

THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATION IN THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

T. ROBERT INGRAM*

In recent times the topic of creation has been stressed very little in Christian preaching, or in the Christian message generally. In early Christian preaching, on the other hand, it played a very important part. The author points out that to neglect creation is to weaken the Christian message, and that various doctrines can really be understood only when the fact of creation is taken into account.

Despite the fervor shown on both sides whenever the question of creation as opposed to evolution is raised, the subject seems to be almost totally neglected in the modern pulpit. This may fairly be stated in spite of the peril of broad generalizations and without the necessity to make a case.

That preachers should fail to espouse evolution in sermons is understandable enough: even those who zealously believe evolution to be true cannot escape what practitioners of modern slang very aptly call a "gut feeling" that it wouldn't do at all to preach it.

Others might incline toward creation but be unequipped to deal intellectually with the issues involved. The attempt to "baptize" evolution by trying to reconcile Genesis with the geological column, besides being a failure, would be dull in any event and would afford small grist for the pulpit mill.

But those who are convinced of the truth, the historical and scientific truth, of creation ought also thereby to understand that it is a doctrine both exciting to hearers generally and absolutely essential to the Gospel.

Neglect of Creation Mutilates the Christian Message

The Gospel cannot stand either on the sentimentalism of the revivalist or the intellectual *tour de force* of those European heroes of the 1920's, such as Karl Barth and Oscar Cullman, who undertook to erect an orthodox theology without reference to creation.

In spite of the intense interest on both sides of the Atlantic, and almost breathless expectation, Continental theology, like ancient Israel, "brought forth wind." The leading minds among Christians were not long in ferreting out the errors and failures of Neo-orthodoxy, but it is surprising how few if any hit on the root error, which was at the same time the central claim to fame. It remained for a Swedish theologian to point out the fatal flaw in trying to build a theology on the single article of faith, namely, the confession that "Jesus is Lord."

Gustaf Wingren, in his book *Creation and Law*, takes the position that preaching Jesus Christ without first recognizing that the God whose Son He is in the Creator results in a totally man-centered view. Wingren makes an impressive and weighty case, despite his emphasis on the controversial doctrine that every soul is created at the beginning of human life, and a lack of clarity on the controlling fact of "the beginning" as it applies to all things.

Nevertheless he speaks directly to the point, and particularly as it applies to the preaching of the Gospel. He

notes, as have others, that in preaching to the pagan world the early Church not only presupposed that God is the Creator, but often, as in the case of St. Paul both in Lycaonia and in Athens, began their sermons with the declaration of God the Creator.

Creation in Early Christian Preaching

"Forgiveness and the summons to conversion in the missionary preaching of the Church to the Gentiles presupposes that there is a work of God in Creation which has already been discerned and experienced before the preaching of the Gospel," says Wingren in a footnote.

Certainly the two sermons of Paul referred to here are cases in point, in Acts 14:15, and 17:24.

In Lycaonia, where the mob called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercury, after the miraculous healing of one crippled from birth, the Apostles restrained the crowd, running in among the people and crying out, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We are also men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, *which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.*" (Emphasis added)

And at Athens, addressing the intellectual establishment, he began by declaring unto them, "God that made the world and all things therein."

These two instances are conclusive evidence that not only did the Church from the beginning approach the pagan world with an explicit and prior declaration of God as the Creator, but further that they could take it for granted the pagan world knew what they were talking about.

These two facts find open and determined hostility from two widely different quarters, and this may account for some at least of the reticence of preachers today to preach Creation.

Why Creation is Often Ignored

The amazingly thorough and stubborn mind-set of evolutionists in the nineteenth century could not tolerate the possibility of a common knowledge of the Creator simply because it didn't fit into their time table of religious evolution. Paganism was firmly believed to represent an evolutionary stage which had not yet progressed to the understanding of one God.

At the same time, there is an overly pious notion among some Evangelicals that man can have no knowledge of God at all outside of Biblical revelation. Hand in hand, these two otherwise repugnant positions undoubtedly have discouraged a great deal of understanding about the value and rightness of preaching creation generally.

*Rev. T. Robert Ingram, D.D., is Rector of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church and School, P. O. Box 35096, Houston, Texas 77035.

Knowledge of Creation is Ancient

Both of these positions are unsupportable. There is overwhelming evidence not only that the pagan world at the time of Christ had knowledge of creation and of the Creator, but also that knowledge was common to the whole race from the beginning.

Adam, Enoch and Noah certainly had a knowledge of God beyond that of most men today and knew Him as Creator, and this knowledge must have been handed on generally. While explicit doctrinal statements that God created *ex nihilo* are lacking in these ancient documents, it is inconceivable that anything less was understood. Job was familiar with creation, and it would seem likely that Abimelech, King of Gerar, to whom God spoke in a dream, must have known God's identity.

That the pagan world did not worship the Creator is another thing. It should be abundantly clear from our own times that to know that God created all things in heaven and earth does not necessarily result in worshipping Him. It has always been the case that the idea of creation is childish in the good sense: it is so simple and obvious that it does not seem to appeal like the contortions of evolutionary thinking to a strong mind. That is, creation is such a reasonable idea that it is often rejected precisely for that reason in favor of something more esoteric.

All Men Know Something of Creation

The Bible declares firmly, without any room for equivocation, that the whole human race has an intuitive knowledge of the Creator. This agrees with reasonable evidence from incidental history contained in the Bible about the pagan world and with the writings of the pagan philosophers. Thus it is seen that by scripture, by reason and by documentary evidence, one concludes beyond a reasonable doubt that man naturally knows that God created all things. The case for evolution of religion, as well as that against a natural knowledge of creation apart from Biblical revelation, is overthrown by the facts.

"The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse," Paul wrote in the first chapter of Romans.

In other words, the natural powers of human reason are held accountable by God to discerning (1) that all things were made; (2) that therefore there was the Maker; (3) that the Maker must be eternal; (4) that no higher power can be imagined; and (5) that the Maker is therefore God and to be worshipped as God.

Any other explanation is not mere ignorance common to man, but blamable contumacy.

Their fault, says the Apostle, is that, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful."

Such is the Biblical position. There is knowledge of the Creator naturally discerned by man, and man has already had this knowledge.

As for evidence from pagan writings of the knowledge of creation, it should be sufficient to accept the testimony of Augustine of Hippo in the early fifth century, who was himself quite a student of pagan philosophy

before he became a Christian. On top of that, at the time he wrote there were plenty of pagan scholars around to correct him.

He said not only that Plato knew about creation, but that he had gone so far as to offer an explanation as to why that which God had made was good: "This was given by Plato as the most valid reason for the creation of the world—that good works should be effected by a good God." Then Augustine added:

Plato may have read this passage of Scripture (Genesis 1:31) or have learnt of it from those who had read it; or it may be that with the intuition of genius he observed 'the invisible realities of God' presented to the mind by means of his creation, or learned about them from those who had thus observed them. (City, Bk. XI, Ch. 21).

In any event, Plato knew. And as for pagan philosophers generally, Augustine wrote:

There are some who admit that the world is created by God, but refuse to allow it a beginning in time, not allowing it a beginning in the sense of its being created, so that creation becomes an eternal process. (City, Bk. XI, Ch. 4).

Attempts to Replace Creation by an Eternal Process

The notion of creation as an eternal process is not unfamiliar to theologians today. It is inherent in evolutionary thinking and has been the false refuge for many a Christian who has tried to keep one foot in faith and the other in evolution. Obviously time is not the refiner of man's thinking about God: faulty reason is present in every time.

The difficulty so many have with creation, now as in Pagan times, would seem to be not only a matter of a perverse will ("when they knew God, they glorified him not as God") but also of ignorance—ignorance not of the historical fact, but of the vast implications which become clear only after intensive instruction grounded on faith and cultivated by much meditation. It is one thing to say the doctrine of creation is childish; it is something else indeed to believe that all there is to it is the credal affirmation, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth."

The Importance of Creation in Preaching

Here is where preaching comes in. It is not only for missionary preaching, but for solid instruction and discipline of the faithful.

It is not preaching creation simply to declare, with however much heat, "God made all things, visible and invisible." Where preaching comes in is to show what difference it makes. The implications seem to be unlimited, for some very important and universal principles of life are rooted here, and if creation is not a fact of history, there is no Gospel.

If everything was not created, there is no Creator; neither is there law, nor is there human guilt to be expiated and forgiven.

I think many preachers would blush to be confronted with the real vapid nature of such sermons as declare salvation requires a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ without any hint as to who this Saviour is.

O yes, there is the Jesus of Nazareth who walked on earth. But any real knowledge of Him brings us at once into the presence of God the Father; and, who is He? He is the Creator. Except for calling him "Father", all that is said about God in the creeds is this, that He is the Maker of all things in heaven and on earth. One can have a personal and present knowledge of this Jesus only as He is alive in Heaven at the right hand of the Father.

Aside from some sentimental mystique, some esoteric experience that may or may not have any validity, knowledge of any person, or of God Himself, is to be had only through his works—what he does.

Each one, therefore, comes to know Jesus Christ by what He does, by His works. And what are they? He is the Maker of all things. This is said of Him as expressly His work as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Word of God: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3)

But, someone will say, the Gospel is concerned with Him as Redeemer. Ah, yes. But how fitting it is that all things should be Redeemed by Him who made them.

"What—or rather Who was it that was needed for such grace and such recall as we (fallen man) required?" asks Athanasius (On the Incarnation of the Word of God, Chapter 7). "Who, save the Word of God Himself, Who also in the beginning had made all things out of nothing? His part it was, and His alone."

Some excellent preaching could go into an explanation of why it was his part, and his alone. And this requires some preaching on creation.

Another will say, salvation needs to be preached only in terms of justification by faith. Ah, yes. And there are hours of fruitless dissertation on the meaning of faith with not a word about what it means to be justified; or, for that matter, about Paul's penetrating discussion of faith in Hebrews 11, especially verse 3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Moreover, justification is a legal action. It has meaning only in matters of law.

But even with his strained emphasis on the creation of every soul as sufficient for a doctrine of creation, Wingen has shown admirably that except God be understood as the Creator, there is no foundation for law at all. If there is no law, there is no guilt, no forgiveness and no redemption.

Still another will say, preach on the Providence of God. But God's Providence can be understood only as it is understood that, as Augustine says, "God rules all things consummately by law."

The very notion of authority, which the Centurion understood so clearly and Jesus accounted it to him for faith, hangs on the truth of creation and an understanding of it. God's own authority, his right to command, arises from the fact that He Created, and man's unqualified duty of obedience arises from his relationship to God as creature.

Another, a revivalist, will say one need only preach so as to convict his hearers of sin. But man is a sinner only because of his creaturely relationship to God. More-

over, there is far more saving grace to be had from sermons on man's nature as a dependent being rather than as a sinful being. For even if man were not a sinner (and in Christ he is no longer held accountable) he still, being dependent, owes perfect obedience. No man can live unto himself, either without God or without his fellow men.

These are some of the areas of preaching where we must admit there is a "thunderous silence" today: Authority, law, providence, faith in Creation, creaturely dependence.

Arguments to Prove God's Existence

Then there is the deadly silence about reasonable arguments for the existence of God.

Not demonstrable by reason, snaps one.

No, but without reason there is no understanding, any more than without faith. And the understanding of God is the goal of human life—to see Him face to face, to see him as he is. (1 Cor. 13:12, 1 John 3:2).

There is no understanding of scripture without the application of reason in its highest sense. The knowledge of God, Theology, is the most exacting and demanding of all sciences, and it is the preacher's job to open the understanding of his flock even as the Risen Christ opened the understanding of the Apostles (Luke 24:45).

One of the great works of Christendom, Paley's *Natural Theology*, is chiefly a discourse on only one of the five traditional lines of argument to show the existence of God, in this case, the argument from design. The pulpit is the place to exercise the reason of the faithful in showing them how reasonable it is to believe God made all things.

The other traditional arguments are equally broad and instructive: the argument from cause and effect, from the nature of man (also a subject for many a good sermon), from the nature of knowledge (that man can conceive only of what exists but all men conceive of God), and finally, the argument already hinted at from the record of Jesus Christ.

Creation and God's Attributes

Finally, there are the attributes of God.

Granting that to see God as He is is perfect bliss, mustn't the eyes of the mind be trained to see first at least His attributes?

But these all derive from the fact that He is the Creator.

His very eternity and immutability are inseparable from His being Creator.

Then there is the relationship between goodness and existence: it is good to be. And God, the great I AM, who is sheer Being, is also sheer goodness. But His being in this sense becomes meaningful chiefly as He is the author of all being.

There is a temptation to go on and on at this point, suggesting subjects for preaching that are rarely if ever used today, yet which become understandable only in terms of God the Creator, and a full understanding of what is involved in Creation *ex nihilo*.

Finally, there is the insulting and senseless retreat of the ungodly into some acknowledgement of a "supreme being."

The atheists of the French Revolution were quite pleased to acknowledge a Supreme Being. In fact, I

would think no man can retain his sanity who does not in some way assume a Supreme Being: there can be no order, no universe, no thought or reason without one.

The great question is, who is He?

There is only one answer: The Creator.

PHYLOGENETIC DEVELOPMENT OF ADIPOSE TISSUE IN ANIMALS

DAVID A. KAUFMANN*

A review of the supposed phylogenetic development of adipose tissue in invertebrates and vertebrates is presented. In invertebrates, lipid-storage tissue is absent in the sponges and coelenterates. There is some evidence of such tissue in Echinoderms, a speculated possibility in Annelids, Mollusks, Crustaceans and Arachnids, and well-developed tissue in Myriapods and insects, but no distinct adipose tissue in Cephalochords.

In vertebrates, the poikilotherms have only traces of adipose tissue, the liver performing a lipid-storing function. Fishes, amphibians, and reptiles have little or no highly developed white adipose tissue. Carnivores have very little white adipose tissue, while hibernating mammals have large amounts of lower-developed brown adipose tissue.

These observations do not correlate with the prediction of the mega-evolution model of a graded increase in quantity and quality of tissues with advancement up the so-called evolutionary ladder of life.

Adipose Tissue Generally

The occurrence of cells filled with lipid material varies greatly among the various branches of the animal kingdom.

Among invertebrates only arthropods have a distinct, individualized adipose tissue. The record shows that some primitive types of fat storage are found in few other invertebrate species.¹ This observation does not correlate with the prediction of the mega-evolutionary model that cells and tissues would develop from the very most primitive forms of animals to the very most complex forms culminating in the highest presumed product of mega-evolution, man.

If mega-evolution were the true explanation of the origin and diversity of life, this development of cells and tissues would be irreversible. Thus there would be some degree of uniform increase in complexity directly related to various grades of development of each animal group in the animal kingdom.

Any gaps of histological development or regression away from development would be counter to predictions of the mega-evolutionary model. But such gaps would correlate with the prediction of the creation model that the Creator created different animal groups for different purposes, and hence there would be distinct differences in their cellular makeup and function along with nonuniform increase in complexity.

The lack of a significant amount of observations of adipose tissue development among vertebrates certainly does not strengthen the case for credibility of the doctrine of mega-evolution.

Among vertebrates a well-developed subcutaneous lipid-storage tissue occurs only in homiothermic animals.² The fact that there is no significant development of adipose tissue in cold-blooded vertebrates is never explained by mega-evolutionary scientists.

One would think that if mega-evolution were true, there would be a gradual upward development of adipose tissue among cold-blooded vertebrates starting with the agnatha and progressing upward through the placoderms, osteichthyes, amphibia and ending with the reptiles. Furthermore, there would be an accelerated but unique development of adipose tissue in both the warm-blooded classes of birds and mammals.

The stages of development of adipose tissue that occur in both invertebrates and vertebrates may be reviewed as follows:

I. Invertebrates

A. Sponges—no evidence of any lipid storage cells.³

B. Coelenterates (Cniderae and Ctenarae)—no evidence of even a rudimentary form of adipose tissue. They even lack mesoderm *in toto*.⁴

C. Echinoderms—only starfish which have lipid-storage sites in their gastric caeca and sea-urchins which have epithelial cells with lipid-storage abilities show any resemblances to an adipose-tissue.

D. Annelids—The only indication of lipid-storing function in Annelids is contributed by Van Gansen,⁵ who speculates that cholaragogenic cells of the coelomic wall perform this function.

E. Mollusks—According to Fontaine and Callamand⁶ mollusks have only faint traces of adipose tissue.

F. Arthropods—As stated above, the arthropods are the only invertebrates that show a definite, individualized form of adipose tissue. Crustaceans and Arachnids have a hepatopancreatic system with only traces of adipose tissue. However, Myriapods and insects which lack a liver are the first invertebrates to demonstrate a significantly developed type of adipose tissue.⁷

G. Cephalochords (Amphioxus)—In this group there is no distinct type of adipose tissue. For invertebrates this appears to be a regression downward, from the complex development of adipose tissue of arthropods to the non-development of adipose tissue in Cephalochords.

*David A. Kaufmann, Ph.D., is Associate Professor at the College of Physical Education, Health and Recreation, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.