Evolution doesn't make the problem of evil worse

By James F. McGrath
January 3, 2013

I continue to encounter – and to find incredibly puzzling – the claim that depicting God creating through evolution portrays God less favorably than depicting God creating directly and instantaneously. Here is why.

In either view of creation, the world includes suffering, starvation, carnivores eating other animals, parasites devouring hosts alive, illnesses of a variety of sorts, and much pain.

While there is no evidence that the world ever contained living things but lacked the above, even if one accepted that, one would still have to envisage God creating all of the above, allegedly in response to human sin. That is, the “curse” mentioned in Genesis 3. That these things are brought about by sin directly is not only unbiblical but baffling nonsense that no one actually believes. No one thinks that by sinning human beings can themselves turn herbivores into carnivores, or actually bring into existence a flesh-eating virus, do they? The only way to posit that disease and earthquakes and tornados and death and everything else came into the world “as a result of sin” is to say that *God deliberately* willed or allowed those things into the world in response to human sin as a punishment.

How does that make God any less the author of those things? It doesn't. And so why does envisaging God doing that deliberately, precisely in order to inflict pain and suffering, seem more appropriate to some creationists than the view that God creates that way because it produces the sort of world full of diverse life and freedom that Christian theology says is a central purpose of creation?

The attempt to say that evolution is a problem for theology or for the philosophical problem of evil, or even that it aggravates theological and philosophical problems related to God, is in my opinion a sham. The suffering that evolution talks about is there anyway. The question is whether, as the Bible itself suggests, there is a God who works all things together for good and brings good out of suffering, or conversely, as according to young-earth creationists and their ilk, there is a God who

inflicts harm simply for the sake of causing pain and suffering.

But either way the suffering in the world is there for us to observe, and so needs to be accounted for by *both* views of God and creation. It is time to stop letting young-earth creationists and other prompters of pseudoscientific and pseudobiblical nonsense get away with pretending that the pain and suffering in our world are not a problem for their viewpoint as they are for others.

Because in actual fact, if anything, they should be more of a problem for them than for anyone else. If you don't see a problem with claiming that a loving God selectively inflicted cancer on all varieties of living things for generations to come because two human beings sinned in the past, then you clearly have not grasped what the theological issues are, or given the issue the thought that it is due.

Originally posted at Exploring Our Matrix