

THE USE OF STUDYING CREATION

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In the first chapter of *True Christian Religion*, on God the Creator and Creation, it is said that a detailed description of how the world was created "does not properly belong to a system of theology, which is the subject of this book" (TCR 75e), and a sketch of the creation process is then given in a series of Memorabilia. The meaning of the statement is evidently this: that the universe *was* created by God is a theological truth, but *how* it was created by Him does not belong to theology as the Writings define it, namely, "the universal doctrine of the salvation of man" (AR 133). God, charity and faith are the essentials on which theology is founded; and the process of Divine creation, apart from the fact, has nothing to do with these.

Yet in the world of science we find the opinion that how the world was created and preserved is a metaphysical rather than a scientific problem and an admission that an increase in data for interpretation complicates rather than solves the scientific problems involved. If the subject of creation does not properly belong to either theology or science, where does it belong? Obviously in the realm of philosophy. But if the inquiry is to be fruitful it must surely be made in the realm of New Church philosophy: a philosophy which finds its primary sources in the Writings, and its secondary sources in the preparatory works of Swedenborg, who, while he was being prepared through the writing of them, had not yet been intromitted into the spiritual world, and was therefore going as far as human logic and reason can go. Such philosophy is, we submit, the proper concern of this body and of those who would advance it.

Without a revealed Divine doctrine, creation can never be understood. The scriptural statement is, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and it must be taken as a whole if a complete idea is to be formed—God, the spiritual world and the natural world. The Lord's creation is one, not two. It is organic—internally spiritual, externally natural; and these two are distinctly one—discrete from one another, distinguishable in idea, but inseparable. The most complete idea possible to man is that of the spiritual sun, within which is the Lord, as the sphere of ends; the spiritual world as the realm of causes; and the natural

world as the plane of effects. These three must be considered together, and the knowledge which makes this possible comes only from Divine revelation.

But what is the use of studying creation? We are taught that the first thing of the church is to know that there is a God and that He is to be worshiped, and that the first quality of God to be known is that He has created the universe and that the universe subsists from Him (AC 6879). If it is objected that this is a religious rather than a philosophic answer, we would reply that this knowledge is the basis of all intelligence and wisdom and therefore of all sound thinking in matters of philosophy. The universe did not come forth out of nothing. Nor was it fashioned out of matter co-eternal with God and resistant or reactive to the impress of His creative hand. By finiting His infinity God created the universe out of His own Divine substance; and that He did so is the primary truth about His quality, because in it all other truths are involved and from it all other truths flow when it has been received. It is, therefore, the starting point of all thinking.

The knowledge that God created the spiritual and natural worlds makes possible a finite understanding of the Divine Esse and Existere—the Divine love and wisdom—as substance and form itself. The knowledge of why He created the universe opens to us an understanding of the essence of the Divine love; and a belief that these two worlds are His creations leads to a unified concept of the universe as a complex of organic forms, created by, in, and for use. But these knowledges must be infilled by a rational understanding of how God created the universe; one which will lead to an informed perception that the two worlds subsist from Him. Therefore we are given in the Writings a doctrine of creation, and it is important that we should try to understand something of it—of that ordered body of truths which explains the universe and our place within it.

This is essential. To know the Lord as Creator is to know Him in one idea as Creator of heaven and earth. The Lord as the First created all the spiritual and natural degrees of finition down to ultimates, and from ultimates He then created, and still creates, intermediates—the regenerate mind and the angelic heaven. This is spiritual creation, and it gives meaning and purpose to the Lord's natural creation, for in it His end in creating is achieved. And it is necessary that we should know the Lord as Creator of

heaven as well as of earth, as the Creator of the regenerate mind—the Former and Sustainer of the new life He wills to give to all men.

Therefore we are given in the Writings a doctrine of spiritual as well as natural creation, a doctrine of regeneration; and as we study them we find that while the two creations are distinct from one another, while they differ in use and are to be considered separately, yet inwardly they have the same purpose. There are truths and principles common to both. Each study may shed light on the other, and because of the correspondence between the two creations, conclusions may be drawn from what is seen in the one about what is hidden in the other.

It is the same God who created and preserves the universe and who forms and sustains the regenerate mind, and the supreme reason we should study creation is that the teaching given about it demonstrates philosophically what the doctrinal parts of the Writings teach theologically, that God is one and is Divine Man. To the elucidation of this truth, among others, Dr. Odhner's many-sided but unified scholarship has been devoted; to continue his studies is one of the many challenges presented to this Association.