

The Scripture Doctrine of Creation

By Rev. Ronald Cammenga

The Church has always confessed the truth of the creation of the universe by God. In one of the oldest of its creeds, the Apostles' Creed, in the very first article of that creed, the Church sets down her faith in "God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." We believe in God Who is an almighty and sovereign God. And the one great work that reveals God's almighty power and sovereignty in His creation of the heavens and the earth. The truth of creation is a basic and fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion. It belongs to those things which it is necessary for every Christian to believe.

It is our purpose in the next couple of issues of the Reformed Witness pamphlet to consider this truth. It is especially our purpose to consider the truth of creation over against the denials of this truth by the error of evolution. Our one source in setting down the truth of creation and opposing the error of evolution will be the Bible. Since the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God, the Bible is "profitable for doctrine" (II Tim. 3:16). Also for the doctrine of creation the Bible is "profitable." Because we believe the Bible to be "the only rule of faith" (See the Belgic Confession of Faith, article VII), also as regards our view of the origin of the universe, we insist that that view be derived from and be in harmony with Holy Scripture. To be sure, the Bible is no detailed science text-book. The Bible is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the Savior of His people (Heb. 1:1, 2). Nevertheless, when the Bible does speak on matters that concern science, it speaks infallibly and authoritatively (II Pet. 1:20, 21).

Just exactly because the creation account is part of God's inspired Word, it is necessary for a man to possess faith in order to be convinced of the truth of creation. Only the man who has faith, faith worked in his heart by God Himself, receives the Bible as the Word of God. And since the truth of creation is a part of the Word of God, faith is absolutely necessary if a man is to be convinced of the truth of the Scripture doctrine of creation. This is exactly what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says in Heb 11:3: "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." Receiving the truth of creation is not a matter of being convinced only that creationism is philosophically more acceptable than evolution. Receiving the truth of creation is not simply a matter of being convinced that creationism is the best explanation of various scientific facts and discoveries. One cannot be convinced of the truth of creation on purely rational grounds. But receiving the truth of creation is a matter of faith. Apart from faith in God and in God's Word, we cannot hold to the Scripture doctrine of creation. This means that the reason why a man rejects the teaching of God's Word concerning creation is that that man does not possess faith. The only reason is unbelief.

The Scripture doctrine of creation is denied, first of all, by the theory of atheistic evolution. This is far and away the view that is being taught in the schools and universities of our land. Most all of the textbooks used for the various branches of scientific study are written from this evolutionary perspective. The vast majority of history textbooks view the history of the world in the context of the theory of evolution. The evolutionary "theory" is confidently presented as the unassailable explanation of the origin of all things. And anyone who might possibly arise to challenge the claims of the evolutionists is derided as unscholarly, unscientific, and simplistic. By most men this evolutionary "theory" is actually viewed, not as a theory at all, but as established fact.

The theory of evolution was first publicized by the English naturalist Charles Robert Darwin (1809-82). Darwin first presented his views concerning the origin of all things in his well-known book, *The Origin of Species*. In this book Darwin aimed to show that every species is a development from previous species, which clearly implies that man himself has evolved from earlier and different forms of life. Darwin believed that all life is involved in a fierce and unrelenting struggle for existence, in which struggle only the fittest survive. He concluded that there exists a process of "natural selection" which, over the course of thousands of year, produces the remarkable variety of living creatures, through this process of evolution. This is the view that is popularized today. The only difference is that whereas Darwin spoke of the evolutionary history of the universe in terms of thousands of years, men today speak in terms of millions and billions of years.

On the very face of it, the Christian rejects this view of atheistic evolution. His faith in the Word of God compels him to do this. For several reasons we reject this view. In the first place, we reject this view because it is a view that rules God completely out of the picture. It is essentially atheistic. Its explanation of the origin of all things does not begin with God and faith in God's Word. We are not swayed by Darwin's claim to be a Christian. Nor are we moved by the claim of many today, who hold similar views, that their theories are completely compatible with Christianity. The theory of evolution is fundamentally atheistic and anti-God. Those who hold to this view must necessarily reject the opening words of the bible, "In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). The origin of the universe is not within itself, which is the necessary implication of the theory of evolution. Matter did not bring forth matter. One creature did not give rise to another creature. But all things had their beginning in God. Before the world was, He existed. The Psalmist declares in Ps. 90:2: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." The world and every creature in the world has the origin of its existence in God. It is God Who has made all things.

In the second place, we reject the theory of atheistic evolution because it is a fundamental rejection of the authority of the Word of God. This only follows, of course. Because the atheistic evolutionist denies God, he must also go on to deny God's Word. On what, we ask, did Darwin base his view? On what do evolutionists today base their views? What is the source of their theories? The answer is: The theory of evolution is based on man's explanation of so-called scientific facts and discoveries. The authority of the Word of God on the origin of all things is completely set aside and ignored. And though the Bible tells us very plainly about the origin of all things, men turn to geological, archeological, and astronomical discoveries in order to arrive at an explanation of the beginning of the universe. The Christian objects to this. We do not mean to imply that scientific discoveries actually contradict the teaching of God's Word about the origin of the world. Nor do we mean to imply that the creation itself does not evidence the truth of its original creation by the hand of God. What we are objecting to is the whole question of method. For the believer be he scientist, farmer, or housewife, the source of our knowledge is first of all the inspired Word of God. First we turn to God's word and then in the light of that Word we turn to the creation around us. We do not turn to the creation itself first of all in an effort to arrive at an understanding of the origin of all things. Our views are not molded first of all by our discoveries and our interpretation of various facts. This is fundamentally nothing but rationalism, man's mind being made the standard of all truth. But our views are molded by the teaching of the Word of God. We regard it, and nothing in the place of or alongside of it, as the standard for our faith and practice. And the teaching of that Word of God is, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Gen. 1:1). In Ps. 33:6 we read, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." In II Peter 3:5 the apostle Peter tells us that men are willingly ignorant of the truth that "by the Word of God the heavens were of old." And John 1:3 tells us that "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made."

In the third place, on the basis of Scripture we reject the very idea of evolution. We reject the idea that the creation derived its existence out of itself and develops along the lines of a natural selection in an ever increasing ascendancy. The very idea of such a process of evolvment is denied by the Word of God. This is exactly what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says is NOT the explanation of the origin of all things. Not only does he affirm in Hebrews 11:3 that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, but he specifically says, "so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Yet, this is exactly what the evolutionist says. It is exactly his position that things which are seen were made of things which had already appeared. His position is in flat contradiction with the Word of God. Besides, the Word of God knows nothing of an ever increasing ascendancy in the creation, as the theory of evolution teaches. Things are not getting better and better. The Word of God teaches something quite different. In Romans 8:20 and following, the apostle Paul speaks of the creation being made subject to vanity on account of the sin of man. He speaks of the creature being subjected to the bondage of corruption and the creation groaning under this bondage. This bondage of corruption is not something that the creations shall itself overcome by means of a process of evolution. But this is a bondage from which the creation shall be delivered only when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again at the end of time.

Our conclusion? "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." The man who confesses this truth must also necessarily reject the false view of atheistic evolution.

It is our purpose in the next article in this series to examine the view known as “theistic evolution” or “progressive creationism.” We believe that this truth of creation is a vital issue in our day, especially in light of the widespread compromise and denial of the historic teaching of the church concerning this truth.