

CREATION vs. EVOLUTION

By D.B. Knox

The Protestant Faith

Our Australian community is on the brink of ceasing to be a Christian community, that is, a community in which Christian values form the outward structures by which the community is held together. There are several reasons for this. Materialism and the pursuit of possessions has, of course, always been with us, but it has become of absorbing interest to the whole community because of the greater possibility of attainment of affluence. And it is as true today as it was in Jesus' time that you can not serve God and mammon. They are also, in the community, active agents seeking to break down Christian values; there are the humanists who think all will be well with society so long as God is excluded. There live in a dream world. But more sinister, perhaps, are the agents of Communism whose object is to break down Christian values, whether values of sex and family or Christian institutions. Their object is to destroy all that binds the community together, morally in order that they may bring in a revolution and set up their party dictatorship. It is as true today as it was in St. Paul's time that Christians are engaged in a struggle, not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of darkness and it is as true today as in the first century that God has overthrown the forces of evil, whether in the community or in the individual, through Jesus Christ the victor over sin, satan and death.

So the first thing that we Christians in Sydney should do is to make more time for earnest prayer for our community and for those who have positions of influence in it; for Christian ministers, for school teachers, for magistrates and judges, for aldermen, parliamentarians and ministers of the Crown. Jesus told us to pray first of all that God's name might be hallowed and honoured, that God should be recognised as God, holy and sovereign, we should pray that His name should be hallowed in our own life and in the life of the community. Prayer to God is the ultimate weapon, and we will find that it is the thing from which we are being constantly diverted, because we are engaged in a conflict with the powers of evil who are anxious to snatch his sword of prayer out of our hands.

But secondly, along with prayer must go positive witness to the reality of God; but if we are to witness effectively we must understand both what the Bible teaching is and how the modern situation lies. The characteristic of modern society is that it lives only in the present. There has always been a tendency in human nature to do this, witness the ancient motto "Let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die" but the tendency to live only for the present is greatly strengthened these days by both philosophy and science. The dominant philosophical theory is existentialism which teaches that life consists of expressing yourself in the present moment. While the dominant theory of the scientific view of the world is evolution which purports to explain the world by materialistic cause and effect without any reference to God or His purposes.

The pressure of these two theories of philosophy and science has been to exclude the concept of God from modern thinking. I believe that the Christian must tackle the nettle of evolutionism, which explains the world mechanistically attributing it to chance and necessity. As a scientific theory, evolution has always seemed to me a very difficult one to believe. It goes against experience, for it teaches that the extraordinarily complicated structures which make up living matter have evolved from the simplest of chemicals in a purely mechanical, accidental way, but experience suggests the exact opposite; namely, that the passage of time breaks down the complicated rather than builds it up by adding complication to complication, which the theory of evolution requires.

Or again, take the problem of the wing of a bird which is a very intricate aeronautical structure, it is only effective in its completed form; how can it get built up little bit by little bit by a staggering number of minute accidental variations, none of which are any use until the final form is reached. Evolution is also contrary to the evidence of the fossils in so far as when fossils first appear in the pre-cambrian rocks they are all in their final form. Many of these first fossil forms are still alive, unchanged, today and although others of these fossil forms have become extinct all are fully developed forms

of life. If anything, these early fossils are evidence of creation, as they appear suddenly and fully developed. And so one could go on, but it is not my purpose now to criticise evolution as a scientific theory so much as to point out that the theory is used very widely but quite improperly as a substitute for thinking about God. By definition, science can only deal with the present though it can theorise about the past. It can, however, only deal with what is observable at the present moment, and moreover, it cannot deal with origins, that is, how things came into being, but can only deal with things after they have originated, for only then are they observable. The Bible, however, deals with origins. It teaches that things originated through the purpose and power of God, and that consequently things are under God's control at the present moment; for it would be a very strange creator who brought things into being and then turned his back on his creation or who could not control every aspect of it at every moment of its existence. The mind of God is of such infinite power that there is no material creation, however minute or however far removed from us in the extent of space throughout the universe, which God is not controlling completely at this present moment. This is what the Bible says and this is what common sense endorses, though it certainly transcends the power of our imagination to comprehend. But we must not limit God's power by the limits of our imagination, drawn as it is from the area of our very limited experience.

The Bible's description of creation does not exclude the concept of process, which is, of course, basic to the concept of evolution; but it directs our attention, not to the process, but to God Who willed creation and whose power carried it through, and that He is the One Whom we are to thank for the beautiful world in which we live and to Whose goodness we are to attribute everything, for example the rising of the sun day by day (Mat. And as we reflect on the world and our life in it, the most important fact to keep constantly before us is that God is the source of our life and is sovereign over it. Evolutionism concentrates solely on a possible, though not likely, process and by so doing diverts the attention of modern society from God, Creator and sovereign Lord, Who made heaven and earth and everything in it.

There is an important and fatal consequence of evolutionism, a theory so widely taught these days in our schools, which is this; that if the world is explained solely in terms of the natural sciences, not only is attention directed from origins, because science cannot deal with origins but studies things only after they have originated, and so has to exclude the concept of creation from its purview, but equally important the concept of purpose is also excluded. Science never takes purpose into its purview. It cannot do so, for it always looks to causes, not to purposes, and yet purpose is the most important element in human life. All the actions that we ourselves undertake are purposeful, and for an observer to understand human actions he must have some acquaintance with the purpose for which they are being done, and not merely with their immediate antecedent causes. So too, if we are to understand the world and our life in it we must understand the purpose that God, our Creator has; and yet this is the very thing which, as I say, evolutionism and scientism (by definition) exclude from consideration, and it proceeds as though purpose did not exist. The theory of evolution excludes from consideration ultimate origins and ultimate purpose of our present life and so it strengthens the modern spirit in concentrating all its attention on the present with its possibilities of pleasure and the accumulation of possessions. Modern man, as a consequence, has a very defective world view.

Science, of course is an excellent area of human endeavour. It has brought us all tremendous benefits and to be a scientist is a most honourable occupation. But what I am saying is that if we take science as capable of providing the whole of our world view, as the modern age does, we will have a very defective concept of reality, for the scientific method is not designed and indeed cannot take into account origins and purpose and ultimate destiny - things which concern our present and our future and which, as far as we humans are concerned, are much more important things to get right than is a knowledge of the intermediate processes, which are now all in the past.

We Christians must witness positively to the fact that God is Creator, that He is sovereign at the present moment over every aspect of His creation and that no single event,

not even the fall of a sparrow or a thought of a man, is excluded from His sovereign sphere. And we must also witness to the obvious deduction that God, the personal Creator, has a purpose in creating us and creating the world and He will undoubtedly bring this purpose to its fulfilment. There will be a time of assessment and judgement as certainly as today followed yesterday. To know this is to begin to understand the world and how we should live in it, while to ignore it is undoubtedly going to bring the individual and our community to destruction. As Solomon put it "The fear of the Lord" (that is the honouring of God and the hallowing of His Name) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

II

Creation implies purpose because creating is a personal action. The dominant theory of explaining the world, namely, evolution, excludes purpose from its purview. It teaches that things are what they are by accidental mutations which happen to survive because of a pre-existent cause, namely the environment. The great error of evolution which is universally taught in our schools is that it contradicts a very large area of what we know to be true from experience, namely the existence of purpose. Evolution explains everything by the past, but human actions are undertaken in view of the future. Our actions look to the future, that is, we act with purpose. It is this which makes us persons and not mere things. Purpose is an aspect of the personal while the mechanical explanation of the world, as is evolution, excludes the personal. It is very important for Christians to witness very strongly these days to the personal nature of our existence, that it results from the personal will of God creating the world and that in this creation and in His sovereign rule of the world at the present moment He is fulfilling His purpose.

We may say that God's purpose for mankind is fellowship, that is to say, a relationship of person with person on a basis

of truth and justice, of love and accepting one another. This makes for happiness. It is a matter of observation that all pleasures are enhanced by fellowship and the greatest pleasures are only experienced in fellowship, that is to say in true relationships between each other, where we accept one another into our personal life. It is God's purpose for us that we should be in fellowship with each other as persons and in fellowship with Him Who is the true Person; and we ought to adopt consciously this aim in our own lives and seek to develop fellowship with other people in our own home or at work, or wherever our life may be placed. Seek to understand other people and to meet them person to person. There are some things which obviously make fellowship impossible, such as selfishness, self-aggrandizement and unilateralism, all these things destroy fellowship. Fellowship is also destroyed by untruthfulness of any sort, for if you put up a facade, you cannot have fellowship, for a facade is untrue relationship, for example, if we try to impress people, or go in for status symbols and all that sort of thing. So too, it is impossible for us to have fellowship with God if we are disobedient, for the true relationship between the creature and his Creator is gratitude and obedience. We are God's creations, created by Him, given all that we have through His goodwill and we should respond to this relationship firstly, by gratitude and secondly by honouring Him as God and obeying Him. But human life is marked by disobedience to God. Naturally, therefore, there is no fellowship and can be no fellowship till we repent of this situation, recognise that it is wrong in other words, and return to a true relationship of honouring God and obeying Him.

Fellowship can only be restored on two conditions; on repentance and forgiveness. Repentance by the party that has erred from the truth in the relationship and forgiveness by the other. This is how fellowship with God is restored. It is the only way. We must repent of our self-centredness and of our regarding ourselves as equal with God and our thinking that we can treat with Him, lay down conditions, argue with Him and so on. We must return to a true understanding and a true acceptance of the fact that He is our Creator and we have received everything that we possess as a gift from Him. Repentance is what we must do, and God has promised that He will forgive. His forgiveness is so complete that fellowship is restored fully and truly. His forgiveness is such that He doesn't even remember, as it were, our sins. The Bible has many ways of putting this, He casts our sins into the depths of the sea; He puts them behind His

back; He blots them out with a thick cloud; He washes them away with water; He does not enter them in His ledger. All these ways of putting the matter amount to the same thing, that when we repent and return to God He completely obliterates from His memory, all the things that we have done against Him so that fellowship is restored completely; there is nothing that rises up to mar it.

You may ask how can this be; how can God give us such complete forgiveness. The answer of the Bible is simple and clear, that this restoration of fellowship is based on the life of Jesus and the victory He won over evil through His death. God's purpose is fellowship but this purpose was brought to a halt by man's sin and disobedience. Yet God in His sovereignty has triumphed over sin through Jesus Christ and has restored fellowship and has fulfilled His purpose, that is why in any understanding of the world or of human history Jesus Christ must be at the very centre. The Bible describes the work of Christ as work of restoration of fellowship; God was in Christ, we read, restoring the world to Himself, not imputing to us our sins. Jesus was the only man whose fellowship with God was never broken, because He was never disobedient but always trustful, always obedient, even when the path of His life led right down into the bitter depths of an unjust and cruel death. As Christ was crucified it is possible to see the perfection of His relationship with God which characterised the whole of His life. At no point were His thoughts attracted to self although the temptation to self-pity was never stronger than when He was being unjustly taunted and despised. But there was no word of self-pity, no word of recrimination, only thoughts for others, for provision for His mother, prayer for the soldiers and a word of comfort for the chief being crucified beside Him. And perfect trust in God His Father as He prayed "Father into Your hands I commend My Spirit".

Jesus overcame sin by His life of complete obedience and complete trust, and He overcame the consequence of sin by undergoing the penalty of disobedient humanity. And so, we who are in Christ through faith in Him are restored to God's presence. The Bible has more than one metaphor to describe this new reality. It speaks of us being seated with Christ in the heavenlies or standing in God's presence, or again as having been introduced to God. What it is saying is that we experience in our spirits fellowship with God through His Spirit present with our spirits. In Christ, God's purpose

of fellowship of man with Himself has been restored; and it is only in Christ that this fellowship can be restored. We cannot climb back again by our good works, by the way we live, by turning over a new leaf, or by anything of that sort. We can only be restored to fellowship by the complete perfect forgiveness which God promises to us as we turn back from the untruthfulness of living apart from God and of being the centre of our own life and as we turn back to Christ and recognise Him as being Lord and Saviour. Standing here in the circle of truth, God Who is truth receives us, forgiving us completely all our sins and giving us His Holy Spirit, so that we are able to speak to Him in a personal way, calling Him "Father". This fellowship which God establishes with us will not be interrupted by death, but it will only be strengthened and deepened as we come to be with Christ and see Him face to face.

It is essential for us as Christians to be quite clear in our own minds about God as Creator and Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and to witness to this view of the world in a community which is on the brink of abandoning its Christian heritage.

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