BULLETIN OF
ECCLESIAL THEOLOGY
God has spoken. Therefore there is a world. God is one and unchangeably the same. Therefore his Word and his world cohere. Because we live as sinners in a world scarred by the Fall, the truths of God’s world, and their relationship to the truths of his Word, are often far from clear to us. And yet, because the Father made the world by his Word and Spirit, he loves it. And so, in their saving missions, he has pledged to redeem it. Moreover, by those same missions God has shed abroad the knowledge of his truth to his redeemed people.

Together these convictions underwrite an evangelical concern for a right understanding of the relationship between Biblical teaching and created reality. They also indicate the need for pastors to think carefully and prayerfully about these issues. It is to this end that this latest edition of the *Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology* is offered.

As with earlier editions, the articles originated as papers presented at the Center for Pastor Theologians’ three annual Fellowship Symposia. The 2016 Symposia were funded by a generous grant from the Templeton Foundation and focused on the relationship of Christianity and science. We are grateful to the various scholars who acted as guest consultants: Robert Bishop, John and Madeleine McIntyre Endowed Professor of Philosophy and History of Science at Wheaton College; Michael Murray, Senior Vice President of the John Templeton Foundation; Jeff Schloss, T.B. Walker Chair of Natural and Behavioral Sciences and Director of the Center for Faith, Ethics & Life Sciences; Ted Davis, Professor of the History of Science, Messiah College; and Robin Collins, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, Messiah College.

The articles build out from this focus on Christianity and science to consider various theological and pastoral aspects of scientific endeavor and also to explore Biblical, doctrinal, and ethical matters more broadly as they arise from and lead to engagement with God’s creation. The articles offer a variety of perspectives and approaches, but with a common commitment to thinking evangelically about the relationship between God’s Word and his world.

Beginning with a focus on Biblical studies, Jim Samra (First Fellowship) considers the pastoral implications of what Hebrews means by saying that creation is known by faith. Dillon Thornton (Third
Fellowship) offers an exegetical study of 1 Timothy 4:1-5 as a remedy for Christian cosmological dualism. David Rudolph (First Fellowship) examines the Jewish calendar as a Biblical example of the relationship of science and faith and asks what implications it might have for the church’s relationship with the Jewish people. In a group of more doctrinally oriented articles, Chris Bruno (Second Fellowship) explores an evangelical theology of new creation to see how it might inform scientific engagement with creation. Gary Shultz (Second Fellowship) considers the cosmic aspects of the atonement to ask what light the heart of the Christian faith sheds on the relationship between faith and science. Gerald Hiestand (CPT Director) expounds Irenaeus of Lyons’ account of the Devil in relation to his cosmology to challenge the more common “Miltonian” reading of the Fall narrative and to reorient our reading of Scripture in a more earth-affirming direction.

The sheer range and complexity of the issues that arise from scientific and technological exploration can be overwhelming. Thankfully, pastors are not called to become experts in these matters. We are not responsible to our scientific age. We are responsible to God, as ministers of his Word. However, we are to be responsible in the world in which God has placed us, for the sake of his name and for the good of his people. This edition of BET attempts such responsible stewardship. It does not pretend to approximate the breadth of reflection needed. Instead, in keeping with the CPT’s mission to provide theological reflection from the church for the church, it offers a snapshot of what thoughtful evangelical engagement with God’s creation might look like, as a stimulus to ongoing prayerful reflection on these and other topics.

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FAITH AS AN EPISTEMOLOGY: HEBREWS 11:3 AND THE ORIGINS OF LIFE

JIM SAMRA

As a pastor I am regularly asked to help people in my congregation think through the religion-science debate, especially when it comes to the origins of life, which tends to be ground zero in the larger discussion. Usually with such questions I am being asked what I think, or what they should think, or what I think of what someone else thinks. Recently in preaching through the book of Hebrews I came to a well-known verse that hit me afresh because it changed the discussion on the origins of life from “what” to “how.” This shift from metaphysics to epistemology opened up new avenues for me to personally think through how we know what we know about the origins of life. It allowed me to give guidance to my congregation on these issues and most importantly to see our epistemology with regard to the origins of life as an integral part of fixing our eyes on Jesus in all areas of life.

Hebrews 11:3 states, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen is not made out of what was visible.”

This verse jumped out at me for three reasons. First, it is an assertion about epistemology more than it is about metaphysics. Most Scriptural statements that refer to creation focus on what we know, including the following examples: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3), and “… God, who created all things” (Ephesians 3:9). But the emphasis in Hebrews 11:3 is that we know God created the world “by faith,” the term being emphatically fronted in the verse.

Second, the placement and form of Hebrews 11:3 is surprising in the context of the larger chapter. After defining faith in verse 1, the author comments that faith is what the ancients were commended for in verse 2. What one would expect at that point is a list of ancients who exercised faith and the results that they achieved through faith—precisely what comes in verses 4-38. But Hebrews 11:3 starts not with the ancients but with us. Furthermore, it doesn’t follow the standard format of “by

1 Jim Samra is the Senior Pastor at Calvary Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
3 Scripture quotations in this chapter are taken from the New International Version.
faith so-and-so did something.” Instead it says, “by faith we understand.” Likewise, faith in Hebrews 11:3 is not forward-looking as it is in the rest of the chapter. It is not “by faith” we will someday come to know that God created the world, but that we do know this now. Given its placement between defining faith (vv. 1-2) and demonstrating faith (vv. 4-38), the best way to take 11:3 is as a transitional verse between the two sections showing how faith works.

Third, the verse is not an exhortation. It is a statement of fact. We are not encouraged to know that God created the world by faith—as if there were an alternative. Knowing “by faith” that God created the world is so fundamental that the author of Hebrews uses it to prepare the reader for what is coming. We can begin to understand how Abraham knew by faith that God would raise Isaac from the dead because we are already exercising that kind of faith in knowing that God created the world. This in turn prepares the reader to know by faith how to endure the cross that we have been asked to bear or to say with confidence that the Lord is our helper even when it doesn’t appear on the surface to be the case.

Because of this important verse, this paper proposes to use Hebrews 11:3 as a doorway to think through faith as an epistemology specifically in regard to the issue of the origin of life, but more broadly with regard to the hiddenness of God in general.4

I should be quick to confess that as a pastor with a background in Biblical studies, I felt more at home with questions of exegesis and Biblical theology, but this study encroached on philosophical issues such as natural theology and warranted belief for which I felt hopelessly lost. As a result I have chosen the Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga as a guide to help provide insights from the world of philosophy to illuminate the study.5

WHAT IS FAITH?

Faith in the book of Hebrews is a way of seeing what cannot be seen with human eyes alone.6 Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is “the proof (ἔλεγχος) of what is not seen” (HCSB). The word translated here as “proof” indicates “the evidence, normally based on argument or discussion, as to the truth or reality of something—‘proof, verification, evidence for.’”7 In Hebrews 11:7 Noah is warned by faith “about things not yet seen,” meaning that he came to know that a flood was coming, but not through

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4 Much of what is being proposed here fits with what Karl Barth has written in Church Dogmatics III/1: The Doctrine of Creation (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 3-41 where he begins by discussing Hebrews 11:3.

5 Plantinga has not only written extensively on faith but also specifically on the issue of faith and science, most recently in Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion and Naturalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and in debate with Daniel Dennett in Science and Religion: Are They Compatible? (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

6 Such a view of faith is consistent with other Scriptures (e.g., 2 Kings 6:8-23; John 9; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:7-9).

7 “ἔλεγχος” in Louw and Nida. The more subjective ideas of “assurance” (NIV) or even “conviction” (ESV) are the result of the objective nature of this word.
human observation or logical deduction. God revealed it to him. Hebrews 11:13 says, “All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance” (emphasis added). By faith Moses chose Christ over Egypt because he was “looking ahead” to his reward and because “he saw him who is invisible” (11:26-27). Faith is the ability to see things like the future that cannot be seen using human eyes. The paramount example of this is Jesus who was able to see through the shame of the cross to the joy that was set before him (12:2). This is why he is “the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

But all this language about “seeing” shouldn’t blind us to the fact that what is in mind is the whole range of human knowing. After all, by faith Abraham “reasoned” that God could raise Isaac from the dead (vv. 17-19), meaning that he chose to believe something that was not logical and for which he did not have a historical precedent.

This fits with the model of how faith works presented by Alvin Plantinga in Knowledge and Christian Belief. Merging and extending the contributions of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin, Plantinga argues that faith is “an epistemic or cognitive state or activity.” It functions like memory, perception, reason, testimony, sympathy, and our other cognitive facilities as a means of receiving beliefs. Simply put, we can receive beliefs through our senses, through what others testify to us as being true, through what we remember happening, etc. or through faith. Faith is one way of knowing among many.

HOW DOES FAITH BECOME KNOWLEDGE?

Hebrews 11:3 says, “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command” (emphasis added). The word for “understand” (νοέω) belongs to the semantic field of knowledge. Faith is the means by which Christians come to know that God created the world. But how does faith become knowledge?

According to Plantinga’s model, beliefs that are received by faith come when God reveals a message to us and we become convinced that this message is true through the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. One of Plantinga’s great contributions to philosophy has been to show that such beliefs that come to us this way are properly basic with respect to warrant. What this means is that beliefs that come to us by faith do not have to be combined with things that come to us through our senses, memory, logic, etc. They can be, but faith in and of itself is a way of coming to know something.

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8 Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. Knowledge and Christian Belief is the shorter and more user-friendly version of Warranted Christian Belief. It provides a useful doorway into Plantinga’s philosophy.
9 Plantinga, Knowledge, 58.
10 For Plantinga, beliefs received through faith are more than just cognitive. They are also affective—that is, they are “sealed on the heart”—but the point for us here is that they are not less than cognitive.
This affirms what Hebrews is saying: faith is a means of knowing. But Hebrews seems to be saying more than this with regard to the origins of life. It is saying that faith is the means of knowing that God created the world. This is more controversial because it touches on the notion of natural theology and the role of logic and scientific evidence in the establishment of knowledge about origins of life. We will return to these, but first more on Hebrews 11:3.

WHAT MAKES SOMETHING A CANDIDATE FOR FAITH?

Contextually, Hebrews is emphasizing that in order for something to be a candidate for faith, it cannot be seen some other way. Faith has as its object things that “we do not see” (11:1). If something can be seen, there is no need for faith.11 This is explicit in Hebrews 11 with a number of the exemplars: Noah was warned about “things not yet seen.” Abraham went to the Promised Land, “even though he did not know where he was going.” Sarah was able to bear children even though she was past childbearing age. Abraham was about to sacrifice his one and only son Isaac “even though God had said to him, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’” Moses persevered “because he saw him who is invisible.” In other words, if it made perfect sense to Moses that Egypt was a declining empire and Israel was a rising one, the truth that he belonged with the Israelites would have been made by wisdom and not “by faith.” In each case the author of Hebrews is going out of his way to show that knowledge was not available to these people by other means. What is explicit with Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Moses is implicit in the remaining stories mentioned in Hebrews 11.

Plantinga leaves open the possibility that something that is known by faith could also be known on the basis of reason12—he posits that this is possible with Jesus’ resurrection, for example—but “there are many of the deliverances of faith such that it is at least plausible to think that they cannot be known by way of reason.”13

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11 Romans 8:24-25 is similar, but Paul uses “hope” there. The Gospel of John seems to come at seeing and believing slightly differently in that seeing can be a pathway to believing (e.g., John 20:29), but even still “seeing” only moves someone so far and then belief is necessary.

12 “In the model, the beliefs constituting faith are typically taken as basic; that is, they are not accepted by way of argument from other propositions or on the evidential basis of other propositions in this way, though perhaps some believers do in fact reason this way” (Knowledge, 60). He goes on to note that if knowledge came by way of something other than faith, it would fall short of the “conviction” and “deep-rooted assurance” that faith provides and so be something less than warranted knowledge. This hedging may be in response to criticism from those like James Beilby, “Plantinga’s Model of Warranted Christian Belief,” in Alvin Plantinga, ed. Deane-Peter Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 125-65, 147-51.

13 Alvin Plantinga, Where the Conflict Really Lies, 179. Compare this with Barth who says, “Our first emphasis is on this final point that the doctrine of the creation not less than the whole remaining content of Christian confession is an article of faith, i.e., the rendering of a knowledge which no man has procured for himself or ever will; which is neither native
But here we should point out a potential conflict with Plantinga’s model. Plantinga follows Calvin in arguing that all humans have a *sensus divinitatis*—a sense of the divine—placed there by God. The *sensus divinitatis* is a belief-producing faculty that, seemingly apart from faith, can create knowledge of God as creator—not of the great truths of the gospel, but only of God’s existence and possibly his role as creator. At times Plantinga appears to say that knowledge of God as creator does not come by faith but through the *sensus divinitatis*. But the conflict may be more imagined than real since in the model the *sensus divinitatis* creates knowledge the same way that faith does, which continues to make his model a useful heuristic device for understanding Hebrews 11:3. It seems to me that for the Christian, faith takes over the role of the *sensus divinitatis* so that the Christian to whom God reveals in the Scriptures that he created all things knows this by faith.

So in my reading of Hebrews 11:3, God creating the world is in the category of deliverances that do not come to us through reason but only through faith.15

Further support for this reading of Hebrews 11:3 is found in the remainder of the verse: “the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible.”16 The relationship of the two clauses in the second half of the verse is important. At first glance it may appear that Christians believe that the universe was formed at God’s command and what is seen was not made out of what is visible. But the second clause actually gives the purpose of God choosing to create the world using a command.17 God used a command to create the world because he wanted what is visible to be made out of what is invisible. Or to translate it more woodenly so as to see the emphasis: “so that not out of what is visible the things which are seen might come to be.” By using the

to him nor accessible by way of observation and logical thinking; for which he has no organ and no ability; which he can in fact achieve only in faith” (Barth, CD III/1, 3).

14 It seems that his rationale for doing this is the need to account for theistic belief in a Muslim, say, without attributing this to faith. But Hebrews (and this paper) are concerned with how a Christian knows that God created the world.

15 Ernst Käsemann, as usual, says it quite strongly: “Just as creation occurred through the Word, and in it the will of God that shapes all things came to light ‘that we may not remain with the visible,’ so also creation is not recognized with the eye but with faith (cf. 11:3), as conversely *pistis* [faith] on principle has nothing to do with the world of appearance…there is no human leap or possibility of appropriation by the senses leading from one to the other. With πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων [proof of what we do not see] in 11:1, an insurmountable barrier is erected between faith and the possibilities of this aeon.” Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 40.

16 On the exegesis of this verse, see Peter T. O’Brien, *Hebrews*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 402. O’Brien highlights the chiasm in the verse so that the first phrase, “the universe was formed at God’s command,” and the second phrase are parallel. In other words, “so that what is seen [i.e., the universe] was not made [i.e., formed] out of what is visible [i.e. at God’s command].”

17 ἐὰν τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι could be taken as result, which does not substantially change the interpretation offered here, but ἐὰν τὸ plus the infinitive in Hebrews usually indicates purpose (2:17; 8:3; 9:14, 28; 12:10; 13:21) except in 7:25 where it is causal.
awkward wording of “not visible” as opposed to “invisible” (as in 11:27) and by fronting this awkward expression, the author is emphatically declaring God’s intent. He did not want the world made using something visible. Why not? To hide the act of creating from human eyes.

THE HIDDENNESS OF GOD AND THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

God himself is invisible, hidden from our eyes (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:12). This means more than just that he we cannot visually see him. It means that he cannot be known through human wisdom (1 Cor. 1:21).18

In conjunction with this, there are things that God consciously chooses to hide from humanity. This is a pervasive theme throughout the Scriptures (e.g., Deut. 29:29; Dan. 2:22; Matt. 11:25; Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Cor. 3:13; Col. 1:26). These hidden things, like God himself, are inaccessible, especially to “the wise and the learned” (Matt. 11:25).

By creating the world using something invisible, i.e., his word, God purposed to keep the origins of life hidden. This can perhaps be visualized using the story of Jesus turning the water to wine in John 2:1-10. In that story Jesus turns water into wine “invisibly.”19 As a result the master of the banquet has no idea that Jesus created the wine miraculously. And there would be no way for him to figure that out. When he tastes the wine, he is convinced that it has aged naturally. It would be impossible for him to know the actual age of the wine. Its origins are hidden from him by the way in which Jesus has chosen to create this wine. Likewise, when God created the word by his invisible command, this hid the origin of the world, its age, etc.

To continue the illustration, the fact that Jesus turned the water into wine is not hidden from the servants who performed the service because Jesus chooses to reveal it to them. Which leads to the important point: because of the hiddenness of God, the only way for humans to know God and that which God has hidden is for God to choose to reveal such things (e.g., Deut. 29:29).20

But revelation alone is not enough. Faith is required to process the revelation.21 The prime negative example in Hebrews is the wilderness generation: “the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed” (4:2). This is why “without

18 John 14:7 shows the connection between “seeing” God and “knowing” God. Cf. John 14:17.
19 John seems to be highlighting just how invisible it was since the miracle is “buried within a participle” in verse 9. J. Ramsey Michaels, John, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 151.
20 See further Marcus Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
21 Consider Karl Barth’s statement, “Revelation occurs for faith, not for unbelief. God exposes Himself, so to speak, to the danger that man will know the work and sign but not Himself through the medium of the work and sign. A complete non-recognition of the Lord who has instituted and used the medium is possible” (Barth, CD II/1, 55).
faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6); faith is the mechanism for processing revelations from God.

Plantinga’s model says something similar. First, God reveals himself (primarily through the Scriptures). Second, God provides the Holy Spirit who takes this revelation and produces faith, and through this faith the revelation of God becomes cognitive and affective knowledge. For Plantinga,

…faith may have the phenomenology that goes with suddenly seeing something to be true: “Right! Now I see that this is indeed true and what the Lord is teaching!” Or perhaps the conviction arises slowly, and only after long and hard study, thought, discussion, prayer. Or perhaps it is a matter of a belief’s having been there all along (from childhood perhaps), but now being transformed, renewed, intensified, made vivid and alive. This process can go on in a thousand ways; but in each case there is a presentation or proposal of central Christian teaching, and by way of response, the phenomenon of being convinced, coming to see, forming a conviction.22

These beliefs constituting faith are properly basic, meaning that they do not come through an investigation of rational arguments or a sifting of scientific evidence or processing arguments from other propositions.

To recap so far: God chose to create the visible world using invisible means for the purpose of hiding the origins of life from human wisdom so that he could reveal it to us so that it would be known by faith and not by logic, philosophy, science, or any other way. Alvin Plantinga’s model of warranted Christian belief provides a model that explains how faith can work in just such a way so that knowledge that comes by faith does not depend on perception, logic, science, etc. for its formation or justification.

Before I draw implications from this, two questions need to be addressed. (1) How does Romans 1 fit into this, and (2) if we know that God created “by faith,” is there any role left for science, reason, logic, etc. (or what role does natural theology play) in our understanding of God as creator?

ROMANS 1 AND THE PARABLE OF CREATION

Romans 1:18–20 says, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

This much-discussed text seems to say that creation reveals God’s invisible qualities so that all humans can know that God created the world. Without attempting to unravel all of the mysteries of this text a couple of comments are necessary:

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22 Plantinga, Knowledge, 61.
(1) Romans 1 is effectively saying that God uses nature to reveal something about himself as creator. This fits with Psalm 19, the other passage so often used with regard to natural theology. It also fits with Hebrews in the sense that it is saying that this revelation is not enough because without faith it is of no value. That is Paul’s point in 1:16-17. It cannot be accidental that both Romans 1:18 and following and Hebrews 11 are launched using the same quote from Habakkuk 2:4 about the righteous living by faith (Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38). Romans 1 shows how this revelation from God does the same thing to humanity in general that happened specifically to Israel in Hebrews 3-4. Because the message from God was not combined with faith, it resulted in disobedience. That disobedience condemns people and prohibits them from entering God’s eternal rest.

(2) Romans 1 is not spelling out an apologetic process whereby people through the study of science gradually come to a position of understanding that God created the world. In fact, Romans 1 seems to argue in the opposite direction: the more people attempt to reason their way to God apart from faith, the more they will be led away from the truth. When Jesus says that God has hidden these things from the wise but revealed them to little children (Matt. 11:25), the same truth is manifested. God has revealed to all humans something about himself through creation, but the more that humans attempt to be wise and gain understanding apart from faith, the more likely it is that they will be led away from what God is revealing in creation. This is comparable to Romans 11 where God speaks about those who “persist in unbelief” (v. 23) as those to whom God gave “a spirit of stupor; eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear” (v. 7).

(3) What God wants known by faith about creation is absolutely impossible to know via science, philosophy, etc.—namely, that God created all things through his Son. Hebrews 11:3 cannot be divorced from Hebrews 1:1-2, which state that God has spoken by his Son “though whom also he made the universe.” This is consistent with what Paul does in Acts 17 when he ties God as creator of all things to the message of Jesus now being

23 See Morna Hooker, From Adam to Christ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 76.

24 Likewise in 2 Thess. 2:11-12 God will send “a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth.” Here God is actively blinding those who are in rebellion so that they cannot see.

25 Plantinga points out that all one could possibly know from creation is that the universe is designed. You can’t know that there is only one designer (many things in our world are designed by groups of people), that this person is morally good (because of the presence of evil), that he is spirit, etc. God and Other Minds (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), 95-111.
proclaimed.26 God’s revelation in Jesus and God’s revelation in creation are part of one message, and the whole message must be received by faith.

In this way, then, creation is like one of Jesus’ parables. Not in the sense that it is a made-up story, but in the sense that Jesus spoke in parables to keep hidden the things that God wanted kept hidden even while proclaiming them clearly (Matt. 13:13-15). Jesus consciously chose a literary form that was designed to accomplish this. Is it strange that God would choose a way of creating the world out of nothing that was designed to accomplish the same purpose? Isn’t this what Paul means when he says God in his wisdom made it impossible for the world to know him through the wisdom of this world (1 Cor. 1:21)?

Just like parables, creation is designed to showcase the spiritual state of listeners and to continue them on the path that they are on. “Whoever has will be given more. …Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them” (Matt. 13:12).27

WHAT ROLE IS LEFT FOR “SIGHT” (OR WHAT ROLE DOES NATURAL THEOLOGY PLAY)?

If we accept that to believe that God created the world “by faith” is to believe based on revelation from the Holy Spirit and not based on rational arguments or evidential reasoning, does that mean that there is no role for scientific investigation or philosophical reasoning (which is often referred to as natural theology)? In Plantinga’s model, there can still be a role for such things, namely, that faith can be affected by arguments, whether positively or negatively. Evidence that comes from the natural world apart from the inspiration of the Spirit can negatively or positively affect how much confidence (or warrant) Christians have for their beliefs.28

26 Bock comments on Acts 17, “God will not be discovered through nature alone, even though nature does at least show us that God is not like humanity (vv. 28-29). One must come to grips with God’s revelation, as Paul will emphasize in verses 30-31.” Darrell Bock, Acts, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 567.

27 For example, consider the statement from theoretical physicist Lawrence Krauss: “By the same token, while much of the beauty of the animal kingdom may look on the surface like pure genius of design, there are manifest examples that should lead one to question this notion, beyond the simple fact that evolution provides a perfectly natural mechanism for living organisms to have the appearance of design.” Krauss thinks that evolution falsely gives the appearance of design. In the same book Plantinga argues that God’s causation in creation could give the appearance of being random to us. The fact that these two people who are earnestly investigating the origins of life using science and philosophy have come to such strongly held mutually exclusive beliefs is a result of how God chose to create the visible world—so that it is accessible only by faith. Lawrence M. Krauss, “Religion vs. Science?,” 146 and Alvin Plantinga, “Science and Religion: Why Does the Debate Continue,” 117 in The Religion and Science Debate: Why Does It Continue? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Hebrews itself doesn’t comment on doubts that might arise from the findings of Darwinian scientists, but it certainly does deal with the issue of Christians in danger of “throwing away their confidence” (Heb. 10:35). So clearly there are things that come from believers’ perceptions of life, for example, that cause us to lose confidence in what we believe. But the response of the author of Hebrews is not so much to offer observations from science or philosophy or logic to bolster their faith. Instead the goal of Hebrews is to present revelation from God to reestablish or confirm their faith. After all, the book begins with a statement of God revealing himself in the past through the prophets and now through Jesus (1:1–2). The rest of Hebrews is an expounding and explanation of that revelation that has come through the Old Testament and through Jesus.

IMPLICATIONS

So what are the implications if we accept that Hebrews 11:3 is stating that knowledge of God as creator comes by faith and not by science, philosophy, etc.?

First, people come to understand that God created the world as a result of the Holy Spirit’s providing and processing this truth especially as revealed through Scripture. Coming to know that God created the world is not the result of sifting through various scientific accounts of the origins of life, weighing evidence, or meditating on various philosophical arguments for the existence of God. It is revealed to our hearts by the Spirit, and through faith he causes us to know that God created the world. The danger comes when people think their knowledge of God as creator is based on there being enough evidence. As a result, when science or philosophy calls into question that evidence, people feel it is only rational to give up their belief or to hold it more loosely. People who have been taught that we believe God created the world because creation shows the evidence of design find that belief shaken when science calls the evidence into question. To paraphrase Galatians 3, did we receive the Spirit by the findings of science or by believing what we heard? Are we so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are we now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Paul wants people to truly understand how they got the Spirit—by faith engendered by what they heard and not by means of the flesh—because if they do they will be more likely to continue by faith and not by the means of the flesh. Importantly, when we help people grasp how we came to understand that God created the world, we help them understand how the gospel works and how to keep believing.

Second, as a corollary, the solution to doubts (or defeaters) about God as creator is not primarily better scientific, philosophical, or apologetic arguments. I say primarily because there is a place for such arguments in helping Christians who are wrestling with doubts that have arisen due to reason. I personally found it very helpful to read Alvin Plantinga’s philosophical arguments alongside those of Daniel Dennett when

“Natural Theology” and James Beilby, “Plantinga’s Model of Warranted Christian Belief” in Alvin Plantinga were very helpful for understanding Plantinga’s view of natural theology.
thinking about faith and science. But if we know by faith that God created the world and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, central place must be given to God’s revelation through Scripture. Seeing the power and love of God revealed in the Word even apart from those passages that specifically address creation strengthens our faith in God as creator.

Third, if God has hidden the fact that he created the world, we should not expect that scientists or philosophers are going to figure out how the world was created. Part of the reason I believe that Jesus pointed out that God has hidden the truths of himself from the teachers of the Law was so that people would not look to the teachers of the Law. Christians today are led astray by teachers of the laws of nature because they don’t realize that God has hidden truth from these teachers. This does not mean that nothing good can come from scientists and philosophers. On the contrary, Jesus agreed with many of the things the teachers of the Law taught. But they didn’t understand the spirit of what was going on and couldn’t see how it all fit together.

Fourth, as a corollary to the third point, simply calling oneself a Christian scientist or philosopher does not completely eliminate the problem of God’s choosing to hide the origins of life. The faith that Hebrews 11:3 is talking about is not just saving faith. Each of us needs to continue to grow in our faith more and more (2 Thess. 1:3), which implies that some Christians are strong in their faith and some are weak (Rom. 15:1). Hebrews 11:3 is connected to those examples in verses 4-38 who were strong in their faith—Abraham, Moses, David, etc. Likewise it is possible for a Christian scientist to espouse intelligent design, for example, out of a position of weak faith because he feels it is necessary for God to give irrefutable evidence of his presence in creation. In the same way, it is possible for a Christian scientist to deny a historical Adam, for example, out of a position of weak faith because he can’t see how God might have intervened in an evolutionary process to create a man and a woman from whom the whole human race is descended despite the genetic data currently available and the generally accepted hypotheses of how to read that data. Hebrews 11:3 reminds us that it is important to recognize how someone arrived at the position they hold. Simply being a Christian does not eliminate the problem of God’s hiding creation.

Fifth, and much more broadly, what we see in how faith works with regard to creation helps make clear what it means to live by faith. Living by faith means that many things in our journeys of faith are hidden from us by God: Why did my child get sick? Why didn’t all of the money come in that I needed? Why can I not escape this depression? Why won’t God answer my prayer? God chooses to hide things from us when we attempt to use human wisdom and experience to make sense of our lives so that he can reveal them to us and therefore create faith.

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29 Plantinga and Dennett, Science and Religion.

30 I might also imagine that time in nature (which is different than time in a lab studying nature) could contribute to strengthening a Christian’s faith that God is creator since God’s glory is revealed in nature.
Consider the example of Abraham’s sacrificing Isaac. God hides from Abraham how the whole situation is going to resolve itself. Why? So Abraham can exercise faith. Where did he get that faith? In Genesis 15 when God revealed to him that through Isaac the blessing would come, this revelation created faith strong enough to help him endure the testing of Genesis 22. Additionally, in Genesis 22 when God reveals his plan to save Isaac once Abraham is at the top of the mountain, this revelation strengthens Abraham’s faith that God will provide and that through Isaac he will be the father of many nations. If God had not hidden himself on Abraham’s journey up the mountain, there would have been no need or opportunity for faith.

Hebrews 10:35-39 talks about not throwing away our confidence, needing to persevere, and not shrinking back. The point is that much will happen that makes it appear that we should throw away our confidence, quit, and shrink back. With regard to the origins of life: science does not seem to support that God created the world, there are not widely agreed upon philosophical arguments for the existence of God, and the intellectual world does not offer a nurturing environment for knowing that God created the world. But this is why Christians need to be exhorted not to throw away their confidence, to persevere, and to not shrink back.

While working on this paper I was reading the book *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected* by Nik Ripken. In it he tells his story of working as part of a team of Christians in Somaliland doing relief efforts. During six grueling years no one came to faith; there were millions of people that they couldn’t help; they saw unspeakable atrocities; many of the people whose lives they saved through relief efforts probably died soon after; and Nik’s sixteen-year-old son died while there. To live by faith means that there are not logical, philosophical, or scientific ways to make sense of what is going on. It can only be seen by faith. Believing God created the world despite the fact that it may not appear that way is the same as believing God is good in suffering and still in control. The way Ripken’s faith is resurrected is not through someone presenting reasonable arguments for theodicy, but through God’s revealing himself to him.

As we grow in our faith more and more (2 Thess. 1:3) through the persecutions, trials, and sufferings of this life, we will be better able to see issues surrounding the origins of life by faith because Hebrews 11 is emphasizing that faith in God as creator of the world is linked to faith in living life in his world.

Finally, recognizing that we know “by faith” that God created the world illuminates Hebrews most important command: “fix your eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (12:2). We normally refer to Jesus as the object of our faith—which he is—but in Hebrews he is also the example of faith. In other words, Jesus did not know everything by sight. He, too, had to put his trust in God the Father (Heb. 2:13; cf. 1 Pet. 2:23). In the face of God’s hiddenness, whether in regard to the origins of life or life itself, we are to consider how Jesus exercised faith in his circumstances

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31 *Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2013.*
and to notice how such faith turned out for him so that we will not grow weary and lose heart.
I. THE PRESENCE OF COSMOLOGICAL DUALISM

In my early years I did not “look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” My acquaintance with the Creeds came late in life. This unfortunate omission was one of many factors in the development of my escapist attitude toward what I thought was an evil earth. Lyrics also shaped my thinking. I grew up singing the old song that says, “This world is not my home, I’m just a-passing through.” Every Christmas I sang the well-known words of “Away in a Manger”: “and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.” If heaven is of first importance, why should I care about this third rock from the sun? Another factor in the development of my “escapatology” was the jargon of my childhood denomination. Though I am grateful for the emphasis we placed on evangelism, I suspect the stress on “soul-winning” contributed to my vision of cosmic evacuation, Christians floating off to heaven as unadorned spirits. Long this idea lingered. Charles Spurgeon once said that he kept his old sermons so he would have something to weep over. Regrettably, I can say the same. Scanning some of my first sermons, preached in my teenage years, I found the following dualistic rejection of physicality: “You do not have a soul. None of you do. You do not have a soul. You are a soul, and you just happen to have a body!” Father, forgive such a broken testimony to our cosmic Redeemer.

Instead of the physical, I valued the spiritual; instead of down here, I wanted up there. This sort of cosmological dualism is common in our churches. N.T. Wright and a handful of others have argued this point at length. Richard Bauckham captures the problem: “So often, in the Christian tradition, we have thought of the non-human creation merely as a stage on which the drama of the history of God and humans is being

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1 Dillon T. Thornton is the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Community Church (EPC), Greeley, Colorado.
2 In addition to the three factors I mention above, it seems to me that rapture theology, which whole swaths of American Christians have embraced, is a catalyst for the escapist attitude, but I will let someone else chase (and preferably kill) this rabbit.
played out—and a temporary stage, at that, due to be dismantled and removed when the story reaches its final climax. Even worse, so often, in the Christian tradition, we have thought of human embeddedness in nature as a fate from which humans need to be liberated.”4 The widespread confusion over the ultimate hope is, well, confusing, especially since the NT is crystal clear on the matter: God’s people are promised a new type of bodily existence in a physical place. As C.S. Lewis puts it, we will come back to earth, not as floating wraiths, but as solid people who eat fish, cast shadows in the sunlight, and make a noise when we tramp the floor.5 Indeed, we should follow Lewis’s lead in _The Great Divorce_, imagining bodies that are _more solid_ than our present ones.6

This bodily resurrection will take place within the context of God’s victorious transformation, his radical renovation, of the entire cosmos. To borrow Bauckham’s wonderful phrase, the Bible is “a christological eco-narrative.” The grand story runs from eternity to eternity, from creation to _new creation_. What God did for Christ on that explosive Easter morning is what he will do not only for all those who are in Christ, but also for the entire cosmos. Revelation 21-22 makes it clear that the end of the story is not emancipation from earthiness; rather, the picture is of heaven coming down, joining with the earth. This will be the final accomplishment of God’s great design, to abolish death and rescue his entire creation from its present plight of decay. In other words, we must not reject flesh and matter as corrupt, because God has not rejected them!

There are many passages of the NT that, if exposited properly, would remedy the problem of cosmological dualism. Here I wish to draw attention to an underused text, tucked away in the Pastoral Epistles. We clergy commonly treat the Pastorals as delinquents, forcing them to sit silently in their corner of the canon. Much of this has to do with questions of authorship. Are these letters true products of the mind of Paul? Alternatively, do we have here some pseudonymous author addressing an ecclesial community of a considerably later stage? If not written by the authentic Paul, do the letters carry the same authority in the church?8

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4 Richard Bauckham, _The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation_, Sarum Theological Lectures (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010), 145.
6 This notion of the solidity of the new creation is prevalent in Lewis’s thought. See also _The Weight of Glory_, “Transposition”; the concluding chapters of _The Last Battle_. Reading Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia, and especially this final volume of the series, is one of the best ways for parents and their children to discover together the eschatological reality, namely, that the new creation will be “more like the real thing.”
7 Bauckham, _The Bible and Ecology_, 151.
8 Altogether avoiding the authorship debate, herein I will simply refer to the author of these letters as “Paul,” because this is the designation provided in the documents themselves. Most NT scholars today maintain that the Pastorals are the product of a Pauline admirer or “school.” See, for example, Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, _The Pastoral Epistles_, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 4; Lewis R. Donelson, _Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles_, HUT 22 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986), 54–66; Jürgen Roloff, _Der Erste Brief an Timotheus_, EKKNT (Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1988), 45–6; Lorenz Oberlinner, _Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge_.

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The letters are also known for their difficult subject matter. Whoever the author is, he boasts one of the most contentious texts in the NT, 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Why does the author forbid women to teach? What is the meaning of authentein? And what could the author possibly mean when he speaks of being “saved through childbearing?” These concerns are outside the purview of this paper, but I mention them here to make the point that these letters, because of their assortment of complexities, do not receive the expository attention they deserve.

My contention is that the Pastorals need to be reclaimed in our churches. This retrieval is needed for a number of reasons, not least of which is that the Pastorals contain some of the most pointed comments about dualism found anywhere in the Scriptures. These comments are found in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. Because the opening of 1 Timothy 4 is an instance of the author’s theological rebuttal of the false teachers in Ephesus, it will be necessary for us to begin with a brief discussion of these false teachers. We will then examine the argument Paul constructs in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. While I hope to make something of a scholarly contribution by showing how the unique affirmation of this passage informs our theology of creation, overall this paper contains very little that is novel. I lean heavily on the works of Lewis and, more recently, Wright and Bauckham. I am of the opinion that what the ecclesial community needs most is not so much originality as it is fidelity, and each of the aforementioned thinkers does wonders in helping us rediscover the genuine Biblical hope of new creation. Shamelessly, then, I borrow from the best.

II. THE OPPONENTS IN 1 AND 2 TIMOTHY: WHAT PAUL IS RESPONDING TO IN 1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

Virtually all commentators acknowledge the presence of opponents in the communities of the Pastorals; however, there is considerable disagreement with respect to the precise details of the alternative group(s). The false teachers reflected in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus routinely are herded into the same corral.9 The problem with this methodology is
that the purported destination of Titus is Crete (Titus 1:5), while the most likely destination of both 1 and 2 Timothy is Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3).\(^{10}\) In my judgment, the difference in destination is a factor significant enough to warrant a separate investigation of the opponents in Titus.

Limiting ourselves to 1 and 2 Timothy, we need also to limit ourselves to those portions of the letters where we have either certain or highly probable reference to the opponents, that is, the explicit and implicit discourse units.\(^{11}\) Explicit language is found, for example, in 1 Timothy 1:3: “As I urged you while I was going to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus, in order that you might command certain ones not to teach deviant doctrine.”\(^{12}\) Here Paul is unmistakably clear: there are opponents; these opponents are promulgating deviant doctrine; and Timothy’s task is one of correction. Explicit units such as this provide the clearest and most certain evidence; so any study of the opponents should commence with these units. Implicit units contain expressions that call the opponents to mind without mentioning them directly. While scholars have suggested a number of clues that might help the interpreter identify allusions to the opponents (e.g., emphasis, elaboration, expressed dissatisfaction, unfamiliar language), the most important clue is repetition. When significant words, phrases, or themes found in the explicit units occur elsewhere in the letter, it is highly probable that the opponents are once again on Paul’s radar. Applying this method to 1 and 2 Timothy, we are able to discern fourteen units that yield valuable information about the opponents in Ephesus.

Explicit Units in 1 Timothy: 1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-5; 6:2b-5, 20-21a

Implicit Units in 1 Timothy: 1:8-11; 2:9-15; 4:6-10; 5:9-16; 6:6-10

Explicit Units in 2 Timothy: 2:14-26; 3:1-9; 4:1-5


12 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
Implicit Units in 2 Timothy: 2:8-13

If we analyze these units and synthesize the data, we can suggest that the opponents’ teaching is best described as an erroneous eschatological position. I have argued this point at length elsewhere.13 Here I have space for nothing more than a sketch of the opponents’ doctrines and practices.

The opponents most likely came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus. At one time they were perceived as being in good standing within the community, and so were considered to be insiders, though at the time of the writing of 1 and 2 Timothy Paul considered them to be spiritual outsiders (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:3-7). The opponents, however, probably continued to think of themselves as “believers” or “Christians,” remaining active in the Pauline community in Ephesus. The dominant critique of the letters is that the opponents rejected the apostolic gospel (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:3, 19; 4:1; 6:3, 5, 10, 21; 2 Tim. 2:18, 25; 3:7-8). For Paul, the decision to reject the apostolic gospel and promulgate an alternative soteriological arrangement marked a changing of sides. When he composed the letters, Paul clearly viewed the former insiders as mentally and morally corrupt individuals who had aligned themselves with the chief adversary, Satan (e.g., 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:26).

We may summarize the opponents’ teaching as an erroneous eschatological position that derived from the complexity of Paul’s views. For them, “resurrection” was a purely spiritual event, one that had been fully realized in the present (2 Tim. 2:18). This notion of resurrection likely led to a confusion of the ages: believing they had been raised, the opponents thought they were living only in the age to come. This eschatological formulation probably stemmed from the Pauline doctrine of the present new life in Christ; the opponents thought the only resurrection was the mystical resurrection, which took place at conversion/baptism. Immaterializing the believer’s resurrection, which was tantamount to denying the future, bodily resurrection, was in Paul’s assessment an attack on the apostolic gospel.

The opponents’ eschatological formulation also included certain ethical norms. The perceived consummation of the present age meant that marriage and motherhood were inappropriate (1 Tim. 2:15; 4:3). This idea probably derived from Pauline teaching similar to that contained in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. Additionally, the opponents probably expanded some of Paul’s teaching on food (e.g., Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 8:1-13) and devised some sort of resurrection diet (1 Tim. 4:3-5).

Moreover, thinking they had been projected into the age to come, the false teachers laid claim to a special “knowledge” (1 Tim. 6:20), the more complete knowledge Paul himself reserved for the future (1 Cor. 13:12). It seems that an element of the opponents’ perceived eschatological existence was a hermeneutical awakening. Their knowledge gave them eyes to see “new” things in the Scriptures (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:7, 8-11). With these “eschatological eyes,” the opponents offered speculative readings of the Law to support their resurrection teaching, readings that Paul categorized as “myths and genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4). While the false teachers may

have found something in Paul’s theology to suggest an enduring role for the Law (e.g., Rom. 7:12, 14), they most likely turned to the Law for practical purposes. Establishing their ideas in the Scriptures would have made their eschatological claims more believable.

Finally, it is evident that the opponents had an active teaching ministry in Ephesus, for which they received payment (1 Tim. 6:5). They likely set out to recruit as large a following, and as large an income, as possible, but found a particularly fruitful field among the women in Ephesus (1 Tim. 2:9-15; 5:11-15; 2 Tim. 3:6-7). Both women within the Pauline community and women outside the community fell prey to these false teachers. At least some of these female adherents were wealthy, and they likely contributed to the opponents’ cause. Additionally, at least some of the female adherents, widows from within the Pauline community, were passing on the opponents’ teaching, whether in a casual or more formal way. If these widows were already included in the circle of church-supported widows, then the Pauline community at large was unwittingly contributing financially to the opponents’ operation.

Suffice it to say that the situation in Ephesus was dire. The key point to note for our present purpose is that the false teachers’ eschatology had no place for the future, bodily resurrection of those who belong to Christ. As I look back on my early eschatology, I must admit: neither did mine. And as Wright and others have shown, many in our churches today find themselves in this same eschatological boat, or cloud rather, since disembodied spirits don’t need boats. Of course, there are important differences between the view of the opponents in Ephesus and the prevalent view today. The opponents had an over-realized eschatology; they believed they were already experiencing the resurrection life in full. Our parishioners have a sense of anticipation that the opponents in Ephesus did not, but the future for which they hope may well be at best vague and at worst downright distorted.

Because the common view of our congregants may be similar (though not identical) to the view promulgated by the false teachers in Ephesus, the argument Paul constructs in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 to counter the opponents’ eschatology is of great significance. To this pericope we now turn.

III. THE ARGUMENT OF 1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

Immediately following his description of the church as “a pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), Paul warns of those who, rather than standing firm, will fall prey to “seductive spirits and demonic doctrines” (1 Tim. 4:1). The warning of 1 Timothy 4:1-3a contains specific information about the content of the opponents’ instruction. I have summarized the opponents’ teaching above, so I will comment only briefly on verses 1-3a. In the ensuing verses Paul counteracts the false teaching with a reading of Genesis 1 (vv. 3b-5). This subsection is for us the most pertinent part of the passage.
As highlighted above, there was an eschatological misconception in Ephesus: some in the community were teaching that the resurrection had already happened (2 Tim. 2:18). Since the opponents came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus, they would have been exposed to Paul’s thought; so this likely refers to a confusion of the future, bodily resurrection with the present, mystical resurrection to new life in Christ (e.g., Rom. 6:1-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:11-14; 3:1). The opponents spiritualized the resurrection and claimed that it had been fully realized in the present, which meant they saw themselves living only in the age to come, rather than in the overlap of the present age and the age to come. This perceived consummation of the present age is the key to understanding the asceticism Paul mentions in 1 Timothy 4:3a.

The opponents, Paul says, “forbid marriage and require abstinence from certain foods.” Perhaps they sought immediate application of Jesus’ teaching, recorded in Matthew 22:30: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.” Since the opponents came from within the Pauline community in Ephesus, even more likely is the notion that they misinterpreted Paul’s teaching similar to that contained in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31: “The appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none” (v. 29). Richard Hays summarizes Paul’s point: “He cannot be telling married Christians to renounce sex, for he has explicitly given the opposite advice in verses 1-7; rather, he means that they should live out their marriages with a watchful awareness that the present order of things is not ultimate.”

It is not difficult to envisage such Pauline teaching becoming high-octane justification for the opponents’ prohibition of marriage, since they were under the impression that they were citizens of the age to come. That Paul’s teaching on marriage would have circulated in Ephesus is highly probable. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 16:8 that 1 Corinthians was written while Paul was in Ephesus, and it is reasonable to conclude that the theology of 1 Corinthians reflects Paul’s preaching in Ephesus when he ministered in the city, for, as Paul Trebilco notes, “it would have been surprising if Paul had written in one way to Corinth, and then preached with a quite different emphasis the next day in Ephesus.”

Thus, the most likely interpretation of 1 Timothy 4:3a is that, believing they had been projected into the age to come, the opponents sought to do away with marriage, since, according to Paul, marriage is fitting only for the old order.

Can this eschatological misconception account for the opponents’ food restrictions as well? William Lane suggests that in Luke 24:42, “Jesus indicated by his own example that the food to be taken after the resurrection was fish or honeycomb.” But, again, since it appears that the opponents defected from the Pauline community, it is more probable that

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15 Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, 73.
they expanded some of Paul’s teaching on food, such as the admonition in Romans 14:17, “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking,” or perhaps some of the teaching contained in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13: “Food will not bring us close to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (v. 8).

B. Paul’s Theology of Creation

Beginning in the second part of verse 3 and continuing to the end of the unit, Paul responds to the opponents’ asceticism with an interpretation of Genesis 1. Having already expressed that Christians may marry, establish a household, and raise children (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:1-12), Paul focuses here on the food regulations.17 The center of Paul’s rebuttal is a belief in the goodness and holiness of God’s creation.

Paul first asserts that God is the Creator of the food the opponents reject. Probably alluding to Genesis 1:29 LXX, Paul indicates that God graciously created food for human nourishment. For this reason, food is to be received gladly and with gratitude. Paul adds tois pistois not to say that only believers may eat, but to emphasize that genuine believers ought to acknowledge God’s gracious provision by giving thanks (v. 3b).18 Expressly in contrast to the unfounded orders of the opponents, believers can and should partake of the sustenance that God has provided for his creatures, because “every creation of God is good” (v. 4). This is almost certainly an allusion to the summary statement of Genesis 1:31 LXX: “And God saw all the things that he had made, and, behold, they were very good.”19 The creation pronouncement functions as Paul’s theological basis for allowing freedom in the use of foods. Since all of God’s creation is good, no food is to be rejected.

In verse 5 Paul ups the ante. Not only is God’s creation good, but also it is holy. This is a significant statement, since the NT generally speaks only of the holiness of humans.20 In contrast, this verse in 1 Timothy clearly speaks of the consecration of “every creation of God.” Here the entire cosmos is “set in a consecrated state.”21 Creation is sanctified, according to the end of verse 5, “by the word of God and prayer.” Based on the previous allusions to the OT, “the word of God” here most likely refers to God’s creative and approving word in Genesis.22 In the two parallel statements

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17 With I. Howard Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 542; contra Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 240, who takes the relative pronoun of v. 3b as including both marriage and food.
18 Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, 297.
19 With Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, 241.
20 Paul Trebilco, “The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation (1 Timothy 4.1-5),” in Readings from the Perspective of Earth, ed. Norman C. Habel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 211 notes that elsewhere in the NT (apart from Matt. 23:17, 19), only people are said to be sanctified.
21 Trebilco, “The Goodness and Holiness of the Earth and the Whole Creation (1 Timothy 4.1-5),” 211.
22 With Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 241. See Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 546–47 for a discussion of the various interpretations of “the word of God.”
of the argument—“God created food” (v. 3b) and “every creation of God is good” (v. 4)—Genesis is clearly in view, which hints that Paul still has the creation account in mind. God called forth the cosmos for his own purpose; thus, his creative word is his sanctifying word. Finally, the prayer in connection with consecration here in verse 5 refers back to the prayer of thanksgiving mentioned previously in the passage (vv. 3b-4). Prayer does not take the place of God’s creation pronouncement or add anything mystical to it; rather, as Fee proposes, “The prayer of thanksgiving has inherent in it the recognition of God’s prior creative action.”

IV. THE HOLINESS OF CREATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR BELIEF AND PRACTICE

In 1 Timothy 4:1-5 Paul attempts to counter the eschatological misconception in Ephesus. His argument has three main planks. First, food was created by God to be received with thanksgiving (v. 3b). Second, and more broadly, everything created by God is good, and good things are not to be rejected (v. 4). Finally, creation is not only good, but also it is sanctified (v. 5). The passage indubitably denies a dualism that sees the material or earthly as corrupt.

The most striking feature of the passage is the affirmation of the holiness of creation. Compared to Genesis 1, which affirms the goodness of God’s world, 1 Timothy 4:1-5 should be understood as assigning additional value to creation. It is not only humans who are holy; the entire cosmos is consecrated, called into existence for God’s own purpose. Because the universe is holy, we are assured of God’s abiding affection and activity: he is doing something with his creation, taking it somewhere! When creation was corrupted as a result of human rebellion, God did not abandon his world. The whole world awaits that future day when it will be liberated from its present plight of decay (Rom. 8:18-25). The Incarnation, that wondrously creation-affirming event, guarantees the arrival of that day. As the one who rose from the dead, Christ has pioneered resurrection for the whole of creation. The created order, which God has begun to redeem in the resurrection of Jesus, is a world in which heaven and earth are designed, not to be separated, but to come together in a beautiful embrace (Rev. 21-22). The “very good” of the beginning will be enhanced in the end. The cosmos is indeed consecrated, set apart for God’s purpose. And this purpose will be fulfilled. The God who formed

25 Some may find it difficult to comprehend how creation can be “consecrated” and at the same time “corrupted” as a result of sin. It is perhaps helpful to suggest that creation is sanctified in the same way that we are, as creatures of the Word; not yet perfect, still struggling with sin, but set apart for God’s purposes.
27 Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 259.
all things will in the end flood the universe with the knowledge of himself (Isa. 11:9).

The chief implication for belief and practice should by now be evident. “Escapatology” is sacrilege. While it is right to long for the radical renovation of creation, the vision of cosmic evacuation treats as evil something God endorses as both good and holy. Douglas Wilson, with his typical wit, explains the two errors we must avoid: “One mistake is that of thinking this creation will be burnt to a cinder and not replaced, or replaced by something completely unrelated. The other mistake is that of thinking that this creation will simply be tidied up a bit, with a certain amount of polish and shine. The Lord comes back with some touch-up paint, and regiments of angels scatter around the world to give our Botox treatments.”

The rescuing of this world from its current corruption will mean transformations we cannot fathom, but this redeeming work will not mean that God will say of space and matter, “Oh, well. Nice try. Good while it lasted.”

Fashioned from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7), earthly in the end we shall be.

Finally, it should be at least briefly noted that this interpretation of 1 Timothy 4:1–5 has important implications for the wider discussion of Christians and the ecological crisis. The reading offered above allows us to see creation care for what it truly is: the handling of the holy. Conversely, pollution is profanity. The earth is not composed of neutral stuff that we can use and abuse for our ends. To contribute to the destruction of the natural order is to degrade that which has an essential relatedness to God. Sadly, as Christopher Wright points out, “Christians are more likely to be blamed for the ecological crisis than seen as bearing any kind of good news in relation to it.”

But the Christian is called to cooperate with God for the fulfillment of his purposes, and as we have seen, God has a plan for planet earth. David Neff says it well: proper eschatology “helps us save nature for God’s sake, not just for our own benefit.”

In the past, Christians have instinctively been concerned about great and urgent issues in every generation, and rightly included them in their overall concept of mission calling and practice. These have included the evils of disease, ignorance, slavery and many other forms of brutality and exploitation. Christians have taken up the cause of

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28 Wilson, Heaven Misplaced, 27. For a sagacious discussion of 2 Pet. 3:10, which some interpreters take as a reference to the annihilation of the earth, see Richard Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 315–22. More likely is the view that this text refers to the burning away of the intervening heavens or firmament, leading up to the discovery, naked and unprotected on the earth, of men and women and all their works by God.

29 Wright, Surprised by Hope, 211–12.


widows, orphans, refugees, prisoners, the insane, the hungry—and most recently they have swelled the numbers of those committed to “making poverty history.” Faced now with the horrific facts of the suffering of the earth itself, we must surely ask how God himself responds to such abuse of his creation and seek to align our mission objectives to include what matters to him.\textsuperscript{32}

Indeed, to include what is \textit{holy} unto him.

\textsuperscript{32} Wright, \textit{The Mission of God}, 413–14.
The Jewish calendar is a prime example of the intersection of science and worship in the Bible. God designed Israel’s worship tradition in such a way that the Jewish people had to have a continuing commitment to science in order to worship their creator on the days he wanted to be worshipped. The first part of this essay focuses on the cosmological background of the Jewish calendar and how Israel looked to the sun, the moon, and the stars to calculate the Lord’s fixed times of worship. The second part focuses on why Gentile Christian leaders during the patristic period did not want to depend on Jewish intercalation to determine the date of Passover/Easter and the implications this had for the church’s relationship with the Jewish people.

“FIXED TIMES” AND SIGNS

A compelling case can be made that the first mention of a calendar tradition in Israel’s Scriptures is not in Exodus 16, or even Genesis 2, where the Sabbath makes its debut, but in Genesis 1 where it is explained why God created the sun, the moon, and the stars. This opening chapter indicates that God spoke these heavenly bodies into being for an ecclesial reason: to regulate a calendar of appointed times for God’s people to worship him. Robert Alter’s translation of Genesis 1:14 makes room for this reading:

And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the heavens to divide the day from the night, and they shall be signs for the fixed times and for days and years....”

What are “fixed times” (moʻadim)? In every other place where the plural noun moʻadim occurs in the Five Books of Moses (Lev. 23:2 [2x], 4, 37, 44; Num. 10:10; 15:3; 29:39), the Hebrew word refers to the full cycle of Israel’s festivals, i.e., God’s appointed times to meet with Israel.

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1 David Rudolph is the Director of Messianic Jewish Studies and Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at The King’s University in Southlake, Texas.
3 See Leviticus 23.
This assertion—that *moadim* in Genesis 1:14 refers to God’s appointed times of worship—is not new. The LXX translators chose the Greek word *kairous* to render *moadim* in Genesis 1:14. The plural noun appears in eight other LXX Pentateuch passages, always in reference to festival times. The three annual pilgrimage festivals of Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles are particularly in view (Exod. 13:10; 23:14, 17; 34:23, 24; Deut. 16:16). For this reason, John Wevers suggests in *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis* that the “word *kairous* [in LXX Gen. 1:14] probably does not mean ‘seasons of the year’ but rather the designated times, i.e. the festivals, the *moadim.*”

Jubilees 2:8–10 similarly understands Genesis 1:14 to refer to Israel’s calendar of appointed times:

> And on the fourth day he made the sun and the moon and the stars. And he set them in the firmament of heaven so that they might give light upon the whole earth and rule over the day and the night and separate light and darkness. And the LORD set the sun as a great sign upon the earth for days, sabbaths, months, feast (days), years, sabbaths of years, jubilees, and for all of the (appointed) times of the years. ...  
>

In line with this history of interpretation, many modern lexicons, theological dictionaries, and critical commentaries support the “festivals” interpretation of *moadim* in Genesis 1:14. As one example, Gordon Wenham concludes in his commentary on Genesis 1:14, “What is clear is the importance attached to the heavenly bodies’ role in determining the seasons, in particular in fixing the days of cultic celebration. This is their chief function.”

What does it mean that the sun, the moon, and the stars “shall be signs for the fixed times”? The idea seems to be that the worshipper would look to the luminaries (like a Google calendar) to know when God’s fixed times of worship will take place. This is why Psalm 104:19 says, “You made the moon to mark the appointed times (*moadim*).” Each celestial body plays a part in the regulation of this calendar from heaven. One of the first jobs of the Jewish worshipper then is to be an astronomer.

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8 Psalm 104:19 alludes to Genesis 1:14 and interprets *moadim* in the creation account as a reference to Israel’s fixed times of worship, which are “marked” (i.e., dated) by the moon. For example, God instructs Israel to observe Passover on “the fourteenth day of the [first] month” (Lev. 23:5). In astronomical terms, this is the full moon of the first lunar cycle. All of Israel’s festivals have lunar dates like this. In Psalm 104:19, *moadim* cannot refer to the four seasons since the moon does not mark them off.
The Sun

A Jewish day may be defined as one complete cycle of the sun setting, rising, and setting again. Jewish days begin in the evening, even as Genesis 1 repeats six times, “And there was evening and there was morning, the... day” (vv. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

A Jewish year is one complete cycle of the tekufot (seasons), which takes 365¼ days. This is measured in relation to four special days:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEASON</th>
<th>ENGLISH NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tekufat Tammuz</td>
<td>Summer solstice</td>
<td>The longest day—beginning of summer, when the sun is farthest to the north</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekufat Tevet</td>
<td>Winter solstice</td>
<td>The shortest day—beginning of winter, when the sun is farthest to the south</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekufat Nisan</td>
<td>Spring equinox</td>
<td>The beginning of spring—when the length of day and night are equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tekufat Tishri</td>
<td>Fall equinox</td>
<td>The beginning of fall—when the length of day and night are equal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Jewish calendar measures the length of the year by counting the number of days it takes from one solstice/equinox until the same solstice/equinox recurs in the annual cycle (e.g., summer solstice to summer solstice).

The Moon

A Jewish month is the time between one rosh chodesh (new moon) and the next. It is a complete cycle of the moon appearing in the sky as a thin crescent, gradually becoming a full moon, and then shrinking each evening to the point of disappearing. The beginning of a new month is the moment when the moon is between the earth and the sun (i.e., when it is not visible). This is called the molad (birth) of the moon. The cycle from molad to molad takes about 29½ days on average.
The Stars

As the earth rotates around the sun, the *mazalot* (constellations) appear to rotate as part of an annual cycle (Job 9:9; 38:31-32; Amos 5:8; Isa. 13:10). This gives the Jewish worshipper a point of reference as to the month, the day, and even the hour of worship. These are the *mazalot* that can be seen in the evening sky in their respective months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEASON</th>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>MAZALOT</th>
<th>(CONSTELLATIONS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Nisan</td>
<td>Tleh</td>
<td>(Aries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iyar</td>
<td>Shor</td>
<td>(Taurus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sivan</td>
<td>Teumim</td>
<td>(Gemini)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Tammuz</td>
<td>Sartan</td>
<td>(Cancer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Av</td>
<td>Aryeh</td>
<td>(Leo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elul</td>
<td>Besulab</td>
<td>(Virgo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Tishri</td>
<td>Moznayim</td>
<td>(Libra)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marcheshvan</td>
<td>Akrav</td>
<td>(Scorpio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kislev</td>
<td>Keshet</td>
<td>(Sagittarius)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Tevet</td>
<td>Gedi</td>
<td>(Capricorn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shevat</td>
<td>Dli</td>
<td>(Aquarius)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adar</td>
<td>Dagim</td>
<td>(Pisces)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A *mazal* is identified with the particular month when that constellation rises just before the sun after not being visible during the previous month. Since the twelve *mazalot* appear to make a full circle around the earth in a twenty-four hour period, a new *mazal* seems to *oleh* (rise) every two hours.
Israel's calendar for times of worship is lunisolar. This means that it is regulated primarily by the cycles of the moon and sun. The chart below lists the various fixed worship times (*moadim*) that God commanded Israel to keep and explains when they occur in relation to the lunar and solar cycles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORSHIP EVENT</th>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
<th>FIXED TIME</th>
<th>LUNISOLAR ASPECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Shabbat</em> (Sabbath)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:3 Num. 28:9-10 Exod. 20:8-11 Deut. 5:12-15</td>
<td>Every seventh day</td>
<td>Sunset to sunset. The <em>Shulchan Aruch</em> (Code of Jewish Law) defines night as the moment when you can see three small stars (<em>Tzeit Hakochavim</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rosh Chodesh</em> (New moon)</td>
<td>Num. 10:10; 28:11-15</td>
<td>First day of every month</td>
<td>New moon = not visible in sky → visible sliver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pesach</em> (Passover)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:4-5 Num. 28:16 Exod. 12:13 Num. 9:1-14 Deut. 16:1-7</td>
<td>Fourteenth day of the first month, the anniversary of Israel’s exodus from Egypt</td>
<td>Full moon of the first lunar cycle. The festival must be in the month of Aviv, the month that Israel left Egypt (Exod. 12:1-2; 13:4; 23:15; Deut. 16:1), and coincide with the spring barley harvest in the land of Israel. See Lev. 23:10-11.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Event</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Fixed Time</th>
<th>Lunisolar Aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matzot</strong> (Feast of Unleavened Bread)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:6–8</td>
<td>Fifteenth through the twenty-first day of the first month</td>
<td>Full moon through half moon of the first lunar cycle. The festival must be in the month of Aviv, the month that Israel left Egypt (Exod. 12:1-2; 13:4; 23:15; Deut. 16:1) and coincide with the spring barley harvest in the land of Israel. See Lev. 23:10–11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Num. 28:17–25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exod. 12:17–20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exod. 13:3–10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deut. 16:3–4, 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bikkurim</strong> (Feast of First Fruits)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:9–14</td>
<td>Day after the Sabbath after Passover in the first month</td>
<td>Between full moon and half-moon of the month of Aviv, the first lunar cycle. The festival must coincide with the spring barley harvest in the land of Israel. See Lev. 23:10–11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shavuot</strong> (Feast of Weeks)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:15–21</td>
<td>Fifty days after the day after the Sabbath after Passover = first half of the third month, when Israel arrived at Sinai</td>
<td>Between new moon and full moon of the third lunar cycle relative to the month of Aviv. The festival must coincide with the spring wheat harvest in the land of Israel. See Exod. 34:22; Lev. 23:16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Num. 28:26–31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exod. 34:22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deut. 16:9–12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yom Teruah</strong> (Day of Blowing [the Shofar])</td>
<td>Lev. 23:23–25</td>
<td>First day of the seventh month</td>
<td>The new moon of the seventh lunar cycle relative to the month of Aviv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Num. 29:1–6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORSHIP EVENT</td>
<td>REFERENCE</td>
<td>FIXED TIME</td>
<td>LUNISOLAR ASPECT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:26-32 Num. 29:7-11</td>
<td>Tenth day of the seventh month</td>
<td>Between new moon and full moon of the seventh lunar cycle relative to the month of Aviv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacle)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:33-44 Num. 29:12-38 Deut. 16:13-17 Exod. 23:14-17 Exod. 34:22-23</td>
<td>Fifteenth through the twenty-first day of the seventh month</td>
<td>Full moon through half-moon of the seventh lunar cycle relative to the month of Aviv. The festival must coincide with the fall harvest in the land of Israel. See Exod. 23:16; 34:22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shemini Atzeret (Eighth Day Closing Assembly)</td>
<td>Lev. 23:36, 39 Num. 29:35-40</td>
<td>Twenty-second day of the seventh month</td>
<td>Half-moon of the seventh lunar cycle relative to the month of Aviv. The festival must coincide with the fall harvest in the land of Israel. See Exod. 23:16; 34:22.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE SCIENCE OF INTERCALATION**

Lunisolar calendars require intercalation because the solar year is 365¼ days while the lunar year (12 months x 29.5 average days per month) is 354 days. This means that the lunar year is about 11¼ days less than the solar year (365¼ - 354 = 11¼).

What difference does 11¼ days make to the Jewish worshipper? A lot! If this gap went unaddressed, each year the lunar calendar would begin 11¼ days earlier than the previous year. Stated another way, if Nisan 1 (the Torah calendar’s New Year) fell on April 12 in Year A, in Year B it would be April 1, and in Year C it would be March 20. This is a drift of thirty-three days in three years, more than a full month. If this pattern continued for twenty years, the New Year would be behind by more than 220 days, more than half a year.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) It takes about 32½ years for the lunar months to retrograde through the four seasons.
In the case of the Jewish calendar, twenty years of drift would mean that Passover (a spring festival) would be celebrated in the fall, and the Feast of Tabernacles (a fall festival) would be celebrated in the spring. From a halakhic perspective, reversal in timing like this cannot be allowed because (1) the Lord instructed Israel to observe Passover annually as a fixed time of worship in the spring, the season of the exodus from Egypt (Exod. 12:1-2; 13:4; 23:15; Deut. 16:1); and (2) calendar drift would lead to the appointed feasts of the Lord (Passover/Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks and Tabernacles) no longer being aligned with the harvest seasons in the land of Israel. This would mean that Israel could not observe these times of worship as God intended (Lev. 23:10-11; Exod. 23:16; 34:22). For these reasons, the Torah calendar requires intercalation so that calendar drift does not happen. Or to put it another way, intercalation ensures that lunar months remain in the right seasons of the year.

How is intercalation accomplished? Notably, the Scriptures do not explain how to do this. It is something that Moses and the other leaders of Israel had to figure out as they sought the Lord for guidance. The tradition that developed over time is similar to what many people groups do that have lunisolar calendars: Israel added an extra month (Adar Sheni) to the calendar every two to three years and adjusted the length of months when necessary. Here is how intercalation works today in order to keep the fixed times of worship in their proper seasons:

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11 “Each year, in the month of Adar, they would determine how much longer the winter would last. Their determination was based upon weather and agricultural conditions and upon calculations of the date of the spring equinox. If they came to the conclusion that the next month would be spring already, they would declare it a regular year and the next month would be Nisan. If, however, they decided that it would not be spring for another month, they would declare the next month Adar Sheni and it would be a leap year. The following month would certainly be spring, so that month would be Nisan” (Nathan Bushwick, *Understanding the Jewish Calendar* [New York: Moznaim, 1989], 51-52). Epiphanius (bishop of Salamis) describes the science of intercalation in his day in Pan. 70.13.1-6: “For since according to the sun's course the year is completed in 365 days and three hours, it happens that because the moon completes the year in 354 days, eleven days and three hours are wanting in the moon’s course. And in the first year there fall the eleven so-called intercalary days and three hours, in the second year twenty-two days and six hours, and in the third year thirty-three days and nine hours, and the one so-called intercalary month is measured off. For the thirty days are intercalated, but three days and nine hours are left over, which when added to the eleven days and three hours from the fourth year make fourteen days and twelve hours. When another eleven days and three hours are added, we arrive at twenty-five intercalated days and fifteen hours. And when another eleven days and three hours from the year are added to the sixth year, we arrive at thirty-six days and eighteen hours, which make one intercalated month, and two months have been intercalated in the three-year periods: one month in the first three years and another month in the other three years. Six days and eighteen hours are left over from the intercalated days. But when in the seventh year these are added to the eleven days and three hours from the year, we arrive at seventeen intercalary days and twenty-one hours. Now in the eighth year, when a further eleven days and three hours are added to the sum, we arrive at twenty-eight intercalary days and twenty-four hours, which make two days. From these hours added to the twenty-eight days we arrive at thirty in all, and it comes about that in the eighth year the thirty days are intercalated, the one month in the two years. Thus in
• The Jewish calendar follows a nineteen-year cycle called *machzor koton* in which there are seven leap years (i.e., years when an additional month is added). They are years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, and 19 in the nineteen-year cycle. To determine if a given year is a leap year, you divide the current Jewish year by 19, and the remainder will tell you if it is a leap year. For example, this essay is being written in the Jewish year 5776. 5776 divided by 19 yields no remainder. That means 5776 is year 19 of the nineteen-year cycle and that an additional month (Adar Sheni) will be added at the end of this year to keep Passover as a fixed time of worship in the spring.

• There are five months that always have twenty-nine (*chosser*—incomplete) days and five months that always have thirty (*molei*—complete) days. The remaining two months can have either twenty-nine or thirty days. The fixed months alternate days to stay in sync with the average lunar cycle of 29½ days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nisan</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iyar</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sivan</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tammuz</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Av</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elul</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tishri</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marcheshvan</strong></td>
<td>29/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kislev</strong></td>
<td>29/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tevet</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shevat</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adar</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• In a leap year, first Adar (Adar Rishon) has thirty days and second Adar (Adar Sheni) has twenty-nine days. First Adar is regarded as the additional month, which is why second Adar has the same number of days as regular Adar. The festival of Purim, birthdays, and yahrzeits (anniversaries of a loved one’s death) that fall on regular Adar are all observed in second Adar.

• The New Moon (Rosh Chodesh) is a fixed time of worship that marks the beginning of each month. Some months have one day of Rosh Chodesh, and others have two. A month that follows a choser (twenty-nine-day) month has one day of Rosh Chodesh, and a month that follows a molei (thirty-day) month has two days of Rosh Chodesh. When a month has one day of Rosh Chodesh, that Rosh Chodesh is the first day of the month. When a month has two days of Rosh Chodesh, the first day of Rosh Chodesh doubles as the thirtieth day of the previous month, and the second day serves as the first day of the new month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DAYS IN THE MONTH</th>
<th>ROSH CHODESH DAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nisan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iyar</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivan</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammuz</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elul</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tishri</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcheshvan</td>
<td>29/30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kislev</td>
<td>29/30</td>
<td>1/2</td>
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<td>Tevet</td>
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<td>1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shevat</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adar</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adar I</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adar II</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the above principles of intercalation, there are guidelines that postpone certain festivals if they fall on particular days of the week for halakhic reasons (e.g., Rosh Hashanah cannot fall on Sunday, Wednesday, or Friday; Yom Kippur cannot fall on Friday or Sunday; the seventh day of
Sukkot cannot fall on the Sabbath). A survey of these calendar customs, and the reasons for them, is beyond the scope of this study.

It may be concluded that the calendar of moadim (fixed times) described in the Torah cannot be followed without intercalation. Moreover, intercalation involves numerous astronomical and mathematical calculations to determine Israel’s times of worship.12 In the first century CE, this work was performed by a sod haibbur (calendar council) in Jerusalem under the auspices of the Sanhedrin that specialized in this area of Jewish law. Over time the Rabbis designed a perpetual calendar that incorporated the principles behind these decisions so that Jews around the world could follow the same calendar even if there was no longer a central authority in Jerusalem in charge of intercalation.

THE CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION OF PASSOVER/EASTER

Is Israel’s calendar relevant to ecclesial theology? And if so, how? It is sometimes forgotten by Christians that the ecclesia is fundamentally a table fellowship of Jews and Gentiles united in Messiah.13 In this regard, the Jewish calendar is as important to the Jewish wing of the church as it is to Israel more widely. Studying the stars and observing the fixed times remains for the descendants of Jacob a boundary marker of Jewish identity and a matter of Jewish calling (1 Cor. 7:17–24).14 Messianic Jews celebrate the moadim in modern Messianic synagogue contexts, following in the footsteps of Yeshua and his Jewish shlichim (apostles).15

For the Gentile wing of the church, Israel’s calendar takes on a lesser level of importance, but it is still relevant because it is infused with Biblical and theological meaning. Jesus-believing Gentiles have the freedom in Messiah to follow the Jewish calendar or not (Acts 15).16 However, there is an ancient tradition among Gentile churches that views Passover, the first of Israel’s festivals, as the centerpiece of the ecclesial calendar. For at least the first seven hundred years of the church, Easter was called Pascha, the Greek word for Passover (a variant of the Hebrew word Pesach), and it is still called Pascha in thousands of churches around the world because Easter is historically rooted in Passover.17

16 Rudolph, “Paul’s ‘Rule in All the Churches’ (1 Cor 7:17–24) and Torah-Defined Ecclesiological Variegation,” 1–23.
17 The origin of the term “Easter” is first explained in the writings of Bede (eighth century). Many scholars today anachronistically use the term “Easter” when rendering
According to patristic literature, second-century Gentile churches followed two calendar traditions concerning the Christian celebration of Passover. Churches in Judea, Asia, Asia Minor, Cilicia, Syria, and Mesopotamia observed Passover on Nisan 14. By contrast, churches in the West, including those in Italy, Greece, Spain, Britain, and Gaul observed Passover on the Sunday after Nisan 14.

When did this split take place? Epiphanius indicates that most of the churches in the East and West followed a common tradition of observing Passover on Nisan 14 until 135 CE. The church depended on the Jewish bishops in Jerusalem to determine the date of Passover, and this tradition contributed to the unity of the church:

For this was their chief and entire concern: the one unity, so that there would be no schisms or divisions. . . . Now altogether there were fifteen bishops from the circumcision, and it was necessary at that time, when the bishops from the circumcision were being ordained in Jerusalem, for the whole world to follow them and celebrate the feast with them, that there might be one accord and one confession, one feast celebrated; this was the reason for their solicitude which gathered the minds of people into the unity of the church. [But since the feast?] could not be celebrated [in this fashion?] for such a long time, by God's good pleasure in Constantine's reign the matter was [set right] for the sake of harmony (Epiphanius, *Pan. 70.10.3-5*).

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pascha (or its equivalent) in English translations of patristic texts. Similarly, Luther, Tyndale, and King James translations anachronistically refer to the celebration of Easter in Acts 12:4 (cf. Luke 2:41; 1 Cor. 5:7 [Luther and Tyndale]).

18 Epiphanius, *Pan. 70.9.2; Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 5.23.1; 5.24.1; Athanasius, Syn. 2; Epiphanius, *Pan. 70.9.8-9; 10.3-5; Theodoret, Haer. Fab. Comp. 3.4.* "The Quartodeciman controversy, which continued for over two centuries in Asia Minor (Canon no. 7 of the Synod of Laodicea, ca. 350), testifies with clariot voice to the perennial desire of many Anatolian Christians to maintain the Jewish heritage of the Christian observance of Easter/Passover (Oster 1992). Athanasius (Syn 2) writes in the fourth century that 'the Syrians, Cilicians, and those who dwell in Mesopotamia dissented from us and kept the Pascha at the same time as the Jews'" (Raniero Cantalamessa, trans., *Easter in the Early Church* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993], 162; cf. 128b). See Bruce Chilton, Redemption: The Wisdom of Ancient Jewish and Christian Festal Calendars (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 82-83.

19 Eusebius, *Hist. eccl. 5.23.1; Vit. Const. 3.18.*


The Jerusalem bishops served as a kind of *sod haibbur* for the Jesus-believing world in determining the date of Passover according to the Jewish calendar, a practice that unified the church in its worship and confession. When the emperor Hadrian expelled the Jewish bishops from Jerusalem in 135 CE, the resulting leadership vacuum led to disputes among Gentile Christian leaders over the proper dating of Passover.\(^{22}\) This controversy over how to calculate a worship day lasted for almost two hundred years.

In a word, there was great confusion and fatigue, as many of the scholars know, during the times when a tumult arose in the preaching of the church concerning the debate about this feast, and in the time of Polycarp and Victor, when the East and the West in their dissension did not accept letters of commendation from each other, but at certain other times as well, and in the time of Alexander bishop of Alexandria, and Crescentius, each of whom is known to have written to the other and quarreled, and down to our own times. [The church] had continued in this troubled state since the time following the circumcised bishops. Therefore the [bishops] from every place gathered at that time and having investigated the issue carefully, ruled that the feast should be celebrated with unanimity, according to what was fitting to the date and the rite. (Epiphanius, *Pan. 70.9.8-9*)\(^{23}\)

Epiphanius mentions Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna in the early second century) and Victor (bishop of Rome in the late second century), two ecclesial leaders who differed in their views on the dating of Passover. Victor threatened to excommunicate the Asian churches unless they abandoned the Nisan 14 Passover tradition. In response to this threat, the bishops in the East assembled and appointed Polycrates (bishop of Ephesus) to reply to Victor.

### Polycrates' Letter to Victor

Polycrates wrote to Victor in 191 CE. Eusebius describes the historical context and then quotes from the letter in his *Ecclesiastical History* (311 CE):

> At that time, no small controversy arose because all the dioceses of Asia thought it right, as though by more ancient tradition, to observe for the feast of the Saviour’s Passover the fourteenth day of the moon, on which the Jews had been commanded to kill the lamb. Thus it was necessary to finish the fast on that day, whatever day of the week it might be. Yet it was not the custom to celebrate in this manner in the churches throughout the rest of the world, for from apostolic tradition they kept the custom which still exists that it is not right to finish the fast on any day save that of the resurrection of our Saviour. Many meetings and conferences with bishops were held

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\(^{22}\) See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.5-6.

on this point, and all unanimously formulated in their letters the doctrine of the church for those in every country that the mystery of the Lord's resurrection from the dead could be celebrated on no day save Sunday, and that on that day alone we should celebrate the end of the paschal fast... but the bishops in Asia were led by Polycrates in persisting that it was necessary to keep the custom which had been handed down to them of old. Polycrates himself in a document which he addressed to Victor and to the church of Rome, expounds the tradition which had come to him as follows:

Therefore we keep the day undeviatingly, neither adding nor taking away, for in Asia great luminaries sleep, and they will rise on the day of the coming of the Lord, when he shall come with glory from heaven and seek out all the saints. Such were Philip of the twelve apostles, and two of his daughters who grew old as virgins, who sleep in Hierapolis, and another daughter of his, who lived in the Holy Spirit, rests at Ephesus. Moreover, there is also John, who lay on the Lord's breast, who was a priest wearing the breastplate, and a martyr, and teacher. He sleeps at Ephesus. And there is also Polycarp at Smyrna, both bishop and martyr, and Thraseas, both bishop, from Eumenaea, who sleeps in Smyrna. And why should I speak of Sagaris, bishop and martyr, who sleeps at Laodicaea, and Papirius, too, the blessed, and Melito the eunuch, who lived entirely in the Holy Spirit, who lies in Sardis, waiting for the visitation from heaven when he will rise from the dead? All these kept the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel, never swerving, but following according to the rule of the faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, live according to the tradition of my kinsmen, and some of them have I followed. For seven of my family were bishops and I am the eighth, and my kinsmen ever kept the day when the people put away the leaven. Therefore, brethren, I who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord and conversed with brethren from every country, and have studied all holy Scripture, am not afraid of threats, for they have said who were greater than I, “It is better to obey God rather than men.”

Upon this [receiving the letter] Victor, who presided at Rome, immediately cut off from the common unity the dioceses of all Asia, together with the adjacent churches, on the ground of heterodoxy, and he indited letters announcing that all the Christians there were absolutely excommunicated. But by no means all were pleased by this, so they issued counter-requests to him to consider the cause of peace and unity and love towards his neighbours (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 5.23.1–5.24.11 [LCL]).
It is significant that Polycrates includes Polycarp among the heroes of the faith who observed Passover on Nisan 14. Polycarp lived from 69-155 CE and died when Polycrates was thirty years old. This “apostolic father” (as he was later called) bridged the apostolic and post-apostolic periods. According to Irenaeus (bishop of Lyons in the late second century), Polycarp annually celebrated Passover on Nisan 14 with John and the other apostles.

After becoming the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp sought to convince Anicetus (bishop of Rome) to observe Passover according to the Jewish dating. Eusebius quotes Irenaeus:

... and when the blessed Polycarp was staying in Rome in the time of Anicetus, though they disagreed a little about some other things as well, they immediately made peace, having no wish for strife between them on this matter. For neither was Anicetus able to persuade Polycarp not to observe it [Passover on Nisan 14], inasmuch as he had always done so in company with John the disciple of our Lord and the other apostles with whom he had associated; nor did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it [Passover on Nisan 14], for he said that he ought to keep the custom of those who were presbyters before him (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 5.24.16 [LCL]).

Significantly, Anicetus did not claim that the date when Roman Christians celebrated Passover (Sunday after Nisan 14) was in keeping with apostolic tradition. Rather, he claimed that the date was in keeping with the custom of the “presbyters before him” whom Irenaeus identifies as “Pius and Telesphorus and Xystus.” These three served as bishops in Rome before and after the Jerusalem church went into exile. Eusebius by contrast held that the Roman dating of Passover originated with the apostles but provides no line of transmission to substantiate his claim. Not unexpectedly, later sources attribute the Roman tradition to Peter and Paul.

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

In the second and third centuries, the western churches lacked the ability to impose the Roman Passover tradition on churches in the East. This changed in 325 CE when the Council of Nicaea convened to resolve the Passover dating question. This first ecumenical council concluded

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24 For a discussion of the historical reliability of Irenaeus’ testimony about Polycarp, see Frederick W. Weidmann, Polycarp and John: The Harris Fragments and Their Challenge to the Literary Tradition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 125-33.
25 Cf. Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 4.14.1; 5.20.5-6; Irenaeus, Haer. 3.3.4; Jerome, Vir. ill. 17.
26 Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 4.4-6; 5.24.14.
27 Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 5.23.1; 5.24.14, 16.
28 “Moreover the Quartodecimans affirm that the observance of the fourteenth day was delivered to them by the Apostle John: while the Romans and those in the western parts assure us that their usage originated with the Apostles Peter and Paul. Neither of these parties however can produce any written testimony in confirmation of what they assert” (Sozomon, Hist. eccl. 2.2.131). See also The Paschal Canon of Anatolius of Alexandria.
by drafting a synodal letter stating that “all of the brethren in the East who have heretofore kept this [Passover] festival when the Jews did, will henceforth conform to the Romans and to us.”

The Emperor Constantine “confirmed and sanctioned the decrees of the council.” Eusebius copied one of these edicts, a document that reflects the extent to which the Council of Nicaea’s decision to reject Nisan 14 was motivated by anti-Semitism. The 318 or so bishops represented at the council did not want to worship like Jews or be dependent on Jews in their celebration of Passover because Jews were detestable:

At this meeting [the Council of Nicaea] the question concerning the most holy day of Passover was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present, that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day. ... And first of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul. For we have it in our power, if we abandon their custom, to prolong the due observance of this ordinance to future ages, by a truer order, which we have preserved from the very day of the passion until the present time.

Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way. A course at once legitimate and honorable lies open to our most holy religion. Beloved brethren, let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness. For their boast is absurd indeed, that it is not in our power without instruction from them to observe these things. For how should they be capable of forming a sound judgment, who, since their parricidal guilt in slaying their Lord, have been subject to the direction, not of reason, but of ungoverned passion, and are swayed by every impulse of the mad spirit that is in them. (Eusebius, Vit. Const. 3.18)

Roger Beckwith concurs that the issue of not wanting to depend on Jews was a major consideration in the move away from the Church’s observance of Passover on Nisan 14:

For, without such help, they [Christians] were in the humiliating position of having to find out the date of the Passover each year

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30 Eusebius, Vit. Const. 3.23.
31 GCS 7.85-86, italics mine. For a survey of Christian critiques of Jewish intercalation in the fourth century CE, see Sacha Stern, Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, Second Century BCE—Tenth Century CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 65-85. Constantine regarded the Council of Nicaea’s decision to be the will of God: “Receive, then, with all willingness this truly divine injunction. ... For whatever is determined in the holy assemblies of the bishops is to be regarded as indicative of the Divine will” (Eusebius, Vit. Const. 3.20). Cf. Socrates, Hist. eccl. 1.9.
from the non-Christian Jews of their locality. ...Constantine, writing about Easter to those absent from the Council of Nicaea, speaks of the Jews’ “boast that it is not in our power without instruction from them to observe these things” (in Eusebius, Life of Constantine 3:18). This clearly reflects the embarrassment under which Christians had been laboring. ...32

Following the Council of Nicaea, a number of church canons were enacted that prohibited Christians from celebrating Passover with Jews or like Jews. These included the Synod of Antioch in 341 CE and the seventh of the Apostolic Canons. As an example of what was communicated from the pulpit about the importance of Christians distancing themselves from Jewish festivals, John Chrysostom preached to his church in Antioch in 386 CE:

What is this disease? The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession. ...There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now. ...Is it not strange that those who worship the Crucified [one] keep common festival with those who crucified him?...Certainly it is the time for me to show that demons dwell in the synagogue, not only in the place itself but also in the souls of the Jews. ...Does God hate their festivals and do you share in them? He did not say this or that festival, but all of them together.33

Two sermons later, he challenges his flock to abide by the decision of the Council of Nicaea rather than observe Passover on Nisan 14 according to Jewish dating:

Three hundred Fathers or even more gathered together in the land of Bithynia and ordained this by law; yet you disdain their decrees.... Christ was present there, it was Christ who formulated and passed the laws. Yet you condemn not only the Council Fathers but the whole world which approved their judgment. Do you consider that the Jews are wiser than the Fathers who came from everywhere in the world?34

These sermons echo the anti-Semitism that informed the Council of Nicaea’s decision to reject Nisan 14 as a date for the church’s celebration of Passover. Chrysostom also reiterates the view expressed by Constantine

34 Chrysostom, Discourses Against Judaizing Christians, 55, 57; italics mine.
and the Council bishops that the church should not be dependent on Jews.

**Restoring a Table Fellowship of Jews and Gentiles in Messiah**

How should twenty-first-century Gentile Christians view all of this? Is anti-Semitism a legitimate basis for ecclesial decision-making? And if not, should the Council of Nicaea’s decision concerning Passover be reassessed? What is wrong with depending on Jewish people for determining times of Christian worship? Were not Jesus and the apostles Jews?

I submit that the church should depend on the Jewish people and that it falls short of being the church when it does not. *This is because the church is called to be a table fellowship of Jews and Gentiles united in Messiah.* By God’s design, this relationship is supposed to be characterized by interdependence and mutual blessing. Dependence on Jewish people is therefore a sine qua non of what it means for the church to be fully the church.

Why did God design the church this way? According to Paul, it was for the purpose of *mutual humbling.* Jews are to be dependent on Gentiles and Gentiles on Jews so that both may be brought low and lifted up by God:

> If some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive root, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. ...So do not become proud, but fear. ...

For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. Lest you be wise in your own sight, *I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers:* a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved. ...As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you who were at one time disobedient to God now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they may also now receive mercy. *For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.* Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord?” . . . To him be glory forever! (Rom. 11:17-36).

Paul wanted Gentile believers to have a profound awareness of their dependence on Jewish people. Then they would not be “arrogant” or conceited in how they related to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom. 11:18, 25).
In the second century, when Gentile churches depended on Jewish bishops to determine the date of Passover, the church experienced peace and unity.\textsuperscript{35} A table fellowship existed between Jews and Gentiles in the Messiah. Two hundred years later, the decision at the Council of Nicaea to reject all dependence on Jews had the effect of removing Jews from the table and making the church an all-Gentile fellowship,\textsuperscript{36} a deformity never envisioned by Jesus and his Jewish apostles.

My point is that at the heart of the Quartodeciman controversy, and its resolution at the Council of Nicaea, was a larger ecclesiological question that centered on the nature of the church and its relationship to the Jewish people. Three hundred bishops decided at Nicaea that the church did not need the Jewish people: “Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way” (Eusebius, \textit{Vit. Const.} 3.18). The subsequent annual observance of Passover/Easter on a date decided by Gentiles, and on a day other than Nisan 14, was a symbolic statement that the predominantly Gentile church was no longer committed to learning from or relating to the Jewish people. For seventeen centuries the Gentile wing of the church has failed to repent of this sin of independence, and this obstinacy has led to the church being blind to its Jewish roots, blind to its Jewish brothers and sisters, blind to its replacement theology, and blind to its anti-Semitism.

How can the church repent of this sin of independence? A start would be to acknowledge the sin and ask the Lord and the Jewish people for forgiveness. Repentance should include turning away from the path of independence and returning to some degree of dependence. In light of this study, I would suggest that repentance ought to involve, among other things, revisiting the Council of Nicaea’s decision concerning Passover/Easter. This could take various forms. Some churches might affirm their ecclesial relationship with the Jewish people by celebrating Passover on Nisan 14 (as Polycarp and the Asian churches did). This would involve learning from Jewish people how to follow the Jewish calendar. Other churches might encourage their members to celebrate Passover at a local synagogue on Nisan 14 like the members of John Chrysostom’s church did, but with the church’s full blessing. Or a church might host a Passover \textit{seder} of their own on Nisan 14 (\textit{in addition to} having an Easter Sunday service), and plan the \textit{seder} in consultation with a Jewish ecclesial leader so that it is done in a way that shows respect for sacred symbols and honors the Jewish community while lifting up the name of Jesus. A more

\textsuperscript{35} Epiphanius, \textit{Pan.} 70.10.3-5.

\textsuperscript{36} The Second Council of Nicaea (787 CE) was the first ecumenical council to explicitly ban Jesus-believing Jews who lived as Jews from the church (canon 8). They were expected to renounce all ties to Jewish life through baptismal confessions, e.g., “I do here and now renounce every rite and observance of the Jewish religion, detesting all its most solemn ceremonies and tenets that in former days I kept and held. In the future I will practice no rite or celebration connected with it, nor any custom of my past error, promising neither to seek it out nor to perform it” (Of Erwig, Leg. Vis. 12.3.14). See James Parkes, \textit{The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism} (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 395.
integrative approach would be to have a Maundy Thursday service that focuses on Passover. This could be done in conjunction with inviting a local Messianic rabbi to share with the church about the meaning of Passover.

Whatever is done to address the Council of Nicaea’s decision regarding Passover/Easter, the date is not the main issue. The core issue is the church learning again to depend on the Jewish people so that a relationship of interdependence and mutual blessing between Jews and Gentiles in the Messiah can be reestablished, so that the schism within God’s people more widely can be healed, so that the church can be fully the church.

CONCLUSION

The first chapter of Genesis states that the Creator of the universe made the sun, the moon, and the stars as signs for the “fixed times” (Gen. 1:14). Israel received this cosmology on Mount Sinai and relied on astronomy and mathematics to understand how to calculate God’s fixed times of worship. First-century Jewish believers in Jesus continued to follow this calendar tradition, as does the Messianic Jewish community today. By contrast, the Gentile wing of the church charted a different course and developed a calendar that retained only a few of the Jewish festivals in modified form, Passover being the most prominent. In the beginning, Gentile Christian leaders depended on Jewish people to determine the date of Passover through intercalation. However, in time the Council of Nicaea ended this practice for anti-Semitic reasons: Christians should not rely on Jews since Jews are detestable. The council decision had the affect of causing a schism within the people of God that has remained to this day.

Do Christians no longer need Jews as the Council of Nicaea claimed? Countering Paul van Buren’s argument that “Only one Jew is essential to the Church and that is the Jew Jesus,”37 Isaac Rottenberg points out that “Jewish-Gentile unity belongs to the esse [being], not just the bene esse [well-being] of the Church.”38 Markus Barth concurs:

The church is the bride of Christ only when it is the church of Jews and Gentiles ... the existence, building, and growth of the church are identified with the common existence, structure, and growth of Jews and Gentiles.39

If God designed the church to be a table fellowship of Jews and Gentiles, and the two are supposed to relate to one another in a spirit of interdependence and mutual blessing as Paul argues in Romans 11 and 15,

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then Gentile Christian respect for and dependence on the Jewish people is intrinsic to the nature of the church. Moreover, without this dynamic of interdependence, the church is not fully the church. I propose that the church needs to work on ways that it can recapture its identity as a table fellowship of Jews and Gentiles united in the Messiah.\(^{40}\) A redemptive step in this direction would be for the Gentile wing of the church to revisit the decision it made at Nicaea and recommit to learning from the Jewish people, beginning with conversations about Passover. For without understanding the historical, Biblical, and theological significance of Passover, and the science of worship behind this festival, it is impossible to grasp the full meaning of Easter.

\(^{40}\) “Traditionally, the church has understood itself as a spiritual fellowship in which the carnal distinction between Jew and Gentile no longer applies. The church has declared itself a third and final ‘race’ that transcends and replaces the difference between Israel and the nations. . . . The proper therapy for this misunderstanding is a recovery of the church’s basic character as a table fellowship of those who are—and remain—different. The distinction between Jew and Gentile, being intrinsic to God’s work as the Consummator of creation, is not erased but realized in a new way in the sphere of the church. The church concerns the Jew as a Jew and the Gentile as a Gentile, not only initially or for the period of a few generations but essentially and at all times” (R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 169-70.)
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CHRIS BRUNO

HUMAN ORIGINS AND THE QUESTION OF GOD

In the summer of 2016, the Creation Museum in northern Kentucky opened the Ark Encounter, a replica of Noah’s ark built according to the specifications of Genesis 6. Answers in Genesis, the young earth creationist organization behind the project, raised over $30 million to build the ark, donated by churches and Christians with a strong commitment to the young earth creationist cause.

While the majority of pastors across all Christian denominations and an even larger majority of regular church attenders continue to affirm young earth creationism, a growing minority of evangelical Christians dissent from this view. Most prominent among such evangelical-friendly groups is the BioLogos Foundation. While they have not completed a $30 million capital campaign, the group’s influence and budget have grown rapidly since its 2008 launch. As I observe some of the skirmishes between Answers in Genesis supporters and BioLogos supporters—and many groups in between—I sometimes wonder whether the various camps do not fully appreciate the presuppositions of the others—and whether they do not fully realize their own. Presuppositions are tricky things, precisely because they are presupposed. They are foundations upon which we build other arguments or even the bedrock upon which we build our foundations; so even when those arguments are defeated, our presuppositional bedrock is often untouched. Thus, these groups often talk past each other even when attempting friendly dialogue.

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Therefore, rather than attempting to analyze the presuppositions behind any number of Christian views on the age of the earth, macroevolution, and the like, I want begin in a place in which most evangelical Christians can agree. Although I do not appropriate his theological method, I want to implement Jürgen Moltmann’s suggestion to consider creation “from the end to the beginning” and ask how “Revelation chapter 21 sheds a special light on Genesis 1.”4 That is to say, we will consider how our understanding of the new creation should influence the way we think about the first creation.

In what follows, I will briefly sketch an evangelical theology of new creation, along with six premises that are necessary components of this theology.5 From this I will consider whether and how these premises could help inform our understanding of the first creation. Finally, I will attempt to draw some conclusions about how these premises should inform our pastoral practice.

II. A BRIEF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY OF NEW CREATION

While Christians have always confessed belief in the resurrection of the body and the world to come, there has at times been confusion about the nature of this coming world. For example, some dispensationalists in the early twentieth century made the strange argument that the church was God’s “heavenly people” while Israel was God’s “earthly people.”6

But evangelical Christians should never allow for this kind of confusion, and, thankfully, the doctrine of the new creation is being recovered among most evangelicals.7 Nevertheless, we cannot assume that all Christians share the same definition of the new creation. Therefore, while some may frame it differently, in what follows I am attempting to articulate an intentionally evangelical theology of the new creation.


5 The label “evangelical” is liable to misunderstanding, perhaps now more than ever. However, in this essay I’m assuming Timothy Larsen’s emphases when describing an evangelical as an “orthodox Protestant...who stands in the tradition of the global Christian networks arising from eighteenth-century revival movements...who has a preeminent place for the Bible...who stresses reconciliation with God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross...and who stresses the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual” (Timothy Larsen, “Defining and Locating Evangelicalism,” in The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology, eds. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 1).

6 Lewis Sperry Chafer argued, “The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity” (Dispensationalism [Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1936], 107).

A. THE NEED FOR NEW CREATION

Our understanding of new creation cannot begin in Revelation, but rather must begin in the first chapters of Genesis. Whatever evil the Fall brought into the world, God intended to remedy from the first. Thus, before we begin thinking about a Christian theology of new creation, we have to recognize the need for the new creation. This requires that we start with the original creation.

During the creation week, we see God bringing order out of chaos. After the formation of the earth, it was, to use a technical term, a big mess, “a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness.” In what follows, God brought order out of that chaos so that the whole of the ordered creation was “very good” (Gen 1:31). When we are speaking about creation, therefore, we must first recognize that God’s creative work moves from chaos to order. This is confirmed as the pattern of the Scriptures moving forward is that sin brings judgment that amounts to chaos—a kind of decreation.

Perhaps the best known example of this is the decreation that accompanies the plagues in Egypt. Rather than animals on land and in the sea springing to life and presumably coexisting peacefully with human beings, the livestock in Egypt were diseased and dying, and locusts and gnats were giving the Egyptians anything but peace. Rather than water finding its proper order, the water turned to blood. And in the place of light, the ninth plague brought darkness to the land. Therefore, a Christian view of the new creation includes the recognition that sin has brought chaos into the world, but, as we will see, God’s new creative work is designed to reorder the creation to reflect and even advance his intended order for creation.

B. PROMISED NEW CREATION

Most theologians (rightly) read Genesis 3:15 as an implicit promise to correct all that had gone wrong in the Fall. The offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent and in so doing defeat all the wrong that sin had brought into the world. This hope is advanced first in the

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8 Genesis 1:2, The Message.
9 Gordon Wenham observes, “The harmony and perfection of the completed heavens and earth express more adequately the character of their creator than any of the separate components can” (Genesis 1–15, WBC 1 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987], 34).
10 Some claim that the pronouncement that the creation was “very good” does not eliminate the place for chaos in the unfallen world. Jon Levenson, for instance, argues that overemphasizing the removal of chaos in Genesis 1 provides “a false finality” to the goodness of God’s creation and does not deal seriously with “the fragility of the created order and its vulnerability to the forces counteracting creation” (Jon D. Levenson, Creation and Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], xxix). However, Levenson’s view fails to account for the authority attributed to God in Genesis 1 and the radical damage that the entrance of sin and the Fall bring to the world. The threat of chaos reentering the garden does not come from forces existing outside of the garden, but rather from the sin that arose within the garden itself. In short, when sin enters the world, it reverses the good order of creation.
subsequent chapters of Genesis and then throughout the OT. In Genesis 4:1 Eve’s words at Cain’s birth hint at the expectation that the Lord will act on behalf of his people. Lamech’s hope for Noah in Genesis 5:29 confirms this expectation. The Lord would bring relief from the curse that sin had brought into the world. Indeed as God reveals more of his redemptive plan throughout the OT, his renewal of his people and the creation itself often echo the description of the original creation. This is evident at three key points in the OT.

First, during the flood, the earth was again in a state of chaos, but the account of Noah’s departure from the ark echoes the first creation. Genesis 8 parallels Genesis 1 in several places. In Genesis 1:2, darkness was over the deep of the earth, and God’s Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters. In Genesis 8:1-2, the “wind” (רוּחַ) blew over the waters of the earth. Genesis 1:9 speaks of God gathering the waters so that dry ground appeared; in Genesis 8:3-5 the peaks of the mountains emerged. Also, birds and then land animals are present in both Genesis 1:20-25 and 8:6-19. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the creational blessing and mandate of Genesis 1:28 is reiterated to Noah in Genesis 9:1-2.

The next and perhaps best known OT event with significant new creational imagery is the exodus. As we noted above, the Egyptian plagues are seen as a type of a return to the chaos before creation; therefore, it is unsurprising to find new creation language describing the exodus from Egypt. As Israel crossed the Red Sea on their way out of Egypt, waters are divided so that dry land appears (Exod. 14:21) after a wind (again, רוּחַ) from God blew over the sea (Exod. 15:12). The comparisons continue after Israel passed through the Red Sea. As, among others, Beale and Walton have argued, the tabernacle and later the temple are reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. When the tabernacle was finished, everything was done as the Lord had commanded—just as the first creation was what God had intended it to be.

Finally, the prophets describe the exile and return with new creation language. Just as was the case with the plagues, the prophets sometimes use language to describe Israel’s exile as a type of chaos or decreation. Jeremiah describes what Judah would look like after the exile with language that points back to the chaos at the outset of the creation week: “I looked on the land, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light” (Jer. 4:23). The formless land, the reference to the heavens, and the darkness all make the echoes of Genesis 1:2 clear.

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12 For example, Peter J. Kearney argues that the seven speeches in Exodus 25-31 point us back to the seven days of creation (“Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Exod 25-40,” ZAW 89 [1977]: 375-87).
Although the exile was another return to chaos, in their descriptions of the new creation, the prophets consistently point back to the first creation. In Isaiah, for example, it is sometimes difficult to discern whether the prophecies refer to the first creation or the new creation event. At times the creation of the universe is clearly in view (Isa. 40:28). Elsewhere the prophet refers specifically to the creation of Israel itself (Isa. 43:15). Still other places point to the promised renewal of the whole earth (Isa. 65:17). That these references are intermingled indicates that all are to be read through the same lens: God’s creative power.

The question might arise at this point about whether any of this is relevant to the creation debate. After all, isn’t much of the new creation language in the Old Testament metaphorical? That is to say, if new creation is a symbolic way of describing God’s redemptive work, is any of this permissible evidence in the discussion? While I will not answer this question in full just yet, we can observe that the creation metaphors do point both backward and forward to actual events. Therefore, if God’s redemptive work is a metaphor for both first creation and new creation events, the metaphorical elements are those that they share in common. In the OT these elements include God’s creative power and his commitment to rescue his creation from sin and death.

C. Inaugurated New Creation

With the resurrection of the Messiah Jesus, the promised restoration and new creation has made a beachhead in the world. We could demonstrate this from several places and indeed from the whole scope of the NT, but 2 Corinthians 5:17 may give us one of the clearest windows into the way the apostles understand the relationship of the new creation promises and the coming of the Messiah.

While many translations render 2 Corinthians 5:17 “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation,” the second part of the verse is somewhat ambiguous.13 A wooden translation of the text would be something like, “If anyone is in Christ, new creation.” Beyond this, as most scholars acknowledge, Paul is likely alluding to Isaiah’s prophecies of new creation in this verse (specifically Isa. 43:18-19; 65:17).14 Thus Paul sees the promise of the new creation in some sense present now. In response Beale asks, “How could Paul be describing the actual dawning fulfillment of Isaiah 43 and 65 when the old earth is still here and Christians still have old, fallen bodies in which they exist?”15 The answer he provides, with which most Christian theologians would agree regardless of how they translate this verse, is that “the new creation is here in part but not in its completeness.”16

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13 Translations that follow this reading include ESV, NASB, HCSB, and AV, although it should be noted that the AV italicizes the words “he is.”
It is therefore likely that Paul is making a general statement about the new creation. Thus the NIV translation of 2 Corinthians 5:17 is preferable: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come.” In other words, Paul is saying that when someone is united by faith to Christ, that is an evidence that the new creation has dawned.

In the previous chapter, Paul described the conversion experience with creational language: “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). He then points to the cross and resurrection as the locus of the new creation. After describing the connections between the suffering of Jesus and that of the Christian in verses 7-12,17 he reminds the Corinthians that they are united to Christ in his resurrection (v. 14). We might even say that at the cross we can see another decreation. At the cross there was again darkness instead of light, death instead of life. But on the other side of that chaos of death, Jesus emerged from the grave. In his resurrection Jesus defeated sin and death once and for all. As he continues this argument in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul then concludes that when anyone is united to the Messiah, it is evidence that the new creation has dawned. But of course that is not the end of the story, for the Bible also speaks of the future consummation of this new creation, when God makes all things new.

**D. Consummated New Creation**

While the cycle of creation—chaos—new creation is repeated several times in the Bible, we must also recognize that this cycle moves toward a climax in the new creation. Mark Harris is therefore correct to observe, “The new creation which is born of the Exodus, namely the settlement in the land of Canaan, was by no means the final redemption. Instead, it soon led to many further such cycles of creation, fall, and then redemption.”18 However, he then suggests that a linear view of history must be modified to account for these cycles. He further suggests the scientific phenomenon of “self-organized criticality,” in which a system is “perpetually teetering on the brink of transforming into a new type of existence.”19 Yet this analogy fails to account for the forward motion and eventual upward trajectory of these cycles in Biblical history. To observe the correspondence between events in Biblical history is very different than conceding a cyclical view of history. At the end of the day, an evangelical theology of new creation must end with the climactic new creation event itself.

Several texts throughout both Old and New Testaments refer to this consummation of the new creation; however, we briefly will comment on

17 While Paul specifically refers to his own suffering here, Scott Hafemann is correct to observe that “all of us can follow Paul’s example of incurring the suffering that comes from considering the needs of others more important than our own” (2 Corinthians, NIVAC [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000], 196).
19 Harris, Nature of Creation, 180.
two NT texts that must shape our understanding of the final new creation event: 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 21. Before considering how these texts contribute to an evangelical theology of creation, we should note that these texts, and others like them, demand an eventual transformation of the cosmos. While Christians have disagreed and will disagree about the timing and nature of this transformation, the virtual consensus of the Christian tradition is that the world one day will be radically and wholly remade.

We can be grateful for a renewed emphasis on the new creation and the continuity between this world and the one to come among many Christians; however, some of these same Christians (and non-Christians) assume that 2 Peter 3:10-13 presents a somewhat different picture. For example, J. N. D. Kelly argues that the text teaches “the world will be finally annihilated by fire.”\(^{20}\) More recently, Harris asserts that in 2 Peter 3, “the present heavens and earth’ (v. 7) will be burnt up and consumed by fire on the ‘day of the Lord’ (v. 10).”\(^{21}\) However, this reading is based on an unreliable text and/or a misunderstanding of Peter’s imagery.\(^{22}\)

In order to understand this text, we must properly interpret three key phrases in verse 10: (1) the heavens will pass away with a roar; (2) the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved; and (3) the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

First, “the heavens will pass away with a roar” is a likely reference to the removal of the sky as a barrier between heaven and earth. That is to say, “the heavens” here does not refer to a typically modern concept of heaven as the place where we go when we die. Rather, it refers to the understanding of heaven as a protective dome of sorts that lies over the earth.\(^{23}\) The point is that the barrier between the earth and what lies beyond will be removed. As Jonathan Moo and Robert White describe it, “the earth is about to be visited by its Creator, Judge and Redeemer.”\(^{24}\) Second, contrary to the popular song lyrics, the dissolution of the heavenly bodies does not refer to the melting away of the earth like snow.\(^{25}\) Rather, it likely refers to the further dissolution of the barrier between heaven and earth. That is to say, after the upper levels of the heavens are removed, the heavenly bodies are dissolved so as no longer to stand in between earth


\(^{21}\) Harris, *The Nature of Creation*, 170.

\(^{22}\) The AV and other older English translations render the last verb in verse 10 as “shall be burned up” (κατακαήσεται), based on the Byzantine textual tradition. However, as most modern translations attest, “will be found out” (εὑρεθήσεται) is the more difficult, earlier, and best supported reading.


\(^{24}\) Jonathan A. Moo and Robert S. White, *Let Creation Rejoice: Biblical Hope and Ecological Crisis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2014), 120.

\(^{25}\) Before blaming Chris Tomlin or other more recent artists for ruining “Amazing Grace,” we should note that this was John Newton’s original lyric in the last stanza (see John Newton, “Amazing Grace,” in *Olney Hymns* [1779], no. 41).
and its creator. Finally, in the third phrase, the earth and its works are exposed for judgment.

Moo and White helpfully describe the sequence here: “(1) the outer heavens are torn away, (2) the intermediary heavenly bodies are dissolved with fire, and then (3) the earth itself and all the things done in it are laid bare before God. ...There is no longer anything left to separate or hide human beings from the testing fire of God’s judgment.” Thus, in 2 Peter 3 the earth is by no means dissolved or wiped away. Rather, it is prepared for the judgment that prepares it for the consummation of the new creation: “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (v. 13).

When we consider the beautiful picture of the new creation in Revelation 21, there is less controversy to sort out. While the glorious new heavens and new earth, the new Jerusalem where righteousness dwells, evoke images from all over the Bible, the garden imagery is perhaps the clearest of these pictures. This imagery reminds us that when he makes all things new, God will finally undo the pain, sin, sickness, and death that the Fall brought to the universe. Moreover, it reminds us that the creation itself has some level of permanence and that there is continuity between the creation and the new creation. This glorious consummation is the culmination of history to which an evangelical theology of new creation must lead.

Just as it is in the history of redemption, God’s creative power will be on display through all of eternity when he makes all things new. While some of his proposals may press beyond the veil, John Polkinghorne is correct to call the new creation ex vetere—out of the old. Whereas suffering and death were in some sense a necessary part of the old creation, in this transformed reality the creation “enters freely into a new and closer relationship with its Creator, so that it becomes a totally sacramental world, suffused with the divine presence.” It does not take long for reflection to turn to speculation about the nature of this reality, but it is reasonable to assert that the substance will in all likelihood exceed our speculations.

III. FOUNDATIONAL NEW CREATIONAL PREMISES

Based on this understanding of new creation, I propose six premises that must stand behind and flow from this evangelical theology of the new creation. These are not intended to be exhaustive; nor are they intended to be a mere Christianity approach to the new creation. Rather, insofar as one can accept the evangelical theology of new creation outlined above, I believe the following premises are necessary and foundational: 1) God is and he has spoken; 2) the world as we see it is fallen; 3) the world will be made right again; 4) there is both a both a “salvation-historical” and an “apocalyptic” aspect to the new creation; 5) this world and its works have

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26 Moo and White, *Let Creation Rejoice*, 122.
some level of permanence; and 6) there is continuity between creation and new creation. We can address each of these briefly in turn.

First, we must recognize that God is, that he has spoken, and that his speech has inherent authority. Regardless of how one interprets Genesis 1-2, it is impossible to deny that these chapters intend to emphasize the overwhelming power of God in creation. The universe behaves exactly as God intends it to behave. To argue otherwise is not only to lapse into a sub-evangelical view of the universe, it is also a sub-Christian view of the universe. Moreover, this view of God’s authoritative and powerful word is not limited to the original creation. God’s speech in creation sets a pattern that is repeated in his work of redemption. Just as the universe behaves as God intends it to behave, the patterns of redemption—up to and beyond the consummation of redemption in the new creation—also behave exactly as God intends them to behave. There will indeed never be a moment when the creation fails to submit to God’s authoritative word.

Next, regardless of the amount of chaos one might see in the pre-fall world, a second necessary premise is that the world as we now see it is broken. No orthodox Christian thinker can dispute this—we live in a fallen world. Therefore, we have to understand that both the world itself and our ability to perceive the world rightly are broken. We are looking at a cracked mirror with broken glasses. The recognition that both human beings and the world are fallen should keep us humble in many ways, not least of which in our confidence to speculate on what life might be like without sin, death, and the curse.

Closely linked to the second presupposition is a third, namely, that the world will one day be made right again and that this renewal has in some sense already begun through God’s redemptive plan. This demands a close link between creation and redemption. That is to say, God’s extraordinary, supernatural power and authority is operative in both the creation and redemption processes. Therefore, it would be a mistake to limit any discussion about either creation or redemption to “natural” or “ordinary” processes. Along with this we must also affirm that new creation itself is indeed a process that has begun already, but is not yet complete.

The tension between these “already” and “not yet” aspects of the new creation highlights a fourth presupposition. There is both a “salvation-historical” aspect and an “apocalyptic” aspect to the new creation. I offer this presupposition with a certain amount of hesitance, for I am not using these terms with the precision that some might demand. However, it is clear that the new creation is both a process that stands in continuity to what has come before and also a radical earth-changing event.

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29 We should note that the contrast and distinction between these two categories is often overblown. N. T. Wright is correct to observe, “We cannot expound Paul’s covenantal theology in such a way as to make it a smooth, steady progress of historical fulfillment; but nor can we propose a kind of ‘apocalyptic’ view in which nothing happened before Jesus is of any value even as preparation. In the messianic events of Jesus’ death and resurrection Paul believes both that the covenant promises were at last fulfilled and that this constituted a massive and dramatic irruption into the processes of world history unlike anything before or since” (Paul: Fresh Perspectives [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 54).
Our understanding of 2 Peter 3 helps us with a fifth presupposition. If I could put it somewhat simply, the earth is meant to endure. While the Bible may use language that refers to the “destruction” of some components of the earth as it now exists (such as in 2 Peter 3), this does not imply that the earth will be disintegrated and God will start with something new. Rather, the implication is that, as in the Noahic flood, while there may be cataclysmic judgment, the earth itself will remain intact and will be renewed in the wake of this judgment. Thus, the universe that we see now is not a prototype that will be tossed aside when the final product is completed. Rather, it may be better to think of it as a first draft. Yes, there are certainly improvements to be made, but the structure will remain intact when the final draft is finished.

Our final premise is built on the fifth. There is a clear continuity and correspondence between this first creation and the new creation. In 2 Peter 3, the works done on earth will be exposed in the preparation for the new creation. We are being prepared now for life in the new creation. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the creation itself is in some way being prepared for the new creation. While the extent of that continuity must remain an open question, the repeated imagery that points us back to the original creation and the garden as well as the preparatory nature of the first creation demands that we affirm some level of continuity and correspondence.

These six premises do not exhaust our new creational theology. Without a doubt we could consider further premises and their implications. However, it seems that at least these six are necessary components of an evangelical theology of new creation.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIRST CREATION

As we continue to read backwards from the end to the beginning, we can next consider four ways in which the premises listed above (and, concurrently, an evangelical theology of the new creation) should inform our theology of origins and the original creation.

A. GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY IN CREATION IS ABSOLUTE.

First, as we consider the first premise above, we must recognize God’s absolute power. In his discussion of creation and redemption—that is, new creation—John Frame observes, “Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9). Since creation is such a vivid revelation of God’s lordship, we should expect significant parallels between creation and salvation.” In short, God is absolutely sovereign over both creation and new creation. We

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must recognize that, to use Frame’s terms, neither God’s authority nor his control over creation and new creation is ever in doubt.

Therefore, as others have noted, if God has authority and power to create, he also has authority and power to create freely. We can conclude then that there is no a priori theological problem with the assertion that God could have, if he so chose, created the universe with age. While some might use the term “perceived age,” I think that is a misleading term, for those who use that language typically argue that God would not use such a deceptive tactic. While it has become a bit of a cliché, the comparison to Adam and Eve holds here. If we grant that God could create human beings fully mature, we can also grant that God could create a universe with age.

However, it is also important to note that God’s absolute sovereignty does not demand that the universe be created with age. God, in his sovereign authority, has the right to create through a long process as well. This truth should remind us that both those who argue for a young earth and those who argue for an old earth need not disparage the other group by assuming they doubt or undermine God’s character or sovereign power.

B. Unfounded Presuppositions must not Undermine Scientific Data.

While the first implication lines up neatly with our first new creational premise, the following three implications emerge concurrently from the last five premises listed above. In short, these three implications should shape the way we view the intersection of science and Scripture.

If we consider the reality of the fallen world and the hope for a radical restoration and renewal, then we must recognize the tenuous nature of our knowledge and of the present order of the universe itself. Capitulation to scientism is no doubt a danger to be avoided. If we are honest, however, we must admit that through much of church history, an unwillingness to abandon unwarranted theological presuppositions has been, and remains, a danger as well.

It is easy to trot out the classic example of geocentrism as a misunderstanding of both science and the Bible to explain that when rightly understood science and the Bible do not conflict. In spite of giving lip service to this truth, many evangelical Christians operate from a fundamental distrust of science. But this distrust sometimes emerges in more subtle ways.

For example, a strongly pessimistic eschatology has likely led some evangelicals toward anti-authoritarian views on any government-funded scientific program. While it is virtually indisputable that the current condition of the government in the United States leaves much to be desired, we must not allow a mistrust of government that is rooted in
a faulty eschatology to distort our willingness to accept clear scientific progress.

C. SCIENTIFIC DATA MUST NOT UNDERMINE CLEAR BIBLICAL TEACHING.

We must not allow unfounded exegetical and theological presuppositions to undermine clear scientific data; however, neither can we allow scientific data to undermine what is clear from the Scripture. For example, as noted above, God intends for the earth and the universe itself to be permanent. Therefore, current scientific projections that anticipate the universe will end in five or more billion years must be interpreted in light of this reality.34

While current projections may be correct in leading to the conclusion that, given the present state of the universe, it will eventually either pull itself apart or snap back into microscopic proportions in the “big crunch,” we can have confidence that the present state of the universe is not the permanent state of the universe. Regardless of how we understand the mechanics of the new creation, we must not assume that the universe will continue to behave precisely as it does now. As John Polkinghorne correctly observes, “I do not think that the eventual futility of the universe, over a timescale of tens of billions of years, is very different in the theological problems that it poses, from the eventual futility of ourselves, over a timescale of tens of years.”35

This principle should also inform how we interpret other scientific data. If we truly believe that the “laws of science” were turned back once some two millennia ago in the resurrection of Christ and that those same laws will one day be permanently repealed in the resurrection of the saints, then we must recognize that the seemingly immutable laws of physics may indeed one day be altered in ways we cannot anticipate.

Moreover, we must not be too quick to concede long-cherished theological truth based on current scientific theory. Most notably, I cannot at this point see any faithful exegetical reading of either Genesis 2-3 or Romans 5 that can preclude the existence of a historical Adam.36 Thus, an argument from genetics or evolutionary theory against a historical Adam must not be allowed to undermine a faithful reading of the Scriptures.37 If we, as evangelicals, confess that the Word of God is truly inspired and without error, then we must be willing to admit that our incomplete scientific knowledge must not trump the clarity of God’s Word.


35 Polkinghorne, Faith of a Physicist, 163.


37 For example, see Harris, The Nature of Creation, 133-36.
In all of these considerations, we must admit that in spite of the rapid advances we have made in many areas of scientific understanding in the last century, our knowledge of the universe is less complete than we’d like to admit. Only within the last quarter century have scientists begun to understand the subatomic neutrino particle. We’ve learned that these particles are fundamental to the very fabric of the universe, yet they still remain frustratingly elusive.

Physicist Peter Gorham, one of the world’s leading authorities on neutrinos, has argued, “We need to find these neutrinos or we have real problems with our understanding of physics. ...These neutrinos are no longer optional.”38 However, Gorham and other physicists have yet to explain exactly how neutrinos behave. Nonetheless, these nearly massless particles without an electrical charge appear to be fundamental elements in the composition of the universe. In the 2007 documentary Encounters at the End of the World, Gorham further describes these particles: “They exist, but we can’t get our hands on them, because they seem to just exist in another place, and yet without neutrinos, the beginning of the universe would not have worked. We would not have the matter that we have today, because you couldn’t create the elements without the neutrinos.”39

If we are only beginning to understand these particles that are seemingly essential building blocks for the existence of the universe, then we must recognize that it is the height of hubris to claim that we have complete scientific knowledge about the origins of the universe. This is doubly true if we are serious about our evangelical convictions. We are fallen people who live in a fallen world and must interpret both the universe and our ability to understand it accordingly.

V. PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

The new creation is not an exact replica of the first creation, and we should not treat it as such. Nonetheless, a proper understanding of the creative work of God, his sovereign power, and the need for redemption should orient us toward a better starting point when considering this question. And this, in turn, will better prepare us to have a proper pastoral orientation when addressing these questions. Therefore, by way of conclusion I would like to consider five pastoral implications of what we have considered thus far.

A. TEACH A CLEAR PICTURE OF GOD AS CREATOR.

First, wherever we may land on questions of creation, evolution, and the age of the earth, we must not undermine or distort the primary


39 Peter Gorham, Encounters at the End of the World (directed by Werner Herzog; Discovery Films, 2007).
emphasis of the Scriptures when it speaks of these issues. Thomas Schreiner rightly notes, “One of the pervasive themes in the OT, from the very first verse, is that God is the creator of all that exists. Indeed, God’s role as creator is woven into the fabric of nearly every piece of literature. Since God is the creator of all, he is the sovereign Lord, who demands to be worshiped above anything or anyone in the universe.”

Both the creation and the new creation are consistently attributed to and placed under the authority of God’s sovereign rule in the Scriptures. If pastors and other leaders in the church leave their people with any other picture of God, then they are doing them a disservice. Rather, any teaching about creation should sound the same notes that the Bible does. When we teach about creation, our primary emphasis should not be the age of the earth, the processes of creation (or lack thereof), or some other secondary point. Rather, our emphasis should be on the power of God in creation and the worship that is due him because of this. If our thinking and teaching about creation does not lead us and those under our pastoral care toward worship, then we are teaching it wrongly.

B. TEACH A REALISTIC PICTURE OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

Considering the first creation in the light of the new creation reminds us that our present experience neither reflects the beginning nor the end. Because of the presence of sin in the world, we can neither understand fully what life was like before the Fall nor what it will be like in the new creation.

Thus as we seek to learn more about the world, as we endeavor to understand the Scriptures more clearly, and as we pursue the God who created all things, we must be honest about the reality of sin. Regardless of what role we think the chaos of death played before the Fall, there is no denying that our present experience is shaped by the chaos of sin and death in more ways than we realize. We therefore must be honest about this reality. We cannot sugarcoat the broken state of this world. This also then affects our ability, or lack of ability, to understand the past, present, and future state of the world with perfect clarity.

However, we must also paint a realistic picture of our hope. Many scientific models of the universe are fundamentally dismal. According to these, the universe began of its own accord, and it will one day fizzle out of its own accord. But that is not truly the end of the story. The Christian hope is that same God who made all things and who sustains all things will one day make all things new.

C. TEACH THE SCRIPTURES CAREFULLY AND ACCURATELY.

All evangelicals can agree that when properly understood, science and Scripture are in agreement. While we should not expect pastors to be experts in science, those who are entrusted with the preaching and teaching of the Word will lead the way in the careful exposition and

application of the Scriptures. Therefore, on the one hand we must be careful to understand symbolic and phenomenological language correctly. We cannot paint ourselves into a corner by interpreting symbolic or poetic language in any overly wooden or symbolic way. As noted above, a misunderstanding of 2 Peter 3 has led some well-meaning Christians to undermine the permanence or goodness of the creation.

However, perhaps the greater temptation is to paint ourselves into an opposite corner by capitulating on the clear teaching of Scripture in order to fit a current scientific theory. It is at this point that the historic creeds and confessions, along with other congregation-specific confessional documents, must play an important role. If our interpretation of science and the Bible puts us outside of our church’s confession, then conscience will demand that we either find common ground or withdraw for the sake of unity. If our interpretation puts us outside of the ecumenical creeds of the church altogether, then we must carefully consider whether we are truly interpreting Scripture as a disciple, let alone teacher, ought.

D. TEACH A ROBUST THEOLOGY OF CREATION AND NEW CREATION.

We also must not let unresolved questions about cosmology keep us from affirming the Bible’s teaching on creation and new creation. As noted above, the primary note that our teaching about creation must hit is the sovereign power and authority of God. Both creation and new creation emphasize this truth repeatedly.

We can also glean the goodness of creation from both the creation and the new creation. God created something truly good (Gen. 1:31), and that goodness remains intact in some sense even as we await the renewal of all things. So we can teach and model a robust embrace for God’s good gifts in creation. Not in such a way that the creation replaces the Creator, but in such a way that we can truly enjoy all of God’s gifts without guilt.41 This in turn should produce a proper hope for creation. We can enjoy and cultivate the creation now with the expectation that our efforts will carry over into the new creation, we can have confidence that there is continuity between this world and the next. And that confidence should produce a full-throated embrace of the creation in the present age.

Further, a Biblical understanding of these issues should give us a proper orientation toward creation and care and environmentalism. Others have written about this in greater detail, but here we can simply observe that a Biblical view of creation and new creation will preclude the extremes of both environmental abuse and earth worship.42

41 A recent and helpful guide on this point is Joe Rigney, The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).

42 See Moo and White, Let Creation Rejoice; Andrew J. Spencer, “Beyond Christian Environmentalism: Ecotheology as an Over-Contextualized Theology,” Themelios 40 (2015): 414-28; Richard Bauckham, The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010); Living with Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011); Russell D.
Finally, in all of these conversations we must pursue the unity that we already have in Christ. Within appropriate confessional boundaries (not least of which may be the ecumenical creeds and shared evangelical commitments), it may be appropriate to consider some of the issues surrounding the origins of the universe as *adiaphora*. That is to say, if one affirms that the same power of God on display in the new creation was also operative in the first creation and remains operative in the history of redemption, then there is room for unity in the midst of disagreement over many of these issues.

It is fitting to draw a parallel to the way many churches and denominational bodies view eschatology. Most evangelical denominations allow for unity in diversity with respect to specifics of eschatology as long as one affirms the literal return of Christ and the transformation of creation. So also, as long as one affirms God as the sovereign creator and human beings as the intentional creation of God, along with the historicity of Adam\(^\text{43}\) and perhaps other key events in the history of redemption, there is room for ongoing discussion and even disagreement about many of these issues.

Regardless of whether one contributes to the Noah’s Ark Encounter or to the BioLogos Foundation, serious Christians should be able to agree on much of what we have considered in this paper. After all, when the new creation comes, even those of us who disagree about the age of the earth and the mechanics of creation will dwell together in God’s kingdom forever, worshipping and delighting in the God who made us, redeemed us, and will forever sustain us.

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\(^{43}\) I recognize that some argue that the historicity of Adam and Eve should not be considered a boundary for orthodoxy or even evangelical identity; however, as noted above, I remained unconvinced that this is a viable evangelical option.
Our aim is to support the renewal of Christian wisdom in contemporary Reformed and evangelical churches: sponsoring historical scholarship at the intersection of the church and academy, building networks of friendship and collaboration within the Reformed and evangelical world, and equipping the saints with time-tested resources for faithful public witness.
Neuroscience and the Soul

The Human Person in Philosophy, Science, and Theology

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The relationship between faith and science is often characterized as a conflict, something akin to “a fight between a boa constrictor and a warthog; the victor swallows the loser.” Popular perception in our contemporary, Western culture is that this conflict isn’t much of a conflict at all, but a rout in which, as Bertrand Russell states, “science has invariably proved victorious.” Movements such as the “New Atheism,” so called because of its antagonistic stance toward faith and religion, have popularized the ideas that faith and science are incompatible ways of viewing the world and that faith has no place in a contemporary, scientific understanding of reality. Richard Dawkins, for example, believes the theory of evolution demands the rejection of God’s existence: “All appearances to the contrary, the only watchmaker in nature is the blind forces of physics, albeit deployed in a very special way. …Natural selection, the blind, unconscious automatic process which Darwin discovered, and we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind.” For many people, science has replaced faith as the ultimate source of wisdom and knowledge in all areas of thought and life, making faith at best superfluous and at worst dangerous.

Even those who do not view the relationship between faith and science in terms of a conflict tend to separate and compartmentalize them, effectively prioritizing science and minimizing faith. Stephen Jay Gould, an evolutionary scientist, proposed treating religion and science as “non-overlapping magisteria,” two different disciplines that both have valuable contributions to make as long as they stay separated, focusing on their respective domains. Paul Tillich elaborates on this approach: “Knowledge of revelation cannot interfere with ordinary knowledge.

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1 Gary L. Shultz Jr. is the Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Fulton, Missouri.
Likewise, ordinary knowledge cannot interfere with knowledge of revelation. There is no scientific theory which is more favorable to the truth of revelation than any other theory. It is disastrous for theology if theologians prefer one scientific view to others on theological grounds.”

While this understanding of faith and science seems to preserve the uniqueness and importance of both, in reality it is impossible to keep faith and science separated without making arbitrary distinctions and relegating faith to a subservient role. As D. A. Carson states, “For those who maintain that God and science occupy mutually exclusive turf, the sphere that is left to God, once science is finished, is very small.”

Unfortunately, the church has often embraced these ways of understanding the relationship between faith and science. On the one hand are those who have allowed science to dictate completely the terms of faith. Rudolph Bultmann is a classic representative of this understanding, famously stating in early twentieth-century terms, “It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.” In other words, whenever there appears to be a conflict between faith and science, faith must acquiesce. On the other hand, some have gone the opposite direction and determined that faith must dictate the terms of science, no matter what science seems to demonstrate. Henry Morris makes this claim: “God’s revelation in nature, therefore, must always supplement and confirm his revelation in Scripture. It cannot be used to correct or interpret it.” While this understanding seems to prioritize the inspiration and authority of Scripture, it seemingly fails to recognize the possibility of wrongly interpreting Scripture and the possibility of bringing science into dialogue with theology under the authority of Scripture.

Setting faith and science against each other or consigning them to their compartmentalized roles has caused widespread confusion among Bible-believing Christians when it comes to the relationship between science and faith. Many Christians today assume that accepting science as legitimate means rejecting faith and Scripture as illegitimate. As Timothy Larsen notes:

The result [of the notion of faith and science in conflict] has been a widespread suspicion of mainstream scholars by conservative Christians. The possibility of a vast godless, conspiracy by academics or scientists is a real one in many fundamentalist or conservative evangelical minds. … The notion of a war between faith and science

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has been so successful that now some conservative Christians can cavalierly dismiss the evidence for global warming as a result of human behavior—not on the basis of countervailing scientific evidence (a perfectly legitimate effort), but on the grounds that it comes from scientists who are opponents not to be trusted.11

Young adults often cite this confusion and suspicion between Christianity and science as a reason for disconnecting from the church or the faith, with one quarter of the respondents in a recent survey stating that they believe Christianity is anti-science and three out of ten stating that “churches are out of step with the scientific world we live in.”12

In light of the current perceptions of the relationship between faith and science, churches and pastors have a responsibility to help their people learn how to integrate faith and science in a coherent, non-compartmentalized way that takes science seriously while submitting to the full authority of Scripture. This integration should flow naturally from a gospel-centered pulpit and ministry. One of the primary ways to regain this integration is to recognize and emphasize the importance of the atonement in understanding creation, particularly the impact of the atonement upon the creation itself. As Jonathan Wilson notes in his work on the doctrine of creation, “One of the gravest errors we can make in our witness to the good news of Jesus Christ is to separate creation and redemption from each other. The place and meaning of creation are found in its redemption.”13 Failing to connect our understanding of the world and God’s redemptive activity in and of our world will inevitably lead to a bifurcation of faith and science.

Therefore, we need to understand and teach that the doctrine of the atonement, the heart of the gospel, has several implications for the integration of faith and science. Understanding how the atonement affects the entire creation helps us to understand how science is a worthwhile pursuit in light of the gospel and how it should be approached carefully and humbly in a creation marred by sin. Science is ultimately anticipatory and looks forward to a time when all things will be brought together in Christ. As Christians we should not be scared or ignorant of science, but instead work to see how it speaks to our faith and how we can use it to honor and worship our Lord and Savior. A biblical understanding of the cross helps us to see why and how we should do this.

I. THE COSMOLOGICAL ASPECT OF THE ATONEMENT

When sin entered the world, it not only marred the relationship between God and humanity, but it also disturbed the relationship of

13 Jonathan R. Wilson, God’s Good World: Reclaiming the Doctrine of Creation (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 49.
the entire creation with God, with the result that the creation itself looks forward to its freedom from sin’s bondage (Rom. 8:19-23). Sin negatively affected everything in God’s created universe, meaning that if all things are going to be set right, a cosmic triumph over sin is necessary. In order to accomplish this cosmic triumph over sin and the restoration of all creation, God reconciled all things to himself through the atonement of Jesus Christ, rescuing creation from the bondage of sin through the same redemptive work that rescues human beings from the bondage of sin. This cosmological aspect of the atonement is Scripturally seen in three ways: the Christus Victor aspect of the atonement, the concept of universal reconciliation, and Christ’s office as king.

A. Christus Victor

Christ’s atonement accomplished salvation and in so doing conquered the powers of evil, sin, and death by defeating Satan and the powers of darkness. This aspect of the atonement is referred to as Christus Victor, in that Christ through the cross gained victory over Satan and his demons. Christ’s triumph over Satan was predicted from the beginning of Scripture (Gen. 3:15) and anticipated by Christ himself in his earthly ministry (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Satan and his demonic powers wreak havoc throughout the cosmos (2 Cor. 4:4); therefore Satan’s defeat at the cross is necessary for Christ’s cosmic triumph over sin. As Herman Bavinck emphasizes, “All the power of sin on earth is connected with a kingdom of darkness in the world of spirits.” This cosmic triumph over the enemies of God begins in the atonement and will ultimately take place at the end of time, when Christ delivers up his kingdom to his Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:9-10). Christ achieved his cosmic victory over all sin and evil and reconciled all things to himself by paying for sin in his penal, substitutionary death. The gospel that saves human beings is the gospel that restores the universe as well. Each Scripture that highlights the

14 The nature of sin’s bondage over creation is affected by one’s understanding of the nature of creation and the age of the earth. However, Rom. 5:12 seems to require an explicit connection between sin and the entrance of death into creation, meaning that death was not present in the creation before Adam and Eve’s sin. I agree with Henri Blocher’s conclusion: “Though we feel uncomfortable with all the uncertainties when we try to correlate scientific data and the results of a sensible interpretation of Genesis 1-4, therefore, we may maintain as plausible the hypothesis that the biblical Adam and Eve were the first parents of our race, some 40,000 years ago; and we may posit an initial period of fellowship with God in their lives before they apostatized.” Henri Blocher, Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 42. For an alternate understanding of how death could be present in creation before Adam and Eve’s sin, see Wilson, God’s Good Creation, 118-20, 196-98.


Christus Victor aspect of the atonement indicates that Christ’s payment for sin is the foundation of his victory over Satan.

Colossians 2:13-15 is perhaps the clearest passage in this regard. It states, “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.” In the context of this passage, Christ’s payment for sin establishes his triumph over “the rulers and authorities.” The Colossian believers, despite their transgressions that leave them spiritually dead, are able to experience forgiveness and eternal life with Christ because Christ canceled “the certificate of debt” that stood against them. This canceling of their debt refers to God’s wiping away their sin through Christ’s death on the cross. It was in this act of canceling out the Colossians’ sins that Christ also disarmed the demonic rulers and authorities, publicly shaming them and triumphing over them. Satan and the demonic powers are no longer able to hold this world in captivity. As Clinton Arnold states, “By offering his life and spilling his blood, Christ could extend forgiveness of sin to his people. The powers thus lost their chief mechanism for holding people in bondage.”

Several other Scriptures reiterate this truth. First John 3:4-10 explains that Jesus’ mission was “to destroy the works of the devil” (v. 8). He did this by taking away sins (v. 5). Destroying the Devil’s work eradicates sin and lawlessness in general (v. 4) and specifically frees people to live righteously through salvation (vv. 6-7, 9-10). Jesus defeats the Devil because he takes away sin by paying its penalty in his substitutionary atonement. Similarly, the “brethren” of Revelation 12 are able to overcome Satan’s accusations against them by “the blood of the Lamb” (v. 10-11). Satan no longer has any power to accuse believers of their sin because their sin has been paid for and their guilt has been taken away by the atonement. As Henri Blocher notes, “Satan was the Accuser, and he prevailed as long as he could point to their sins. But the blood of the Lamb was the price paid for the cancellation of their debt. The blood of the Lamb wiped out the guilt of their sins forever, and the devil was disarmed.” Hebrews 2:14-17 also states that Christ, “through death,” rendered Satan, the one “who had the power of death,” “powerless” (v. 14), so that people might be freed from the fear of death (v. 15). In order to render Satan powerless Christ become incarnate “so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in

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18 Scripture quotations in this essay are taken from the New American Standard Bible.
things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (v. 17). Christ’s satisfaction of the Father’s just and holy wrath against sin on the cross overcomes even the ultimate power of evil that infects our universe.

B. UNIVERSAL RECONCILIATION

In conquering Satan and evil through his death, Christ also brings about universal reconciliation. Colossians 1:19–20 introduces this idea and explains how God brings it about: “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.” These verses are the end of what scholars generally consider to be a hymn focusing on the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things (Col. 1:15–20).22 The hymn begins in verses 15–16 by extolling the supremacy of Christ in creation. Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,” and all things in creation were created by Christ, through Christ, and for Christ.23 The middle of the hymn transitions from Christ’s supremacy in creation to his supremacy in redemption (vv. 17-18a). Not only is Christ before all things, not only do all things hold together in Christ, but Christ is also the head of the church and the firstborn from the dead. He has first place in everything, from creation to redemption to consummation. Verses 19-20 then describe why Christ is supreme not only over creation, but over redemption and consummation as well.

Jesus Christ is supreme over all things for two reasons. First, all of the Father’s fullness dwells in him (cf. Col. 2:9). This means that all of God’s divine essence and glory is found in Christ.24 Second, the Father has reconciled “all things” to himself through Christ’s atonement, “the blood of His cross.” The extent of Christ’s reconciliation in this passage depends on what the phrase “all things” means. One option is to understand it as only referring to believers, those who are actually reconciled, with the idea that only believers are reconciled to God.25 Others expand “all things” to include all human beings.26 A third option is to understand “all things” as only referring to the cosmic powers, and not to the world.

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22 Whether Paul composed this hymn or used an existing hymn for his own purposes, the theology is clearly Pauline and needs to be understood in its present context. See Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 108-110.

23 The phrase “firstborn of all creation” indicates Christ’s supremacy over all creation (Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 120).


of humanity.27 Still another option is to understand “all things” as all personal beings, including both humanity and the cosmic powers.28 All of these understandings, however, are problematic in light of the context of the passage.29 The phrase “all things” occurs five other times in Colossians 1:15-20, and each time it refers to the entire created universe, making it extremely likely that it refers to the same thing in 1:20.30 The reconciliation of “all things” by the blood of Christ in this passage is coextensive with the creation of “all things” by Christ mentioned earlier in Colossians 1:15-16.31 The phrase “all things” is also as broad as it possibly can be, as it is described as “things on earth or things in heaven.” This means that the work of reconciliation is as broad as it can be; it is on the widest possible scale; all things everywhere are reconciled to God by the atonement.32 “All things” cannot be limited to a certain part of creation, but must include everything in creation.

Further supporting this understanding of Colossians 1:19-20 is the truth that Christ’s lordship over all of his creation, as described in Colossians 1:15-18, has been disrupted by sin. As Douglas Moo states, “In speaking of the reconciliation of all things to Christ, the ‘hymn’ presupposes that the Lordship of Christ over all things (vv. 15-18) has somehow been disrupted. Though created through him and for him, ‘all things’ no longer bear the relationship to their creator that they were intended to have. They are therefore in need of reconciliation.”33 Sin has negatively affected everything in God’s created universe, necessitating the reconciliation of all things in the universe.34 It is not only humanity or the cosmic powers that need to be reconciled to God; everything in the universe has been tainted by sin and needs to be restored. As Ephesians 1:10 puts it, God’s intention through Christ’s redemption is “the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.”35

30 Moo, Colossians and Philemon, 134-35.
33 Moo, Colossians and Philemon, 134.
34 Bavinck, Sin and Salvation, 472.
35 Commenting on Eph. 1:10, Andrew Lincoln states, “Christ is the one in whom God chooses to sum up the universe, in whom he restores the harmony of the cosmos. Earlier, in Christ” has functioned to indicate Christ’s being the elect representative in whom believers are included, but now it can be seen that God’s comprehensive purpose goes beyond simply humanity to embrace the whole created order. This part of the berakah helps believers to recognize that to be incorporated into God’s gracious decision about Christ is also to be caught up in God’s gracious purpose for a universe centered and
Even though Colossians 1:19-20 teaches that everything in the universe is reconciled to God by the atonement, including all human beings, we should note that the context of the passage prevents any idea of universal salvation. The passage preceding Colossians 1:15-20, Colossians 1:12-14, describes what the Father does for believers. He qualifies believers to share in the inheritance of the saints (v. 12), he rescues them from the domain of darkness (v. 13), and he transfers them to the kingdom of his Son (v. 13), in whom they have redemption and forgiveness of sins (14). At the very least these verses imply that the Father does things for believers that he does not do for others, and that happens as they are saved in his Son. Following Colossians 1:15-20, Colossians 1:21-23 is even clearer in this regard. After proclaiming that Christ reconciled all things through his cross, Paul now explains how the Colossians themselves were reconciled as believers. Though the Colossians were sinners apart from God (v. 21), they were reconciled through Christ’s atonement so they could be presented holy before God (v. 22), and this reconciliation took place because of the Colossians’ faith in the gospel that Paul preached (v. 23). There is clearly a difference between the reconciliation accomplished by Christ in Colossians 1:20 and the Colossians’ reconciliation (1:21-23) and redemption (1:12-14). For the elect, the reconciliation that comes through faith in the gospel results in peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and peace with one another in the church as all barriers to fellowship are broken down in Christ (Eph. 2:14-16). Reconciliation with the Father in this life also means that the believer can be fully assured of reconciliation with the Father throughout eternity, as those related to God in Christ will always be in Christ (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:31-39).

This does raise the question then of the nature of universal reconciliation, or what peace with God through the blood of the cross looks like for those outside of Christ and creation itself. Those who never experience a saving relationship with God will still have a future experience of reconciliation with God, though this experience is radically different from the reconciliation of believers. There is an eschatological reconciliation in which all people will participate as God restores cosmic peace to his creation. While believers freely accept the peace brought about by the atonement and experience eternal life with God, God imposes this peace upon unbelievers. For this reason F. F. Bruce calls this aspect of reconciliation “pacification.” There is no glad surrender of unbelievers to the will of God, even though they now realize that they

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36 “Brought” translates as metestesen, a word that was used in secular literature in reference to removing persons from one country and settling them as colonists and citizens in another country. It might be rendered ‘reestablished.’ The tense of the verb points to the time of conversion. The ‘kingdom’ (rule) is not to be interpreted eschatologically. It was for the Colossians a present reality (cf. John 3:3-5). — Vaughan, Colossians, 180.

37 This is not to say that there aren’t present implications of universal reconciliation for creation and the nonelect (e.g., Rom. 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:14-21). See Gary L. Shultz Jr., “The Reconciliation of All Things in Christ,” Bibliotheca Sacra 167.4 (2010): 445-49.

38 Moo, Colossians and Philemon, 136-37; and O’Brien, Colossians, Philemon, 52-57.
ought to worship God and were wrong to sin against him. Instead God will decisively subdue their will to his, so that they can do nothing but serve his purposes. As Philippians 2:9-11 teaches, all things in heaven and earth and below the earth will bow before Jesus Christ and acknowledge him as Lord.39 Even unbelievers consigned to an eternal hell will acknowledge Jesus for who he is. Henri Blocher clarifies this truth:

The theory of sin forever flourishing ignores the message of Christ’s perfect victory over sin and evil. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess . . . (Phil 2:10ff.), those of the lost included. It cannot mean outward, hypocritical, and forced agreement; what sense could there be in any outward show in the light of that Day, when all secrets shall be exposed (Rom 2:16), before the God who is Spirit? Sinners are forced, then, to confess the truth, but they are forced by truth itself, by its overwhelming evidence and spiritual authority; they can no longer refuse to see, they cannot think otherwise. Through Christ, it has pleased God to reconcile, *apokatallaxai*, the whole universe, including all rebellious spirits (Col 1:20).40

As a result of the atonement, there will be peace even between God and those who never accept the provision of salvation he has made for them. The evil personal elements of creation, Satan, and his demons are reconciled in much the same way as unbelievers are, bringing peace to the entire universe as Christ’s victory accomplished through the cross is brought to fruition. Even Satan and his demons will one day bow down before Jesus and confess his lordship to the glory of God the Father, forever submitting to his sovereign rule. At the end of the Kingdom, after Satan has attempted one final rebellion against God (Rev. 20:7-9), he will be thrown into the lake of fire along with the eternally lost (Rev. 20:10), where he will no longer be a threat to God’s harmony and peace in creation. As Clinton Arnold states, “There is no part of the creation that will continue to work in open rebellion against Christ. His reign especially includes all principalities and powers.”41 Even angels will likely experience some kind of reconciliation with God, although Scripture nowhere hints at what this aspect of reconciliation might entail. They do not need reconciliation to God as human beings do, and they do not need to be pacified, but as members of the creation that was estranged

39 “Although all things will *finally* unite to bow in the name of Jesus and to acknowledge him as Lord (Phil 2:10, 11), it is not to be assumed that this will be done gladly by all.” O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 57, emphasis the author’s.

40 Henri Blocher, “Everlasting Punishment and the Problem of Evil,” in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 303. This is not a “fourth position” concerning the relationship between hell and salvation (in addition to the traditional view of hell, annihilationism, and universalism), as Stephen Williams proposes in “The Question of Hell and Salvation: Is There a Fourth View?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 57 (2006): 163-83. It is a modification of the traditional view, as punishment in hell is eternal, but it is imposed upon those who are eternally remorseful and ashamed, not on those who eternally rebel against God.

from God because of humanity’s sin, they too will likely participate in the reconciliation of all things brought about by Christ’s cosmic atonement (Rom. 8:19-23).42

Along with all of God’s people, the entire material creation will be renewed and cleansed from sin at the eschaton. As Bavinck states, “The whole creation as one day it will stand perfect—without spot or wrinkle—in God’s presence is the work of Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Heb 12:22-28).”43 Believers will dwell in new heavens and a new earth (Rev. 21-22) as Christ fulfills the cultural mandate and hands over his kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28).44 As Isaiah 60 and Revelation 21-22 describe, all of the sinful aspects of culture will be transformed and brought into the kingdom so that they can eternally glorify their Creator.45 God’s transformed people will dwell forever with God in God’s transformed place. All of this will occur because sin has been paid for, conquered, and vanquished by Christ’s atonement, resulting in the reconciliation of all things. There will be a day when the entire universe, including those who are forever lost, will experience universal reconciliation.

C. CHRIST AS KING

The final way in which Christ’s cosmic triumph over all sin can be seen in Scripture is through his work and role as king. Jesus is king not just because he is God incarnate, but because of his atonement and resurrection. Jesus repeatedly spoke of his crucifixion as something that he had to go through in order to receive the blessings and prerogatives of his kingdom (e.g., Mark 10:35-40; Luke 12:49-50). It is the “Lamb that was slain” who is worthy to receive power and glory on the throne (Rev. 5:11-14).46 As a result of his death and resurrection Christ presently sits at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33), is “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5), and is “head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22). Christ’s current session at the right hand of the Father is anticipatory, however, as he awaits the time when he will return and consummate his kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46). It is at Christ’s return that his kingdom will be visibly established over the entire earth (Rev. 19:11—20:6), sin and Satan will be conquered once and for all, and creation will be free (1 Cor.

42 Bavinck, Sin and Salvation, 471-73; see also Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 399.
43 Bavinck, Sin and Salvation, 473.
46 “The sacrificial death of the Lamb of God is clearly the basis for his worthiness, and in the book as a whole it entails the actual victory over Satan. It alludes back to 4:11, where God is ‘worthy of praise; now the Lamb is also “worthy.” The reasons for that worthiness are not spelled out here (as in vv. 4, 9), however, but summed up in the basic work of Christ, his sacrifice.” Grant R. Osborne, Revelation, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 262.
Christ’s atonement is inseparable from his rule and reign as king.  

Jesus’ rule and reign as King is implicit in the very idea of his cosmic triumph over sin. As we have seen, Jesus Christ reconciles all things because of his priestly work in the atonement (Col. 1:20), but all things are reconciled to Christ as he rules over them. Philippians 2:8–11 makes this clear when it states that it is because of Christ’s death on the cross (v. 8) that God has highly exalted Jesus (v. 9). On the basis of Christ’s humiliation, which climaxed in his atonement, God gave him the name of “Lord.” This name means that Christ is the sovereign ruler over the entire universe. Christ’s exaltation consists of all creatures bowing before Jesus (v. 10) and confessing his lordship, or his sovereign rule, “to the glory of God the Father” (v. 11). Even Christ’s authority to judge his creation as Lord and King is based upon his atoning work. Jesus is worthy to open the book with the seven seals (a work of judgment) because of his death on the cross (Rev. 5:9). Christ’s judgment contributes to his pacification, as peace is brought about through his justice.

As king, Christ not only saves and rules over his elect, but he will one day visibly rule over all creation, first in the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1–10), and then in eternity (Rev. 21–22). As king, Christ triumphs over and defeats Satan, sin, and death. All of this kingly work is universal. Christ is the ruler of his universe, the universe that he created (Col. 1:15–16). Christ’s universal rule is possible and certain because Christ has paid for sin and will one day reconcile all things to himself. The good news of the gospel is that the cross and the resurrection have implications “as far as the curse is found,” which is to say, for the entire universe.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND SCIENCE

The cosmological dimension of the atonement demonstrates that God cares for his creation and has a purpose for his creation, a purpose that extends into eternity. Science, broadly conceived, is concerned with extending our knowledge and understanding of creation. The gospel itself demands that Christians view the entire universe as significant and meaningful, because it is significant and meaningful to God. Christians therefore have a responsibility to encourage and pursue scientific

47 Though Christ’s kingdom is future, there are certainly present implications and experiences of the kingdom (e.g., Col. 1:13), an already/not yet inherent in the nature of the atonement and salvation.
48 For a systematic defense of this, though from a different eschatological perspective, see Jeremy Treat, The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).
50 Osborne, Revelation, 249.
51 The word science is notoriously difficult to define. For a brief history of how the term has been understood, see David K. Clark, To Know and Love God: Method for Theology, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003), 260.
investigation, working to understand how a new way of thinking about the world might impact their faith, without compromising the authority of the Word. At the same time, however, Christians must realize that in a sin-cursed world any scientific pursuit must be a chastened and humble one and that faith is a legitimate way of gaining knowledge in this fallen world. The atonement leads us to appreciate the anticipatory nature of scientific discoveries, as the creation is not yet what it will be.

A. SCIENCE IS A WORTHWHILE PURSUIT

Christ created all things, sustains all things, and has reconciled all things (Col. 1:15-20). Therefore, all science is a God-given activity, and there is no possibility of discovering knowledge that is somehow independent from God. God created human beings in his image and then commanded them to “subdue” and “rule over” the earth (Gen. 1:27-28), which includes caring for creation and even uncovering the wonders of creation, as evidenced by Adam’s subsequent relationship with animals. Science is part of the cultural mandate given to human beings by God.52 While sin distorts the image of God, including scientific pursuit, the goal of redemption is that we might become “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29). The atonement frees human beings to image God once again in their relationship to creation, and it encourages us to understand that creation is also being “set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). Christians cannot be anti-science or compartmentalize knowledge of the created universe and knowledge of God as if these were completely separate pursuits. Instead Christians must recognize that Christ’s work of redemption brings together faith and science.

Pursuing scientific inquiry in light of the atonement means resisting and countering the idea that faith and science are in conflict. Alvin Plantinga notes that the reason so many Christians, indeed so many religious people in general, are suspicious of science is because of the insistence of many in the scientific community that science and faith are incompatible.53 This insistence not only makes religious belief less appealing to those who respect science, but it damages science as well, as those who embrace religious belief reject it because it seems to contradict their faith. Yet it is impossible to approach any scientific inquiry without some kind of faith, religious or not. As Owen Gingerich remarks, “What is accepted today as science is commonly colored by personal beliefs, including our religious or antireligious sentiments. If someone tells you that evolution is atheistic, be on guard. If someone claims that science tells us we are here by pure chance, take care. And if someone declares that the magisteria do not overlap, just smile smugly and don’t believe it.”54

54 Owen Gingerich, God’s Planet (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 153.
The alleged conflict between science and faith is a superficial one at best. Plantinga, for example, demonstrates repeatedly how the supposed conflicts are driven by methodological presuppositions and are not really conflicts at all. Regardless of what one believes about the theory of evolution or the age of the earth, there are explanations of how these beliefs are compatible with the Christian faith. Whether one understands divine action in the universe in light of Newtononian and Laplacean physics or quantum theory, these ways of thinking are compatible with the Christian faith. There are disciplines such as evolutionary psychology and historical criticism that seem to directly contradict the cardinal tenets of Christianity, including the belief in an actual God and the authority of Scripture, but these disciplines rule out the possibility of the supernatural as an essential part of their methodology. Therefore Christians who believe in the supernatural need not be challenged by their conclusions. Faith and scientific inquiry are two distinct ways of gaining knowledge and understanding our world, but in light of God's creative and salvific works, they are complementary and actually require one another. They are not in opposition.

Integrating faith and science is not a new enterprise for the church, but something the church needs to recover in light of contemporary challenges. In the second century Justin Martyr interacted with the philosophical and scientific teaching of his day, wrestling with Socratic and Platonic thought and how it fit with the Christian faith. Augustine appealed to the current scientific understanding of the universe when he thought it aided the understanding of Scripture or doctrine. Thomas Aquinas sought to systematize the faith in light of a rediscovery of Aristotle's way of viewing the world. Galileo labored to demonstrate how his scientific discoveries were compatible with the Christian faith. One can even understand aspects of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation as resulting from an appropriation and interaction with Humanist thought. Some of these ways of integration might seem suspect today, but their example helps us understand how the gospel calls us to take truth and even possible truth about creation seriously, wherever it is found.

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B. SCIENCE IS AN ANTICIPATORY PURSUIT

While the church should understand the integration of faith and science as a worthwhile and necessary pursuit, we must also understand that the atonement teaches us it is an anticipatory pursuit. The atonement has taken place, sin and Satan have been defeated, but ultimate reconciliation is still a future occurrence. The creation, marred by sin, is not yet what it will be, and neither are the human beings investigating creation. This is part of the already/not yet aspect of eschatology. As Robert Letham states, “Christ’s victory over Satan is decisive but, in the context of biblical eschatology, its manifestation awaits his return. Therefore, we still see much damage done by Satan. It is essentially the same with the problem of sin. Christ redeemed us from the bondage of sin and bought us for God. Nevertheless, we still sin and will not be free from sin in a final sense until Christ returns and our salvation is brought to its consummation. The victory is a present reality but not yet manifested fully.”

The atonement makes scientific investigation possible and worthwhile, but it also indicates that science, like any other human endeavor, will never be flawless or perfect in this age. Science, as an interpretation of some aspect of creation, is provisional, the best understanding possible at the present moment. Steve Bishop notes, “Observation is not neutral. Observation is theory-dependent; it is therefore impossible to be a neutral observer. What we will ‘see’ will depend on what we know and what we expect to see.” As with all pursuits of knowledge, fuller understanding awaits the new heavens and the new earth, the glory of the resurrection, when sin no longer clouds our perception and impacts our understanding. Christians do not need to appropriate or reject science uncritically, fearful because they do not understand how an apparent truth coheres with revealed truth. Further investigation may shed light on a particular issue, or it may be there are things we will never know for sure. At the same time, Christians should not fear reexamining their interpretations of Scripture in light of new scientific understanding. The gospel should lead us to have a humbled, chastened attitude toward knowledge and the integration of knowledge as we await the fullness of our salvation and the reconciliation of all things.

This understanding of the pursuit of science as anticipatory should result in an ongoing dialogue between faith and science. As David Clark indicates, however, Christians often balk at the idea of a dialogue between science and faith because if the Bible is the ultimate authority, it seems that faith should always trump science. A dialogue does not mean jettisoning Biblical authority or allowing science to trump Scripture. It means bringing a particular scientific discovery or theory into conversation with the Christian faith as a whole, typically from a specific Christian tradition.

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64 Michael Polanyi has demonstrated the subjective component of all scientific knowledge. E.g., Science, Faith and Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).
66 Clark, To Know and Love God, 286.
or a particular doctrine. Clark explains: “We bring interpretations of Scripture—theology—into conversation with interpretations of nature—science. So, we do not allow science to supersede the Bible itself. We allow it to override interpretations of the Bible. No particular scientific theory, model, or idea possess authority over Scripture, but there could be a scenario where a scientific claim trumps the deliverances of theology.”

Science should never override the clear teaching of Scripture. Certainly there are some scientific models that directly contradict Scripture, such as a naturalistic Darwinism. However, there are a variety of understandings among Bible-believing Christians concerning issues such as the age of the earth and the rest of the universe, the way God created the universe, the nature of a historical Adam and Eve, and other such issues where the possibility of erring in one’s interpretation of Scripture must be taken into account.

Christians must be content with some mystery not only in their theology but in science as well. Such mystery is inherent in the way things currently are. Commenting on the role of faith in any pursuit of knowledge, John Polkinghorne states, “Recognition of the limitations of ratiocination is not indulgence in anti-intellectualism, but rather the avowal that knowledge has a broader base than that afforded by atomized argument alone.” Integrating faith and science means recognizing that there might not be answers presently for every question or solutions for every problem. This is why an ongoing dialogue is necessary, driven by a gospel-centered faith that science is a worthwhile pursuit. The church does not need to abandon the conversation when scientific conclusions challenge or contradict Scripture, but to continue the hard work of seeking understanding of the creation in light of the Creator’s revealed Word.

III. CONCLUSION

Preaching and living the truth of the gospel means doing more than telling people that Jesus died and rose again that they might be born again (though it doesn’t mean less than that). Preaching and living out the truth of the gospel means helping people to understand God’s cosmic plan to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10) and how everything, including science, must be understood in light of that plan. The entire universe, though currently marred by sin, is important to God and has been reconciled to him through the blood of the cross (Col. 1:20). Evil is coming to an end, and Christ will return and rule as King in a renewed universe. Ultimately, the pursuit of understanding and knowledge is doxological, as we look forward to a time in the new heavens and new earth when we will “know fully” (1 Cor. 13:12), exercising our dominion and authority over creation as God intended (Gen. 1:26-28). Despite

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67 Clark, To Know and Love God, 286.
68 E.g., John Mark Reynolds and J. P. Moreland, eds., Three Views on Creation and Evolution, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010); and Charles Halton, ed., Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither?: Three Views on the Bible’s Earliest Chapters, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).
popular perception, both inside and outside the church, the cosmological aspect of the atonement helps us understand that faith and science are not in conflict and that understanding creation should not be separate from understanding redemption. The gospel leads us to appreciate that science is both a worthwhile and an anticipatory pursuit and that the integration of faith and science is not only possible but necessary.
If our hymnody and funeral sermons are any indication, contemporary Christian suspicions abound regarding the goodness of the material world. And if not suspicions about its goodness, then at least about its enduring goodness. As the old gospel hymn states, this world is not our home; we’re just passing through. Heaven, it would seem, occupies pride of place in the popular imagination as the final resting place for the people of God. This heaven-bound narrative is the result of latent Platonic and Stoic influence upon patristic Christianity. In the Platonic tradition, the heavenly world of the true “forms” is the dwelling place of all things good. Death is release from the prison of the body, so that the soul can leave the material world and rise to the more perfect world of the forms. And in the Stoic account, the way to avoid becoming overly preoccupied with the material world is to recognize that fine dishes are nothing more than the “corpses of dead animals,” that wine is merely “grape juice,” and that sex is nothing more than the “friction of a piece of gut.” When material things seem “most

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2 The anti-material posture of Platonic and Stoic thought and its unhealthy influence on Christianity is assumed as a theological premise for this paper, rather than defended as a conclusion. Yet I realize that at least some Christian theologians (such as we find in Radical Orthodoxy) would push back against my statement that Plato is to blame for the anti-material, anti-body posture of much Christian theology. And of course my claim depends upon what counts as true “Platonic” thought. At the end of the day, my concern is not with who is to blame (be it Plato, the Neo-Platonists, the Stoics, etc.), but rather with the problem at hand—namely, that too much Christian theology has adopted a sub-Biblical account of the material world and the body. For a helpful analysis of this question and Plato’s role in it, see James K.A. Smith, “Will the Real Plato Please Stand Up? Participation versus Incarnation,” in James K.A. Smith and James H. Olthuis, eds., Radical Orthodoxy in the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 61-72. I might also add that my critique here of Plato and the Stoics is not meant as a dismissal of the entirety of their thought. I find a great deal in both traditions that is admirable and wise.

3 This basic account is woven throughout Plato’s writings and can be seen most clearly in his famous analogy of the cave. See Plato, Republic, 12. For Plato on the benefits of death and the evils of the body, see such passages as Phaedo, 63-65, 79a-81d; Timaeus, 81e; Apology, 40c-42.
worthy of our approval,” we must “lay them naked and see how cheap they are.”

Don’t make much of the material world, Stoic logic goes, because it is not worth making much of. It is all just “water, dust, bones, stench!”

The anti-material, anti-body posture implicit within these accounts (and expressed by other Greek philosophers in their own variegated ways), runs counter to the Biblical witness regarding the goodness of the material world and stands in strong contrast with the Bible’s vision of bodily resurrection and the renewal of the material cosmos.

Try as we may, Christian theology has never been able to wholly shake it. Many early Fathers such as Origen, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine, each in their own way, show a commitment to the basic Platonic and Stoic prioritization of the “spiritual” over the material. This Platonic and Stoic narrative has steadily pulled Christian eschatology up and out of the material world into the world of the forms, gods, and spirits. The problem with the Platonic narrative, of course, is that it is wrong. Heaven is not the final resting place for the people of God. God has created us from the earth, as earth people. It is no affirmation of our humanity or credit to God’s creative power that we treat the material world (from which we are made) as a throwaway husk. As John’s eschatological vision in Revelation 21–22 makes clear, the destiny of the Christian—both temporal and eternal—is tied up with this world. What God has made is good, indeed very good. It was virginal in Adam; it will be consummated in Christ.

4 Thus the advice from the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius in his Meditations, 6.13. The same basic disinterested approach can be seen in other Stoic-influenced Roman statesman-philosophers such as Cicero and Seneca. For Cicero’s comments about death as a blessing, see his Tusculum Disputations, 1. And Seneca’s counsel to a mother who was grieving the loss of a son is typical of Stoic and Platonic thought: “There is no need, therefore, for you to hurry to the tomb of your son; what lies there is his basest part and a part that in life was the source of much trouble—bones and ashes are no more parts of him than were his clothes and the other protections of the body. He is complete—leaving nothing of himself behind, he has fled away and wholly departed from earth; for a little while he tarried above us while he was being purified and was ridding himself of all the blemishes and stain that still clung to him from his mortal existence, then soared aloft and sped away to join the souls of the blessed. A saintly band gave him welcome.” De Consolatione ad Marciam, 25. Seneca’s perspective is uncomfortably similar to what one hears at Christian funerals and what one reads in Augustine’s response to the death of his mother in Confessions, 12.

5 Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 9.36.

6 Tertullian, Origin, and Clement of Alexandria are especially noteworthy. For Origin’s comments on the vanity of the material body, see De Princ. 1.7. For Tertullian’s comments about the dangers of female beauty see On the Apparel of Women, 1.2–2.2; here Tertullian memorably asserts that makeup and the braiding of hair are dark arts taught to the daughters of men by the fallen angels of Genesis 6. Thus feminine beauty should not be emphasized, but “obliterated and concealed by negligence.” For a thorough analysis of Clement of Alexandria see John Behr, Asecticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Behr shows how Clement largely accepts the Platonic and Stoic premise that the unseen world of the heavens is ontologically superior to the material world and how this in turn leads to an overdrawn asceticism. Behr likewise shows how Irenaeus rejects this basic anti-materialist premise and avoids Clement’s unduly ascetic approach to the Christian faith.
Here we are not just quibbling about eschatological geography. What is at stake is the very nature of Christian hope. As a pastor I have seen the positive way in which a robust knowledge of our terrestrial future serves as a vital resource for anchoring Christian hope. This hope is in turn the basis of Christian obedience; we persevere in obedience to the teachings and person of Christ precisely because we believe that God’s promises are true and his reward is sure. No Stoic ethic, this. As the author of Hebrews makes plain, even Jesus’ will to obey was based on his confidence in the eschatological “joy that was set before him” (Heb. 12:2). Visions of disembodied spirits dwelling in an angelic celestial city do little to inspire Christian hope and perseverance. Thankfully, our Lord has more terrestrial things in store for us.

For the purposes of this paper, I take it as axiomatic that the eternal home of God’s people is (at least in part) the earth that now spins through our space and time. Much good work has been done to recapture the Bible’s pro-terrestrial posture and its eschatological vision of cosmic hope. As N. T. Wright and others have shown, God’s ultimate plan for the material world is not its annihilation, but its redemption. So I do not here attempt to make a case that has already been made ably elsewhere. Instead I wish to resource this pro-terrestrial narrative by marshaling the assistance of an unlikely ally—the Devil. And not just any old Devil, but the Devil of the early Christian tradition as articulated by the great church father and bishop, Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130-200). As we will see,

7 I say “at least in part” because the New Testament also makes plain that Christians are raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3-10)—a position that we occupy for eternity. In the eschaton, we do not trade earth for heaven, but rather, in Christ, take on heaven as an extension of our home.

8 This has been a particular emphasis of recent evangelical Biblical theology. See, for example, N. T. Wright, Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church (New York: HarperOne, 2008); Greg Beale and Mitchel Kim, God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2014); J. Richard Middleton, A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2014).

9 The main lines of Irenaeus’ account of the Devil can be found in earlier Christian writers. See Ignatius, Ad Rom. 5, Ad Traj. 4.2; Papias, Frag. 11, 24; Justin, 2 Apol., 5; Tatian, Ad Graec. 7; Athanasias, Plea, 10, 24, 25; and Theophilus, Ad Autel., 2.28-29. No single one of these authors mirrors exactly Irenaeus’ account of the Devil; yet the similarities point toward a common narrative. At no point do the Christian writers contemporary with or earlier than Irenaeus contradict the basic structure of Irenaeus’ account of the Devil. What’s more, Irenaeus tends to speak of the Devil in passing, without justifying or defending his position. The overall effect of this suggests that Irenaeus takes his position on the Devil to be common knowledge within the early Christian community. In support of my claim that there is an “early” Christian account of the Devil, as distinct from the later Christian tradition, see Jeffery Burton Russell, Satan: The Early Christian Tradition (Cornell University Press, 1987), 80-106. Russell correctly notes that Theophilus, Athenasias, and Tatian all worked within the same basic tradition, a tradition that Irenaeus continued and expanded. For Russell, the break with this early tradition begins with Origen. See also Neil Forsyth, The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 333-42. Forsyth likewise views Origen as a transition figure who moves Christian reflection away from Irenaeus’ account toward what will later emerge as the standard account codified by Augustine.
Irenaeus’ account of the Devil offers us a minority report in the Christian tradition that runs in a somewhat divergent direction from the accounts of the Devil that emerged after the third century and that now hold sway in contemporary Christian theology. By retrieving Irenaeus’ account of the Devil, I hope to resource and bolster accounts of the biblical narrative that seek to take seriously the eschatological goodness and permanence of the material world.

I. IRENAEUS AND THE DEVIL IN IRENAEUS’ SCHOLARSHIP

Irenaeus is unique among the Fathers. He is rightly called the church’s first theologian and is certainly the church’s earliest extant Biblical theologian. His Christology, anthropology, and early trinitarian articulation offer us perhaps the best look into a developing and maturing second-century Christianity. In many respects his work established the framework for later Christian reflection. As Gustaf Aulén correctly observes, Irenaeus “did more to fix the lines on which Christian thought was to move for centuries after his day” than did any of the other fathers.10 Indeed his thought remains fertile soil for contemporary theological reflection and scholarship. As a consequence, scholarly studies abound regarding Irenaeus’ views on apostolic succession, recapitulation, anthropology, Christology, Mariology, canonicity, the rule of faith, atonement, and divinization (to name a few).11 Most saliently for the theme of our symposium on the doctrine of creation, Irenaeus is well-known for his strongly pro-cosmological stance.12 His disputation with the Gnostic heresy compelled him to articulate a clear and aggressive

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12 See especially Matthew Steenberg, *Irenaeus on Creation and Of God and Man*; also John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology*.
affirmation of the goodness and eventual redemption of the material world—an affirmation that stands unparalleled in the early Christian tradition.\(^{13}\)

But what is of equal relevance for the present occasion, and what has not been explored at length, is Irenaeus’ account of the Devil and the way this account resources his (and potentially our) high terrestrial cosmology. To be sure, one can find many treatments of Irenaeus that touch upon his view of the Devil.\(^{14}\) Likewise, there are a number of scholarly treatments of the Devil that touch upon Irenaeus.\(^{15}\) But in both instances Irenaeus’ account of the Devil features only as a peripheral topic in a larger argument—most typically in discussions centered on atonement and theodicy. Such neglect lacks imagination. As William James once famously quipped, “The world is all the richer for having a Devil in it, so long as we keep our foot upon his neck.”\(^{16}\) And rich indeed is Irenaeus’ world, not least because of his Devil.

Into this open space I offer an executive summary of Irenaeus’ account of the Devil and the way this account shapes and informs his high terrestrial cosmology and eschatology.\(^{17}\) Like any story, the shape of Irenaeus’ narrative is significantly influenced by the identity and aims of the narrative’s chief antagonist. And it is at just this point that Irenaeus’ account of the Devil has unique power to reshape our overly Platonized Christian story in a more Biblical and pro-terrestrial direction. In what follows I offer a brief summary of Irenaeus’ account of the Devil—the Devil’s identity as angelic steward of the material world, his envy of humanity’s lordship, his assault upon humanity, his fall, and his eventual defeat—all with a view to showing how this narrative pushes Irenaeus’ reading of the Biblical plotline in a decidedly pro-terrestrial direction. By way of a foil, we begin with a brief retelling of the Devil narrative that now reigns in the contemporary imagination.

\(^{13}\) Colin Gunton goes even further, stating that Irenaeus’ defense of the goodness of the material creation is “without equal in the history of theology.” Gunton, *The Triune Creator* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 62.

\(^{14}\) Typically the Devil tends to show up in Irenaeus’ scholarship as it relates to the broader themes of atonement. Gustaf Aulén’s classic work, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, 16–35 is a standard here. Likewise, see Gustaf Wingren’s, *Manniskan och Inkarnationen enligt Irenaeus*, chap. 11. Wingren shows how the *Christus Victor* framework undergirds the whole of Irenaeus’ narrative. See also the brief (but helpful) comments in Denis Minns, *Irenaeus: An Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 104–07. Yet in each case no systematic treatment of the Devil is offered.


\(^{16}\) William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, 1902), 50.

\(^{17}\) Such is a central burden of my doctoral research, which I hope to complete in 2017.
II. THE FOIL: JOHN MILTON’S DEVIL

Beginning with Origen\(^{18}\) and then achieving a relatively fixed status by the time of Gregory the Great in the sixth century, Christian teaching on the Devil took the form now known to us and popularized by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*. In this now familiar “Miltonic”\(^{19}\) narrative, the fall of the Devil and his angels occurs in heaven prior to the creation of humanity.\(^{20}\) Satan’s besetting sin is pride. Though one of the great archangels, he is not content with his limited status in relation to the Son, and so leads a rebellion against God in an attempt to usurp the Son’s dominion in heaven. The coup fails, and the Devil and his angels (one third) are cast out of heaven. Still determined to strike against God, the Devil attempts to avenge this defeat by attacking humanity—God’s prized possession. The garden temptation and the fall of humanity ensue.

A number of features from this narrative are notable. First, the fall of the Devil and the angels occurs before the creation of humanity. As such the informed reader of the Biblical narrative has already been handed a backstory that necessarily shapes the reading of Genesis 1-3, which in turn influences the way one reads the rest of the canonical narrative. Second, the primary and initial conflict of the Miltonic narrative is between God and the Devil; indeed, the initial conflict of the narrative occurs before humanity has even entered the story. Humanity becomes involved in the plot’s conflict only as an innocent bystander, a civilian casualty of the already existing warfare between heaven and hell. Third (and most significantly), the spoil of war in the Miltonic account is a celestial one; Satan’s pride has driven him to attempt to usurp the Son’s heavenly throne. In this account the earth is simply the battleground where two extra-terrestrial forces wage war. The story concludes in a celestial tone. The Devil is defeated in his war against God by the divine Son of God, faithful humanity ascends to heaven to replace the angels who have fallen, and humanity lives happily ever after in God’s eternal home.

As we will see, this Miltonic narrative of the Devil mirrors the same basic plot sequence and climax that we find in Platonism’s non-

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\(^{18}\) The account of Satan’s fall takes a new turn with Origen. Origen’s neo-Platonic framework—particularly his notion of the pre-existence of the soul—is influential at this point. Material creation and the body are the result of the Fall, and thus the Fall must take place prior to creation. On this account, Origen must look beyond the canon for Satan’s fall rather than taking the Genesis account at face value, as does Irenaeus. More on this below.

\(^{19}\) It is, of course, anachronistic to refer to the whole of this tradition as “Miltonic.” But given that Milton’s *Paradise Lost* has done more to shape the contemporary English imagination on the Devil than has any other work, and given that our primary concern is pastoral and theological (rather than strictly historical), I here use Milton as the spokesman for a tradition that he, more than any other, has expressed in its most mature form. As we will see, the same is the case for Irenaeus, who himself does not invent the early Christian account of the Devil, but nonetheless is its most mature spokesman.

\(^{20}\) See Augustine’s extended discussion on the timing of the Devil’s fall in his *De Gen. litt.*, 11.1-26. Augustine is uncertain about when the angels fell. But he is certain they didn’t maintain their original righteousness for any significant length of time, falling soon after they were created. In any case, for Augustine, Satan has already fallen prior to his temptation of Adam and Eve.
terrestrial narrative. In the Miltonic account of the Devil, the redemption of humanity and the earth are not necessary features in the resolution of the larger soteriological narrative. Irenaeus’ account, however, runs in a different direction.

III. IRENAEUS’ DEVIL: PRE-FALL IDENTITY

Irenaeus’ comments regarding the Devil are scattered liberally throughout his two extant works. For Irenaeus, the Devil is “Satan,” “the serpent,” “the rebel,” “the adversary,” “the deceiver,” “the author and originator of sin,” the “neighbor of death,” the “accuser,” the “dragon,” the “enemy of humanity” and “the apostate.”

But the Devil was not always so diabolical. Irenaeus, like other early Christian writers, posits a “fall” in which the Devil apostatizes and becomes the enemy of God, of the good angels, and of humanity. Irenaeus does not offer us an exhaustive portrait of the Devil’s pre-fall identity (in keeping with his general anti-speculative reading of Scripture). Yet given the paucity of Scriptural information available on the topic, Irenaeus has...
more to say about the Devil’s pre-fall identity than we might otherwise expect. Two aspects of Irenaeus’ thought are notable. First, for Irenaeus, the Devil began as the angelic “steward” of our planet, ordained to govern the affairs of the world on behalf of humanity until such time as humanity “came of age” and could govern the world on its own. And second, it was as an angelic steward that the Devil and his angels were destined to be subject to humanity. I address each aspect below.

A. THE DEVIL BEGAN AS AN ANGELIC STEWARD
OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

Fundamental to Irenaeus’ perspective on the Devil is the idea that the Devil began as an archangel, a “creature of God, like the other angels,”33 who was divinely appointed as steward of the earth. For Irenaeus, innumerable angelic hosts occupy the seven heavens; each is assigned to various tasks by the Creator.34 The lowest heaven (the seventh) is our firmament. It is in this lowest heaven that the archangel—soon-to-be-the-Devil and his angels reside. Irenaeus writes,

In the domain [i.e., the world] were also, with their tasks, the servants [i.e., the angels] of that God who fashioned all, and this domain [i.e., the world] was in the keeping of the steward, who was set over all his fellow servants. Now the servants were angels, but the steward the archangel.35

33 *Adv. Haer.*, 4.41.1; see also 5.19.1, 5.21.1, 3, 5.24.3, 4; *Dem.* 11. The idea that the Devil began as an angel is not original with Irenaeus. See Justin, *Dial.*, 79; Tatian, *Ad Graec.*, 7; Athenagoras, *Plea*, 24; and Theophilus, *Ad. Auto.*, 2.28. Russell notes that this view was fixed in the Christian tradition from Theophilus onward (c. 170). See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan*, 78. Russell’s comment implies there were alternative early Christian perspectives on the Devil’s origin. However, I am not aware of any ancient Christian writer (here I exclude Gnostic writings) before or after Irenaeus who offers an alternative understanding of the Devil’s original ontology.

34 See *Dem.*, 9.

35 *Dem.*, 11. This same idea of the Devil’s stewardship is again mentioned briefly in *Adv. Haer.*, 5.24.4: “Just as if any one, being an apostate, and seizing in a hostile manner another man’s territory, should harass the inhabitants of it, in order that he might claim for himself the glory of a king among those ignorant of his apostasy and robbery; so likewise also the Devil, being one among those angels placed over the spirit of the air [*sic autem et Diabolus, cum sit unus ex angelis his qui super spiritum aeris praepositi sunt*], as the Apostle Paul has declared in his Epistle to the Ephesians.” The *spiritum aeris* here is a reference to the lowest level of heaven and identifies Satan and the angels as those who dwell in the firmament and (presumably) from this position in the cosmos exercise their stewardship over the material world. While Justin and Papias speak of angelic stewardship generally, Athenagoras is the only other extant early Christian writer who assigns this role to the Devil specifically. See *Plea*, 24: “…so also do we apprehend the existence of other powers, which exercise dominion about matter, and by means of it, and one in particular, which is hostile…to the good that is in God, I say, the spirit which is about matter, who was created by God, just as the other angels were created by Him, and entrusted with the control of matter and the forms of matter….”
As the narrative of *Demonstration* unfolds, this angelic “steward” is the one who tempts Eve and so becomes the Devil.\(^{36}\) Thus in Irenaeus, the Devil stands apart from the other angels and archangels insofar as he was once the chief steward of the material world and leader of those angels assigned to care for the earth.\(^{37}\)

Our understanding of Irenaeus’ position here is informed by other early Christian writers, who explicitly taught some form of angelic stewardship over the material world. So Papias: “Some of them—obviously meaning those angels that once were holy—he assigned to rule over the orderly arrangements of the earth, and commissioned them to rule well.”\(^{38}\) Likewise Justin: “God, when he had made the whole world...committed the care of humanity and of all things under heaven to angels whom he appointed over them.”\(^{39}\) And Athenagoras, *Plea*, 24: “For this is the office of the angels: to exercise providence for God over the things created and ordered by him, so that God may have the universal and general providence of the whole, while the particular parts are provided for by the angels appointed over them....”\(^{40}\) Taken together, it is likely that Irenaeus has something similar in mind when he speaks of the angels as serving God by “keeping” the domain of the earth.\(^{41}\) Exactly what this care consisted of is not certain. In pre-first-century Jewish thought the angels were said to have dominion over nations and peoples,\(^{42}\) but Irenaeus seems to be suggesting something different, since for him angelic stewardship is in place from the very beginning of creation (and thus prior to nations and peoples). Was it ordering the powers of the natural world—the winds, the snows, the rivers, the oceans, etc.? Or perhaps watch-care of the animals?\(^{43}\) Irenaeus does not tell us.

In some of the Gnostic schemes that Irenaeus was combating, the Devil’s association with the material world was a black mark on the Devil’s

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36 See *Dem.*, 16.

37 Along these lines, Joseph Smith observes that for Irenaeus, the “steward” (i.e., the Devil) and the “servants” under him (i.e., the angels) appear to be uniquely “subcelestial.” See Joseph Smith, trans., *St. Irenaeus: Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1952), 150.

38 Papias, *Frag.*, 11.


40 See also *Plea*, 10, 25.

41 However, see MacKenzie who argues for less similarity here between Irenaeus and Justin and Papias. For Mackenzie, Irenaeus is hesitant to assign the angels a stewardship role over the material world, since such a role would play into Gnostic cosmologies. “Irenaeus does not approach anything as definite as angelic dominion. Dominion could imply territory, and territory ownership, and ownership that the holder had created that domain. Irenaeus deliberately removed himself from such a train of thought; it was too near the tenants of the gnostic system.” *Irenaeus’s Demonstration*, 113. I appreciate MacKenzie’s theological point, but given Irenaeus’ comments, it seems he is content to work within the “angelic stewardship” framework, even at the risk of it being deployed against him by his Gnostic opponents.

42 See, for example, Daniel 10:13, 20, 21 which makes reference to “the prince of Persia” and “the prince of Greece” and to “Michael, your prince” (i.e., Daniel’s). Justin’s singular comment in *Sec. Apol.*, 5 might point in this direction as well.

43 Something along this line seems to be suggested in *Hermes*, 1.4.2.
curriculum vitae insofar as spirits associated with the material world were viewed as less enlightened than those above. In the Valentinian system, the material world represented the wrong side of town and owed its origins to fear, grief, death, passions, and ignorance; it was certainly not a place for a respectable spirit to dwell. Thus in the Valentinian system, both the demiurge (i.e., the creator god) and the Devil are mutually slandered in their association with the material world.

But for Irenaeus, the material world is inherently good and serves as a visible witness to God’s inherent goodness and wisdom. Thus it would be inappropriate to read the Devil’s primordial association with the material world as a slur against the Devil. Rather, the Devil’s association with the material world serves in Irenaeus to underscore the Devil’s uniqueness and highlights the egregious nature of his rebellion. We can’t go so far as to say that Irenaeus viewed the Devil as the highest of all the archangels; yet the fact that the Devil was assigned to care for humanity and humanity’s world is an indication about the high honor the Devil held at the time of creation. His original assignment, at any rate, was most illustrious.

B. THE DEVIL WAS DESTINED TO BE SUBJECT TO HUMANITY

Irenaeus next introduces us to what is perhaps the most central aspect of the Devil’s pre-fall identity: the temporary nature of the Devil’s stewardship and his eventual subjection under humanity. According to Irenaeus, the Devil’s stewardship of the material world was always intended to be for a limited duration. “Therefore, having made the man lord [kurios] of the earth and of everything that is in it, [God] secretly appointed him as lord over those [angels] who were servants [doulos] in it.”

Here we must pause to comment briefly on Irenaeus’ concept of human infancy. For Irenaeus, Adam was created as “lord of the earth and all things in it,” but was nonetheless created as an “infant.” It was
necessary that he “grow, and so come to perfection” before he would be able to properly exercise this lordship. The idea that the first human pair was created as infants occurs five times in Irenaeus—two times in *Demonstration* and three times in *Adversus Haereses*. For Irenaeus, the infancy of the first human pair explains their need for a steward to govern on their behalf. Irenaeus writes:

Therefore, having made the man lord \( \text{kurioj} \) of the earth and of everything that is in it, [God] secretly appointed him as lord over those [angels] who were servants \( \text{dou/loi} \) in it. They [the angels], however, were in their full development, while the lord, that is the man, was very little, for he was an infant, and it was necessary for him to reach full development \( \text{karelut'iwn} \) by growing. But the man was a little one, and his discretion still underdeveloped, wherefore also he was easily misled by the deceiver.

Thus humanity, though created as the heir of the world, was nonetheless not yet in “full development.” The steward and his angels were to govern the world until humanity came of age.

Irenaeus also comments here that though Adam’s lordship over the world was public knowledge, Adam’s lordship over the angels was “secret” of human infancy. See also Clement’s comment in *Stromata*, 3.17, likewise passing and suggestive. Behr sees a clear connection between Irenaeus, Theophilus, and Clement on this point. See his *Asceiticism and Anthropology*, 135, 143-44. The idea is absent in early Jewish and Gnostic writings. See Matthew Steenberg, “Children in Paradise: Adam and Even as ‘Infant’; in Irenaeus of Lyons,” 20-21.

48 *Dem.*, 12.


50 In his commentary on *Demonstration* Ian MacKenzie rightly notes the link between human infancy and Irenaeus’ larger maturation theme: “This idea of the potential of growth of Adam from infancy to the fullness of human stature in the Word, and therefore in perfect community of union with God, whereby Adam will be made like unto God points to an integral and characteristic of Irenaeus’ theology; namely that humanity is given the opportunity to grow and advance in the knowledge of God.” See MacKenzie, *Irenaeus’ Demonstration*, 116.

51 Smith remarks, “The [Armenian] word so rendered is \( \text{karelut'iwn} \), which would mean ‘possibility.’” See his *Proof*, 150.

52 *Dem.*, 12. Irenaeus refers to the “steward” and his “fellow-servants.” As such, I take Irenaeus to mean that Adam’s lordship over the “servants” includes lordship over the “steward.” Irenaeus’ account of the temptation stands in stark contrast with Tertullian on this point. For Tertullian, humanity was created in power and glory, as mature bearers of the image of God. The Devil resorts to subterfuge precisely because of humanity’s greater power. Tertullian writes, “No doubt it was an angel who was the seducer; but then the victim of that seduction was free, and master of himself; and as being the image and likeness of God, was stronger than any angel; and as being, too, the afflatus of the divine being, was nobler than that material spirit of which angels were made.” Tertullian, *Cont. Marcion*, 2.8. And again in 2.9, “Undoubtedly, when you demand for it [the soul] an equality with God, that is, a freedom from fault, I contend that it is infirm. But when the comparison is challenged with an angel, I am compelled to maintain that the head over all things is the stronger of the two, to whom the angels are ministers, who is destined to be the judge of angels, if he shall stand fast in the law of God—an obedience which he refused at first.”
Smith helpfully remarks, “The ‘secrecy’ is probably to be explained by the fact that man, though lord by right, and destined to rule in fact, was not yet capable of doing so...so that his lordship was not yet made known to his subjects.” This reading makes good sense, given that Irenaeus immediately follows his comment about the secrecy of Adam’s lordship with comments about Adam’s infancy and the maturity of the angels. Thus I take Irenaeus to mean that the steward and his angels knew that the man had been made lord of the world, but did not know that this lordship extended even to them.

Even without direct knowledge of Adam’s future lordship over the angels, the steward and his angels knew themselves to be caring for the world on behalf of humanity. Thus Irenaeus introduces the Devil into the creation narrative as not only a servant of God, but more pointedly, as a servant of humanity. The Devil, much like the steward of a child-king, is granted only temporary leadership of the earth until such time as the heir can assume the full responsibility of his throne.

The stewardship of the Devil and the infancy of humanity thus serves in Irenaeus as the alternate backstory that sets the stage for the first major action in Irenaeus’ narrative—the Devil’s envy of humanity and the garden temptation.

IV. The Devil’s Envy of Humanity

We now arrive at the crux of Irenaeus’ account of the Devil. Irenaeus tells us that the Devil’s fall was due to his envy of Adam and Eve and that the Devil’s first sin was not a celestial rebellion against God in heaven, but a terrestrial rebellion against humanity on earth. The idea of the Devil’s envy of humanity occurs five times in Irenaeus. The most significant occurrence is in the early chapters of Demonstration. We begin with Dem., 11 to establish the context. Irenaeus writes:

But man he formed with his own hands, taking from the earth that which was purest and finest, and mingling in measure his own power with the earth. For he traced his own form on the formation, that which should be seen should be of divine form: for (as) the image of God was man formed and set on the earth. And that he might become living, he breathed on his face the breath of life; that both for the breath and for the formation man should be like unto God. Moreover, he was free and self-controlled, being made by God for this end, that he might rule all those things that were upon the earth. And this great created world, prepared by God before the formation of man, was given to man as his place, containing all things within itself. And there were in this place also with (their) tasks the servants

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53 The Armenian term is used only here in Demonstration. It is variously translated elsewhere as “in secret,” “furtively,” “stealthily.”
54 Smith, Proof, 150, note 69.
56 Robinson notes that the Armenian text here is equivalent to the Latin plasma or plasmatio.
of that God who formed all things; and the steward, who was set over all his fellow servants, received this place. Now the servants were angels, and the steward was the archangel.57

Notable here is the way that Irenaeus highlights the creation of humanity. Human beings are made by God’s own hands, a combination of the best of the earth and God’s own divine power. Moreover, the sovereignty structure between humanity and the angels is clearly established; humanity, not the steward, is destined to rule over this “great created world.”

Irenaeus then goes on in chapters 13-15 to briefly discuss the creation of the animals and of Eve, as well as the prohibition regarding the tree of knowledge. Having set the stage with the principal actors, Irenaeus thus introduces the reader in chapter 16 to the first scene of the drama—the Devil’s envy of humanity and the garden temptation.

This commandment the man kept not, but was disobedient to God, being led astray by the angel who, becoming jealous of the man and looking on him with envy58 because of the great gifts of God which he had given to man, both ruined himself and made the man a sinner, persuading him to disobey the commandment of God.59 So the angel, becoming by his falsehood the author and originator of sin, himself was struck down, having offended against God, and man he caused to be cast out from Paradise. And, because through the guidance of his disposition he apostatized and departed from God, he was called Satan, according to the Hebrew word; that is, Apostate:60 but he is also called Slanderer. Now God cursed the serpent which carried and conveyed the Slanderer; and this malediction came on the beast himself and on the angel hidden and concealed in him, even on Satan; and man he put away from his presence, removing him and making him to dwell on the way to Paradise at that time; because Paradise receives not the sinful.61

The steward is not content to be the steward. He is envious and jealous of “the great gifts of God which he had given to man.” Irenaeus does not specify here (or elsewhere) the exact nature of “the great gifts” that invoke the Devil’s envy. But given the overall context this must

57 Dem., 11.

58 “Looking on him with envy” is from the Armenian կարակնալ and is perhaps more literally “evil-eyeing.” Smith suggests ἁπαταίνων (envying, grudging) as the underlying Greek for this term. See Joseph Smith’s commentary in his translation, St. Irenaeus: Proof of the Apostolic Preaching (New York: Paulist Press, 1952), 153. For more on the “evil eye” and envy in the Christian tradition, see George R.A. Aquaro, Death by Envy: The Evil Eye and Envy in the Christian Tradition (Lincoln, Neb.: iUniverse, Inc., 2004).

59 Note the close parallel with Adv. Haer., 4.11.3., where the Pharisees are the “envious wicked stewards” who resist Christ as he rides into Jerusalem to assume his kingdom—a kingdom that they were to rule until his coming.

60 Cf., Adv. Haer., 5.21.2. So too Justin (from whom Irenaeus likely got this etymologically incorrect idea), Dial., 103.

61 Dem., 16.
certainly include humanity's lordship over the earth. (Indeed, this is the only divine gift given to humanity mentioned thus far in \textit{Demonstration}) Irenaeus may also have in mind humanity's creation in the \textit{imago Dei}, which he has already mentioned in \textit{Dem.}, 11. This too would be connected to humanity's lordship over the world, for it is precisely because humanity bears the image of God (by which Irenaeus means the image of the embodied human Son)\textsuperscript{62} that humanity is the rightful lord of the world.

The Devil enters Paradise in the form of a serpent and assaults Adam and Eve while they are yet in their infancy. The Devil is successful as it relates to overthrowing humanity; he causes humanity to be cast out of Paradise. But ultimately the plan fails. The steward is found out by God.\textsuperscript{63} In this act of rebellion the steward has overstepped his boundaries and has become an apostate. He too is cast out of Paradise. Insofar as he used a serpent to disguise himself, the steward is cursed with a perpetual association with the serpent.\textsuperscript{64}

Ultimately then for Irenaeus the Devil's rebellion is as much a rebellion against humanity's lordship over the material world as it is against God's. Unlike the Miltonic narrative, Irenaeus' Devil does not assault humanity as a means of rebelling against God. Rather in Irenaeus the Devil wrongly supposes that his treachery toward humanity will go unobserved by God (he futilely uses the serpent as a cloak).\textsuperscript{65} Irenaeus' Devil has no aspirations to take on God; his target is humanity, and the throne he seeks is earth's. This way of framing the Devil's initial relationship to humanity emphasizes the enmity between humanity and the Devil as the chief conflict of Irenaeus' soteriological plotline. To be sure, Satan is an enemy of God; but as concerns the narrative Irenaeus will tell, he is principally an enemy of humanity, for humanity is the rightful heir of the world—the chief object of the Devil's desire.

\textbf{V. The Devil's Envy and Irenaeus' Pro-Terrestrial Cosmology}

The theological implications of this narrative are far-reaching, particularly when set against later Milton-like accounts. Per Milton, the primary conflict in the Christian narrative is between God and Satan; the restoration of the earth and repossession of its throne by humanity is largely inconsequential to the resolution of the Miltonic Devil narrative. The Miltonic account of the Devil fits well with, and indeed enables, Platonizing accounts of the Biblical narrative.

As we have already noted, many of the Church Fathers tended to downplay the significance of humanity and the material creation. For Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, the material creation itself is a result of the

\textsuperscript{62} See \textit{Adv. Haer.}, 5.16.2. See also Minns, \textit{Irenaeus}, 74.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Adv. Haer.}, Book 4, preface, 4.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Adv. Haer.}, Book 4, preface, 4. Irenaeus will go on to assign the fall of the world and the birth of sin most fully to the Devil, for the Devil was in his full development, while Adam and Eve were mere children. As such, Irenaeus interprets the divine cursing of Gen. 3 to be directed chiefly at the Devil; Adam and Eve are only cursed indirectly via the curse of the ground and childbearing. See \textit{Adv. Haer.}, 3.23.5

\textsuperscript{65} See \textit{Adv. Haer.}, 5.26.2. See also \textit{Adv. Haer.}, Book. 4, preface.
Fall (or in Gregory’s case, a punishment for an anticipated fall), and thus not central to God’s redemptive purposes, at least not central in any kind of telic sense. Salvation is about leaving behind the material world and shedding the material body. What is more, in such accounts the destiny of redeemed humanity is to become like the angels, freed from the confines and limitations of the material world and destined to dwell with God in the heavens. While Platonizing Fathers such as Origen, Gregory, and others are careful to leave a place for the body and creation, the overall effect of their synthesis tends to be dismissive of materiality in ways not faithful to the broad concerns of the canon. A Milton-like account of the Devil enables and reinforces this basic Platonic narrative, in that it tends to sideline the embodiedness of humanity and the materiality of creation as central features of the soteriological story and does not require the reenthronement of humanity over the earth as a necessary conclusion.

But Irenaeus’ account of the Devil pushes the Christian narrative away from Platonizing and Stoic tendencies and toward a more properly anthropocentric, terrestrial climax. In Irenaeus’ view, the Devil’s fall occurs within Scripture as detailed in Genesis 3. Most significantly, the world is the prize that humanity initially possesses and that the Devil desires. The Devil wishes to be worshipped as God, not by supplanting God in heaven, but by supplanting Adam on earth. In short, the Devil seeks Adam’s throne on earth, not the Son’s throne in heaven. What’s more, in Irenaeus’ account, Satan is a successful usurper of Adam’s throne rather than a failed usurper of Christ’s. Thus the primary conflict in Irenaeus’ narrative is between the Devil and humanity, and the lordship of the material earth is the chief spoil of war.

Humanity’s loss of the world’s throne via the Devil’s subterfuge thus sets the stage for the outworking of the soteriological and eschatological narrative that Irenaeus will tell. Not content with Satan’s rebellious actions and a reversal of earth’s lordship, God enters the war between the Devil and humanity on the side of humanity and through Christ, the Second Adam, reclaims the world’s throne on behalf of humanity. Thus

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67 For examples of “angelic soteriology” in early Christian writings, see *Shep. of Hermes*, 3.9.25, 27; Tertullian, *Cont. Marc.*, 3.9; *Ad Mart.*, 3; *De Resurrectione Carnis*, 36, 42; *De Anima*, 56. Tertullian’s idea that we become like angels at the resurrection is not a denial of the resurrection of the body. He affirms the resurrection of the flesh throughout his writings and is more careful elsewhere to insist that we do not actually become angels. See *De Resurrectione Carnis*, 62. But his repeated emphasis that the highpoint of salvation is to become like the angels pushes his soteriology in a celestial rather than terrestrial direction. See also Clement, *Instructor*, 2.10; *Stromata*, 6.13, 7.10, 12, 14; Origen, *Cont. Celsus*, 4.29; *Comment. in John*, 2.16; *Comment. in Matt.*, 12.30; Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, 11.15, 12.16, 22, 22.1; Aquinas, *Summa*, 1.62.5, and 1.93.3, where Aquinas states that angels, insofar as they are endowed with a higher intellect than humans, are in some ways more in the image of God than humanity; and Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1.16–18.

68 Origen is the first to interpret Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 as references to Satanic pride vis-à-vis God, and even then only tentatively. See *De Princ.*, 1.5, 8.3. See also Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, 125–32.
the reclamation of Adam's throne vis à vis the Devil and the restoration of the material world becomes central to Irenaeus’ Biblical narrative in a way not seen in the Miltonic account. With Irenaeus, the soteriological narrative necessarily climaxes with the defeat of the Devil and the terrestrial reenthronement of humanity; Platonic escape from the material world, or Stoic indifference, is thereby rendered—from the very outset—an inadequate consummation to the Christian narrative.

And in a remarkably Biblical way, Irenaeus’ pro-material account of the Devil both affirms the goodness of the material world against pagan Greek philosophy, while at the same time it undercuts the temptation to make an idol of the good world that God has made (the opposite error on the other side of the pagan coin). In some ways Irenaeus’ strong affirmation of the material world may seem a counterintuitive way to combat the idolization of it. We might expect that the surer way forward is to chastise the creation, following the route of Platonism and the Stoics. Irenaeus is not naïve about the dangers of idolatry. But he would have us break free from idolatry not by dismissing God’s good creation, but rather by giving thanks for it.

...all [things] have been created for the benefit of that human nature which is saved [pro eo qui salvatur homine factur sunt].… And therefore the creation is devoted to humanity [Et propter hoc condition insumitur homini]; for humanity was not made for its sake, but creation for the sake of humanity. Those nations, however, who did not of themselves raise up their eyes unto heaven, nor returned thanks to their Maker [neque gratias egerunt factori suo], nor wished to behold the light of truth, but who were like blind mice concealed in the depths of ignorance, the word justly reckons as waste water from a sink, and as the turning-weight of a balance—in fact, as nothing.70

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69 A fundamental question that must remain unaddressed in this paper is the extent to which Irenaeus’ account of the Devil maps on to the Biblical story line. That Irenaeus’ account of the Devil forestalls unwarranted Platonist/Stoic tendencies in Christian theology and eschatology does not mean that Irenaeus’ account is true. The question bears more investigation than I can supply here, but I offer briefly five reasons for embracing the early Christian account over the later account. 1) The early account of the Devil is early, 2) the early account is reasonably unified in the first two centuries, 3) the early account of the Devil fits better than the later account with the overall arc of the canonical plotline, which ends in a restoration of the material world and the reenthronement of humanity upon the world’s throne, 4) the early account postulates that a creature under the authority of Adam was responsible for Adam’s downfall; this follows the same basic contours of the Genesis account, which likewise suggests that a creature under Adam’s authority was instrumental in humanity’s downfall, and 5) the early account is less speculative than the later account, insofar as it places the fall of the Devil within the canonical plotline and does not rely upon a speculative pre-canonical celestial fall. In the end, both the early and later accounts of the Devil are speculative to varying degrees; the Bible does not offer us a complete picture of the Devil’s pre-fall identity, motivations, and post-fall activity. But Irenaeus’ account is less speculative than the later account and thus to be preferred.

Creation has been made by a good God for the sake of his people. It has been “devoted” to humanity and is thus to be enjoyed by humanity. The problem, Irenaeus tells us, is not that we like these good gifts too much, but that we have forgotten to “return thanks to our Maker.” Irenaeus here is following the logic of Paul in Romans 1:18-25, where Paul tells us that the things that are made reveal God’s “eternal power and divine nature.” For Paul (and Irenaeus), creation has an iconic function—it is a gift from God that points beyond itself to the Giver. And as with any “icon,” creation derives its value and meaning from that to which it points, namely, God. But humanity, rather than viewing creation as an icon—a springboard—that led to a knowledge of God instead severed the connection between the icon and the Creator. We fixated on the gift and lost sight of the Giver. But how did this breakdown occur? The answer is found in verse 21, which serves as the fulcrum of Paul’s logic in this passage: “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.” The problem is not that we failed to recognize the iconic nature of creation, but rather that we failed to give thanks for the icons. This lack of gratitude sets in motion the rest of the story of sin that Paul’s gospel will address in the whole of Romans.

To give genuine thanks for the creation is to acknowledge that there is One above and beyond us who has given it. To give thanks for the world and our bodies necessarily compels us to acknowledge that the Lord is, and that he is good, and that he gives. It reminds us that we ourselves are not the good God, but that we stand in a posture of humility and need—recipients of grace. Thankfulness rightly orders our self-understanding with respect to the creation of which we are a part and with the God who made it and gave it to us. This is why a refusal to give thanks to God for the good world he has given and a refusal to acknowledge the iconic nature of creation go hand in hand. To thankfully acknowledge creation as a good gift is to acknowledge that there is necessarily a good Giver. At its core thankfulness establishes the relationship between the gift and the giver. It is impossible to give genuine thanks to God for the good things of the world and idolize these things at the same time.

The basic contours of Irenaeus’ Devil narrative do not encourage us to view the material world as a throwaway husk, a ladder to be climbed and then kicked away once we’ve reached the angelic top. Irenaeus’ pro-material account of the Devil reminds us, right at the beginning of the Christian soteriological narrative, that creation is a good gift, given to us by a good Creator. It encourages us to view the materiality of creation as a great blessing that God has given to humanity, and our world as the crown jewel of all the worlds that God has made. Irenaeus’ Devil narrative tells us that our home is a prize so rare that one of the high archangels of heaven has waged war to possess it. It reminds us that Christ has come not only to save our souls, but to save our home. Indeed, to save his home, insofar as he too is now forever the embodied Second Adam.

In recent years evangelical Christians have loved to talk about culture. This has been, by and large, a good thing, helping many of us see that we are all culturally-situated and cannot escape our culture. But for some cultural observers, the desire to escape culture altogether, if not explicitly voiced, lies not-so-far under the surface. Thankfully, most evangelicals do not hold to the modern form of Gnosticism that rejects the material world as evil. However, while they recognize that the new creation will indeed be a physical domain, they have not reckoned seriously with one significant entailment of that physicality: culture.

Culture is a difficult thing to get a handle on. Some might assume “culture” only refers to things like fine wine, classical music, and French poetry. Others might define “culture” the way they think about speaking with an accent. It refers to the way other people do things, but not me. Still others might not give much thought to culture at all.

While *Culture Making* has been in print for nearly a decade, there remains an ongoing need to understand and engage with culture among many pastors and churches. In each section of this book, Andy Crouch helps us better understand culture and our calling toward it.

In the first part of the book, Crouch, relying on Ken Myers, defines culture as “what we make of the world” (p. 23). And the truth is, we all make something of the world. We all interact with the world in some way and in so doing change it. Over time the accumulated number of small changes that a group makes in some geographical region results in the unique characteristics of that region. Thus, the culture of that region. But all persons of integrity, Christian or not, will run up against some aspect of their culture or a new culture they encounter that they find unjust or immoral. How then should we approach culture?

Crouch’s explanation of four strategies toward culture (condemning, critiquing, copying, or consuming) and how we exercise those strategies is one of the most valuable parts of the book. In short, if our strategies toward culture become postures (fixed dispositions) rather than gestures (occasional movements), then we will inevitably deal wrongly with culture. Rather, Crouch suggests that our fixed disposition toward culture
should be as artists and gardeners. That is to say, we should be creators and cultivators of culture. To correct the wrongs in the cultures around us and to advance the good, we should all be “culture makers.”

Part two of the book is essentially a biblical theology of culture. That is to say, with the idea of culture as “what we make of the world” in view, Crouch walks from creation to consummation and highlights the role of culture in the unfolding story of the Bible. The commission that God gave to Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” is a cultural commission. While sin’s entrance into the world has created all sorts of distortions of culture, we cannot deny that from the beginning, God intended the earth to be “culturized” for his glory. Crouch concludes, “In sum, the only story that can truly be named the ‘good news’ is absolutely, completely saturated with culture” (p. 176). And so, he argues, this is why the picture of the new creation is a picture of a city full of the redeemed cultural accomplishments from every culture.

In light of the reality of our place in culture and in the ongoing plan of redemption, Crouch turns his attention to our calling in the last section of the book. He begins with the helpful reminder that culture change is not a simple formula. “The sobering truth is that at a large enough scale, there are no sufficient conditions for cultural changes” (p. 196). Our call is not to change the world per se, but to look for opportunities to create culture wherever we may find ourselves. The book ends, therefore, with some exercises in culture making framed in terms of power, community, and grace. Crouch calls us to create culture not by seeking power, but by using it for the powerless, in a community that spurs us on and holds us accountable, and in a context of giving and receiving grace.

Much more could be said of Crouch’s proposal in this book. It is, on the whole, a compelling and biblically faithful view. While I may have some quibbles with his reading of the role of culture in the history of redemption and in his reading of Genesis 1-11, I was helped by his emphasis on culture, when rightly defined, within the story of Scripture. Perhaps the most significant contribution that Crouch has made in this book is to provide us with a fully-orbed modern exposition and application of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1. That is no small feat.

With the cultural mandate in view, the lingering question is how the church participates in the culture-making project. Other than encouraging individuals and small groups of Christians toward participation in the ongoing project of culture-making, does the church as church have a role to play in this project? Pastors and parishioners alike need to consider this question, both to provide a clear model for Christian faithfulness and to press toward the ongoing fulfillment of the call to make something of the world for the glory of God.

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“The foundations of Christian ethics must be evangelical foundations; or, to put it more simply, Christian ethics must arise from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise it could not be *Christian* ethics” (p. 11). So reads the masterful first line of the opening chapter in *Resurrection and Moral Order* by Oliver O’Donovan. O’Donovan is Professor of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology at the University of Edinburgh and is an ordained priest in the Church of England. This seminal and ambitious work charts a course for a distinctly Christian approach to ethics.

By placing the resurrection at the center of his project, O’Donovan is positioned to look both *backward* to creation and *forward* to the coming kingdom in order to traverse the *present*. As he puts it, “In proclaiming the resurrection of Christ, the apostles proclaimed also the resurrection of mankind in Christ; and in proclaiming the resurrection of mankind, they proclaimed the renewal of all creation with him. The resurrection of Christ in isolation from mankind would not be a gospel message. The resurrection of mankind apart from creation would be a gospel of a sort, but of a purely Gnostic and world-denying sort which is far from the gospel that the apostles actually preached” (p. 31). His goal is to describe the Christian moral vision by articulating how ethics “responds to, and is itself an integral part of, the Christian gospel” (p. 26). Toward this end, the book is divided into three sections.

The first section (chapters 2–4) concentrates on the objective reality of Christian ethics. Through the resurrection we learn that God stood by his created order and will one day restore it. “Man’s life on earth is important to God; he has given it its order; it matters that it should conform to the order he has given it” (pp. 14–15). Ethics is part of the good news of the Christian message and includes an implicit moral epistemology.

The second section (chapters 5–8) turns to the subjective reality of the gospel, namely the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual believer and the corporate people of God. The Holy Spirit makes “the reality of redemption...both *present* and *authoritative*” and “evokes our free response to this reality as moral agents” (p. 102). Here O’Donovan arrives at the crucial intersection of rationalism and voluntarism. O’Donovan emphasizes that each of these approaches need to be heard and chastened by the other. Left to themselves each will lead to humanism. Voluntarism reminds us that we are not transcendent and that our rational judgments need to be evaluated by revelation. Rationalism provides “hope” in mystery, that while we have limited vision and thus remain trusting the divine light, “the *paradox is not an ultimate contradiction of reality*” (p. 136).

The third section (chapters 9–12) develops the theme of love as the shape of the Christian moral life. By investigating the relationship between moral rules and the moral character of an individual, O’Donovan sets the stage to show how Christian love “gives unity to the varieties of moral character” (p. 27). We are to love others as creatures destined for
the Creator’s fellowship because that is what their “nature demands of us.” Moreover, we are to love Christ as our first priority because . . .

it is the love of Jesus as the Christ, the acceptance of him as the one whom the Father has sent. From it there follows that we are given to love the whole reality in due order: God, the neighbour, self and the world. . . . This brings us back to where we began, to the divine act by which God has designated Jesus as the Christ and has vindicated creation in him, his resurrection from the dead. In this act all Christian love, from the universal to the familiar, finds its spring.

(p. 243)

Throughout this work O’Donovan assumes knowledge of longstanding academic conversations, the Christian tradition, and contemporary debates. So readers who are not as acquainted with this material might need to brush up on some foundational discussions or keep reference books handy as they read. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, the payoff for carefully wading through this tome is well worth the effort. O’Donovan displays his deep learning and awareness of a variety of disciplines, which is both refreshing and needed in the culminating discipline of Christian ethics. And by refusing to choose between “creation” and “kingdom” ethics, O’Donovan helpfully attempts to avoid false dilemmas and unbalanced conclusions.

As a former pastor and someone who now trains students for ministry, I have found that deep theological reflection built around the gospel is sorely needed in the area of ethics. It is up to pastor-theologians and pastoral-scholars to spell out in more detail and—for most contexts—to translate his insights for mapping the most faithful routes through the ethical issues facing the church.

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According to the late Harvard paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, science and faith occupy two “non-overlapping magisteria,” or “NOMA.” While science and faith can “be friends,” they nonetheless must adhere to the rules and norms of their realms. NOMA has become the default position for many in contemporary society and in the church. However, while Owen Gingerich, an esteemed emeritus professor for the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, agrees with Gould that science and faith essentially ask different questions, he ultimately disagrees with Gould’s NOMA theory. In _God’s Planet_ Gingerich argues that faith and science have enjoyed a complementary relationship throughout history and that history tends to side with coherent, integrative visions of
scientific progress. Gingerich surveys the work of Copernicus, Darwin, and Hoyle, articulating how religious or antireligious sentiments often determine what society accepts as science. *God’s Planet* is based on a set of three lectures Gingerich delivered as part of the Hermann Lectures on Faith and Science at Gordon College.

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), in *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, asserted that the earth revolved around the sun, challenging the geocentric (Earth-centered) consensus held by the church and society at the time. In Part I Gingerich asks, “If Copernicus’ cosmology was right, why did it take a century and a half for a majority of educated people to accept the idea that the earth moved and the sun stood still?” (p. 9). Some have asserted that Copernicus’ work was inaccessible to society at the time; however, this was not the case. The existing overwhelming consensus of a geocentric universe, rooted in the work of Ptolemy and some theological speculation, created an insurmountable barrier for Copernicus to promote his heliocentric cosmology. The acceptance of Copernican cosmology was “slow, far from unanimous, and based not on proofs, but on the persuasion of what was increasingly seen as a coherent system” (p. 46). The subsequent work of Galileo and polymath Richard Hooke would slowly overturn consensus by the end of the seventeenth century.

In Part II Gingerich provides a brief yet comprehensive summary of how Charles Darwin (1809-1882) developed the theory of evolution. Gingerich, contrary to much of evangelicalism today, suggests that “the combined roles of geology, paleontology, chemistry, and biology have provided strong credentials for evolution today” and that he is “personally convinced that Darwin was on the right track” (p. 97). Gingerich posits that Christians are often uncomfortable with evolutionary theory because of how humans fit into the picture (pp. 97-98). The debate over evolution continues to rage within the church today, though scientists have overwhelmingly accepted its conclusions about the way species transform over time.

In Part III Gingerich describes Fred Hoyle’s (1915-2001) thinking on multiverses and metaphysics. Hoyle, along with the majority of scientists in his day, generally held that the universe existed forever, a theory described as “steady state cosmology.” In response to new discoveries challenging steady state cosmology, Hoyle pejoratively coined the phrase “Big Bang” to describe the emerging theory of a university with an origin. As the Big Bang theory gained prominence in scientific circles, Hoyle announced that his adherence to steady state cosmology was untenable (p. 117). However, Hoyle would posit that in order for the Big Bang to successfully occur, large amounts of carbon, combined with perfect amounts of helium and lithium, needed to be present. This concept of “fine-tuning” led Hoyle to acknowledge the possibility of an Intelligent Designer.

A primary theme of Gingerich’s book is that society often lags behind scientific developments for several decades, even centuries. As Gingerich has demonstrated, ideas such as heliocentrism and evolution took years to overturn scientific consensus and take root in society. One could argue that had Copernicus made his discovery today, the consensus would have quickly overturned, as the dissemination of information occurs at a much
faster pace. However, Gingerich demonstrates that social, theological, and scientific milieu often play a role in inhibiting or supporting the acceptance of new science. In this case, the contributions of Copernicus, Darwin, and Hoyle all interacted with theology in significant ways, which presented numerous challenges to broad acceptance.

Pastor theologians bear the responsibility of leading their people in grappling with scientific revelations in light of theological realities. If we adhere to the old adage “all truth is God’s truth,” we will critically examine modern scientific advances through a robust theological lens in order to construct an expansive view of how God has created this world to function. I strongly recommend this book to pastor theologians who perceive the need for extended reflection on the relationship between faith and science. There exists a deep need to consider how our theological or scientific biases undermine the pursuit of truth in churches today. A book such as God’s Planet illustrates how accepting new truth often means retooling previous assumptions. In our day and age, the church must move beyond the binaries it perpetuates and construct a grander vision of God’s truth. As Gingerich writes, “If someone tells you that evolution is atheistic, be on guard. If someone claims that science tells us we are here by pure chance take care. And if someone declares that magisteria do not overlap, just smile smugly and don’t believe it” (p. 153).

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...
try and try he does; the ultimate resolution comes by Ransom’s shocking resolve to take out the Strong Man by means of violent struggle. A bloody battle ensues over many days until Westin—and the Un-Man possessing his body—is dead. Perelandra is saved from suffering the same fate as Earth and is thus liberated to live out the story that Adam and Eve failed to live out.

Lewis’s likely goal in writing this second of three novels dealing with interplanetary travel may well be summed up on the second page: “A man who has been in another world does not come back unchanged.” By inviting us into Perelandra, the world of Genesis 1 and 2 reimagined and reminted, and by putting two earthlings on this planet as dialectical presences to each other and the new world, Lewis clearly seeks our change; he is characteristically brilliant in doing so. His reflections on temptation, sex, and gender seem especially salient for the church in today’s world.

From one angle *Perelandra* can be seen as Lewis’s *Screwtape Letters* refashioned, with the problem of temptation being put on new display. Our world is “enemy-occupied territory” (p. 12), and Perelandra is threatened with becoming similarly infiltrated because of Westin’s possessed presence. In both worlds the struggle is presented as being most fundamentally against powers and principalities that seek to darken God’s good worlds. More specifically, history in each case (or at least proto-history for Perelandra) is presented as a dialogue—or, better, a duologue, where two distinct “words” are being spoken—and the struggle concerns to which voice/Voice one will ultimately listen. In our fallen world, malevolent voices become present to humans in our own thoughts and impressions. In the unfallen Perelandra, the malevolent voice is and can only be present to the Green Lady in Westin’s host body. Consequently, Lewis shows that redemption is enacted differently in each world. On Earth, where we have already internalized the lie about God, Christ countervails the powers by offering his body as the revelation of Truth (God is good, and you can *still* get in on this goodness). On Perelandra, where the lie has not yet taken root in human hearts but exists alone in Westin’s body, Ransom countervails malevolent power by destroying its vessel. In Lewis’s mind, redemption is particularistic, even though always Christological.

One of the things spared in Perelandra by Ransom’s action is Maledil’s vision for sex and gender. Lewis elsewhere observes that a child who has only ever played in a sandbox has no conception of the splendor of a day at the beach, and so stays content in his sandbox. Similarly, in this novel Lewis shows that most of our thinking and experiences with sex and gender on earth simply indicate that we’ve never experienced them in all their magnificence. Gender is deeper than its expression in a male and female. Sex is deeper than physical intimacy. Why? Because sex and gender are sacramental: visible signs of heavenly realities, parts that participate in a much greater and grander whole. This is why when Westin first stumbles upon Ransom with the Green Lady and accuses Ransom of having sex with her, and when Westin then scoffs at Ransom’s defense that he’s been communing with this goddess in a state of “sexless innocence,” Ransom qualifies:
Oh, sexless! . . . All right, if you like. It’s about as good a description of living in Perelandra as it would be to say that a man had forgotten water because Niagara Falls didn’t immediately give him the idea of making it into cups of tea (p. 76).

Sex is to sexuality what a drop of water is to a waterfall. Similarly, the Man and Woman’s respective genders—which are the “more fundamental realit[ies] than sex” (p. 172)—are themselves merely parts of a larger and heavenly whole. Gender is part of the deep structure of reality. This is manifested to Ransom in a vision of two sexless angelic figures. The one is masculine—Malecandra, who is *not* male, and the other is feminine—Perelandra, who is *not* female. Lewis’s description is worth quoting at some length, because it gives us an idea of what Lewis thought gender essentially is.

Both bodies were naked, and both were free from any sexual characteristics either primary or secondary. . . . Malecandra was like rhythm and Perelandra like melody. . . . Malecandra affected him like a quantitative, Perelandra like an accentual . . . the first held in his hand something like a spear, but the hands of the other were open, with the palms towards him. . . . At all events, what Ransom saw at that moment was the real meaning of gender. . . . Malecandra seemed to him to have the look of one standing armed, at the ramparts of his remote archaic world, in ceaseless vigilance, his eyes ever roaming the earth-ward horizon whence his danger came long ago. . . . But the eyes of Perelandra opened, as it were, inward, as if they were the curtained gateway to a world of waves and murmurings and wandering airs, of life that rocked in winds and splashed on mossy stones and ascended as the dew and arose sunward in thin-spun delicacy of mist. (pp. 171–172)

Lewis qualifies that “the male and female of organic creatures are rather faint and blurred reflections of the masculine and feminine. Their reproductive functions, their differences in strength and size, partly exhibit, but partly also confuse and misrepresent, the real polarity” (p. 172). Nevertheless, when Ransom at long last sees the Man and Woman together in all their sacred and gendered difference, he is filled with awe, and the book enters its climax and dénouement.

There was great silence on the mountain top and Ransom also had fallen down before the human pair. When at last he raised his eyes from the four blessed feet, he found himself involuntarily speaking though his voice was broken and his eyes dimmed. “Do not move away, do not raise me up,” he said. “I have never before seen a man or a woman. I have lived all my life among shadows and broken images. Oh, my Father and my Mother, my Lord and my Lady, do not move, do not answer me yet. My own mother and father I have never seen. Take me for your son. We have been alone in my world for a great time. (p. 176)
In sum, *Perelandra* is a masterpiece of creative and theological genius. It cannot be more heartily and enthusiastically recommended for reflection and digestion by our current generation. By God’s grace it will effect that transformation of the imagination to which Paul behooves us.

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This volume begins with an apparent and perplexing discrepancy found in Rev. 21:1—22:5. Beale observes that John claims to be seeing a new heaven and a new earth, and yet he goes on to describe merely a city—a city with the shape and structure of a temple. Beale wonders why the temple and the city and the new cosmos are seemingly being equated, thus compelling him into a substantive and wide-ranging Biblical theology of God’s dwelling place. Beale states, “My thesis is that the Old Testament tabernacle and temples were symbolically designed to point to the cosmic eschatological reality that God’s tabernacling presence, formerly limited to the holy of holies, was to be extended throughout the whole earth” (p. 25). Beale claims that this view of God’s presence not only resolves the tension of Revelation 21, but it opens new and important insights into the role of the temple in both the New and Old Testaments. In order to support his view, Beale 1) surveys the cosmic symbolism of temples in the Old Testament and Ancient Near East, especially their expansive aspects, 2) argues that the Garden of Eden serves as the archetype of the concept of temple, and 3) explores every important reference to temples in the New Testament, especially in relationship to Old Testament predecessors, before returning to Revelation 21—22.

Chapter 2 begins Beale’s exploration of the symbolism of temples in the Old Testament, suggesting that Israel viewed its temple as an earthly representation of God’s cosmic and heavenly temple. This symbolism begins with the Sabbath and the garden, which Beale compares to other Ancient Near Eastern literature. He concludes that the Garden of Eden was, symbolically, the first temple/tabernacle, and subsequent temples and tabernacles likewise included garden-oriented qualities (pp. 79-80).

Chapter 3 follows parallel arguments, focusing primarily on the mediatorial role of mankind (as priests and kings) in expanding the garden through the “be fruitful and multiply” mandate. Beale suggests that this shows up most clearly in in the building of altars (e.g., Israel at Sinai, David and Solomon, Israel and the building of the second temple after the return from Babylon).

Chapter 4 preliminarily concludes Beale’s work in the Old Testament. Here Beale connects his theme to that of kingdom, showing that the
mandate to expand the garden is expressed in a mandate to expand the kingdom of Israel in Numbers, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.

Chapters 5-10 follow the development of Beale’s theme in the New Testament: in the Gospels; Acts; 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians; 2 Thessalonians 2; Hebrews; and concluding with Revelation. Beale, a New Testament scholar, expertly draws the Old Testament work in rather fully. In the Gospels (ch. 5), Christ is the last Adam and last temple in the New Creation, the cornerstone of the last temple, and the greater temple that would be torn down. In Acts (ch. 6), Pentecost relates to Sinai and fulfills Joel’s prophecy. Stephen and James both view Christ as the temple and New Creation. In Paul’s epistles (ch. 7), temple imagery is applied to the Church, the representatives of the New Creation. In 2 Thessalonians 2 (ch. 8), Beale takes the position that Paul’s statements about the “man of lawlessness” are prophetic, but within the Church (seeing the temple in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 as a spiritual temple representing the Church). Depending on one’s eschatological framework, Beale’s conclusions could be quite challenging. More explanation of his position can be found in his commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians in the IVP New Testament series. In Hebrews (ch. 9), Jesus is the fulfillment of the temple and the tabernacle. Finally, in Revelation 11 and 21—22 (ch. 10), the temple once again is represented in cosmic fullness.


Chapter 12 brings Beale back to Revelation and the broader description of the New Jerusalem (and its antecedents in the Old Testament). Beale concludes that God’s presence in the structural temple of the Old Testament was, indeed, a cosmic foreshadowing of God’s and Christ’s presence amongst his people as the true “paradisal city-temple” (pp. 392-393).

Chapter 13 introduces some practical applications of this massive theology of the temple, particularly how the Church is to understand its mission in light of the expansive nature of the garden temple.

Occasionally a book is so thorough and yet so helpful, so original and yet so important that the reader begins to sense that it must be destined to become a classic. While little more than ten years old, Beale’s *The Temple and the Church’s Mission* is such a monograph. It is both a compelling survey of one of the most important Biblical themes and an exemplary model of how to do Biblical theology, published well in advance of the recent notable increase in interest in Biblical theology within the academy and the Church.

Beale’s superior knowledge of the Bible is evident as every argument emerges from the text (and his expertise extends to the Ancient Near Eastern sources as well). His work is also careful, arguing each point from several angles and clearly organizing his lines of reasoning. Together these qualities result in a volume that has a new and compelling interpretation or profound elucidation of text on nearly every page. If you are fascinated
by an author who has much to say and does so convincingly, this book will
be hard to put down.

At the same time, it is a rather dense volume and written in an academic
style. It is not an easy book to read, and parts of it will simply have “gotten
through” (e.g., some of the sections on Ancient Near Eastern comparisons
interspersed throughout chapters 2 and 3). As with most volumes of this
type, its exhaustive qualities mean that it feels less accessible and therefore
less practical. But for those looking to read some of the same content but
in a little more approachable form, see his 2014 volume (cowritten with
Mitchell Kim) called *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of
the Earth*. This present volume, however, was a necessary step in building
the foundation for the later work and is worth every bit of energy required
to mine its riches.

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Colin E. Gunton. *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic
Study*. Edinburgh Studies in Constructive Theology. Grand
$27.50.

*The Triune Creator* is a rich and ambitious historical and theological
essay on the doctrine of creation. Its author was Professor of Christian
Doctrine at King’s College London from 1984 until his death in 2003
and one of the most important and influential British theologians and
teachers of the second half of the twentieth century. This volume more
than lives up to expectations.

After an introductory chapter outlining the book’s themes, Gunton
offers an exegetical sketch of some key Biblical material. Then in Chapters
3 to 7 he gives a sweeping theological history of the doctrine, beginning
with various classical Greek philosophies, continuing through selected
Church Fathers and on to the allegedly non-trinitarian contributions
of the theologians of the Middle Ages and then the philosophers of
modernity before recounting the contributions of Calvin and Luther,
Barth and Pannenberg in returning to a more trinitarian account of
creation. The hero of this narrative is undoubtedly Irenaeus, while the
villains are the platonized theologies of Origen and Augustine. The
final three chapters have a more doctrinal emphasis, considering God’s
interaction with the world in creation and providence, the question of
what it means for humans to be created in the image of God, and issues of
eschatology and the ethics of createdness. Along the way there are various
insightful theological interactions with modern science.

Gunton’s account of the historical material is definitely in the service
of his own dogmatic proposals: this is *theological* history (p. ix). He draws
heavily on Irenaeus’ account of the Father creating by means of his two “hands,” his divine Son and Spirit. This “trinitarian mediation” of creation *ex nihilo* allows him to emphasize the sharp distinction between Creator and creature over against the hierarchies of being and non-divine mediators of creation in Greek-influenced cosmologies. It also connects creation to redemption and allows, by means of the incarnation and resurrection, space for the goodness of the material creation. These themes of trinitarian mediation and the goodness of the material continue throughout the book.

Gunton’s other big theme is that creation was always a divine “project,” not a perfectly completed, static entity. In Gunton’s own words, “As created, it is perfect, because it is God’s project. . . . But it is not perfect in the sense of complete. It has somewhere to go” (p. 202). From the beginning, creation had an in-built eschatology; this is what Irenaeus understood and what Origen and Augustine lost. The tragedy of sin is that “from the beginning the human creation refused to be that which it was created to become, and so became the means . . . of subjecting to futility that which had quite another teleology.” This then enables Gunton to connect creation with redemption, providing an integrated trinitarian account of the divine economy from creation, through Christ, to eschatology: “The recapitulation of the human story by Jesus [in the Spirit] is then the means of perfection in the sense both of restoration and of completion. God re-inaugurates the project of creation by means of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus” (p. 202). This is a compelling account of the shape of the doctrine as revealed in Scripture and has the power to stimulate rich and fruitful exegetical, theological, and pastoral reflection.

Overall the scope of Gunton’s project is deeply impressive. The systematic rigor and coherence of his vision and his theological engagement with Scripture are admirable. His theological evaluations of the philosophies and worldviews of various scientific writers are also commendable, as is his concern to connect dogmatics with ethics.

As in all his writing, Gunton also shows a noteworthy commitment to wrestling with the Christian theological tradition and an enviable breadth of reading. However, this strength is also perhaps the book’s greatest weakness. His reading of the history is self-confessedly “Harnackian” (p. ix), claiming a theological fall into Greek metaphysics rather early in the tradition, although at least he is as critical of Kant and Hegel as he is of Origen and Augustine. The scope of his project means that Gunton paints on a vast canvas, using a roller and liberal dashes of paint in impressionistic style rather than the fine brushwork of detailed contextual readings that would have been required to sustain the historical side of his thesis. Whether he is entirely fair to his sources is questionable in places, and his historical case is hard to assess on the basis of the arguments put forth.

One other quibble: the book is perhaps mistitled. It is less a study of the triune Creator and more an account of his work of creation. Gunton himself notes that “the doctrine of creation . . . has its primary reference to God, and only secondarily to the world” (p. 207). This follows the
conceptual order of dogmatics, which is the study of God and only then all things in relation to God. He does briefly address God’s life *in se* when he expounds the image of God as constituted by personal relations; in his emphasis on *creatio ex nihilo* he also maintains that God’s life is entirely independent of his creation; and in passing he mentions the Son’s eternal begottenness (p. 159). Nevertheless, the focus of his exposition is the works of God’s “two hands” in the economy, rather than on the Creator’s own being and life. A full account of this includes the processions, relations, and properties of the divine persons, and only then the divine missions, which receive their shape from the eternal processions. This dogmatic ordering would perhaps have enabled a more fully trinitarian account of creation by allowing for clearer articulation of the indivisibility of God’s economic works, while allowing for appropriation of aspects of the divine works by particular divine persons. This complaint may seem unfair, given the extensive attention Gunton paid to trinitarian theology elsewhere. But in this volume he claims that Aquinas’s account of creation is insufficiently trinitarian, despite passing over the subtle and detailed attention to the Trinity in the *Summa Theologicae*, which concludes with an account of the divine missions as the bridge from the doctrine of God into the account of creation. Elsewhere he has also placed severe strictures on Augustine’s account of the Trinity. It would therefore have been interesting and useful to see in more detail Gunton’s own account of the relation of God’s inner life to his temporal works in creation. As it is, in this book he relies on a right insistence on the Creator-creature distinction and a rather generic account of relationality that is applied both to God and to human creatures.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, *The Triune Creator* is a stimulating and helpful contribution from a modern theological master and provides much food for us as pastor theologians in our task of expounding the Bible’s teaching on this vital doctrine.

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Gerard Manley Hopkins, a convert to Catholicism under the influence of John Henry Newman in the 1860s, is best known for his poetry, although a series of diaries, journals, letters, and sermons also survive. These works have now been conveniently collected and provided with an introduction and notes by Catherine Phillips. I focus below on Hopkins’s poetry, and only here a small selection, drawing out representative themes of interest to a pastoral audience.
Hopkins is a profound observer of nature, and his poems consistently function like a lens through which the reader learns to see, with him, the sacramentality of creation. “The world is charged with the grandeur of God,” Hopkins writes famously, and despite humanity’s at-times troubling interventions—it “wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell”—“nature is never spent,” because the Spirit continues to brood over it (God’s Grandeur, p. 128). This grandeur is, for Hopkins, evident mostly in the mundane. “Glory be to God for dappled things,” begins Pied Beauty—streaky, splotchy things like sky and cow, trout and chestnut, finches’ wings and plotted landscapes (pp. 132-133). But creation is not good in itself; it remains dappled and changeable, and so the poem ends praising the One “whose beauty is past change.” Many today recognize the goodness of creation. Hopkins penetrates further, telling us why it is good: it sacramentally shares in the life of God. But it also shares in the curse, and Hopkins is clear-eyed about the “subtle web of black”—that is, death—that wraps “trees and flowers round” and “lay along the grasses green” (Spring and Death, pp. 16-17). It is a good and cursed created order; there are no banal dichotomies here.

The same could be said of Hopkins as an observer of humanity, although here he tends toward a more melancholy, if not pessimistic, view. In The Sea and the Skylark—his critique of late-Victorian culture—nature, in the sound of a wave’s roar and a lark’s wings, shames modern man, and in a line as relevant now as then he writes, “Our make and making break, are breaking, down / To man’s last dust, drain fast towards man’s first slime” (p. 131). Over against modern confidence in a boundless humanity, Hopkins paints a picture of humans deeply constrained by finitude. He is tormented by a lack of productivity—“The whole world passes; I stand by”; his labors could amount to something, if he could “count on prediluvian age” (The Alchemist in the City, pp. 65-66; cf. To R. B., p. 184).

Nor does the so-called spiritual life, of prayer and koinōnia, provide an escape from this finitude. Too often, in fact, these are a reminder of it. The title My Prayers Must Meet a Brazen Heaven says it all—a poem every pastor should read, memorize, and force upon his or her parishioners (p. 74). So too with his Nondum, in which he speaks what most of us stutter: “God, though to Thee our psalm we raise / No answer voice comes from the skies; / To Thee the trembling sinner prays / But no forgiving voice replies” (pp. 81-82). It is not only God who feels distant, but others too. Fellowship fails him: “To seem the stranger lies my lot” (To Seem the Stranger, p. 166).

What breaks through this malaise? Where may Christ be met and grace received? In some ways precisely through the other from whom Hopkins feels removed: “For Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men’s faces” (As Kingfishers Catch Fire, p. 129). But more centrally, it is Easter that is, for Hopkins, an apocalypse of grace. In That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and Of the Comfort of the Resurrection (pp. 180-181), after line after line describing nature we read, “Enough! the Resurrection,” and the poem shifts dramatically (see also Easter, pp. 83-84). The resurrection, though, for Hopkins, needs something tangible, physical; it needs to come
to us again and again. That is, it needs the Eucharist: “Pure fasted faces draw unto this feast: God comes all sweetness to your Lenten lips” (Easter Communion, p. 60). And it needs a place, an institution, a Church—and this may be Hopkins’s greatest challenge for us. In the last verse of The Half-way House Hopkins wrestles with a paradox. To see, love, and overtake God then, we must, in some sense, see, love, and overtake him now. Future reality is an intensification, not a denial, of present experience. So the question is where; where may Christ be met and grace received? “You have your wish; enter these walls, one said: / He is with you in the breaking of the bread” (p. 76). Hopkins’s answer? Church, and within her, Eucharist.

Protestants and evangelicals may not be prepared to go all the way with Hopkins. His Half-way House expresses his doubts about Anglicanism and precedes by months his own conversion to the Roman Catholic Church (see p. 321). But in an age of ironies such as ours—that deifies nature and yet is rapacious in its abuse; that is more connected and yet lonelier than ever; that is thrilled by technological advance and yet haunted by feelings of unproductivity; and, in the church, that is increasingly materialist and yet dismissive of material practices of worship—Hopkins’s theological poetics offers a more robustly Christian vision of creation (its sacramentality), of humanity (our finitude), and of the church and her sacraments (their primacy for grace) than much of what is currently on offer. And so, for pastor-theologians, his is a voice worthy of our attention.

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Explorations of the interrelation between Christian doctrine and science often either give short shrift to the work of pre-Enlightenment theologians who attempted to understand the world around them or canonize their efforts as work that can never be surpassed. The teaching of the tradition is alternately condemned for its backwardness or plucked from its context in order to be placed upon the museum shelf. It is easy to divide those who have gone before us in the project of negotiating this interdisciplinary project into one of two bins: accept or reject. But for those who work with the conviction that the Holy Spirit has both been at work in the tradition and is also currently renewing the church’s teaching today, there must be a better way. What is needed is scholarship that will serve as the foundation for the work of theological retrieval that is needed in the church.

In The Theatre of His Glory: Nature and Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin, Susan Schreiner has provided a carefully argued and
contextualized survey of pastor theologian John Calvin's understanding of the natural order. This revision of her doctoral thesis bears all the marks of a fine work of historical theology: close attention to the contemporary theological tradition, a hesitancy to overstate conclusions, and painstaking effort to provide a fair and charitable reading of her subject. This comprehensive study gives us a survey of Calvin's thought on providence and causality, angels, the nature of the human person, natural law, and the redemption of the causality and gives the reader a sense of what commitments and methodologies guided Calvin as he formed his thoughts on these doctrines.

It is this window into Calvin's reasoning that makes this volume so significant for pastor theologians and other readers of this bulletin. Schreiner demonstrates how Calvin triangulates his theology based upon his exegesis of Scripture, pastoral concerns for the flock in Geneva, and claims made within the intellectual milieu of his age. The first chapter on providence and causality provides an excellent example of this reasoning. For Calvin, providence was a profoundly pastoral doctrine that could bring great comfort to God's people. Yet this conviction was to be tempered by the careful reading of Scripture in light of the tradition's teaching as well as the rebirth of philosophical trends such as Epicureanism and Stoicism. His concern with causality, though a far cry from current discussions about quantum mechanics, demonstrate his conversance with what amounted to the physics of his own day. Calvin's theology is indicative of the kind of interdisciplinary work that is required of pastors today.

The second chapter on angelology and the final chapter on eschatology are also instructive to our own age. Although he was attentive to contemporary intellectual trends like Averroeism and Aristotelianism, Calvin did not allow these influences to flatten his exposition of Christian doctrine. Instead his theology remains well-proportioned to the Scriptural witness. While Calvin cautions against overfascination with angels, he nonetheless gives an account of them that contrasts strikingly with modern systematics that are curiously silent on this topic. His work on eschatology gives both a place to the natural order in God's redemptive economy while also training the eye to the need for God's saving intervention. In a time when it is easy for pastors and theologians to fall unsuspecting into the naturalizing tendencies of our age, Calvin provides a needed alternate vision.

Finally, Schreiner does well to capture the pastoral impulses that leaven all of Calvin's thought. His concern for the proper catechesis and formation of his flock is evident throughout Schreiner's study, but a quote from the Introduction is representative. “This study argues that the motivating principle of this quest for order is to be discerned in Calvin's view of providence. Calvin sensed that the foundations of the late 'medieval' world had crumbled. The portals of change had been opened and threatened to sweep everything away. In the face of such chaos, Calvin encouraged his audience to hold to the Word of God. That Word, which had caused the morning stars to sing together and the sons of God to shout for joy (Job 38:7) was, he believed, able to call light out of the darkness that was the sixteenth century” (p. 3). Such thinking is a
fine example of the task of the pastor-theologian. Calvin’s answers to the questions of his age may not be precisely the same as what pastors today provide, but he remains a fine example to those who would take up the same task in an age where “portals of change” are no doubt likewise being opened so that God’s people may again be pointed to the Word who still calls light out of darkness.

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When members of my church approach me about the doctrine of creation, their questions inevitably center on issues such as the age of the earth, whether or not God used some kind of evolutionary process to create, or how long the days really were in the creation week. These are not unimportant questions. They also reflect the broader conversation in the evangelical world, even among academics. Yet they are a small part of the doctrine of creation, and overemphasizing these issues has led to a neglect of the broader Biblical themes of creation. This neglect has had consequences not only for life inside the church, but also for how the church has engaged culture and lived in this world.

Jonathan Wilson, Pioneer McDonald Professor of Theology at Carey Theological College in Vancouver, aims to correct this neglect and recover a robust doctrine of creation. He builds his doctrine on two necessary truths: redemption and creation must always be kept together, and the doctrine of creation must be thoroughly trinitarian. Ultimately the doctrine of creation is not about creation itself, but about the God who creates. Wilson uses the phrase “the dialectic of the kingdom” to develop the idea that creation and redemption must be thought of and lived out together. The term “dialectic” refers to the inseparable nature of creation and redemption, while the term “kingdom” calls to mind God’s eternal plan of redeeming his creation. The reality of our Triune God also leads us to hold creation and redemption together, and Wilson emphasizes that we must have a “Trinitarian grammar of creation” based on a trinitarian grammar of redemption to properly understand and live out the doctrine of creation.

God’s Good World is divided into three parts. Before developing his ideas concerning the dialectic of the kingdom or the trinitarian grammar of creation in any depth, Wilson outlines the results of neglecting the doctrine of creation. He devotes a chapter apiece to the deficiencies he sees in the church, the academy, and society because of this neglect. These deficiencies are intertwined and include truncated theologies of salvation and the body, theological retreat, and a lack of proper creation care. Having demonstrated the need for a recovery of the doctrine of creation, Wilson then develops his main ideas, remaps the doctrine in light of those ideas,
and demonstrates the Scriptural validity and foundation of his doctrine. In the last part of the book Wilson offers a series of short reflections on how the doctrine of creation should make a practical difference in our lives. His applications range from how we should worship to how we should understand science to how we should treat our bodies.

The most important question to ask in evaluating a work of constructive theology such as this is: does it succeed? Does Wilson offer a Biblically faithful, coherent, and relevant doctrine of creation that helps us understand and live out the doctrine in a deeper, more meaningful way? The answer is unequivocally yes. Wilson’s concepts of the dialectic of the kingdom and the trinitarian grammar of creation are both worth careful attention. The inseparability of creation and redemption should form the foundation for how we understand creation, and without question this idea needs to be recovered and stressed in our churches. Wilson demonstrates the serious consequences of separating creation and redemption and allowing science to set the terms of how we should understand creation instead of grounding our understanding in Christ and his Word. His practical applications of the doctrine are broad, but also contain much pastoral wisdom.

This does not mean that the book is without its flaws. Wilson takes a while before he explicitly grounds his understanding of creation in Scripture. He also avoids directly engaging some of the topics he wants to move beyond, such as creation and evolution or many of the ethical concerns associated with the doctrine of creation like sexuality, bioethics, or ecology. Wilson presents some questionable ideas without taking the time to defend them, such as claiming the Son of God would still have become incarnate even without sin or that death existed before the Fall. He makes much of the distinction between the “world” and “creation” in order to help us understand the difference between the sin-cursed world we live in now and the redemptive aspects of God’s plan. He neglects, however, to ground this distinction exegetically, and it doesn’t quite fit with the way the Bible always uses these terms. When I checked the website Wilson mentions in his introduction for further study and resources, I found it devoid of content.

None of these flaws should keep you from reading this book. As Christians we need a robust, Biblical doctrine of creation in order to understand our salvation and live for God like we should. Pastors need the theological understanding to help their churches recover the fullness of the doctrine of creation and move beyond reducing it to creation vs. evolution and age of the earth debates. God’s Good World is a helpful guide.

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Alister McGrath is Andreas Idreos Professor of Science and Religion at Oxford, President of the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, and associate priest in a group of Church of England village parishes in the Cotswolds. McGrath began his studies at Oxford in 1971 by focusing on quantum theory, eventually going on to gain a doctorate in molecular biophysics. He proceeded to study theology at both Oxford and Cambridge, focusing on the interaction of science and religion during the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. This volume is an introduction to the dialogue between the Christian faith and the natural sciences, written specifically for those with very little scientific or religious background knowledge. The book serves as a starting point for exploration of this important field, a cracking of the door to further reflection. The volume, which is divided into four main parts, consists of thirty-four succinct chapters. Each chapter concludes with a list of resources for readers who desire to take their thinking further.

In Part One of the book, McGrath explores key historical debates. He first considers the importance of the increasing realization that the earth did not stand at the center of the universe (i.e., the Copernican revolution). He next turns to the achievement of Isaac Newton and the emergence of the mechanical worldview. This paves the way for a consideration of the nineteenth-century Darwinian controversy. Having considered three debates of considerable importance to the dialogue between science and religion, McGrath devotes the second part of his work to a discussion of general themes in the field, such as proofs for God’s existence, the doctrine of creation and the natural sciences, and divine activity in the world. Part Three focuses on contemporary debates. Here McGrath interacts with the atheist propagandist and scientific popularizer Richard Dawkins. His attention then turns to significant debates in contemporary cosmology concerning the origins of the universe. Subsequent chapters in this section deal with quantum theory, the biological sciences, evolutionary psychology, the psychology of religion, and the cognitive science of religion. The final part of the book investigates ideas and approaches found in ten contributors to the dialogue between science and religion (e.g., Thomas Torrance, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Philip Clayton). The purpose of this fourth section is simply to give the reader a basic knowledge of some representative contributions to the field and how these came to be developed.

The constant flow of books and documentaries dealing with God and physics, spirituality and science, and the mysteries of human nature and destiny indicates growing interest in this area, and yet evangelical pastors, by and large, seem hesitant to contribute to the conversation. In his important work *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving Church … and Rethinking Faith,* David Kinnaman explains that in this age of science countless young people are abandoning the church because they do not see the mutually complementary relationship between faith and science.
The church needs pastors who dare to deal with the supposed antagonism of Christian theology and scientific discoveries. Perhaps the reason many pastors remain silent on this subject is that we are ill-prepared. Of course, we have our shelf of canned answers: “God created out of nothing,” and “God is in control of all things.” But we haven’t found the time to do the wide reading that is necessary for intelligent engagement. Or maybe we have had the time, but didn’t know where to begin reading. This is precisely where McGrath’s work comes to our aid. It acquaints us with the most pertinent historical debates, theological concepts, and scientific developments, while also pointing us to additional sources that will help us develop our understanding of the different facets of this field. McGrath’s introduction is invaluable because it helps us think our way into the discussions about faith and science that are happening all around us.

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Stephen Hawking has been the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge for thirty years and serves as the Director of Research for its Centre of Theoretical Cosmology. Hawking is also a Fellow of the Royal Society and has received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. What seared him on the public consciousness, however, was his decision to write a popular-level work on theoretical physics: *A Brief History of Time*. In my younger days as an engineer, I fancied myself an armchair physicist. It seemed obvious that when I transitioned into pastoral ministry I should also transition into cosmology; so I picked up a copy of Hawking’s famous book. It was a fascinating read then, and I still recommend it as a primer on general relativity and quantum mechanics.

When I say “popular-level,” I mean the equations have been replaced with illustrations (it even includes a glossary). In relatively few pages Hawking explains how the human concept of the universe has evolved over the centuries so effectively that most readers should have no problem realizing the significance of even high-level concepts such as the three Friedmann models of the universe. Hawking defines the uncertainty principle so clearly that quantum mechanics almost makes sense. He also describes the 1980s model of elementary particles, anti-particles, and force particles in a way that holds up against the more recent discoveries. Most importantly, Hawking shares the passion of his own part in the pursuit of a unified theory with such fervor that even the most uninformed reader will be drawn in. This “theory of everything” dominates Hawking’s thought. He is not simply interested in the origin and fate of the universe;
he sees the pursuit of a complete theory of the universe as a search for “the mind of God” (p. 175).

But Hawking is an atheist. His “God” has nothing to do (p. 141). Seeking the mind of God simply means seeking all knowledge, which he believes humans are capable of knowing. This book lays the groundwork for Hawking’s noncontingent universe. He uses the uncertainty principle, the foundation for his understanding of quantum mechanics, to destroy determinism (p. 55, cf. p. 12) as well as any meaningful concept of truth. He applies the theory of relativity not simply to a relative experience of time’s passage, but argues that time itself is relative. Consequently, if both time and space are relative (by practical implication curved), then it is “meaningless to talk about space and time outside the limits of the universe” (p. 33), not because those limits exist but because they are curved back on themselves, much as a sphere can be thought of as infinite from a two-dimensional perspective (cf. pp. 44, 116). Hence, a universe without beginning or end.

Pastors should be concerned. Hawking begins his book with a humorous response to an astronomy lecture: “What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.” When asked what the tortoise was standing on, the doubter continued, “You’re very clever, young man, very clever. But it’s turtles all the way down” (p. 1). As much as he tries to justify himself (and discredit theism), that is what Hawking himself offers in this book—an infinite stack of turtles (Hawking would likely say that they curve back on themselves). Sometimes answers like this are all that can be given. For example, force particles cannot be detected, and so they are said to be “virtual” (p. 69). Other times Hawking has no better option. For example, he associates the fine-tuning argument of creation (including arguing that a number of initial conditions of the universe would all result in the same current condition, pp. 124-132) with the weak anthropic principle, even using it to demonstrate why there are only three space dimensions (pp. 164-165). He resorts to the many-universes theory (called here the “sum over histories” and “imaginary time”) to keep a Creator away from his finely-tuned universe. The most important proposal of this book, that quantum mechanics demonstrates a finite universe without a boundary, is itself “metaphysical” and unprovable (p. 136).

For anyone interested in Hawking’s more recent thought, the sequel to A Brief History of Time is The Grand Design with Leonard Mlodinow (not A Briefer History of Time, also with Mlodinow, which is a disappointing abridgment and reorganizing of the former). In The Grand Design, Hawking uses quantum mechanics to explain the idea of the multiverse in much greater detail. Most importantly, he is able to put more flesh on the bones of string theory (which was still young in the 1980s), declaring it the only viable candidate for a “theory of everything.” According to Hawking, string theory removes the singularities that demolish general relativity, which in turn provides the occasion for Hawking to explain much more clearly his alternative to the singularity known as the Big Bang as well as black holes.
Anyone who reads this review should appreciate the underlying tension of *A Brief History of Time*: Hawking has isolated himself from philosophical or theological engagement. In his conclusion he notes that philosophers have not been able to keep up with scientific theories and thus have no place in any meaningful discussion because they cannot contribute anything of value (p. 174; cf. his response to the Pope, p. 116). I do not know what the answer is to that exclusion. I am an honors graduate in engineering, and I cannot begin to understand the mathematics. But that does not mean there should be two separate and mutually exclusive discussions of ultimate truth (or even can be).

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