing to retain the older morality and liberals arguing that the church must adapt to the new one. Eventually, the liberals win and the conservatives lose. Next, the denomination ordains openly gay candidates or decides to bless same-sex unions.”

Two important conclusions:

1. Genuine, biblical Christianity cannot accommodate to this new morality. Many evangelicals have failed in so many ways when it comes to this moral revolution. Mohler correctly observes that “we have often spoken about homosexuality in ways that are crude and simplistic. We have failed to take account of how tenaciously sexuality comes to define us as human beings. We have failed to see homosexuality as a Gospel issue. We are the ones, after all, who are supposed to know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only remedy for sin, starting with our own.” Genuine biblical Christianity never speaks of the sinfulness of homosexuality as if we have no sin. In fact, it is precisely because we have acknowledged our sin that we came to faith in Jesus Christ. Our passion must be that the homosexual, the bisexual, and the transgendered person come to see their own sin and thereby their need for Jesus Christ and the forgiveness and cleansing that He alone offers.
2. The Bible condemns same-sex behaviors in a comprehensive and clear manner. There is no ambiguity on this issue. In fact, it is interwoven with the Bible’s message concerning God’s plan for humanity, marriage and the larger society—as well as the Gospel. Mohler has also written that “our rebellion against the Creator is never so insidious as when we declare that our own plan is superior to His.” His plan is clearly articulated in the Creation Ordinance of Genesis 2:18-25. God created Adam and concluded that he needed a perfect complement—woman. As God had Adam name the various animals, Adam understood his need as well—and thereby enthusiastically embraced God’s precious gift of Eve, different physiologically, emotionally and in every chromosome from his body. Therefore, as Genesis 2:24-25 declare, God’s design is that man and woman come together in a “one flesh” relationship, symbolized by sexual intercourse but also by the merging of two complete personalities into a complementary whole. The Bible irrefutably links two critical realities—gender difference and procreation—with marriage. You cannot separate these two. When you do, as this moral and ethical revolution is now doing, moral and ethical chaos result. It is for this reason that the Bible, when it discusses human sexuality, uses terms such as “natural” and “unnatural” (see Romans 1:18-32). The term “natural” strongly implies a standard that transcends all culture and all time—and that standard is of course God’s Creation Ordinance. Any sexual activity that violates that standard (e.g., adultery, premarital sex, extramarital sex, or bestiality—as well as homosexuality in all its forms) is sinful in God’s eyes and in need of forgiveness and cleansing. Our civilization has abandoned all commitments to that standard. In its place is a dangerous postmodern autonomy that believes whatever the individual chooses to do in the sexual area is fine as long as it meets a need and is consensual. (We have not yet sanctioned rape!!!) But if we truly follow the logic of The Heartland

Proclamation, which even sanctions “bisexuality,” then on what basis would we declare that bigamy or polygamy is ethically wrong? If the standard that the Bible so comprehensively and clearly articulates is rejected, then what exactly is the “new” standard to be?

In one of the Bible studies I lead in the Metro Omaha area, we were recently discussing the moral and ethical standards detailed in Scripture. One of the businessmen who attends had an “ah ha” moment when he said, “Oh, God paints the lines on the tennis court.” We can choose to play the game outside the lines but the penalties for doing so in tennis are clear. So, it is in life. God has defined the ethical and moral standards for us and for our good because He is the Creator. If we choose to defy those standards, we will face the consequences of that defiance. Indeed, that is what Paul is arguing in Romans 1:18-32. The Heartland Proclamation is wrong in its affirmation of LGBT choices in sexual behavior. That is not a statement of intolerance; that is a statement that reflects the absolute standard of God’s Creation Ordinance. That is not a very popular sentence I just wrote—but it is the truth. May God give us the grace and the enablement to represent Him well in this tragic and difficult culture we now face. As Mohler correctly observes: “. . . it is not the world around us that is being tested, so much as the believing church. We are about to find out just how much we believe the Gospel we so eagerly preach.”

See Mohler’s essay in the *Wall Street Journal* (1 July 2011) and [albertmohler.com](http://albertmohler.com) (3 June 2011).