

## Creationist Living

By David Feddes

If opinion polls are right, most of us agree that God created the universe. We may disagree about how long ago the Lord began creating or what methods he used, but most of us agree that God did it. Even among those who accept at least some aspects of evolutionary theory, the vast majority still believe that the entire process was begun and directed by God. Only a small minority say that God had nothing to do with it, that the entire universe, including humanity, is just a cosmic accident.

Most of us believe in divine creation. But so what? What difference does it make? One way to answer that is to hear from someone who doesn't believe in the Creator God. Francis Crick wrote in his book *The Astonishing Hypothesis*: "The Astonishing Hypothesis is that 'You,' your joys and sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules." Sound inspiring? In response to Crick, Professor Phillip Johnson pointed out that we might not take Crick's "astonishing hypothesis" seriously if Crick just came out and said, "I, Francis Crick, my opinions and my science, and even the thoughts expressed in this book consist of nothing more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules." Crick's hypothesis is self-refuting. If he had no self, why listen to him? If his thoughts were just nerves and molecules interacting, why pay any attention to them? Denying the Creator—whether as a materialist who believes only in matter and molecules, or as a Buddhist who accepts the doctrine of no self—leaves us without any basis for supposing that human thought and morality can have any connection with reality.

Why does belief in the Creator matter? For starters, because creation is the foundation for rationality, morality, and human dignity. So if you don't already believe in the Creator, I encourage you to reconsider.

Right now, though, I don't want to challenge those who don't believe in creation so much as I want to challenge those who *do* believe in creation. Sometimes those of us who believe in creation tend to focus on out-arguing those who don't. We focus on the origin and early history of the universe. Christians try to convince atheists that the universe exists only because God made it, and we also debate with fellow Christians who hold different views of how God did it. This is important.

But we're not going to focus on getting our facts straight, important as that is. Instead of debating various theories, let's just suppose you and I both believe God created the cosmos, and what's more, let's suppose we've got the right theory of how he did it. Then what? Supposing we've got our facts straight about what God did a long time ago, what difference does it make right now?

Let's assume we believe the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). We believe what God says in the book of Isaiah: "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens" (Isaiah 45:12). We're in tune with Hebrews 11:3: "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command." We *believe* the truth of creation. But what's it like to *live* the truth of creation?

Faith in the Creator isn't just a fact to be stored away in our mental filing cabinet. It's not just a theory about something God did a long time ago. We don't just need creationist belief. We need creationist living. A living faith in the Creator affects everything: the way we relate to *God*, the way we relate to *people*, and the way we relate to *the earth*.

## **Relating to God**

Let's begin with what it means for our relationship to God. One thing it means is that we live with *confidence in our Creator*. It's good to have correct beliefs about what the Creator did long ago in getting the universe started, but what good is it if we can't trust him for today and tomorrow? We can have all the right ideas about origins, we can even criticize the flaws in other people's theories, yet we sometimes manage to worry ourselves sick, as though the Creator were no longer in charge.

Jesus told us that instead of worrying, we should trust our Creator. After all, God makes sure the birds have plenty to eat; he gives splendid clothing to the flowers. If that's how he takes care of his lesser creatures, he can make sure you've got food to eat and clothes to wear. So don't worry about these things, says Jesus. Your heavenly Father knows you need them. You just seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and leave the rest to God (Matthew 6:25-34).

Our worries would be understandable if we believed that everything in the universe happens by pure chance, that there's no plan for our lives, and that nobody's in charge. But if we believe that the entire universe is God's creation—if we really believe that God made it and that he continues to uphold and direct it, then it's time to stop worrying and start trusting.

We can trust God to care for our immediate needs, and we can also be confident also for the ultimate future. If you were an atheist, you might have a right to feel gloomy. If you believed that when you die, you're dead, and that's the end of you, there wouldn't be much room for hope. If you were convinced that humanity will eventually become extinct, that the earth will eventually be swallowed up by the sun, and that the entire solar system will collapse and leave no trace of life—if you were convinced that that's how it's all going to end, then I wouldn't blame you for feeling grim and grumpy and glum.

But if you believe in the Creator, the gloom has got to go. Despair has to give way to confidence. The Lord who originally created something out of nothing can also bring life out of death; indeed, Jesus Christ, the one through whom all things were created, has already risen from the dead, and by faith in him, you can have a splendid future. What's more, the entire creation will be set free from its bondage to sin and decay, and it will ultimately be renewed and transformed to be what the Creator wants it to be. When you're confident of all that, why be a pessimist. Death isn't our ultimate destiny; life is! The universe isn't doomed to ruin; it's destined for renewal! So stop moping and start hoping! Don't just say you believe the truth about creation; live it!

Creation living involves a powerful sense of confidence in God. It also involves an *attitude of gratitude*.

In one of the Bible's great songs about creation, Psalm 104, the writer says, "He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food

from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart" (v. 14-15). In another place, the Bible says, "He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy" (Acts 14:17). The Bible makes it clear that God didn't just get the universe going a long time ago. He's the one who supplies every good thing right now, and that calls for thankfulness on our part.

Unfortunately, though, it's possible to believe the correct theories about creation, and yet live as though we've earned everything we've got, as though we deserve all the credit for our prosperity and success. Instead of being grateful, we become arrogant. Maybe you've got an excellent mind, and you've done very well in the academic world. Well, before you become too proud of your brainpower, don't forget where it comes from. As the Lord asked Job, "Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind?" (Job 38:36)

Or maybe you started with very little, and over the years, you've become successful and prosperous. You've got a business, you've got money, you've got a great house, and you may think it's all due to your cleverness and hard work. But aren't you forgetting something? As the Bible puts it, "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth..." (Deuteronomy 8:17-18) In other words, you're not a self-made success. You didn't pull yourself up by your bootstraps. You wouldn't have any ability to produce wealth; you wouldn't have opportunities to make money, if your Creator hadn't given them to you.

If you believed only in the survival of the fittest, then I suppose that when you succeeded, you could congratulate yourself on making yourself one of the fittest. But if you and I believe in the Creator, then pride has got to go. There's only room for humble gratitude. We can only say, "Thank you" to our Creator for giving us so many good things.

And that brings us to a third way that creationist living affects our relationship to God: *a sense of wonder and praise*. Creation isn't just an academic theory. Creation is a present reality. It's a grand theater which displays God's glory, and we should be applauding.

Psalms 104 is a marvelous hymn about God's creation. It begins, "O Lord my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty" (v. 1). The inspired writer sees God's splendor in the dazzling brightness of the sun. He hears God's power in the deep roar of the thunder. He sees God's creativity and loving care in sky and clouds, in meadows and mountains, in wild donkeys and mountain goats and lions, in birds and fish. The writer is so full of awe and amazement he can hardly contain himself: "How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures" (v. 24). He ends by exclaiming, "May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works... I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live" (v. 31).

So don't just believe certain facts about creation. Experience the creation itself, and offer the Creator wonder and praise. As you look at the sky on a clear night, echo Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." When you're looking at a flower or watching a sunset or walking through a zoo

or driving through a park or wildlife preserve or hiking up a mountain or savoring an orange, it's a good time to praise the Creator and marvel at his greatness. God has birds to sing his praise, lions to roar his praise, elephants to trumpet his praise, breezes to whisper his praise, brooks to babble his praise, thunder to rumble his praise, but he also seeks praise from you and me, and he loves to hear it. When we have a living faith in the Creator, we do more than just nod our heads in agreement with a certain set of facts. We pay attention to what the Lord has made, and we praise him for it.

So far, we've seen how a living faith in creation affects our attitude toward God: it inspires confidence and gratitude and praise. Now, in the time we have left, let's see how it affects our relationship to people and to the rest of creation.

### **Relating to People**

The Bible teaches that every person is a creation of God, made in his image. If you and I believe this and live what we believe, it has a profound impact on how we relate to ourselves and to other people.

It changes the way you think about yourself. You may have a tendency to run yourself down. Maybe you think you're too ugly or too stupid or too clumsy or whatever. Maybe you feel worthless because of some disability. Well, before you run yourself down any more, don't forget who made you.

When God told Moses to lead his people, Moses said, "I'm not eloquent. I stumble and bumble when I talk. I'm slow of speech and tongue." And what did God say? He said, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" (Exodus 4:10-11)

When you degrade yourself and your abilities, you're also degrading the one who made you. The Bible says, "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker... Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?'" (Isaiah 45:9) God didn't make us all the same, he didn't give us all the same looks or the same abilities, but he did make each of us in his image, and he's given each of us characteristics and abilities that he expects us to make the most of, instead of complaining about what we don't have. Do you really believe God made you in his image? Then live like it!

And remember, you and I aren't the only ones who bear God's image. Every person we meet does too. And that must shape the way we treat them. Before we insult or curse other people, we need to realize that we'll be insulting their Maker as well. The book of James says, "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be" (James 3:9-10). The Creator takes insults to his image-bearers personally. Maybe that's why Jesus said in his great Sermon on the Mount that "anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matthew 5:22).

I suppose that if you thought people just evolved by accident from primeval slime, it might make sense to treat them like slime. But if you believe that people are made in God's image, you'd better treat them like royalty. This includes people of races and nations other than your own. I know people who are very strict and proper in their doctrines of how God created Adam and Eve; they're scrupulous about the most minute details of the biblical story, and yet they treat people from a different ethnic background

with contempt. What's the use of knowing the truth if you don't live it? What the using of saying people are made in God's image if you don't treat them that way?

If you believed that some races are more evolved than others and that only the fittest should survive, I can see why you might feel justified in despising and degrading and even destroying people who are different, but not if you believe in creation. According to the Bible, "From one man [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26). It's God who put us in different places; it's God who formed different races from the same original parents. And, in the words of the Bible, "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34-35). If we believe in a Creator who doesn't show favoritism, who accepts people from every nation, then that should be our attitude as well.

There's still another way our faith in creation affects the way we relate to others. It involves economics. In reading a major biography of Charles Darwin, I was struck again by the fact that Darwin's ideas about competition among various life forms and survival of the fittest didn't originate in his study of biological data. Darwin got his ideas from reading the economic theories of Thomas Malthus. Malthus favored the idea that people are always in competition for economic survival. Smart, capable, hard-working people are successful, and poor people are inferior. It's survival of the fittest. These economic ideas are what Darwin adapted and used in his biological theories.

The irony is that some people who reject Darwinist biology as anti-Christian and evil seem to be firm believers in survival of the fittest when it comes to economics. They're not satisfied to make a living; they want more and more, and they're eager to crush any competitor they can. If they run a business, they don't see their employees as people made in God's image, but only as units in an economic machine where you try to get the maximum amount of work out of them for the least amount of money. They respect those who are rich and successful, and treat the poor as inferior beings. It's done under the banners of "free enterprise," but it's social and economic Darwinism.

Now, it's okay to make a living, to do your best, to make a profit, and so forth. But if we see other people only in terms of survival of the fittest, and not as God's image-bearers, we have wandered far from creationist living. We can't measure someone's value in terms of financial success.

When you live the truth of creation, you realize that rich and poor have equal value in God's sight. In Proverbs 22:2, the Bible says, "Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all." Having money and power doesn't make you better than those with less. In fact, you need to be careful how you treat the poor, because God takes it personally. In Proverbs 14:31, the Bible says, "He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Proverbs 14:31). And Proverbs 19:17 says, "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done" (Proverbs 19:17).

So don't settle for just believing the doctrinal truth about people being made in God's image. Live that truth. Respect God's image in yourself and others. Regard people of other nationalities as equals. Treat your employees fairly. Realize that your business competitors are more than just rivals to be crushed. And show kindness to the

poor, knowing that God is the Maker of all. That's all part of creationist living in relation to people.

### **Relating to the Earth**

In addition to shaping how we relate to God and to people, creationist living also shapes how we relate to the world around us. Some people talk about earth as a living and divine entity, as a goddess called Gaia or Mother Earth. But it's wrong to worship the earth if God made it. We should worship the Maker, not something he made. Likewise, it's foolish to rely on astrology or to read horoscopes as though the stars control our destiny. God made the stars. God controls our destiny; the stars don't. Creationist living rejects every form of nature worship.

Still, although creation isn't a goddess or a god, it does belong to God, so we can't treat it just any way we please. The Bible says, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). This is God's creation and God's property, and so we must treat it with respect. God values all his animals, even the smallest bird, and that means we must treat animals with care. We can eat meat or use animal products in order to live, but there's no place for cruelty or needless destruction of animals.

When we live the truth of creation, we will treat this earth with care. The Bible teaches us to think of the earth as a garden. One kind of garden is the sort that produces food: a fruit or vegetable garden. And certainly the earth is a garden in that sense. We depend on the earth's resources to sustain our very lives. We can't damage water, soil, and air without damaging ourselves. So we'd better take very good care of this garden we live in, since it is God's way of providing for our physical needs.

The earth is a garden also in another sense. Some people enjoy having a flower garden. They don't eat from it; they maintain it simply for its beauty. They enjoy the bright colors and the lovely scent of the flowers. Likewise, some parts of creation don't produce much food or have much economic value. They're just beautiful displays of God's creativity, made for his delight and ours. God created the earth not only to produce food, but also to display beauty.

If you've got accurate beliefs about how God made the world, but then toss garbage out the window when you're driving down the road, what good are your beliefs? What does the Creator think? You and I have no right to deface or vandalize the beauty of what he's made. In creationist living, we care for the earth like we're gardeners. For our own survival, we try to keep the earth productive and useful. We also seek to maintain its beauty.

So how about it? The opinion polls say that most of us believe in creation. But are we *living* the truth about creation? I know I've fallen short, and I suspect you have too. We've sinned against God, against people, and against the rest of creation. We need to be forgiven, and we need to change. We need the blood of Jesus to wash away our sins, and we need God's Holy Spirit to help us, not simply to know the truth about creation, but to make creationist living a reality in our everyday attitudes and actions.

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