

Book Review
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Theistic Evolution A Sinful Compromise, by John M. Otis, Triumphant Publications Ministries, 2013, ISBN: 978-0-9772800-9-4, \$15.00.

John M. Otis writes to defend the doctrine of creation against those within the Reformed churches (or anyone else) that would compromise the creation account with evolution. He views Theistic Evolution as a major threat to the credibility of the Bible.

The book is divided into fourteen chapters with an introduction and conclusion. It begins with Acknowledgements and ends with treatises on *The Value and Necessity of a Presuppositional Apologetic* and *How Do I Know the Bible to be the Word of God?* Below is a synopsis of each section of the book.

In the Introduction, Otis defines theistic evolution using statements from BioLogos which advances this view. BioLogos believes that God used the process of evolution to create all the life on earth today. BioLogos agrees with modern scientific consensus on the age of the earth and the evolutionary development of all species (p. 1). Those at BioLogos refer to themselves as “evolutionary creationists.” In Otis’ view, they have seriously compromised the truth of Scripture. He affirms that the very nature of redemption is linked with the doctrine of creation. He aims to answer this important question, “What does the Scripture say **independent** of what modern science supposedly says? (p. 3). Otis believes that true science and the Scriptures do not contradict each other. But, pseudo-science and the Scriptures do contradict each other. Otis states that he will affirm the basic concepts set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In chapter one, Otis sets forth “A Faithful and Scriptural View of Creation.” Otis pinpoints the problem: hermeneutics: how to properly interpret the Bible. He sets forth some principles of interpretation. First, there cannot be more than one meaning given to a word in a specific context. Second, we must allow the Scriptures to interpret themselves. The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is the scripture itself (p. 10). Where do we find that the latest findings of science are the filter by which we determine the meaning of scripture? (p. 10). Otis affirms creation “*ex nihilo*” (out of nothing). He affirms that God did use “dirt” to make Adam and took a rib from Adam’s side to make Eve. This he refers to as mediate creation but rejects evolution as the means of creation. He rejects the eternity of matter by affirming Genesis 1:1, “in the beginning God” and not “in the beginning matter.” He rejects the Big Bang Theory and the spontaneous generation of life. He affirms that Genesis 1 is literal and historical in refutation of theistic evolutionists who believe that the language of Genesis 1 is figurative and constitutes a creation myth. He believes that Adam and Eve were real people and not just part of the creation myth. Otis affirms that gender specificity arose by creative acts of God and not through evolution. The theory of evolution has no adequate explanation for the simultaneous development of a male and female with reproductive capabilities each sharing 23 chromosomes in order to produce another human being (p. 13). Otis uses Scriptures in both the Old Testament and the New Testament to defend his views. He concludes the chapter by defending the literal interpretation of the days of Genesis 1 as six literal 24-hour periods.

Chapter two addresses the meaning of the creation days and Bible chronology. Otis sets forth the following arguments to prove that the Hebrew word, *yom*, refers to a 24-hour period. First, he argues that the Hebrew word *yom* which occurs 1,704 times is overwhelmingly used of

a normal solar day. A word should be taken in its common import unless there is some compelling reason to change its meaning in a given context. In Genesis 1, there is no compelling reason to change the meaning of the term from a 24-hour period. Second, Otis argues that the phrase, “evening and morning” qualifies the Hebrew word *yom* and limits its meaning to a 24-hour period. Third, Otis argues that the use of the numerical adjective (first, second, etc.) qualifies the meaning of *yom* and refers to a 24-hour period. Fourth, he argues that Exodus 20:11 shows that the Sabbath day was a 24-hour period and that God rested on the seventh day in the creation week. The creation week is the basis for establishing man’s work week. After making these arguments, Otis turns to Bible Chronology. He appeals to James Ussher’s work and Floyd Nolen Jones’ Bible chronology. Both of these men relied upon the chronologies given in the Bible to form the basis of computing the age of the earth. Otis affirms that there are 76 generations from the first Adam and the Second Adam, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (p. 33). This would rule out an evolutionary view of chronology.

Otis shows that the worldviews of creation and evolution are not compatible in chapter three. Otis states that the conflict is not between faith and science, but between two opposing worldviews, i.e. creation and evolution. God was present when the universe was created and wrote about what happened. No one was present at the time of the supposed Big Bang and only theories have been given about what actually happened. Now, which are you going to believe? The conflict is really about faith against faith. Faith in God verses faith in the theories of man. Otis states, “Various elements of the Christian community are in crisis over the **supremacy and authority of Scripture**” (p. 34). Otis specifically identifies the “sinful compromise of theistic evolution.” He states, “So, the great Reformation doctrine of Sola Scriptura is made a servant of science as interpreted by pagans” (p. 38). The great compromise of theistic evolution is making Scripture subservient to scientific theories that have yet to be proven. These theories are based upon presuppositions that cannot be proven.

In chapter four, Otis takes a look at the descent of Charles Darwin into apostasy. Charles Darwin was baptized into the Church of England. His mother was a Unitarian. He married Emma Wedgwood who was also a Unitarian. He attended Christ’s College in Cambridge and pursued theological studies. In March, 1829, he had doubts about his “call to the ministry” and his interest in becoming a clergyman faded away. At the same time, his interest in natural science grew. His slide into apostasy began when he questioned the truth of the first chapters of Genesis (p. 53). From 1836 to 1839 his faith in the veracity of the Old Testament failed. He remarks that the Old Testament was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindus (p. 53). He gradually came to disbelieving Christianity as divine revelation. Darwin states, “Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress” (p. 53). Darwin lost his faith in Christianity and the miraculous before he formulated his hypothesis of evolution. Darwin was greatly influenced by Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology*. Lyell attempted to free science from Moses. Lyell ridiculed the idea of the simultaneous creation of various species. He favored an old earth, denied the universality of Noah’s flood, and denied divine judgment (p. 54). At the time that Darwin wrote the *Origin of the Species* (1859), he still characterized himself as a theist (p. 57). Darwin never became an atheist. In 1879, he wrote that an agnostic would more accurately describe him (p. 56). In 1880, Darwin wrote to a correspondent that, “...I do not believe in the Bible as divine revelation, and therefore not in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (p. 58). Darwin died on April 19, 1882 at the age of 73. Darwin never converted back to full belief in Christianity (see p. 60) even though there were reports of his return to faith in the Bible. These reports were denied by his own children.

Chapter five gives the background of the people and their philosophies that influenced Darwin. Otis relates information about: Erasmus Darwin-Charles Darwin's grandfather, Charles Lyell and his work, *Principles of Geology* (2 volumes), Thomas Henry Huxley (Huxley was known as Darwin's bulldog), and Herbert Spencer. Otis summarizes the thoughts of men such as Bruce Waltke, Stanley Beck, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, Helmut Thielicke, Lyman Abbot, Nels Ferre, Reinhold Niebuhr, and George Bernard Shaw. Each of these men affirm the necessity of believing in evolution, while functioning as theologians. Otis concludes the chapter by investigating eugenics. Eugenics is "the applied science of improving the genetic composition of the human population" (p. 74). Eugenics is based on evolution. "It seeks to achieve this goal through both encouraging reproduction among fit individuals and discouraging breeding among unfit populations. It aims to achieve this goal of population control by abortion and sterilization (p. 74). One of the greatest champions of eugenics was Sir Julian Huxley an evolutionist. Huxley advocated for: prohibition of marriage for the unfit, segregation of institutions containing degenerate individuals and sterilization of the unfit (p. 75). Bill and Melinda Gates Charitable Foundation has \$60 billion to engage in world eugenics through WHO (World Health Organization) and other organizations. Gates father was once the head of Planned Parenthood.

In chapter six, Otis reveals the scientific failure of evolution along with Darwin's great admissions. Darwin admitted in a letter to T. H. Huxley dated December 2, 1860, "that the difficulties on my notions are terrific..." He was speaking one year after the publication of "Origen of the Species." Darwin wrote to Huxley, "When we descend to details, we can prove that no one species has changed (i.e. we cannot prove that a single species has changed), nor can we prove that the supposed changes are beneficial, which is the ground work of the theory. Nor can we explain why some species have changed and others have not" (p. 79). T. H. Huxley (Darwin's bulldog) did not believe that transmutation (one organism changing into another) was proven (p. 81). In addition, Otis gives the testimony of several other evolutionists regarding the failure of the theory of evolution to account for the facts. In the section titled, "The Basic Tenets of Darwinism," Otis outlines the fundamental concepts of Darwin's theory of evolution. They are: (1) natural selection, (2) spontaneous generation (living organisms come from non-living matter), (3) change occurs over vast periods of time, randomly (by chance). These changes are mutations within the genetic material of a human cell. Mutations are almost always destructive to an organism. Mutations cannot produce new traits. Darwin argued that one species could give rise to another species. This, however, has never been proven. (4) common ancestry or simple life forms gave rise to higher, more complex life forms. If Darwin's theory was true, there should be ample evidence in the fossil record. However, there are no missing links in the fossil record showing this gradual transmission of creatures. Otis quotes Darwin in one of the most significant admissions that Darwin ever made: "Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory" (p. 95). Otis remarks, "A (sic) 140 years after the publication of the *Origin of Species*, the evidence is still demonstrating the falsity of Darwin's theory" (p. 96). The fossil record is still decidedly in favor of creation. Otis concludes this chapter with a discussion of biblical kinds. The father of modern taxonomy is Carolus Linnaeus whose system is still in use today. Linnaeus believed in a type of "fixity of species" meaning that organisms do not change over time. Creationists would allow a certain diversification within the "biblical kinds" (p. 101). Every creature brings forth after its kind. This indicates fixity of kinds and allows for variations within a kind (Gen. 1:24; I Cor. 15:39).

In chapter seven, Otis begins an analysis of “the compromisers” or theistic evolutionists. He begins with the Biologos Foundation. Otis states, “When one adopts the premises and conclusions of those who are self confessed unbelievers, then one has seriously compromised the Faith once delivered to the saints” (p. 103). He examines old earth progressive creationism and evolutionary creationism. There are differences among theistic evolutionists on how God used the evolutionary process and how God may have intervened miraculously. The basic tenets of old earth progressive creationism are: (1) It accepts the age of the universe and of the earth to be billions of years; (2) It accepts the “day-age” theory regarding the days of creation in Genesis 1; (3) It generally accepts the fossil record as a history of life over millions of years; (4) It believes that death did not originate with Adam’s sin, but that it existed long before Adam; (5) It believes that Noah’s flood was a local or regional flood; (6) It believes that life came into existence over millions of years from simple to complex organisms through God intervening in making new life forms (miraculously); (7) It generally believes that hominid like creatures existed before Adam and Eve, but that they were “soulless” (pp. 105-106). Otis allows BioLogos to define itself, “BioLogos is a community of evangelical Christians committed to exploring and **celebrating** the compatibility of evolutionary creation and biblical faith, guided by the truth that “all things hold together in Christ” (emphasis John Otis) (p. 111). BioLogos does not believe that natural selection as described by Charles Darwin is contrary to theism (p. 113). BioLogos is supported by N. T. Wright, an Anglican bishop. BioLogos rejects young earth creationism which it affirms results from a faulty interpretation of Genesis that does not take into account that the Genesis account owes its existence to Mesopotamian origin stories or myths (p. 113). BioLogos rejects a universal flood in Noah’s day. BioLogos rejects the view that Adam and Eve were real people from whom all other human beings are descended (pp. 114-117). BioLogos affirms that death occurred before Adam and Eve sinned. These are some of the basic tenets of BioLogos. Otis refutes each one.

In chapter eight, Otis continues to assess the compromisers. He focuses on Dr. Tim Keller. Dr. Keller is the pastor for the Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City and has strong ties with BioLogos. He fully embraces the notion of theistic evolution. Otis reviews an article written by Dr. Keller for BioLogos titled, “Creation, Evolution, and Christian Laypeople” (p. 123). Dr. Keller affirms that Genesis 1 does not teach that God made the world in six twenty-four hour days (p. 125). Dr. Keller also affirms an old earth view thus allowing for an evolutionary chronology of the earth. He attempts to make a distinction between the science of evolution and the worldview of evolution (p. 126). Otis contends that this is not possible. Keller argues that Genesis 1 may be myth, but Paul in Romans 5:12 believed that Adam was a real figure. Otis found this pure arbitrary interpretation. Keller is trying not to offend those who do not believe that Adam and Eve are historical persons. Many theistic evolutionists such as C. S. Lewis and Peter Enns do not believe that Adam and Eve were actual persons (pp. 128-129). Keller allows that Adam could have been a hominid type creature who God selected to breathe human life into so that that creature could possess a soul (p. 130). Keller uses Derek Kidner’s explanation as a model (p. 130). The “Adam” of Scripture is a hominid that evolved from lower life forms into which God breathed the breath of life. God by special creation made Eve and thus we have the first human pair. This is the type of speculation that follows when the Scriptures are rejected. Otis affirms that this produces a bizarre interpretation to man’s creation in the image of God (p. 131). Another question that must be dealt with if we assume that evolution is the mechanism of creation is that of the occurrence of death before man’s sin. Theistic evolutionists affirm that death came before Adam. The Bible teaches that death

followed Adam's sin. "Keller says that even a traditional interpretation of God's creation of the earth means that there was not perfect order and peace in the creation from the first moment" (pp. 132-133). Otis stamps this as a serious theological error.

In chapter nine, Otis examines the work of Dr. Ron Choong. Choong is a member of Metro New York Presbytery (PCA) and has taught classes in Keller's church. He has written a book, *Project Timothy: The New Testament You Thought You Knew*. Choong states, "Project Timothy provides a climate of inquiry within a sanctuary of doubt that we call a theological safe space (TSS)- to engage the Global Secular Culture...(p. 139). Otis reviews Choong's book, *The Bible You Thought You Knew: Volume 1* and his blog titled, "Faith Seeking Understanding." Choong attacks the credibility of the Bible and its authority. He affirms lapses in the historical and scientific accuracy of the Bible (p. 141). He believes that the first eleven chapters of Genesis are myth. He states that Genesis 1 does not refer to the origins of the material universe (p. 144). Choong believes that biological evolution is a fact (p. 146). He does not believe in the Genesis account of the creation by God of Adam and Eve. Instead, he believes that Adam was one of many AMH (anatomically modern humans), but Adam was the first AMH in the line of Jesus who was formed in the image of God (p. 149). In answer to the question, "Who did Cain marry and who were the Sons of God in Genesis 6?", Choong replies, "Possibly other hominids such as Homo sapiens that may not have been given the image of God. They were clearly AMH who could biologically mate with the Adamic race and probably shared in the physiology" (p. 149). Otis replies that, according to the Scriptures, there is no common descent from other life forms preceding man and there are no hominids (p. 150). Choong does not believe that his views should be used as a "litmus" test for faith (151). He affirms that the Bible does not offer evidence. "It offers trustworthy 'accounts' by those who believe and should not be degenerated to become 'evidence' (p. 151). Otis shows that Choong's doctrine violates the teaching of the Westminster Confession which Choong has sworn to uphold (pp. 154-155). Otis summarizes Choong's views in a twenty point summary on pages 158-159.

In chapter ten, Otis scrutinizes the teachings of Dr. Gregg Davidson. Davidson has written a book titled, *When Faith and Science Collide: A Biblical Approach to Evaluating Evolution and the Age of the Earth*. Davidson holds to an old earth view that accommodates the evolutionary chronology of the earth. He believes that Adam and Eve were descended from ape-like creatures (hominids) who were adopted by God and given a soul (p. 164). Davidson's book is an attempt to harmonize evolution with the Bible. Davidson states, "There is a growing body of people who share this conviction who have been convinced that the scientific evidence for evolution and an old earth is unassailable" (p. 168). Davidson favors allowing science to be used to interpret Scripture. Otis strenuously objects to this point. Davidson argues that there are gaps in the generations listed in Genesis 5 and 11. However, Otis points out that these gaps are not sufficient to permit billions of years in the chronology of the earth or millions of years in the descent of man. Davidson holds to macroevolution, i.e. that all life forms evolved from simple, single celled organisms throughout millions of years (p. 174). He affirms the random formation of life out of non-living material (p. 177). Davidson views Adam as a hominid chosen by God (p. 188). Davidson contends that man's evolution is well documented in the fossil records. Otis examines each of the supposed scientific finds. Java Man (1887, 1888), discovered by Eugene Dubois and later identified by Dubois as a giant gibbon (p. 199). Peking Man, the result of a find by Dr. Davidson Black near Peking, China in the 1920's and 30's. On the basis of just one tooth, this creature was determined to be a hominid (and, consequently, a missing link). Nebraska Man was declared to be a missing link on the basis of just one tooth by Henry Fairfield Osborn in

1922 (p. 200). In 1927, the tooth was identified as belonging to a wild pig. *Pitldown Man* was discovered in 1912 by Charles Dawson near Pitldown, England. In 1950 the bones were further tested and the discovery was made that Pitldown Man was a complete hoax. *Australopithecus* discovered by Raymond Dart in 1924 turned out to be the bones of an ape. *Lucy* was discovered by Donald Johanson in 1974 in Ethiopia. He announced the discovery as a one and a half million year old hominid. Others have disagreed with Johanson saying that the knee joint of *Lucy* is more in tune with tree climbers. *Flipperpithecus* was found by Dr. Joel Boaz. The bone fragment was identified as a five million-year-old collarbone of a human like creature. In actuality it was a dolphin rib. These are the “missing links” in the development of humans from non-humans. Among other things Otis mentions about Dr. Davidson’s positions, he concludes with Davidson’s affirmation of uniformitarian geology. Davidson believes in a local or regional flood and dismisses a universal flood.

In chapter 11, Otis evaluates the work of Dr. C. John Collins. He is a professor at Covenant Seminary (PCA) and wrote a book titled, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?: Who They Were and Why You Should Care*. Collins affirms, “Most recently, discoveries about the features of human DNA seem to require that the human population has always had at least as many as a thousand members” (p. 215). Collins is advocating evolution in this statement. He is moving away from the biblical and literal view that humanity began with the creation of Adam and Eve. John Collins references Francis Collins who is a theistic evolutionist and who led the Human Genome Project (p. 215) in regards to moving away from the traditional beliefs about Adam and Eve. Otis states that the doctrine of Sola Scriptura is being assaulted by Collins. John Collins also allows that the biblical writers could be mistaken about their interpretation of the world we all encounter (p. 216). Collins also affirms that in interpreting the writings of the biblical authors we are not limited to the actual words that they use (p. 218). He has interjected intuitions (these are named on page 217) into the hermeneutical process. Otis replies, “If we are not limited to the actual words, then we can make the text say whatever we want” (p. 218). Collins suggests that we interpret Genesis 1-11 in the same way that we would the Mesopotamian origin and flood stories (p. 219). These stories contain divine action, symbolism and imaginative elements according to Collins. The stories may have a “historical core” but also have elements of symbolism and imagination (p. 219). This approach sets up an interpretive view of Genesis 1-11 as myth. Collins allows for the bestowal of a soul upon a hominid (ape-like man) (p. 221-222). For him, this is the biblical Adam. Otis calls this, “a compromising synthesis with the world” (p. 222). Dr. Collins allows for uncertainty with regard to the chronology of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 (p. 225). He also affirms that physical death preceded the fall of Adam and Eve (p. 226-227). Collins’ interpretive approach involves a concept he calls, “sociolinguistics.” This involves looking for the overarching worldview and not adhering to the actual words of the biblical writers. Otis illustrates this approach with an example for Gregg Davidson’s book. Davidson believes that the real meaning of the “sons of God” marrying the “daughters of men” is that of sub-human Neanderthals having sexual union with human females resulting in a strange hybrid species referred to in Scripture as “the *Nephilim*” (p. 229). The theory of evolution was not known until the middle of the 19th century. What did the Israelites believe about Genesis 1 and 2 when they had no idea of organic evolution? Dr. Collins, in the last part of his book, advances his own understanding of man’s origins. He calls his approach, “modified monogenesis.” He gives his own view, after mentioning several scenarios from different authors including C. S. Lewis, who is a theistic evolutionist (p. 241). He believes that God

supernaturally endowed certain hominids with His image resulting in Adam and Eve as the progenitors of mankind (p. 245).

The final compromiser scrutinized by Otis is Peter Enns. Chapter twelve takes a look at where Theistic Evolution can lead. Enns was professor of Old Testament for 14 years at Westminster Seminary, Philadelphia up to his dismissal in 2008. In 2005 he wrote, *Inspiration and Incarnation*. In 2012, he wrote, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Does not Say About Human Origins*. Enns does not believe that the Genesis creation stories fit the scientific evidence. He modifies the creation account to fit the science. Enns believes that Paul is mistaken when he affirms that Adam was the first human being and ancestor of everyone who ever lived (Rom. 5:12-21 and I Cor. 15:20-58). Enns rejects the doctrine of original sin. Enns does not believe that the doctrine of inspiration means that the biblical writers were free from faulty cosmological concepts (p. 256). Enns states, "...the inspired status of Paul's writings does not mean that his view on human origins determines what is allowable for contemporary Christians to conclude" (p. 256). Otis remarks that Peter Enns has Paul in error. Enns believes that evolution demands a synthesis with Christianity (p. 259). This synthesis is also termed the *concordant* view by John Collins (p. 223). This idea involves the harmonizing of two views that are discordant or contradictory. The only way to do this is to attack the inspiration and historicity of the Genesis account of creation. Enns does both.

In Chapter thirteen, Otis examines the PCA Creation Report of 2000. PCA stands for the Presbyterian Church in America. Otis mentions that the PCA has a serious problem with those in its midst who believe in theistic evolution. The Creation Report was submitted to the General Assembly in the year 2000. The Committee working on this report failed to come to a consensus that the days of creation mentioned in Genesis 1 were 24 hour days. Otis remarks that this was its "Achilles Heel" (p. 267). Otis reveals that he is a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in United States (RPCUS) (p. 268). He confessed, "We are strict subscriptionists when it comes to interpreting the Westminster Standards" (p. 268). The PCA affirmed its toleration of views distinct from the "Calendar day view" of Genesis 1. Otis criticizes this and remarks, "I have consistently argued in my entire book that the fundamental issue in the debate on the doctrine of creation is **one's view of and practice of hermeneutics** (how we should interpret the Bible)" (p. 275). He continues, "I am shocked that certain men who ostensibly adhere to the doctrine of the authority of Scripture can simultaneously advocate the value of utilizing "scientific discoveries" in aiding us in understanding how we should interpret Genesis. This is the crux of the matter" (p. 275).

The final chapter in the book, chapter fourteen, answers the question, "Why Theistic Evolution Is a Sinful Compromise." Otis offers the following reasons: (1) It robs God of His due glory; (2) It elevates science as an equal authority with Scripture; (3) It adopts a faulty hermeneutic; (4) It assaults the uniqueness and dignity of man; (5) It is insulting to Jesus' true humanity; (6) It can undermine the glorious gospel; and (7) It undermines the Bible's credibility.

In the conclusion, Otis declares that theistic evolution is one of the greatest dangers facing the church today. He refers to it as, "Pandora's Theological Box" (p. 287).

The book contains an appendix on the *Value and Necessity of a Presuppositional Apologetic* or *How Do I Know the bible to be the Word of God?* Otis affirms *Sola Scriptura* (the Scriptures Alone). He appeals to the internal evidences of the Scriptures to prove that they are God's word and to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The book closes with an index and bibliography.