**The Importance of Creation &**

**The Implications of Theistic Evolution**

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[1] The importance of creation to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and the implications of theistic evolution

[2] In the forward of the book *Creation, Catastrophe, & Calvary,* Harold Coffin writes: “The secular worldview…has so dominated the civilized world that the biblical narrative of creation and then global catastrophe only a few thousand years ago has been difficult to maintain even in churches that consider Genesis to be literal history.

[3] “Impressed with what appear to be compulsive scientific evidence, and growing weary of swimming against the current, scholars have attempted to reconcile science and religion through reinterpretation of Scripture.

[4] “Such efforts have succeeded so well that few religious entities, even fundamentalist churches, hold to a recent **creation** week and subsequent destruction by a **worldwide flood**. Even the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been immune from such influences.”

[5] This presentation blends two topics: The importance of creation to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs…

[6] …and the implications of alternatives like theistic evolution and progressive creation, which suggest that God created over long ages using some sort of evolutionary process.

[7] A subsequent presentation will discuss the importance of the worldwide flood.

[8] The ideas in the presentation are taken from the article “In the Beginning” by Michael Hasel in the Adventist Review, Choose You This Day by Leonard Brand and Richard M. Davidson, and the chapter “Theistic Evolution: Implications for the Role of Creation in Seventh-day Adventist Theology by E. Edward Zinke in Creation Catastrophe, and Calvary.

[9] One of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is creation.

[10] It states that God has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical account of His creative activity.

[11] “He created the universe, and in a recent six-day creation the Lord made ‘the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them’ and rested on the seventh day. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of the work He performed and completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today.”

[12] “The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation…

[13] “…given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it.”

[14] “When the world was finished it was ‘very good,’ declaring the glory of God.”

[15] In contrast, evolutionary theory claims that all living things on earth today descended from a common ancestor over millions of years. / Because of this, many have come to question the literal account of Genesis, even within conservative Christian churches.

[16] Some try to accept evolution, while including God in the process.

[17] This attempt to blend creation and evolution has resulted in ideas like progressive creation—which suggests that life began on earth some 600 million years ago with God’s intervention at crucial stages along the way– / and theistic evolution—which suggests that God initiated the whole process millions of years ago and left it to develop on its own.

[18] Among the general population in the United States, less than half report believing in creation.

[19] How important is creation to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Does it really matter how or when life on earth was created?

[20] Embedded directly in the Creation story are at least four important doctrines.

[21] In the Creation story, humans are made in God’s image, formed with His hands, the apex of creation with the privilege of direct communication with God.

[22] The Sabbath is intimately tied to Creation. God’s creation was made to worship and glorify its Creator, and in the Creation story we see that God set aside the seventh day for rest and worship.

[23] At creation, marriage of a man and woman is introduced as a divine institution.

[24] And at Creation, God instructed us to care for everything He made

[25] If God did not create humans, / we are just another species in the evolutionary process. / If God did not create in six literal days, then our motive for worshiping on the 7th is called into question. / Without God’s divine plan for marriage it is just a cultural institution. / Theories other than creation imply that humans are in mutual competition with all species, which they must dominate in order to survive.

[26] But Creation affects much more than these four important doctrines which come directly from Genesis 1-2. / Evolution, progressive creation, and theistic evolution *also* challenge the trustworthiness of the Bible as the inspired word of God.

[27] All of these theories directly contradict the creation of life in 6 literal days as described in the first two chapters of Genesis.

[28] References to this literal Creation also appear throughout the rest of the Old Testament, in verses like these…

[29] For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth. / The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. / He spoke and it came to be. / God is the Creator of the ends of the earth.”

[30] Creation is reaffirmed throughout the New Testament as well.

[31] Through him all things were made. / The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth for he himself gives all men life and breath. / For by Him all things were created. / Worthy are You, for You created all things.

[32] Even Jesus, Himself, refers to the creation of man and woman by God.

[33] The trustworthiness of the Bible--not just the Genesis account, but all of Scripture--is at stake when Creation is compromised.

[34] Another important issue related to creation involves the character of God, Himself.

[35] In the Sabbath commandment, God claims to have made the world in six days.

[36] The Bible says that He even wrote about it in stone with His own finger.

[37] God would be misleading humanity by stating that the world was created in six days and that He spoke these things into existence if He did not.

[38] Besides being misleading, he would also be responsible for evil.

[39] Genesis 3 tells of the fall of humanity after creation, which results in death.

[40] In Romans, Paul describes it this way: “Sin entered the world through one man, / and death through sin, / and in this way death came to all men”

[41] But instead of the Biblical view where sin results in death, / any kind of evolutionary perspective would have death present for 600 million years prior to Adam.

[42] Theistic evolution would imply that death is a part of God’s original plan—a divinely instituted reality used in an evolutionary process of competitive struggle for survival.

[43] In fact, in some forms of theistic evolution and progressive creation, God is thought to be responsible, not only for the origin of evil, / but for every evil event in nature.

[44] If God created using the process of evolution, He cannot be all that the Bible claims He is: / loving, wise, and powerful. / He must be responsible for the origin of evil.

[45] With theistic evolution or progressive creation, there would also be serious implications for the plan of salvation as described in the Bible.

[46] According to the Bible, Jesus died a substitutionary death on the cross to save us from death, which was the result of sin.

[47] But if death is not related to sin, then the wages of sin is not death, / and Christ would have had no reason to die on the cross of Calvary for our sins.

[48] Finally, the promise of a new creation is intimately bound up with the original creation.

[49] The Bible declares that God will create new heavens and a new earth. / In it there shall be no more death.

[50] Even if Christ’s second coming were still a reality in view of millions of years of progressive creation or theistic evolution, / what hope would there be for a “new” creation? / Would God take another 600 million years to create it?

[51] If our literal understanding of the first things (protology) is set aside, / our hope in the literal fulfillment of the last things (eschatology) / will soon vanish.

[52] We have seen that creation is foundational to many of our fundamental beliefs, / including the nature of man, the Sabbath, marriage, and stewardship. / In addition, any compromise of creation casts doubt on the trustworthiness of the Bible, questions the character of God, / undermines Christ’s substitutionary death, and calls into question our hope in the second coming and the creation of a new earth.

[53] In his article, Hasel concludes that belief in creation assures us of Christ’s soon return and his promise of a new creation, / encourages us to nurture our environment, / motivates our Sabbath worship, / and gives us incentive to endure our trials and live pure and upright lives.

[54] Zinke’s chapter concludes by emphasizing that Adventists worship the God of creation, a personal God who desires to fellowship with us and to dwell among us. / Without creation, the Adventist faith would no longer be itself.

[55] Brand and Davidson end their book with a call to make a critically important decision in the Great Controversy. / Will we accept the god of theistic evolution, who would be the author of pain and death,/ or the Creator God of the Bible?